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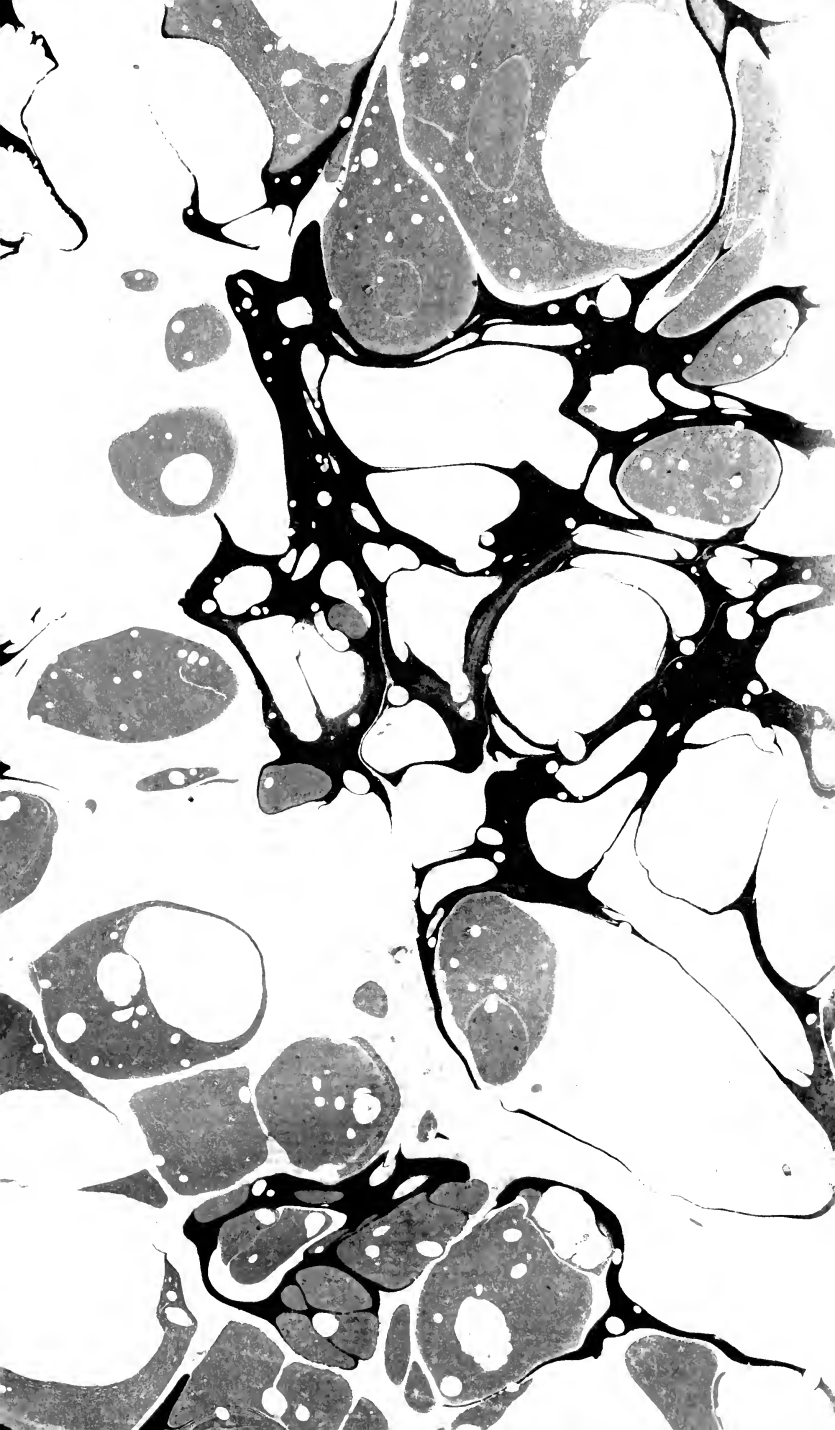
OF

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY


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












THE
PRACTICAL WORKS
OF THE
REV. RALPH ERSKINE, *A. M.*

CONSISTING OF HIS
SERMONS AND POEMS.

IN TEN LARGE VOLUMES OCTAVO.

VOLUME THE EIGHTH.



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T H E

S E R M O N S,

A N D O T H E R

P R A C T I C A L W O R K S,

Of the Late REVEREND and LEARNED

MR. R A L P H E R S K I N E,

Minister of the Gospel in DUNFERMLINE.

CONSISTING OF

Above One Hundred and Fifty SERMONS, besides
his POETICAL PIECES.

I N T E N L A R G E V O L U M E S O C T A V O,

To which is prefixed,

An Account of the AUTHOR'S LIFE and WRITINGS,
with an ELEGIAC POEM and large CONTENTS.

We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, 2 COR. iv. 5,

V O L. VIII,

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M D C C L X X V I I I.

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

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FAITHFULNESS unto Death, crowned with
Eternal Life. Page 13

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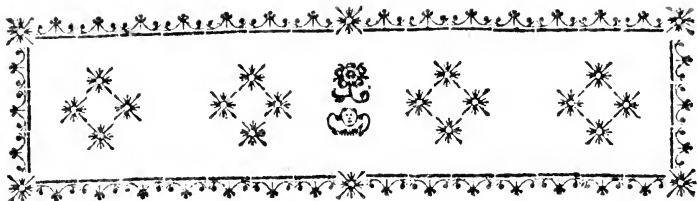
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S E R M O N CXXVI.

FAITHFULNESS unto DEATH, crowned
with ETERNAL LIFE*.

REV. ii. 10.

—*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee
a crown of life.*

THES E words are a part of the epistle written from heaven to the church of Smyrna; wherein Christ forewarns and forearms her, against further troubles, besides what are mentioned in the preceding verse, and exhorts her not to *fear*, but to be *faithful*.

More particularly, in the verse we have these four things observable, 1. A general *warning* about approaching trouble; and things they were to suffer, 2. A particular *description* of what they were to suffer; *Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days.*

* At what time, or in what place, this sermon was preached, cannot be positively ascertained, nothing being marked relative thereto in the Author's notes. However from several passages in the discourse itself, we learn that it was delivered in the year 1742. and a person of undoubted veracity assures us it was at Orwel, on Monday after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.—— This is the second impression.

3. Their *duty*, not to *fear*, but to be *faithful*. 4. The ample *encouragement* here promised, *I will give thee a crown of life*.

1st, A general *warning* about trouble, called, *These things they were to suffer*. What troubles the church of Smyrna were under before, you may see from ver. 9. *I know thy works and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan*. But more trials were yet abiding her. Hence learn, The sufferings of God's people are not soon brought to an end; but, when they have drunk deep in one cup of God's affliction, they have more to drink: change of crosses is some times all their refreshment, as it was with Job, chapter i. when one messenger backed another; so with David, Psalm xlii. *When deep called unto deep*: therefore, lay not your account to want troubles as long as you are in this world; and see that your troubles be indeed sufferings, and that affliction and an ill conscience meet not together. Hence also learn, Christ foreknows all his people's trials, what they shall suffer; therefore he forewarns them, and provides a remedy; hence he has *chambers* provided, *till the indignation be overpast*, Isa. xxvi. 20.: he has a *place*, even in the *wilderness provided for the woman*, Rev. xii. 6. He can make the *earth help her*, ver. 16.; yea, he can make the enemies friendly, Jer. xv. 11. *The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction*.

2^{dly}, You have a particular *description* of their trouble. And here there are five things, 1. The *notification* or *certification* of it, *behold*. 2. The *instrument* of it, *Satan*. 3. The *subject* of it, *some of you*. 4. The *kind* of it, namely, *imprisonment*; *He shall cast some of you into prison*. 5. The *end* and *design* of it, that ye may be *tried*.

1. The *intimation* or *notification* of it, with a *behold*; shewing, that it was a certain and serious matter.—Hence learn, The particular trials of God's people ought to be observed; and all the particular circumstance

stances of their trial should be noticed ; because, every circumstance thereof, relating either to the instrument, time, place, kind, and continuance, are ordered of the Lord : and we ought to behold God therein : *Is there evil in the city, and I have notd one it, saith the Lord?* We ought to observe every circumstance both of mercies and crosses that the Lord orders ; *Whofo is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

2. The *instrument* of it, the *devil*. Crosses, when sinfully inflicted, by the hands of men, Satan has the chief hand therein ; for, he acts in other instruments : *He works in the children of disobedience*, and especially in the matter of persecution. Satan tempts them, in a special manner, as he tempted Judas : the armies against the Lamb are raised by the devil. If there be any here that oppose and persecute God's people, they may look upon themselves as driven by the devil, and acted by Satan : and, Ah ! what a shame it is to be the devil's slaves and drudges ! If you knew, you would think shame of your employment ; the Lord's people need think no shame of their sufferings, it is Satan that opposes them.

3. The *subject* of the trial, the party suffering ; *some of you*. Observe, The Lord does not call forth all his people equally to suffer ; nor will he tell them in particular, who are to suffer, whether they be the persons or not ; for, he can make a warning, relating to some, to be useful to all ; that none may think the storm will miss them, and that all may resolve and lay their account with trials. The Lord has the choosing of such as are to suffer for him ; and he will choose these that are fittest : and these who think they are most unfit, he can choose them, and fit them too.

4. The *kind* of the trouble ; it is called *imprisonment*, by which is to be understood, all the sufferings they were to meet with at that time. Observe, That among other trials of God's people, imprisonment, or restraint of liberty, is a very sore trial : therefore, let us learn to make better use of our liberty, lest, like David, you

be sent to the wilderness, and be deprived of gospel-liberty and privileges; and lest it be matter of a sad challenge, that you made no better use of liberties when you enjoyed them.

5. The *end* of the sufferings *that ye may be tried*; that faith, and other graces, may be tried, 1 Pet. i. 7. Hence learn, The Lord disposes his people's sufferings to his own ends. Though Satan has a chief hand in them, yet the Lord over-rules all as he sees fit; he makes the wrath of men and devils to praise him. Thus he over-ruled Joseph's sufferings to the good of his brethren; and Paul's sufferings to the furtherance of the gospel. Therefore, never look what troubles threaten, but look to God who can bring good out of them, and can make darkness light, and death life; if you were thus looking to God, great trouble would give little annoyance. Hence also learn, That trials are sent to the Lord's people to make proof of their graces: therefore, look on trials as occasions to evidence your graces. There are two furnaces of a believer's graces for trying them: the one is, examination; the other is, affliction: if the first be neglected, the Lord will set up the other.

6. The *continuance* of the trouble, you shall have it *ten days*; importing, a short time. Hence learn, That the afflictions of God's children, are bounded and limited of the Lord; Israel must come out of Egypt when the time of their bondage is expired. God is at the helm in the time of the storm; and we may sleep quiet, because he awakes. Again, we may here observe, how the Spirit of God would have us counting the time of trouble, not by *years*, nor by *months*, but by *days*. They are called sometimes but an *hour*, sometimes but a *short moment*. Art thou under a cross? Reckon it but from *day to day*; and that will make a long trouble seem short. Time is but *days*; and *days*, *hours*; and *hours*, *moments*; and how small is that when compared with the eternal crown of glory? Make not your time eternity; but, be *numbering your days*, and *applying your hearts unto wisdom*.

3dly, The next thing in the words is, the *duty*, namely, *fear not*, but *be faithful*. Where we may observe two things,

1. What we should NOT *do*, namely, *fear not* : *Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer*. Hence learn, that slavish fear is to be avoided by all these that would stand up for Christ. Many a call is given to the children of God not to fear, *Fear not little flock ; Fear not worm Jacob, for I am with thee ;* and accordingly many of the saints have got above all their fears, saying, *I will fear no evil, for thou art with me : Wherefore should I fear in the day of evil, even when the iniquity of my heels may compass me about : None of these things move me*, said Paul, speaking of his sufferings : he got above all fears.—Slavish fear has three great evils in it.

(1.) It apprehends *crosses* and *hardships* even where there is none in reality : *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ? And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ?* Isa. li. 12, 13.

(2.) When troubles are real, it *magnifies* them, and points them out in the most disheartening and discouraging colours imaginable. This makes the cross terrible, when fear gets leave to paint it in the blackest colour : whereas, when faith looks upon the cross, it extenuates and says, they are *light afflictions ; they are but for a moment*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

(3.) This fear *slays* a man first, and then the last trouble will *kill* him outright. The devil sends faithless fear first and foremost, and then brings up his army. No trouble has been found to be deadly to God's people till first slavish fear has killed, wounded, and weakened them. Therefore, our Lord cautions against this killing enemy, slavish fear ; *Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer*.—Thus we have a hint at what we should *not do*.

2. What we should *do*, viz. be *faithful*; *Fear not, but be faithful*. From the connexion between these two we may learn,

(1.) That slavish fear is to be *checked* and *guarded against* in evil times, because it has great influence to draw us from our duty. If we would be faithful, we need to be aware of faithless fears, Heb. xii. 12, 13. A frightened man is already halting, and may be soon turned out of the way. Satan makes men first to fear, and then to be unfaithful: and hence faithless fear of trouble and danger, in the good way of the Lord, usually ends in apostasy. Therefore, we need to be aware of it as an enemy to all duty.

(2.) Learn, that in the discharge of our duty, and in the whole course of a Christian, there is no greater burden lies upon him, than just to be in the *way of duty*. Thus Christ here advertises his people, saying, 'There are sufferings coming upon you; but take you no other thought or care upon you, but only how to be faithful and upright; for, as to the troubles and sufferings, how they shall be ordered to right ends, and what shall be the kind, and measure, and degree, and length, or duration of them, trouble not yourselves therewith, but leave all that to me: I will take the care and burden of all that; and I put no other burden upon you, but just that you wait faithfully upon me, as he says to the church of Thyatira here, ver. 24, 25. *I will put upon you no other burden; but that which you have already, hold fast till I come*. We have nothing to fear, if we be but helped to be faithful: whatever we are ready to fear, it is God's part to take care of that, but it is our part to study what is our present duty. But, alas! we are ready to take God's part upon us, like the sons of Zeruiah, we are ready to *take too much upon us*, by our sinful fears and cares about events and sufferings, and so to assume a sovereignty to ourselves. But, indeed, to sit down on his throne would soon undo us; the burden would soon break our backs: but God enjoins us to be *careful* FOR NOTHING, *but cast all our cares on him who careth for us*. And we put ourselves to much heedless trouble,

trouble, if we take the burden of care upon our own backs, which we ought to cast upon the Lord, and which alone belongs to him to bear: who allows us to take no other care, no other burden upon us, but how, through his grace, to be faithful in his service, and faithful unto death.

Atbly, The *fourth* general in the words is the *encouragement*, viz. *I will give thee a crown of life.* This is annexed especially to the duty of faithfulness in Christ Jesus: it is annexed to it in a way of free grace, reigning through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

In which words we have these four things observable, 1. The *duty* enjoined, namely, to be *faithful*. 2. The *term* how long, viz. *unto death*. 3. The *glorious issue* of this fidelity, namely, the *crown of life*. 4. The *gracious conveyance* of this crown, *I WILL GIVE it thee; Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

I shall endeavour a short explication of these in the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That to these who are faithful unto death, Christ is to give a crown of life.*

The observation is much the same with the words of the text; and, in speaking to it, I propose to do only these three things.

- I. To *explain* the proposition.
- II. To *confirm* the truth of the doctrine.
- III. To make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We are to offer something for *explication*. And here are four things to be enquired into.

1. What it is to be *faithful*.
2. What is imported in being *faithful unto death*.
3. What we are to understand by the *crown of life*.
4. What by Christ's *giving* it.

1/3, What

1st, What it is to be *faithful*? We find fidelity is a duty much commended in scripture, and frequently called for at his people's hands; and it is of the free mercy of God that any are enabled to it. Paul speaks of himself, 1 Corinth. vii. 25. as one that has *obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*.—It was the Lord's commendation of Moses, that he *was faithful in all his house*, Numb. xii. 7. The perfection of this faithfulness was to be found, indeed, only in Christ, *who was faithful to him, who appointed him*, Heb. iii. 2. even as Moses, (a type of Christ,) *was faithful in all his house*. I shall mention four things required unto faithfulness.

1. It is necessary to make a man faithful that he have much *faith* in God; for, the same word that is rendered *faithful*, is also rendered a *believing* man, John xx. 27. *Be not faithless but believing*. It is the same word with this in the text here, called *faithful*, Eph. i. 4. *To the faithful in Christ Jesus*; that is, to the *believing* people in Christ Jesus: and indeed, without faith in Christ, there is no faithfulness to God. He that would be faithful in doing and suffering, has great need of much faith in God.—See, to this purpose, 1 Timothy iv. 10. *For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God*. The doing and suffering Christian, that is faithful both in his active and passive obedience, is he that trusts in the living God. An unbeliever may have morality, but hath no fidelity; and hence is that sweet conjunction of *holding faith, and a good conscience*, 1 Tim. i. 19.—A good conscience will stand on no other ground but that of true faith; and true faith will ly upon no other bed but a good conscience.—Hence,

2. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he has *goodness*; therefore, as faith and faithfulness are conjoined, so goodness and faithfulness; *Well done, thou good and faithful servant*, Mat. xxv. 21. And, I think, the goodness here respects the state and condition; and faithfulness respects the way and conversation: for, when God calls people to be judged, he first judges every

every man *according to his state*, and then every man *according to his work*: they are first judged according to their state, whether they be good trees in Christ, before they be judged according to their works, whether they have brought forth fruit: and, no doubt, if they be good as to their state in Christ, they will be faithful and fruitful, according to their measure. The procedure of the Judge at the last day, is, first to judge men according to their state, before ever any word be said about their works; for, the sheep are to be set on the right-hand, and the goats on the left, before any sentence be passed, or any verdict given about their actions: that is, it is first judged whether they be good or bad, in a good or bad state, in the first or second Adam, under the covenant of works or of grace; and, to the faithful in Christ, their goodness will be proclaimed, because of their union to Christ; and their faithfulness will evidence it.

3. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he has *wisdom*; *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing*, Matth. xxiv. 45, 46. This is not only requisite in *ministers*, their dispensing the bread of life; but also in *people*, that they be *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*; and *we are to understand the times, and what Israel ought to do*: this is the *wisdom that is from above*: and therefore, *if any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, for it must come from the Lord immediately*, James i. 7. *Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things*, 2 Tim. ii. 7. The wise are the faithful.

4. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he be *trusty*.—And this trustiness has a respect to three things, *viz.* both to what is spoken by him, and what is committed to him, and to whom he is concerned with.

[1.] To what is *spoken by him*, or to what he says. The trusty man, is one whose words we may depend upon, and that verifies his words by his deeds; and,

as in religion, the faithful man is he that makes good by his practice, what he says by profession; and, on the contrary, they are unfaithful that are not as good as their word, like these, Titus i. 16. who *profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*— Thus the apostle Paul taxes the Galatians, that they were not *so good as their word*, Gal. iv. 14, 15.

[2.] Trustiness has a respect to what is committed to a man. He is a trusty man that keeps that which is committed unto him, or what he is intrusted with; so, in a spiritual sense, he is a faithful man who keeps what God has intrusted him with.

QUEST. *What is that wherewith believers are intrusted, and wherein they must be faithful?*

There are these four things I name.

(1.) *The truths of God, and the purity of religion;* that is the *common salvation* the apostle Jude speaks of, Jude ver. 3. and that *good thing* the apostle Paul speaks of, 2 Tim. i. 14. *And that good thing which was committed to thee, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.* Ver. 13. *Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus:* this is a trust committed not only to ministers, but to all God's people; Phil. i. 27. *Stand ye fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.* This is what our Lord speaks of to several of the seven churches here, *Hold fast till I come; hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* This is one great thing for which we must be accountable, and wherein we must be faithful.

(2.) To every Christian there is committed a certain *measure of gifts and graces;* to some one talent, to some two, to some five, Matth. xxv. 15. Now, the man that is faithful occupies with them to the utmost; lays not up his talent in a napkin; and, thro' grace, lets not the coal die out; but *stirs up the fire of his gifts and graces*, as Paul exhorts Timothy; by employing all to the glory of God, while he lives in this world.

(3.) To

(3.) To every one is committed a *place* and *employ-ment* in the world, and particular *stations* and *relations* therein. Now, the faithful man is one that employs the power and privilege of his calling for God's honour; and so he is a faithful magistrate, a faithful minister, a faithful head or member of a family, *behaving himself wisely*, and *walking within his house with a perfect heart*, as David, Psalm ci. 2. He is faithful in every relation.

(4.) To every one is committed a *time* and *opportunity*; a particular season, and day that he is called to improve: *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*. And he is a faithful man that *redeems the time*, and *improves the time of his visitation*; that *numbers his days*, and *applies his heart to wisdom*; that in *this their day know the things that belong to their peace*; that *understand the times*, and *what Israel ought to do*; that takes the opportunity of the present time, to witness for the present truth. Many, in our day, are slipping that opportunity; and therefore God is leaving them to be carried down with the stream of the corruptions and defections of the time. Their apostasy is open; and it goes on to such a height as would never have been expected; nay, once a-day they would have thought, *Am I a dog, that I should do such things?* But apostasy wants but a beginning; and it usually begins with unfaithfulness, in neglecting the day, the time, the opportunity of appearing for God and his cause.

[3.] The faithful man is trusty to all whom he is *concerned with*: you see to *what* he is faithful; and now the question is, *To whom he is faithful?* To this the answer is also fourfold: He is faithful to God, to man, to himself, and to all the generations of his concern.

(1.) To God; having his *heart right with God*, in opposition to the way of hypocrites, spoken of, Psalm lxxviii. 56, 57. that *flattered him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue*; for *their heart was not right with him*. Set a wicked man, or hypocrite to prayer, he would ask these things which he would not

thank God to give him; his tongue will say, Give, and his heart will say, No: like Augustine, before his conversion, he confessed he would have prayed when his heart was saying, *Non adhuc, Domine*, "Not yet, Lord." But the faithful soul is one that deals ingenuously with God.

(2.) He is faithful to *man*: not subjecting himself to fleshly interest; not moved from the way of God, by the fears or flatteries of men; not joining with them in a course of sin, wickedness, or defection; not running with them to *the same excess of riot*; not openly joining with them, nor tacitely approving of them; but giving a plain testimony against their sinful ways, according to that law of the Lord, Lev. xix. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; (or, as it is in the margin, that thou bear not sin for him.)*

(3.) He is faithful to *himself*; to his light, to his conscience: herein doth he *exercise himself, to keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men*, Acts xxiv. 16. Endeavouring to have the testimony of conscience spoken of, 2 Cor. i. 12. He is an unfaithful man that crosses the light of his own conscience, as many have done at this day, and God has given them up to side with all the *dreadful defections*, and *awful delusions* of the day, according to that threatening, Psalm lxxxix. 11, 12. *But my people would not hearken unto my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* The faithful man is so faithful to himself; that he searches and tries himself, and loves to be searched and tried by God himself, Psalm xxvi. 2. *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me.—* The man suspects himself, because he knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous of his own heart; and therefore ready, with the first, to cry, *Master, is it I?* He judges himself, condemns himself; and

and though he condemns sin in all men, and is grieved to see sin in others; and is willing to witness against the sins of the time he lives in; yet he is more severe against himself, and his own sin than he is against others and their sins: hence abstinence from sin will not suffice him, without hatred; nor hatred, without mortification.

(4.) He is faithful to all the *generations of his concern*; I mean, to the generations past, present, and to come.—He is faithful to the *past* generations of his *predecessors* and *forefathers*; if they have transmitted to us any good thing, and given us any good examples, conveyed to us any notable treasures, such as the pure doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church; sound Confessions of Faith: the faithful man knows he cannot be faithful to his forefathers, if these be not faithfully kept. If any of you have had parents, now in the dust, who gave you good examples, counsels, and instructions, if you now neglect these, you cannot be faithful to your parents that are gone.—The faithful man studies to be faithful to the *present generation*, and to the *present truth* that is controverted in his day, that he may glorify God in his day; and, by his example, excite others about him, his family, and neighbourhood: such faithfulness we see how it is commended in Abraham, Genesis xviii. 19. *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.*—The faithful man studies thus to be faithful to the *generation to come*, by transmitting to them a faithful testimony for God and his truth. See this exemplified, Psalm lxxviii. 3,—8. A faithful man may thus be a blessing to posterity.

2dly, What is *imported* in being *faithful unto death*. Here is the perseverance in this duty that we are called to: and upon this there are these four things I would observe as imported in it.

1. That it would contribute much to make us faithful and steady in the *Lord's way*, to be in the view of death and mortality: therefore, says the Spirit of God, Deut.

Deut. xxxii. 29. *O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!* What makes many so unfaithful in their life? Even because they are so unthoughtful of their death: they cannot think of exposing themselves to any losses, crosses, or hazards and inconveniences for religion's sake; hoping they will live so long and so long in this world, not considering their latter end, and how near it may be at hand; and consequently what need there is to make a faithful improvement of a short life.

2. That there is no other *term-day* of the faithfulness of God's people, but the day of death; Matth. xxiv. 12. *He that endures to the end shall be saved.* Rev. ii. 25. *Hold fast till I come.* Luke xix. 13. *Occupy till I come;* till I come, by death and release thee. Hence, it is that no victory obtained in our life-time releases us from the task of faithfulness, Eph. vi. 13, 14. *Having done all, stand;* in the margin, *Having overcome all, stand.* Having slain one enemy, you must engage with another; the warfare is not accomplished till the day of death.

3. That death is the *upshot* and *conclusion* of the believer's work and warfare amongst enemies; after death there is no enemy. Hence the time of Christ's coming is called the *time of refreshing*, Acts iii. 19.; a time of cooling: their hot war never cools till then; but then they may look over their shoulders, and laugh at all their enemies; *Sorrow and fighting shall flee away.* Then will the saint lay down his arms and put on his crown; he will lay down his sword, and take up his sceptre, saying, Farewel faith, and welcome vision; farewel hope, and welcome fruition; farewel sorrow and fighting, and welcome joy and singing, &c. Bless God there is a term-day of trouble coming; you are promising yourself an outgate this day and that day; but here is a term-day that will not fail you.

4. It imports, that we should be *constant* and *faithful*, though *death* were laid in the way of our duty and fidelity: and, indeed, a faithful man that knows the work of God's service, and the value of his truth, will

will quit his life before he quit his fidelity; and that for two reasons.

(1.) Because, in the cause of God, and in the course of faithfulness, a man's *losses* turn out *advantages*; and all the advantages that are got by unfaithfulness turn to losses; if *a man would gain his life, he must lose it*, Matth. x. 39. There was never a surer way for a man to gain his life, than to lose it for faithfulness to Christ.

(2.) Because a faithful man finds the Lord's *favour better than life*; for, *In his favour is life*, Psal. xxx. 5. *Thy loving-kindness is better than life*, Psalm lxiii. 3. Put God's favour, with death itself, in the one hand, and God's wrath, with life, in the other, the faithful man will soon know what to chuse, and will say, Lord, there is no choice, there is no comparison. Ye that close with Christ, may see what you are, through grace, to resolve upon, even to be *faithful unto death*; and to lay down all, yea, and life itself, for his service. And death itself should be resolved upon rather than be unfaithful; then how patiently should you bear any thing that he sends less than death? Thus the apostle says, Heb. xii. 4. *You have not yet resisted unto blood*; you might have had greater burdens; therefore bear the less more patiently. Many are peevish and fretful under public and necessary burdens; but, what if Christ came and fought your life? Would you then be *faithful unto death*? If he should seek all your worldly accommodation, your houses, lands, and possessions? Would you then *suffer joyfully the spoiling of your goods*? —So much for a hint about being faithful unto death.

3dly, The next thing to be explained is the *crown of life*. What are we to understand by this? We find eternal life and happiness is elsewhere called a *crown of life*, James i. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*. It is called a *crown*, as it is a gracious reward of the faithful man; in allusion to the custom of the times, when a crown was given to wrestlers and runners, as
a badge

a badge and garland of honour. Here we may notice some things imported in the words, and then some reasons why it is called a crown.

1. There are these two things may be observed as *imported* in the words.

(1.) That they that would be faithful ought to look to *eternity*, and a *crown of glory*. No doubt, the faithful have encouragement even here by the way; but the grand encouragements are a-coming; *For, if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable*, says the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 19. Moses had an eye to *the recompence of reward*; and Paul had a look to the *prize of the high calling of God in Christ*, and all believers have *Christ in them the hope of glory*. Some believers take it ill that they have not so much comfort here as they would wish, when yet the hope of glory is set before them and not made use of.

(2.) That eternal life is a *sufficient up-making* of all the difficulties the faithful can meet with here in the Lord's way; all their sufferings and hardships are well made up with a crown: whatever losses they sustain here, yet, when they land in heaven, they will be no losers; it will be no grief of heart to them then to remember that *they came through great tribulation*, and that they were helped to be *faithful unto death*; while they *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*, they have reason to *glory in tribulation*, Rom. v. 2, 3. But,

2. Why is it called a *crown of life*? To this we reply, in the following particulars.

(1.) It is a *a crown of life* in respect of *faithfulness unto death* they are called to; intimating, the encouragement allowed to them; that, though called to lay down their life, yet they are so far from being losers, that they but change a life of sorrow for a life of joy; and rivers of tears, for *rivers of pleasure for evermore*. Perhaps some faints will scarcely get a sight of heaven while in this world, but rather of hell, and of enemies, and devils, and corruptions; and looking much upon sin, they hardly know till they be within the gates of the New Jerusalem.

(2.) It

(2.) It is called a *crown*, because it is an *honour* put upon the faithful man. The wrestlers and runners of old, as I said, had badges of honour put upon their heads; so the faithful will be *crowned with glory and honour*. *Faith*, however weak will be *found to praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. i. 7. Here they sit many times with the dogs, as it were; content with the crumb: but then they will be set upon the *throne with Christ*, Rev. iii. 31.

(3.) It is a crown in respect of the *plenty of all good* that is to be enjoyed there; *Thou crownest the year with thy goodness*; that is, thou makest it abound with fruitfulness: and this is most agreeable to the heavenly blessings; for, *there is fulness of joy* there, Psalm xvi. 11. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. Plenty, without want; and rest, without weariness, is there: the joy does not enter into them only, as here; but *they enter into the joy of their Lord*; and have communion with God in his joy.

(4.) It is a *crown of life* in respect of *safety*; for, it guards the man from all trouble; Psalm v. 12. *With favour wilt thou compass him*, [Heb. CROWN HIM,] *as with a shield*. God's favour, even in this life, guards the saints from danger? so that the *blast of the terrible one is but as a storm against a stone wall*; but when he gets this crown of life upon his head, there shall not be any enemies left to annoy him; his head will be crowned and lifted above all his enemies.

(5.) In a word, it is called a *crown of life*, for its *preciousness* and *dignity*; *splendour* and *glory*; *duration* and *permanence*. It is a kingdom, a palace, a throne, a sceptre, and an inheritance, *Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, like the earthly crown of mortal kings, princes and potentates.

4thly, The last thing to be explained on this first general head, is the manner of the *conveyance* of it; *I WILL GIVE thee a crown of life*. And here four things may be observed.

1. The *party conveying*, or the *person conferring* this blessedness, in the pronoun *I*; *I will give*. Christ, who is the Purchaser, is also the dispenser and giver of

the crown ; this power he has as Mediator ; *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ;* John xvii. 2.

2. The *party to whom* the conveyance is made, *I will give THEE ; Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give THEE*, namely, the faithful person. And here you are to observe the difference between the promises of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace : in the covenant of works, the promise was not made to the *worker*, but to the *work*, and to the worker *because* of his works ; for works was the condition : but in the covenant of grace, the promise is not made to the *work*, but to the *worker*, and that not *for* his work but because he is *in Christ*, and his work is the evidence thereof ; for example, in that promise, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live ;* here the promise is not made to the work of mortification, but to the mortified person ; and that not because of his mortification, but because he is in Christ ; and his mortification, through the Spirit, is an evidence thereof. Thus, here, the promise of the crown of life is not made to the work of faithfulness, but to the faithful person ; and that not because of his faithfulness, but because he is faithful in Christ ; or, because he is united to Christ : and his faithfulness is an evidence of his union to Christ ; to whom, all the promises are primarily made ; and in *whom they are all Yea and Amen*. Christ's work, his righteousness, being the only condition of the covenant, to which all the promises are made.

3. Hence here you have the *manner* of the conveyance, namely, by free gift ; *I will give thee a crown of life ;* according to Rom. vi. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. And it must needs be by free gift, because there is nothing in the creature that can deserve it. That God, who conveys faith and faithfulness to the soul, might, in justice, at the same instant convey that soul, to hell ; the grace whereby we are faithful is free grace ; and so the gift of the crown must be by free grace also ; *It is God that worketh*

worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The more faithful we are to God through his grace, the more do we run in his debt, who gives grace to be faithful; and how can the new debt, still running up, merit a crown? Therefore it must be freely given. The crown of glory is a crown of mercy; Psal. ciii. 4. *He crowneth us with loving-kindness, and tender mercies. Not unto us, not unto us, or to our faithfulness, but to thy name be glory,* will be the song of the redeemed.

4. Hence observe the sovereign *reason* of the conveyance, namely, his will and pleasure; *I WILL give thee a crown of life.* And, O! how does the Father's will and the Son's harmonize, in giving the crown? *Fear not little flock,* says Christ, *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:* and it is Christ's will expressed to the Father, John xvii. 24. *Father, I WILL that these whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.* By this I am conducted,

II. To the *second* general head proposed, which was, the *confirmation* of the doctrine, *viz.* That to these who are *faithful unto death*, Christ is to give a *crown of life.*

Here I might do these two things, first, show that it is so; and secondly, why it is so.

1st, That it is so, appears from the *words of the text*, to which agree many other promises; Matth. xxiv. 13. *He that endureth to the end, shall be saved.* The *faithful unto death*, are the *overcomers*; and more than conquerors, through Christ; and you will see every epistle to the seven churches of Asia conclude with a promise to such, of a *crown of life*, under various names and denominations; Rev. ii. 7. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, &c.* Verse 17. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and a new name, &c.* Chap. iii. 12. *Him that overcometh I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.* Verse 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, &c.*

2dly, Why will he give the *crown of life*? Why, he will give a crown of life to them, who are faithful unto death. Beside the sovereign reason, I have mentioned, on the following accounts.

1. He will give them a crown of life, because he has *promised* so to do, as here, to all that continue faithful in their day: see also Luke xxii. 28, 29. *Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed unto me.*

2. Because he has *purchased* it to them, as well as the grace of faithfulness, the glory that follows is also purchased; therefore is heaven called the *purchased possession*, Eph. i. 14. The crown of life is the price of blood.

3. They shall have the crown, because they are his *children*; they are *born of God*: and being children, they are *heirs, heirs with God, and joint heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. Among men, the first born only are heirs: but all God's children are heirs of a crown and kingdom.

4. To them, who are faithful unto death, he will give a crown of life, because he is their *God*. This is the great reason why he will give them a crown of eternal life, because he who is *the true God, and eternal life, is their God*, Heb. xi. 16. It is said of the faithful under the Old Testament, *They desired a better country; that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.* Therefore when God is ours, eternal life is ours: he will not be called our God for nothing.

5. To the faithful unto death, he will give a crown of life, because they are the *members of his body*; *Who is the head of the body, the church*: and the head being crowned with glory and honour, so must the members be, so must *his body, the fulness of him, that fills all in all*, Eph. i. 23. They have the honour to make Christ mystical, perfect and complete; and he, as the head, is gone away to heaven, to *prepare a place for them*, John xiv. 2; and sends down his Spirit to pre-
pare

pare them for it. Though now they are despised and rejected; yet, a little while, and they shall shine glorious in Christ's glory; for, *He will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,* 2 Thes. i. 10.

6. To them who are faithful unto death he will give a crown of life, because it is *suitable* that it should be so; not only suitable to the promise and purchase, I have spoken of, and suitable to their relation to him, and his relation to them, but suitable to their *desires*; and he *bears the desire of the humble*. It is suitable to their *labour and pain*; for God hath said, their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. It is suitable to their *hope and expectation*: *The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever*. It is suitable to their *prayers*; they pray for the crown and he is the *bearer of prayer*. It is suitable to their *needs and wants*; they are weary with fighting and they need rest; therefore, *There remains a rest for the people of God*.—So much for the confirmation of the doctrine, by scripture and reason.

III. The *third* general head proposed, was, The *application*. Is it so, That our Lord Jesus Christ will give a crown of life only to those that are faithful unto death.

1. Hence see the reason of all *zealous appearances* of God's children in all ages; and the reason of their *stedfast contendings and earnest essays*, to witness for the honour of God, and his truth; for which essays the world has in every age condemned faithful ministers and people, and shamefully reproached them; why, they know that their Lord was in earnest, calling them to be faithful even unto death; and hence their care was not to please men, but to please him that called them to be faithful; therefore, they undervalued the reproach of men, and *endured as seeing him who is invisible*.

2. See hence, that *few* will get the crown of life, because few are faithful, ~~and these cannot be faithful~~ that are destitute of faith, and strangers to Christ; that are ignorant of him, and disobedient to the call of the gospel; against such, Christ *will be revealed*
from

from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them ; because they know not God, nor obey the gospel. These that are unfaithful can have no ground of hope, for the crown of life. Oh ! the misery of the unfaithful, the unbelieving, and ungodly ! However prosperous they are now, in time, they are doomed with the unfaithful servant, into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, Matthew xxv. 30.

3. Hence see the *happiness of the faithful* ; for, to them shall be given a crown of life. Here it may be enquired, *Who are the faithful ?* To this we reply, All that are in Christ, by the grace of faith ; and that abide in him, by the life of faith : they that *hold the head*, and so *hold fast the truth as it is in Christ Jesus* : they that *believe in him with the heart, and confess him with the mouth* : *These shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony*. Some will think we reckon them all faithful that are on our side, and of our party in the present secession. Indeed, I am far from thinking all of that name will be found faithful ; but they that do not appear for Christ in a day of trial, nor cleave to his persecuted cause, surely they are not faithful in their day. But these that honestly *keep the word of Christ's patience*, however reproached and persecuted ; they are happy, though they be under the cross ; for, they are in the way to the crown.

4. Hence see the necessity of *faithfulness* ; since none shall have the crown of life but the faithful ; the command of Christ makes it necessary in point of duty, *Be thou faithful* ; the promise makes it necessary in point of interest and advantage, *I will give thee the crown of life* : we expect God will be true to his word of promise ; and, in the faith thereof, we ought to be true to our trust.—The Jews speak of two great *deposits*, or sacred trusts, God has committed to the sons of men, namely, the lamp that is within us, the soul ; and the lamp without us, the law ; comprehending the divine mysteries. We are called to *hold fast the truth* ; to *hold fast the form of sound words*, 2 Tim. i. 13. ; the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house ; to be faithful in *defending*
and

and *contending for the faith*, Jude, ver. 3. Ministers and people both are called to this work, especially when these concerns of God's glory are at stake, and endangered by the corruptions and defections of their time. True, a carnal and careless generation of professors reckon such as desire to endeavour to be thus faithful, nothing but *madmen*, as Christ himself was said to be *beside himself*: they are reckoned *men of contention, fire-brands, pests, and troublers of Israel*; men that *turn the world upside down*. But, alas! how are many, who have refused to witness for God, and faithfully to adhere to our reformation-principles, left in the righteous judgment of God, to disclaim all confessions and standards of doctrine, besides the holy scriptures, as human compositions. Some, that were friendly to our covenanted reformation formerly, turning their backs upon it, saying, "They are for no covenants, no confessions, no standards, but the Bible;" like the first Independants in Germany, that were for burning all books but the Bible, and actually gathered all they could get, and set them in a flame, pretending to make that the only rule, and then interpreting the scriptures as they pleased. Even so, the independent spirit of the age are for discarding all confessions*: but who are so ignorant as not to know, that all who bear the name of Christians will subscribe to the words of the scriptures; Papists, Socinians, Arminians, Arians, Deists, will do so; each of them, in the mean while taking the words, and so juggling with God and the world, in a sense agreeable to their own sentiments, though contrary to the common sense and understanding of men; contrary to the phraseology of scripture,

* Independent principles were making considerable progress at this time. This spirit of independency had been first attempted and introduced by Mr. John Glass, minister at Tealing, and Mr. Francis Archibald, minister at Guthrie, about the year 1728. They found fault with our Confession of Faith and Formula; impugned the obligation of our Covenants; affirmed there was no warrant for national Churches; maintained they had a right to ordain their own pastors, &c. For their adherence to these, and the like tenets, they were both suspended, and afterwards deposed. Notwithstanding, their opinions were secretly favoured by several ministers, and openly espoused by numbers of people; and to this day they still subsist.

and the analogy of faith? Thus Hymeneus and Philetus would have subscribed the scripture words, concerning the resurrection, meaning, at the same time, that it was past already. How much does all this show the necessity of faithfulness!

5. Hence see, the necessity of *perseverance*, or of being *faithful unto death*. It is not enough to begin well, and hold out a little: the crown of life is promised to them that are *faithful to the death*; they that *endure to the end, shall be saved*. The command is peremptory, *Hold fast till I come*. We need therefore not only grace to be faithful, but grace to abide so, and to *stand fast in the faith, looking to ourselves, that we lose not these things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*, 2 John, ver. 8. Hence,

6. See the *evil and danger of apostasy*, and of *unfaithfulness*; *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*, Heb. x. 38. Alas! how little pleasure has God in the present generation, that have drawn so far back from him, and from their solemn vows and covenants, wherein they swore allegiance to him? How has he, *in his hot displeasure*, hardened them, and given them up to be deluded? How is Scotland like to be a company of desperate atheists, *forgetting God*, and *calling the proud happy*? Most people think that these are the wisest folks that comply best with the corruptions of the day, and follow the present times. How is God sweeping this generation as with a besom! I remember a word Mr. John Welwood had in one of his sermons, "God, says he, will have Scotland swept; and will have it turned upside down, ere it be a dish for his service." He will have a generation of professors, who have not been ingenuous and even down for him, hurled out of the way, as well as a malignant party. How is the Lord, I say, sifting the present generation, as in a sieve, and discovering the naughtiness of many, who were once eminent professors, who now want, in these trying times, only to sleep in a sound skin, but are not for *taking the kingdom of heaven by violence*, nor for fighting their way to it, but dreaming of ease and out-

outward liberty, as if they were to live here eternally, never minding death? But we will not be long here: let us be faithful for God unto death.

7. Hence see how *reproveable* these are, and how *dreadful their case is*, who, instead of being faithful themselves, are *enemies* and *persecutors* of these who are studying to be faithful, and direct opposers of them: and instead of siding with the faithful in times of defection, *stand in the opposite side*, as it is said, Obad. ver 10,—13. Where Edom is charged with the sin of *standing on the other side, looking on his brother, and laying hands upon his substance*. Many a heavy charge will God have against many in this generation, for their violent opposition to, and persecuting the cause of truth, when a testimony was lifted up for it. God will have *some reprobation against them*; he will say to some, “You have sided with the corruptions of the times; when the question was, *Who is on the Lord’s side?* You stood upon the other side.” To others he will say, “You did not *redeem the time*, nor take the opportunity that was put in your hands to witness for me.” To others he will say, “You persecuted my servants, and thrust them from their kirks, and houses, and livelihoods, and thought you did God service.” To others he will say, “You made apostacy from your sacred covenants, and solemn engagements, to be for me and my truth. You said and made a confederacy with the enemy, and was yourself an enemy to my cause; and a plain testimony for it was tormenting to you.” To others he will say, “You pretended that you were enemies only to the wrong way and manner of testifying for my cause and interest; but I saw the enmity that you bare to the very cause itself.” To others he will say, “You *turned my Father’s house to a den of thieves and robbers*, and you were partakers with them; you were recettors and receivers of these thieves and robbers, *who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*” To others he will say, “You came to sacramental occasions, and communion sermons, just to catch and mock, jeer and sneer; but

“ *behold ye despisers, wonder and perish. I will laugh at your calamities, and mock when your fear cometh.*—
 “ Many a heavy charge will he bring forth against an unfaithful generation.

8. Hence see the *duty of all*, who would be honoured with a crown of life, namely, to be *faithful unto death*. Let me exhort you then, 1. To be *faithful*. 2. To be *faithful unto death*.

[1.] To be *faithful*. And there are these following inducements to it I would offer you.

(1.) Faithfulness is what all the children of God may, through grace, *attain* in whatever station; though you cannot be *perfect* here, yet you may be *faithful* and *upright*: though you be not so far dignified as others, in gifts and graces, and have not *five talents*; yet you may, through grace, be faithful in improving the *two* you have: and so the woman said, “ Though I cannot dispute for Christ, yet I can burn for him.” So, though you cannot do much for Christ, yet you may be accounted faithful, who are ready to suffer for him. Tho’ you cannot act for him in such a public manner, in such a public station as others, yet you may be faithful in private; yea, and be in a secret chamber, when it is not to exclude your confessing Christ before the world, as you have opportunity. We cannot expect a perfect church on earth, but we should seek to be members of a pure and faithful church, aiming at perfection, and owning her imperfections; and faithfully acknowledging all things that are wrong; but, I think, you will own we should beware of that church that is so unfaithful, as neither to confess nor forsake. However, here, I say, it is a great encouragement to faithfulness, that, through grace, you may be faithful in whatever station, even the lowest; and be as far forward, in fidelity, as the greatest,

(2.) A second encouragement is, that a man may be faithful unto God, though he be not *successful*. It will not be enquired of a minister in his labour, or a Christian in his endeavours, what success he has had; but what fidelity he has used; therefore Christ says
 not

not, *Well done*, successful servant; but, *good and faithful servant*. You may take an instance of this both in the public, and in your bosom. In the public; it is said, Isa. xlix. 4. *I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought; yet, surely, my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.* Again, in your bosom, it will not be enquired, what success you have had, and what speed you have come in your conflict against sin and Satan; but, art thou aiming at faithfulness in the holy war? Psal. xviii. 21. *I have kept the ways of the Lord.* Well, how proves he that? Indeed, he durst not say, *I have not departed from my God*; but he could venture to say, *I have not WICKEDLY departed from my God.*

(3.) The next encouragement is, Faithfulness is the way to *increase*: the talent that is occupied shall grow. Many do not grow in grace, because they do not improve it; *Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning: and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth,* Hos. vi. 3.

(4.) A fourth encouragement is, the greatest *honour* can be put upon you, and the greatest *mercy* you can find, to get leave to be faithful; it is said of Paul, he *obtained mercy to be faithful,* 1 Cor. vii. 25. If you considered that to be faithful is a privilege and a *great mercy*, you would go chearfully to work: but when you believe the command to be faithful in this or that duty, as upon Pharaoh's task-masters, saying, with heaviness, *It must be done*; and not with chearfulness, *It shall be done*, through grace; why, then your service is but legal, not evangelical; forced and not free, as if you were *under the law, and not under grace.* But if you looked upon faithfulness as a mercy, a privilege, and honour, as David did, when he got leave to offer to the house of the Lord, then you would say with him, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. *Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things are of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.*

(5.) A fifth encouragement we offer is, That though

you should have few neighbours in this unfaithful generation, yet the fewer they are, that are faithful in their day, the more *honourable mention* will be made of them; *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy,* Rev. iii. 4. And tho' the whole generation about them should ruin themselves with their infidelity and apostacy, yet God will take care of them and theirs, that study faithfulness, and endeavour to put honour upon God in their day; *The Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all the house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,* Gen. vii. 1.

(6.) The next encouragement we present you with is this, You that aim at fidelity, though you should have never so many unfaithful neighbours about you, yet you have a *faithful God* to deal with. What encouragement is it to be a faithful servant, that you have a faithful Master? 1 Cor. i. 9. *God is faithful, by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.* And chap. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, &c.* 1 Thess. v. 24. *Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it.* And 2 Thess. iii. 3. where the apostle speaking of the need of being *delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all men have not faith,* it follows, *but the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, [namely, over the head of the sacrifice, the blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin,] God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* as oft as the faithfulness of God is spoken of in scripture, so oft you are invited to take encouragement from it. You may say, "Lord, thou hast called me to such a work and warfare;" and the Lord will say, *I am faithful that hath called you, and also will do it.* Likewise his word is a faithful word, a faithful saying; and Christ is a *merciful and faithful High-priest, the true and faithful witness,* Rev. xix. 11. His name in capital letters, is called, FAITHFUL and TRUE. You need not fear to venture on difficulties in his service; for he that has

has called you is *faithful and true*. I would next exhort you,

[2.] To be faithful *unto death*; that is to perseverance and constancy: for which end I offer you the following directions.

(1.) Look not only to your *work*, but to your *encouragement*; yea, look first to your encouragement and privilege, and next to your work; for you are not now called to *do, and live*; but to *live, and do*. Look to the life, strength, and righteousness, fulness and furniture you have in Christ; and then up and be doing, with the psalmist, *I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only*, Psal. lxxi. 16. If you look only to the burdensome work, the hard task, it will break your back, and break your heart, and damp your courage before ever you begin. Therefore,

(2) If you would be faithful unto death, *quit your own strength*, and even all the strength of grace received formerly, or presently, and *be not strong* in that, but *in the grace that is in Christ*, 1 Tim. ii. 1.; in the grace that is in the fountain, running out to you in the promises. The children of God never lost their feet, when they thought themselves in hazard, and were diffident of themselves; but when God was good to them, and they thought their *mountain stood strong*, this brought in a slip and a fall. If thou goest through the wilderness, it must be leaning upon thy Beloved.

(3.) If you would be faithful unto death and to the end, take notice, with thankfulness, of the *steps* God has led you through the wilderness already, saying, as it is, 1 Sam. vii. 12. *Hitherto has the Lord helped us*; and hitherto has the Lord helped me. Some of you have already met with many crosses, and God has carried you through; and yet when you look to the cross before your hand, the fear of that makes you forget what he has done: but, O! bless him for what he has done already, in that so many crosses are fairly over your head; and *now is your salvation nearer than when you first believed*. Therefore, hope in him, that he who *has delivered, and does deliver, will yet deliver*, and help you.

(4.) Main-

(4.) Maintain the relish of the *sweetness of your course* in the good way of the Lord, *if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, 1 Pet. ii. 3. Some, indeed, may be carried on to perseverance, through much bitterness, because of divine desertion; but you would labour to *taste and see that God is good*; and how, at times, he is even drawing you with the bands of love, when you are seeking him. Have you not found sometimes a *smell of his ointment on the lock of the door*, sweetly drawing you after him?

(5.) Would you be constant to death? Then consider the *loss and disadvantage of inconstancy*; if you persevere not, you are in greater danger than before; *It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment*, 2 Peter ii. 21. *Where is the blessedness you speak of?* Gal. iv. 15. *Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?* Gal. iii. 3. Had you a sense of God's favour when you kept his way? And will you now throw it away in an hour of temptation?

(6.) Would you be faithful to death? Then lay hold upon, and plead the *promise of perseverance*; Jer. xxxii. 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me*: in the strength of that promise go on, go on; and remember it is but a little farther you have to continue going on. It is but a short while you have to be faithful: it is but *unto death*; and that is but for a day; because, for any thing you know, to-morrow may end your course; in regard, *you know not what a day may bring forth*.

(7.) But last of all, consider the crowning encouragement in the text, *I will give thee a crown of life*: though you should be now losers, yet you shall be gainers hereafter; though now you are in a way of suffering, yet you are in the way to glory: if you be truly faithful, and faithful unto death, you are going, as Christ did, by the way of the cross to the crown. See Luke xxiv. 26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory?* And ought you not to follow his steps? If so; you are sure of the crown.

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And, what sort of a crown is it? It is a *crown of life*; a *crown of righteousness*; a *crown of glory*, that *fadeth not away*, 1 Peter v. 4.: it cannot be taken away either by deceit or violence. It is a crown incorruptible, that will never either wear or decay. And it will be but a little while and you will be possessed of it; *Let a little while, and he that shall come, will come*: a little while will ease you of all your burdens, and bring you to glory. Your afflictions are but light and inconsiderable, in comparison of this heavy crown; *the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory*. Therefore, as you would desire to be crowned after death, endeavour to be faithful unto death. Think what a folly it is to begin and enter upon the way of the Lord, and then to go back; *Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*, Luke ix. 62. And is there not the same reason for continuing with Christ, and cleaving to his truth and cause, as there was for joining with Christ at first? Is there not as much beauty in Christ now as before? Is not his name and truth as precious still as ever it was? Is not *Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*? Are not his promises the same as they were? And is there not as much furniture and fulness in Christ as ever there were? Is he changed from what he was, because you see many of this generation changed from what they were? O Sirs, turn not your backs upon him: you that are his disciples, tell me, *Will you also go away with the multitude, that are turning off from their most solemn engagements to him? Will you halt, for fear you have not ability to go on? Is there not as much grace and strength in Christ, to bring you on with him, as ever there was to bring you in to him? O then, hear him saying, Come with me from Lebanon.*

Consider, likewise, if you be not faithful unto death you *lose all that you have done*; you lose the fruit of your profession; you lose all your pains, and prayers, and fightings formerly: you give the greatest wound to religion; you bring up an ill report upon the Lord's way; and, by your apostasy, you wound and weaken the

the hearts of the faithful, and you harden the hearts of the wicked and graceless generation, and strengthen their hands: yea, if you wickedly depart from the ways of the Lord, under whatever pretence, you shew yourself unfaithful, and declare you was never truly of the number of the faithful: for, you *go out from them, because you were never of them*, 1 John ii. 19. And you fall under the weight of God's eternal displeasure; Heb. x. 24. *Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* The weight of God's hand is heavy upon his own people, on account of their partial departure from him, Psalm lxxxix. 30,—32. O then, how dreadfully heavy shall the weight of God's wrath be for ever to wicked apostates! They that depart now from the truth of God, the God of truth will charge them to depart from him at the great day, and doom them to eternal misery!

Now is the time you are called to appear for God faithfully, in a day wherein truth and the friends thereof, are persecuted and opposed, reproached and reviled; in such a dark day you had much need to shine as lights. See the practice of David, Psal. cxix. 137. *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.* In a declining time, when many are turning from the truth, and drinking in error and delusion, shewing hatred and spite against any zealous appearance, or faithful testimony for the truth: tormented with it, and embittered and enraged against it; then especially it is God that charges us from heaven not to decline; Deut. xxviii. 14. *Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right-hand, or to the left, to go after other gods.* Though you should be broken *in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, yet must we not forget the name of our God, nor stretch out our hands unto a strange god; for, shall not God search this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart?* Psalm xlv. 19, 20, 21. And though, *for his sake, we should be killed all day, and counted as sheep for the slaughter; yet then we ought especially not to decline, if we would have the testi-*

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mony of God and conscience, though the world calls us fools. See the testimony God gives to Pergamus, Rev. ii. 13. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* To be faithful in cleaving to the Lord in such a wicked place, and under such discouragements, has a mark of honour upon it. Mens oppression and opposition, and hell and earth's raging against the work of the Lord, will be no excuse, at the great day, for any man to decline from the testimony of God. Alas! many carry now-a-days, as if they thought a little worldly conveniency, a well paid stipend, or an estate, was better than the prospect of a crown of life, at the end of the day: but, alas! what is outward ease and liberty, with a racking conscience? It is true, many blindfold their conscience, by thinking they can keep in with God and the world both; with the God of heaven, and the god of this world both: which is as possible, as to join measures with an apostate church, and yet keep a good conscience, and think they do God service.—Hence some rack their inventions how to find out faults and blemishes in a faithful testimony at the present time; and how to find out excuses and apologies for an apostate persecuting church, and for holding close communion with them; but, *Shall not God search this out; for he understands heart secrets?* It is not enough we be reckoned faithful some time of our lives; but, happy they, that are faithful unto death!

I shall now close, and shut up what I have said with a few *advices*. There are first some things we should beware of; and next some things that we should be careful of, if we would be faithful unto death.

1st, There are some things that we should be aware of, if we would be faithful unto death.

1. We should beware of the *world*, and the *love of the world*; for, *they that will be rich, by whatever means, they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into*

many foolish and hurtful lusts, 2 Tim. ii. 4. The love of the world is the spring of much defection, *which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith*, 1 Tim. iv. 9 *All these things will I give thee*, was Satan's utmost offer to our Lord Jesus; but, as he has disputed it, with a *get thee behind me Satan*, so will all his faithful followers, when it comes in competition with Christ, and his cause. They are not the fools to throw away the world at random; but they would be great fools if they preferred it to that which is of more worth than a thousand worlds: and, so is every grain weight of precious truth, relating either to the doctrine, worship, discipline, or government of God's house.—It was an honourable reproach one of the great men of the church of Rome passed upon Luther, “That German beast, says he, cares not for gold.”

2. Beware of making nothing of *Christ's little things*; for, his small things are great things; and the neglecting of them is a matter of great moment, Matt. v. 19. *He that breaks one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*—On the other hand, beware of thinking nothing of the *world's little things*; I mean, of thinking little of some sins. The greatest sins and apostasies have been little beginnings: and the devil and the world say, why, “Here is but a little and a light thing; you need not fear.” But these little beginnings may be like the needle, which, though it makes but a small hole, brings a long thread after it.

3. Beware of *carnal company*; for, *the companions of fools shall be destroyed*. The company of some carnal and unfaithful professors will soon tend to cool your zeal for God; and especially the company of those who have been of reputation for piety, and now are noted for apostasy. Their example and influence may do more harm than an hundred others that are openly graceless; because, harm by these that are of most reputation, for religion, is not so much seen or suspected; but they are more dangerous; just like rocks in the sea, that are only covered with water, on which vessels

vessels may be broken to pieces, before ever they be aware of them.

4. Beware of all the *good new ways*, which tend to lead you out of the *good old way*, which you *ought to seek after*, Jer. vi. 16. By the *good new ways*, I mean, these that are extolled for goodness, and yet are delusive and destructive, while Satan therein is transforming himself to an angel of light; and, under a mask of more than ordinary religion, and the appearance of a good new work of conversion, seeking to raze and undermine the good old work of reformation, and to knock down all essays to witness for it: but it will be found there is *no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel* §.

In a word, beware, and take heed, brethren, *Let there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12. This is the root of all apostasy and unfaithfulness. O be afraid, lest, by any means, *as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Cor. xi. 3. Again,

2dly, In order to be faithful unto death, there are these things you should be *careful* of.

1. Study to receive the *love and power of the truth*, to which you are called to cleave faithfully unto death; for want of this, many otherwise more learned and eminent than you, are given up to *strong delusions, to believe a lie*, 2 Thess. x. 11. O study to learn the truth as it is in Jesus; and not only to have a head-knowledge of it, but a heart-love to it.—Some that have seemed pillars in the church, have not only fallen in days of trial, but led others away in apostasy, by which the faith of some have been overthrown, and the faith of others much shaken; while yet saints, of the lowest station, have been faithful witnesses and martyrs for the truth, while they had, in their hearts, what others have only had in their heads.

2. Study to cleave to the *truths of God* that are *most attacked* and assaulted by the enemies in your time, and

§ The affair here alluded to by our Author, was formerly laid open. Vol. VII. Serms. CXXIII, CXXIV, CXXV.

to be established in the present truth, 2 Peter i. 12 — Otherwise, you cannot contend for the faith in your day, if you stand not up for the truth that is opposed in your time.

3. Study, in order to be faithful unto death, to hold *the mystery of faith in a pure conscience*, 1 Tim. i. 19. *which some, having put away, concerning the faith, have made shipwreck*; for, if a man make a gap in his conscience, by sinning against light, and act unfaithfully, especially in public matters, that relate to the declarative glory of God, if it be not speedily healed by the application of Christ's blood, it is hard to tell where it may land. The gap that is once opened that way, may let in a devil of apostasy from the faith; and then a devil of enmity against the faithful; and then a devil of open persecution of them: and, alas! it is too evident, that such devils have entered and taken possession of many of this generation.

4. To name no more particulars, study to have from the Author and Finisher of faith *a fulness of faith*; for, I think, faithfulness just imports a fulness of faith: the more faith the more faithfulness. Endeavour to be much in the prayer of faith, for the Spirit of faith and the life of faith; you cannot be faithful unto death, unless you live and die in the faith; and to live a life of faith is to live a life of diffidence in yourself, and of humble confidence in the Lord, *trusting in him at all times, and pouring out your heart before him*, believing the promises and resting upon a promising God for furniture to qualify and enable you to be faithful unto death. Your promising God is a giving God in Christ; and what does he give? *He gives grace and glory*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. What is that? He gives grace to be faithful; and then he gives the crown of life. In this covenant of grace both the work and the reward is freely given, upon the price of Christ's blood, fully paid down upon the cross; and, upon this ground, grace to be faithful is as freely given now, as the crown of life is freely given hereafter.—Therefore, live by faith; and depend upon a promising and giving God
both

both for grace to be faithful unto death, and for the crown of life at the close of the day.

I might speak a word now to you that are in a *state of sin and unbelief*. You that are in a state of nature and unbelief, and consequently of unfaithfulness: know, if you remain in that state, what is awaiting you; not a crown of life, but the wadges of your sin, which is eternal death: you must die in your sins, and die under God's everlasting wrath. You remain unfaithful in your duty, unfaithful in your day; and, if you be unfaithful unto death, he will give you a cup of wrath: *the unfaithful servant is to be cast out into the lake of fire, the place of utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* But if you would yet be among the faithful in Christ, then you must get in to Christ: therefore, in order to your being capable of faithfulness, let me exhort you to faith, or believing; for, this is the way also, and the first step to the crown of life: *He that believeth hath everlasting life.* O then, Sirs, come to our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and hear his voice to you, saying, *Come unto me*, Matth. xi. 28; *Look unto me*, Isa. xlv. 22.

QUEST. *Who is he that is saying, Come to me; and look to me?*

ANSW. Even he that gives you so many of his names and designations in these epistles to the seven churches of Asia.—It is he *that holds the seven stars in his right-hand*, Rev. ii. 1.; and is the minister above all ministers: we cannot say, *Come to us*, but to our Master, who says, *Come to me*.—It is he that is the *first and the last*, ver. 8. that *was dead and is alive*; even he that is *Alpha and Omega*.—It is *he that has the sharp sword with two edges*, whose word is like a sharp two edged sword; that hath both a cutting and a quickening edge, to be a favour of life or death; it is he that says, *Come to me*.—It is *he that has eyes like a flame of fire, and has feet like fine brass*; pointing out the omniscience of his eyes, and stability of his ways and counsels: it is he that says, *Come to me*.—It is *he that has the seven*

ven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ; that has all the gifts and graces of the Spirit to give out as he pleaseth.—It is he that is holy and true ; he that hath the key of David, that openeth and none shutteth, and shutteth and none can open : that has the opening of the gates both of hell and heaven ; that is able both to damn and to save : it is he that says, Come to me.—It is he that is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, the author both of the old and new creation ; he that can create faith, and turn grace, in his word, to grace in your heart.—He it is that is saying, Come to me, look to me : Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters ; come to me, without money, and without price.

Why, say you, “ I am not faithful ; I am not yet “ qualified with faith and faithfulness ; therefore I “ should not come yet, till I be better qualified.” Why, man, do you think to have faith or faithfulness either before you come to Christ for them : he is the author of both : and because you have nothing, you are invited to come to Christ for all that you want. If you stay away from the market of free grace, till the day you have a price in your hand, or till the day that you have faith and faithfulness to bring with you, you will come too late ; you will come the day after the market, and the door will be shut upon you. Therefore, Come, poor soul ; come just now, as you are ; for, *Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation.* Now, now, he is saying, *Come to me, look to me, believe on me :* though you have been never such a desperate sinner heretofore, and though you be this moment a dead sinner, with a heart as dead as a stone within you ; yet, *Hear, and your soul shall live :* hear who is speaking to you, and saying, *Come to me ; I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* O look to the God of all power and grace that he may put power in his word ; he that says, *Be thou faithful,* is the God that said, in the first creation, *Be thou fruitful and multiply ;* and as he said, he hath made it come to pass to this day : so he here says, as the author of the new creation, *Be thou faith-*

faithful. O say you, "AMEN, *be it so, Lord:* " turn the grace that is in thy word, to the grace in " my heart and life." And for this end, O dear soul, hear and consider who it is that is speaking to you from heaven, and calling you first to faith, and then to faithfulness; even he that hath both to give, and that is more willing to be a giver than you are to be a receiver: put not the gift and the giver both from you, saying, It is not to me he is speaking; yea, it is to you, man; you, woman; it is to thee in particular; to young and old. Well, what is he saying? Why, would you know what I would have you to do? *This is the work of God that ye believe;* therefore, *Come to me; come to me* to do all for you: and would you know what I would have you to be? *Be thou faithful, even thou, and thou, and thou; Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*—May the Lord enable you to answer his call: this is his will; therefore, say thou, *Thy will be done.*

S E R M O N CXXVII.

THE BUILDER'S ARMOUR; or, the WORK
and WARFARE of SPIRITUAL BUILDERS*.

NEH. iv. 18.

For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.

THESSE that have been solemnly giving up themselves to God in Christ, as his friends and followers, have a twofold work lying upon their hand, which they ought to be daily employed in, through the grace and strength of the Lord Jesus Christ; one is a *building*, which they are concerned to have carried on, Jude, ver. 20. *Building up themselves in their most holy faith*; another is, a *battle*, which they are concerned to fight under the banner of the Captain of salvation; *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, wherunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*, 1 Tim. vi 12. Somewhat relating both to this building and this battle is represented here to us.

In the words which I have just now read, we have an account, how the Jews in Nehemiah's time carried on the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, that were gone to ruin, as you see, chap. i. 3. *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province, are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates there-*

† This sermon was preached at Stirling on Monday, June 31. 1743. after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there. It hath undergone four impressions.

of are burnt with fire. And chap. ii. 17, 18. *Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire; come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God, which was upon me, as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me; and they said, Let us rise up and build; so they strengthened their hands for this good work. Their work behoved to be carried on with a warfare against surrounding enemies: see chap. ii. 10. When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. And chap. iv. 1, 2, 3. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews: and he spake before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Now, Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall. Verses 6, 7, 8. So we built the wall, and all the wall was joined together, unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together, to come and fight against it and hinder it. And ver. 11, 13. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. They were obliged to be ready for the building and the battle both at once; see verse 17.—Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a*

weapon : For, says the text, the builders, every one had his sword girded upon side, and so builded.

Now, the manner wherein they carried on that work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, in the literal sense, when they were ruinous, was typical of the way and manner wherein the spiritual building is to be carried on, whether it relate to the work of grace in the hearts of particular believers, or the work of reformation in the church. There is no repairing of that work, when ruinous, without opposition from enemies without and within, filled with the fury of earth and hell against the work ; therefore, builders must be ready for fighting. every builder must have his sword girded by his side, and so build. The observation I deduce from the text is the following.

DOCT. *That spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers.*

As we have the spiritual banquet and the spiritual battle joined together, Song ii. 4. *He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love ; his banner for war :* So here, we have the building and the battle put together ; the trowel in the one hand, as it were, and the sword in the other. God's people are called both to work and war at once. It is true, God is the *worker of all their work in and for them :* and as for the war, *the battle is the Lord's :* but, as this is the greatest encouragement to *work out the work of our salvation with fear and trembling ;* because it is *God that worketh in us both to will and to do :* so it is the greatest encouragement imaginable to *building work,* that Christ is the Master-builder, who alone *builds the temple, and shall bear the glory ;* so also to *warfare,* that he is the *Captain of salvation,* that fights for us, in whom we are to be strong.—Therefore it is in the name and strength of this great Builder and glorious Captain, that spiritual builders must be spiritual soldiers.

The method we propose, for handling this subject, is the following.

- I. We would speak a little of the *spiritual builders*.
- II. Concerning the *spiritual soldiers*.
- III. Offer some *reasons* why *spiritual builders* need also to be *spiritual soldiers*, still ready for war.
- IV. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application*.

I. We would speak a little concerning the *spiritual builders*. And here I would offer the following account of them.

1. Every spiritual builder is one that is acquainted with the *great Master-builder*, and has come to learn the trade with him; he has, in a manner, bound himself apprentice to learn this art of *building up himself in his most holy faith*, even from him, who is the chief Builder, that is, God; *For every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God*, Heb. iii. 4.: and all that are taught this art are taught of God; *It is written in the prophets, they shall be all taught of God*, John vi. 45. The spiritual builder then is one that has *heard and learned of the Father*. They are such as have either served, or are still serving their apprenticeship to this great Master of the work, and seeking to be more and more taught of him.

2. The spiritual builder is somewhat acquainted with the *preparation of fit and proper materials* for the building, such as are spoken of, 1 Cor. iii. 12.: not *wood, hay, and stubble*, and trash; but *gold, silver, and precious stones*; such as the golden graces of the Spirit, the silver promises of the covenant, and the precious stones, the precious blessings of the everlasting gospel. There is no building without materials of that sort: and the builders with these materials are not only ministers, who are superior in office, and yet under-builders, when compared with the great Master-builder, CHRIST; but private Christians are inferior builders: for, *every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*; what sort of materials he builds withal.

3. The spiritual builder is himself a *part* of the building; *We are labourers together with God*, says the apo-

file; ye are God's building, 1 Cor. iii. 9. *To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. called an habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22.*

4. The spiritual builder is concerned to have the *rubbish removed*, the old building overturned in order to the new work he has on hand, Isa. xl. 3, 4. Such preparation we read of, chap. lxii. 10. *Go through, go through the gates, prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the high-way, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.* Men must be unbottomed from the covenant of works, and all hope of life by the law, in order to their new building upon the new-covenant ground. Hence,

5. The spiritual builder is concerned to *dig deep*, that he and his building may stand the firmer; to dig deep by conviction and humiliation into his sinful and miserable state, deep into his wants and plagues, and into a sense of the wrath of God, ready to pursue him for his sin; otherwise he has no due sense of his need of Christ, and salvation through him; therefore the builder seeks and earnestly intreats the Spirit to come by his *convincing work*, John xvi. 8.; and make him dig deep into the heart, that is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. The building is heart-work; the heart-evils must be discovered, and the builder must be concerned to dig deep, that he may build high; I mean, to be deeply *humbled under the mighty hand of God*, that *he may be exalted in due time*. The lower the foundation, the stronger will be the superstructure. Hence,

6. The spiritual builder is one that is in a spiritual manner concerned about and occupied in laying a *good foundation*, and having himself built upon it. The only foundation is Christ; for, *another foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iii. 11. Christ is the foundation that God has already laid; *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure*

a sure foundation ; he that believeth shall not make haste, Isa. xxviii. 16. compared with Rom. ix. 33. and x. 11. and 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. Therefore the builder's work or business is not to do any thing that was never done, or to lay a foundation that was never before laid, but to believe and assent to what God has done, and appropriate that foundation to himself that God has laid for him, who has *laid our help upon one that is mighty.* He is occupied in laying his help, where God has laid it ; he builds upon no other foundation but Christ, as he is *the way, the truth, and the life :* and so he is the foundation in all respects ; personally, as the way ; doctrinally, as the truth ; and efficaciously, as he is the life : he is the foundation in his person, as the way ; in his doctrine, as the truth ; and in his Spirit as the life.

Q U E S T. *What is to be done in laying the foundation ?*

A N S W. Nay, rather you may ask, What is to be undone ? what is a man to do for Christ ? Indeed, to be undone is the thing to be done ; for this is a self-outing, self-emptying work. He that lays a foundation needs not raise a scaffold for working ; nay, as I said, he digs down, for the foundation is not laid upon any part of the building ; and all must be levelled to the ground before a new foundation is laid : even so, he that lays Christ to the foundation of all his faith, hope, and comfort, needs not, yea, must not, build a scaffold of his own works and righteousness. The foundation is not laid upon any part of the building ; on the contrary all must be pulled down ; yea, all must be counted loss and dung for Christ ; *What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ ; yea, and I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,* Phil. iii. 7, 8.

7. The spiritual builder is one who, having thus laid the good foundation, and himself upon it, studies to make *daily progress* upon that foundation, by adding one stone to another, one grace to another, 2 Peter 1. 5, 6, 7. ; and joining them all close to and upon the foundation, and close to one another ; cementing them

all together as with mortar, and gradually advancing and growing in grace, and the knowledge of Christ. See to this purpose, Eph. ii. 20. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*—And verse 21. *In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.*—And Col. ii. 7. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him ; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught.* See Jude, ver. 20. This progressive work includes a cleaving more close to the foundation, and living by faith upon Christ, and so going from strength to strength, from faith to faith.—It includes a closer union and a closer association of the members of Christ, as lively stones joined together in Christ, and in the truth, all holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God, Colos. ii. 19. To unite in a way, not holding the head, is to carry on a vain building in the air, separate from the foundation ; an imaginary work.

8. The spiritual builder carries on his work according to the *right rule* ; he has his line and plummet, and acts according to the strictest regularity, and by the most exact square. What is the rule? Even the word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the only rule ; *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,* Isa. viii. 20. *They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them,* Luke xvi. 29. *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God,* Gal. vi. 16. There are some builders at this day, who make other things their rule : some make *ministers* their rule ; right or wrong they will follow them, saying, God forgive our teachers, if they mislead us ; we know no better. But, as the holy man *Rutherford* says, “ If our light, (speaking of “ ministers in his day) if the minister’s light be all your “ scripture, the Lord pity you ; I would not give a “ farthing for your faith ; for our light, says he, fits
“ many

“ many times door-neighbour with the fat world ; and “ the world poisons light.”—Some make the *Spirit* their rule ; particularly such as fall into the quakerish enthusiastical way. It is a delusive work, wherein the Spirit, who is the *ruler*, is put in place of the word of God, which is the *rule* : Hence some make motions, feelings, impressions, influences, the rule of judging that the work with them is a right work, and the rule of judging that the witnessing work of the day, among our hands, is a wrong work, which is at best a setting the Spirit of God against the word of God. No wonder than a delusive influence may be thus abused ; for men may be under a divine influence, and yet under a delusion, when they make that influence their rule. Job's friends were under a divine influence in what they spoke ; but they made that their rule of judging that Job was an hypocrite, and so were under a delusion, which God afterwards discovered.—Some, again, make the *word* their rule, and a good, sufficient, excellent rule, but not the *only* rule ; thus they speak and write who favour of a deistical spirit, making the light of nature and reason a rule, as well as the light of the word. But the true spiritual builder makes the word his only rule. But I proceed to,

II. The second thing proposed, *viz.* To give some account of the *spiritual soldier*. It is said, *every builder had his sword girded by his side* : every builder here was a soldier ; and to be a soldier, in a spiritual sense.

1. Supposes the person has *intisted* with the Captain of salvation, Christ Jesus, and is acquainted with him. You are not soldiers, nor can you possibly be reckoned such, who have not taken on, or come to Christ, both as the Master-builder, to build with you, and for you, and as *the Lord, mighty in battle*, to fight for you.

2. The spiritual builder is one who is brought to the *field of battle*, which is just the field where they build : the place of building is the place of battle. The soldier no sooner begins to build, but he must begin to *fight the good fight of faith*.

3. The spiritual builder is one who has *put on the whole*

60 *The BUILDER'S ARMOUR ; or, SER. CXXVII.*
whole armour of God, spoken of, Eph. vi. 11,—18. ; that is, the various graces of the Spirit, that are so many weapons of war against *the devil, the world, and the flesh*. But,

4. The spiritual warrior is one who dares not trust to the *received grace of God*, but to the *God of grace* : he does not depend upon the armour of God, but upon the God of armour ; being *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*.

But I shall speak a little of the spiritual warrior as here represented and exemplified in the text : where you may observe, 1. The *weapon* they are said to have, namely, the *sword*. 2. Their *readiness* to make use of it while building ; *every builder had his sword girded by his side, and so builded*.

1st, The *weapon* mentioned is the *sword* ; and the sword of the spiritual warrior is no other, than that you read of, Eph. vi. 17. *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. I think it is remarkable, it is not the *Spirit* himself that is the sword, but his *word* is the sword. As the word is the only rule for building, so the same word is the only rule for fighting. As the Spirit is the ruler, not the rule ; so the Spirit is the fighter, not the weapon. We are to try the spirits by the word, not the word by the Spirit and his motions or influences : these are various and changeable, enduring but a little while ; but *the word of the Lord endureth for ever*. Indeed, the Spirit makes the word plain and powerful, and then the word makes the Spirit and his work plain and evident to be his. True and false spirits are to be tried by the word : this is the sword that the Captain himself girds withal ; *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty*, Psal. xlv. 3. : and thus girded, he goes forth *conquering and to conquer*. This also is the sword wherewith his soldiers are girded.

The *word* may be compared to a *sword* on many accounts. The sword is a *sharp* weapon ; so is the word compared to a sharp two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any*
two-

two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.—A sword is both a *defensive* and *offensive* weapon; so is the word for defending against Satan's assaults, and making the enemy fly; with this Christ defeats the devil, saying, *It is written.*—A sword is a *bright, glittering* weapon: the word of God is like a clear glancing sword; it is *a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn*, 2 Pet. i. 15.—A sword must be *good* and *proven* metal: so the *word of the Lord is a tried word*, Psalm xviii. 30. *The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*, Psal. xii. 6.—A sword must be drawn out of the *scabbard* ere it do execution, and pointed towards the enemy, to push at him: so the word must be opened by the Spirit, otherwise it is a sealed book, a sword not drawn.—The sword of the Spirit must be drawn by the *Spirit* and applied; then will his arrows be *sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under him*, Psal. xlv. 5.—In a word, a sword must be managed by a *fit hand*; and the hand must have strength to play and push with the sword: even so the word, in the hand of faith, must be managed by the strength of Jehovah, by the power of the Spirit, otherwise our Leviathan lusts will *laugh at the shaking of our spear*; we must be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

But as the *word* is fitly comparable to a *sword*, so it is called the *sword of the Spirit* fitly; for, 1. It is the Spirit that *made* the sword; the word is indited by him; for, *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* 2. It is the Spirit that *burnishes* and *brightens* the sword, making it clear, to be a *light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths.* 3. It is the Spirit that *points* the sword, and makes the word *sharper than a two-edged sword.* 4. It is the Spirit that *draws* the sword, and that wields and manages it whenever it does any execution, and makes it powerful; *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.* 5. It is the Spirit that *puts* the sword, the word into our mouths and hearts; Prov. i. 22, 23. *How long ye simple ones,*

will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Isa. lix. 21. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. 6. It is the Spirit that makes the sword of the word to be spirit and life; John vi. 63. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. It is the Spirit that turns grace in the word to grace in the heart, by making the spirit and life; for, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life, 2 Cor. vi. 3.—Here then is the sword of the Spirit, the weapon of the spiritual builder. But now,

2dly, Here is their readiness to make use of it while building; every man had his sword girded by his side, and so builded; where four things may be observed.

1. Every worker here is a warrior; every builder had a sword, none are exempted from the war, that were engaged in the work of building; so in the spiritual warfare, every one that puts his hand to the building, must put his hand to the sword, and resolve to fight upon the wall that he builds, *to fight the good fight of faith.*

2. Observe, that every builder had his sword, his own sword; even so in the spiritual warfare, every true builder has his sword, making the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the *word of God*, his own word. They take to them this armour of God, as David said, Psa. cxix.

3. *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever.* They take the word that Christ gives them, John xvii.

14. *I have given them thy word.* Here we may say, the spiritual mason's word is *the sword*; the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the *word of God*; and every builder that intends to have the pillars of the temple he builds upon, to be called JACIN and BOAZ, *stability and strength*, he has the word of promise, that he uses as his own: *Remember, Lord, the word on which thou hast caused me to hope.* Hence,

3. Every builder had his sword girded by his *side*, girded and bound, that it might not be lost; so every spiritual warrior has the sword of the word applied, cleaving to him as a girdle, and he binding it, as it were, to his side, to his heart: *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*, by yielding to the enemy when I have this sword to resist him.

4. Observe, every builder had his sword *girded by his side*, or his **LOINS**, as in the margin, and so builded.

Here again are several things instructive, with reference to the spiritual builder and soldier both. Why, here is the *closest application* of the sword; *every one had his sword girded by his loins, his sword by his side*: so the word must be closely applied; hence says the apostle, *Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you*, Col. iii. 16.—Here is their *prudence*, girding up the sword, that it might not hinder them in their work: we are not to make such use of the word as to hinder our work, but to *lay it up in our hearts*, so as to *practise it in our lives*.—And again, here is their *diligence* in their present work; when they were not just at war fighting, they were at work building. God gives his people sometimes a little breathing and interval of rest from the pitched battle, like the *silence* that was *in heaven about half an hour*, Rev. viii. 1.: but when they are not just fighting with the foe, they are called to be building at the wall.—Finally, here is their *readiness* for the war, as well as diligence in their work, not knowing how soon they might be assaulted; *every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded*. Thus in building we should be ready for battle; still armed, still watching, still wearing the *sword of the Spirit*, ready to draw upon the enemy and lash the foe that would hinder the building of the wall, and interrupt our progress in the work of God.—So much for a short account of the *spiritual soldier*, from this text.

III. We proposed, in the *third* place, to offer some *reasons*, why the *spiritual builder*, needs to be a *spiritual soldier*. Why,

1. Because this spiritual building has *many enemies*, and is very grievous to enemies: it is opposed by all the power of earth and hell; *the heathen rage against it*, and *the people imagine a vain thing*, *the kings of the earth set themselves*, and the rulers of church and state *take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed*, saying, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us*, Psalm ii. 1, 2, 3. The up-building of any soul, in the *most holy faith*, is the eye-sore of hell; and the building up of the *wall of Jerusalem*, or any attempt to repair the ruins of the church, in the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, is grievous and tormenting to them that dwell upon the earth.— Thus the building of the wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days; see how grievous and vexing it was to enemies, that Nehemiah was come to put hand to this work; read Neh. ii. 10. *When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiab the servant the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.* That work which is exceeding gladdening to the godly, the welwithers of Jerusalem, and the rebuilding the desolations thereof, is exceeding grievous to the enemy; as the building goes up, the enemies go mad: therefore, every builder needs to be a foldier, ready for war.

2. Because the enemy is *very powerful* and *politic*; very strong and subtle, very wicked and malicious, full of hatred and indignation against the building and builders: see how they discovered themselves in Nehemiah's time, when he set about the work, chap. ii. 19. *But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiab the servant the Ammonite, and Gessem the Arabian heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?* They that were builders of the wall were charged as enemies to the government, derided and laughed to scorn, chap. iv. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11.—Their opposers also were *subtile* and *politic*: see chap. vi. how they practised by craft, seeking to do Nehemiah a mischief, ver. 2; how they practised by rumours and false reports, ver. 6, —10; and also by false and feigned prophecies,

phesias, ver. 12, 13, 14. When enemies are so many, so powerful and politic, so wicked and malicious, surely the builders have need every one of a sword girded by his side.

3. Spiritual builders need to be ready for war, because they build in an *enemy's country*, as long as they are about this building work on earth. As on earth *Christ rules in the midst of his enemies*, so his faithful servants and people *build in the midst of their enemies*.—This earthly region is the devil's walk, where he is *going to and fro, and walking up and down*, Job i. 7. While they build in such a place, where they are surrounded with the devil, and instruments of the devil; yea, not only with the wickedness of the wicked and unregenerate world, but the remaining wickedness of the godly, alas! what need have builders to be still ready armed!

4. The spiritual builders need to have their sword girded on their side, and so to build, because they build in the *enemy's eye*, in the enemy's sight and presence: he that covers a table for his people in the presence of their enemies, calls them also to build and bear witness for him in the presence of their foes; for which they are looked upon as *signs and wonders*: but as they expect he will not be ashamed of them at the last day, so they are not ashamed of him before the world of men and devils, nor ashamed of their building work. See how boldly Nehemiah sets about the work, in the face of his enemies, that laughed him to scorn, chap. ii. 20. *Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.*—However, their building in the enemy's presence makes the enemy rage the more; and therefore they need to be ready armed when they build.

5. Spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers, ready for war, because the enemy is ready to *break down the building* as fast as we can build it up, unless we be still ready, with our sword girded by our side, to resist them. Satan stands at our right-hand, ready to resist

resist us in the work of God, and is always watching to overthrow the building of grace; therefore we need to be always on our guard, watching and ready, *looking to ourselves, that we lose not what we have gained*, 2 John, ver. 8. *Holding fast what we have, that no man take our crown*, Rev. iii. 11.

6. Every builder should have his sword girded by his side, and so build, because every builder has the enemy as *near and close by his side*, as he can have his sword girded by it: enemies without and within; enemies within the house, within the heart, within the building, within the wall, as well as without. Nehemiah had even the nobles of Judah with him, that kept a correspondence with the enemies. *As we wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but also with principalities and powers, &c.*; so we have enemies within, that keep correspondence with enemies without, and need therefore to be still ready, still armed, for fighting with a sword; offensive, to attack the enemy, and defensive, to defend themselves, and defend the building.—So much shall suffice for the *reasons* of the doctrine.

IV. The *fourth* head proposed is, To make *application* of the subject. If it be so, *That spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers and warriors, with their sword girded by their side, and so building*, hence see,

1. That the *exercise of true religion* is no *idle business*; it is both a building and a fighting. Though believers are not now under a covenant of works, to work for life, or *do and live*, that covenant is perfectly fulfilled for them by their glorious head; yet under the covenant of grace, and under the influence of the grace of the covenant, there is a *work of faith*, and *labour of love* they are called to, 2 Thess. i. 3.; and it is such a work and labour, as may take up all their time, and allow no time for an idle hour. They have work for both their hands; as here in the context it is said of the builders, in respect of their throng of work and war at once, that *every one with one hand wrought at the work, and with the other hand held a weapon*.

2. Hence

2. Hence see, that *Christians have little need to be cowards*; nay, they ought to be *couragious*. They have a twofold trade upon their hand, particularly when they live to see the desolations of Zion; they have a work and a warfare to accomplish, a building and a battle; and their warfare is never accomplished till the building be compleated. As long as there is a stone of the building to lay, there will be a stir and mighty combination to oppose it, and to make the work cease: therefore, they that put their hand to the building work little need to be of a cowardly disposition. We find cowards are cursed, that go not forth to the work and to the war, when the *enemy comes in like a flood*, and the *Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against them*, and calls his people to come under his standard, Judges v. 23. *Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* God calls every inhabitant of Zion to be a builder when it is ruinous, and every builder to have a sword girded by his side: yea, he curses every loiterer, that puts not his hand heartily to the work, and every faint-hearted coward, that dares not draw his sword against the enemy; *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, or, **NEGLIGENTLY**, as in the margin; and *cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood*. Many of this generation do not know or consider what heavy curses they are drawing upon their own heads, for their carelessness in the work, and cowardice in the war they should be engaged in. Again,

3. Hence see, since *true Israelites*, or the *true born children of Zion*, when the walls thereof are ruinous, are still building at the wall, or battling with the enemy, then they cannot be *true-born children of Zion*, who profess only to build up themselves in *faith and holiness*, but reckon they have no concern to build up the *walls of Jerusalem*: they profess they should be occupied about a personal reformation, but to appear for public reformation, is what they look upon as none of their business.

business. What shall we think of these that pretend now-a-days to be converts, and yet are converted to a hatred of public church reformation; and whose conversion is a screen to cover, and mask to hide all the public defections and corruptions of the time, as if there were no need of any testimony, or witnessing work against them? Alas! though some who have testified against such corruptions, and hellish and dreadful conversions, are charged with blasphemy, as if they were appearing against the work of the Holy Ghost, yet may not that charge be justly retorted? For, what blasphemy against the Holy Ghost were it to ascribe that work to him, whereby so many persons are converted to perjury and covenant-breaking with the great God; converted to apostasy from, and opposition to the most solemn obligations to God, that ever a church or nation were under. To call this a work of the Spirit of God, is one of the greatest affronts done to the Holy Ghost imaginable; it looks *like doing despite to the Spirit of God*, to make him the author of that work, that leads people to have a despite at the glorious work of reformation he wrought for us, and at all that witness for it; or if they pretend to pray for them, it is, I am well informed, as if they would pray for the enemies of God and his glory. These that are converted to open apostasy, it is easy to see that they are not God's converts, but the devil's †.

4. Hence see, since spiritual builders must be spiritual soldiers, with their sword girded by their side; then here is one reason why the spiritual building of the *work of grace in the heart*, or of the *work of reformation on the church*, goes *slowly on*: why, the opposition is great; and indeed builders, whether they be in a more private or public station, must lay their account with opposition from all quarters under heaven. The Christian who puts to his hand to build up himself in the *most holy faith*, and to build up the *walls of Jerusalem*, by join-

† This affair, which our Author here shortly hints at, is fully laid open, Vol. VII. Sermon, CXXIII, CXXIV, CXXV.

ing in an honest witnessing work, he may lay his account with reproach, calumny, hatred, persecution, and ill treatment, in the world. If people intend to side with the times and fall in with the way of the world, the world cannot hate them; but if they will testify against a wicked world, or a corrupt church, then they may expect the world's fury, such as Christ himself met with, John vii. 7. *The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.* Christ was the chief Builder; and he built by bearing witness to the truth, and testifying against the evil of the world, and the corruptions of the Jewish church: but he was hated for his pains: and not only hated, but persecuted to death. All that have been builders under him, they have been hated and reproached also. Elijah was a builder, but he is called *a troubler of Israel*; Jeremiah, *a man of contention*; Paul, *a mover of sedition*; the apostles a set of men, that *turned the world upside down*; the builders here in the text were represented as rebels against the government, *Will you rebel against the king?* So, if any in our day put hand to building work, they will be reckoned enemies to church and state, and schismatics: but tho' departing from corruptions and corrupters in a church be a commanded duty, yet Satan always labours to put odious names upon real duty, and to bury the truth of God under the rubbish of vile reproach, and strange aspersions.—However, the opposition from enemies, by violence and deceit, is one of the reasons why the building goes on slowly, and meets with many interruptions.

5. If spiritual builders must be soldiers, with their sword girded by their side, then we are not to *think strange*, if *building times* should be *troubulous times*; it is said, Dan. ix. 25. *The wall shall be built, even in troublous times.* God carries on his work even in such times, because it is most suitable to his name, as a *present help in time of trouble*; because it is most surprising to his friends, and confounding to his enemies: also, because it is most for the glory of his name, his wisdom, power, mercy, and truth; and because the building then ap-

pears the more to be the Lord's work, when opposed by earth and hell; and because the building appears more remarkable and conspicuous. He gets the praise of his work that is carried on in troublous times; and he gives his people occasion both to sing of *mercy and judgment*: and when the *wall is built, even in troublous time*, when it is least expected, he thus encourages the faith of his people, in the worst of times, that they may *trust in him at all times*. Let none be discouraged from building for fear of trouble, and troublous times; for then, says the Lord, the *wall shall be built*.

6. Hence we may learn, that it is not strange, if *reforming times* be also *contending times*. Whenever any begins to repair the wall that is ruinous, then they begin to *contend for the faith*, and to be *valiant for the truth*, and to set themselves against the devil and the world, and to face their fury. When Christ appeared to lay the foundation of the New-Testament church, he says, Matt. x. 34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword*. He came not to send peace on earth, but a sword; and to set men at variance one with another. Though his work was to preach peace, and purchase peace, and give peace; yet, meeting with the malice of men and devils, his work occasioned war, dispeace, and disturbance; therefore, he warns his people not to be offended at the confusions and contentions that his coming would occasion. When he appears in his providence to repair, or rebuild his house, it must necessarily occasion such variances as our Lord speaks of: hence the carnal world blames the builder of the wall for all the dispeace and disorder that then falls out. Some will say, O! such a set of men, that profess so and so for reformation, they have raised up much division and contention! While yet it is only the devil and his instruments opposing the work among their hands.—The building cannot be assayed, but a battle must be expected; and the more beautiful the building is designed, the more bloody the battle may be looked for. Indeed, *we have not yet resisted unto blood*, and know
not

not but bloody times may be coming. It is a common distich,

*Sanguine fundata est ecclesia, sanguine crevit
Sanguine succrevit, sanguine finis erit.*

That is to say, "The church of Christ is founded upon blood, built up with blood, rebuilt and repaired with blood, and finished with blood." *A bloody husband hast thou been to me*, said Zipporah to Moses; a bloody bride hath the church been to Christ: what with the blood of Christ, the blood of enemies, the blood of martyrs, she is become *red in her apparel*, like her glorious Head and Husband.

7. Hence see, that it is an *honourable work and employment* that our Lord calls all his followers to, namely, to be *builders under him*, and both to work his work, and to wear his sword at the same time; to be workers and warriors for God: every honourable worker will work with the King's sword at their side, *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* This is the *honour of all the saints*, that are helped to be faithful to their sovereign King Jesus, to work at his building, and fight his battles. It is not below the nobles of the earth, to be employed in building and fighting for God. David, though a king, says, Psal. cxxxii. 4, 5. *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* You see how much it was in his heart to build a house for the Lord, 2 Sam. vii. 2.; and how he was approved therein, ver. 5,—17.: but many reckon it a dishonourable work to build God's temple, in a spiritual sense, or to fall a building the ruined walls of his church, and especially the nobles in our day; how like are they to the nobles of Judah, in the days of Nehemiah? for it is said of them, Neh. iii. 5. speaking of the names and order of them that built the wall, and particularly of the Tekoites, that they repaired, *but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord.* And we are told, chap. vi. 17. how secret intelligence pass between the enemies and the

nobles of Judah; instead of building, they kept correspondence with the enemies of the work. Alas! how is this exemplified in the nobles of our land? Instead of putting hand to repair a ruined work of reformation, how are they rather confederate with the enemies of it! But, as it did not discourage Nehemiah, that the nobles were none of the builders, the work went on for all that: so it should not be discouraging to them, who aim at the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall, that they have not the countenance of nobles and gentry. God stirred up the nobles of this land indeed to reformation-work, a hundred years ago; but though now they should ly by, yet God can carry on his work without them: it is an encouraging word you have, Zeph. iii. 12, 16, 17, 18. *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack: the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee to whom the reproach of it was a burden.* The work is honourable, though these that are both devout and honourable should be stirred up against it, as Acts xiii. 50. The warfare is honourable, though Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, yea, and the children of Lot with them, should be confederate against it, Psal. lxxxiii. 5,—8.

8. Hence see the mark and character of the true and faithful children of Zion, when the concerns of Zion call for it, they are every one builders, and every builder has his sword girded by his side, and so builds. There is a twofold building and battling they are called to and concerned in; the one is habitual, and the other occasional.

(1.) The *habitual* daily building they are employed in, is their building up *themselves in their most holy faith*, by endeavouring to be more and more *rooted and built up in Christ*: and this building is also still carried on
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with sword in hand; for they must fight every bit of ground on which they build, having not only *flesh and blood*, but *principalities and powers to wrestle against*. This building and battle is personal and habitual; continual work and warfare, that all true Israelites are engaged.

(2.) The *occasional* building and battle they are concerned in, is at certain times and periods, wherein the enemy rages furiously, and ruins the walls of the building; and especially when *Zion is in adversity*, and *Jerusalem in ruins*: when the carved work of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church is *broken down*, as with *hammers and axes*, then are all true believers called to be *builders*, or *burden-bearers*, Neh. iv. 10; and to be soldiers or helpers in the holy war: if not by handling their arms, as warriors; yet by holding them, as servants, as it is said, ver. 16. some held *the spears, the shields, the bows, and the habergeons*: every one, according to his station, associating with these that are engaged in the building and the battle, and contributing to their assistance in the work and warfare. They may be said to bear arms really, that bear witness faithfully and honestly, in a day of defection and apostasy, when a testimony for God, and against error and corruption, is on the field.

As this is the mark and character then of all the true and faithful children of Zion, that they are engaged in this two-fold work and warfare; so there is this peculiar in their conduct therein, that they have no *confidence in themselves*, nor in their *works*; their whole confidence is in the Lord, without whom they can neither build nor fight to any purpose or advantage: they know, that *unless the Lord build the city, the builders build in vain*; and that it is CHRIST *himself that must build the temple*, and *bear the glory*: they know also that unless the *Lord fight for them*, they can do nothing but fall or fly before the enemy; for, *the battle is the Lord's*. Therefore when they go to work, their language is, with David, Psal. lxxi. 16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only*: and when they go forth to war,

war, they dare not trust in their sword or bow; but their language is with David, when going forth against Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.*—You may try if you have the mark and character of the true and faithful children of Zion.

9. Hence see both matter of *conviction* to enemies, and *comfort* to the friends of Zion. On the one hand, this doctrine speaks *conviction to enemies*: if all the true and faithful children of Zion are *spiritual builders*, and *spiritual soldiers*, then it may reach conviction to these, that profess to be true Israelites, true Christians, and yet *knew nothing of this work*, of being builders with sword in hand; but, instead of being builders, are *destroyers of the work*; who, instead of being up-builders of the wall of Jerusalem, are down-breakers thereof. Well, Sirs, but Jerusalem will prove a *burdensome stone* to such, Zech. xii. 2, 3.—It speaks conviction to these who have been builders, but now are *deserters* of the work, of whom God says, *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own way*, Prov. xiv. 14. *I hate the work of them that turn aside*, Psalm ci. 3. See Psalm cxxv. 5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel.* It speaks conviction and terror to these that are *traitors*, who betray the builders: perhaps the society we are concerned in have had such in our bosom, that now have *gone out from us, because they were not of us**; but they that betray the cause of Christ, betray Christ himself, and will make but a poor hand of it in the issue.—It speaks conviction to these that *profess to build*, but *without a sword*, and would be *builders but not soldiers*: but in

* It is probable Mr. THOMAS NAIRN, is the person our Author here has his eye upon: he having, about five months before this, [viz. Feb. 3d, 1741.] given in his dissent and secession from the *Affiliate Presbytery*, in regard he had espoused *Anti government principles*, which he has likewise since relinquished. If the reader inclines to see this affair laid open, he may consult *Answers by the Affiliate Presbytery to his reasons of dissent.*

vain do they think to obtain the kingdom of heaven, without taking it by violence; nay, *it suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* Will they ever raise buildings that will reach up to heaven, and yet lay by their sword, lay by their Bible, *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God?* There is no fighting against the devil and his instruments, but by the *word of truth*, the gospel weapons of warfare, that are *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.* The Deists of our day, who allow not the scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice, the only sword of the Spirit, they are not church-builders; they may be *church-rulers*, but are truly *church-ruiners*: *Christ will fight against them with the sword of his mouth*, Rev. ii. 16.; for they are against the word of the Lord, and the word of the Lord is against them.—Again, it speaks conviction and terror to these that profess to be *soldiers*, and yet are not *builders*: but as none can be spiritual builders who are not spiritual soldiers; so none can be spiritual soldiers, who are not builders: yet some profess to be soldiers; they pretend to take the sword of the word in their hand, and gird it by their side, and the sword of power and church authority, but instead of *building*, they draw the sword against the *builders*, instead of drawing it against the enemies †. This is the case, when church judicatories abuse the authority Christ in his word gave to his church, by drawing that sword in his name, against his friends; *Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word, your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to your glory, and they shall be ashamed*, Isa. lxvi. 5. But to all such enemies to the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and opposers of the work and oppressors of the builders, may be applied these words you have, Jer. l. 24. *I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and*

† This was remarkably verified, in the prosecution raised against the Associate Brethren, and carried on by the respective Church judicatories with so much keenness, when venters and propagators of pernicious errors were either passed by, or inadequately censured. See Vol. I. p. 304, 305, 466. Vol. IV. p. 148. Vol. V. p. 304, 394, 396.

thou wast not aware ; thou art found and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord. Ver. 33, 34.—Thus saith the Lord, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together, and all that took them captives held them fast, they refused to let them go : their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name ; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet to the inhabitants of Babylon.

But, on the other hand, this doctrine speaks *comfort* to the *true friends of Zion*, and true builders therein, with their sword girded by their side. As there is a heavy curse denounced against these that will not *work the Lord's work*, nor *fight his battles*, Jer. xlviii. 10. ; so there are *blessings* that God has promised to be upon the head of builders. See Hag. ii. 18, 19. *Consider now from this day and upward, that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid,—from this day will I bless you.* Whenever a man begins honestly to build, upon the foundation Jesus Christ, were it *from this day*, then *saith the Lord, from this day will I bless you.* Blessings are also pronounced upon the head of these that gird their sword by their side and so build ; and upon honest fighters of the *good fight of faith* ; for, *to them is laid up a crown of righteousness.* The fair fighters shall be conquerors, and the conquerors shall be crowned ; *be faithful to the death, and I will give thee the crown of life.* Every fair stroke you give your lusts and spiritual enemies with the sword of the Spirit drawn against them, is a token, that tho' like Gad, *a troop may overcome you, yet you shall overcome at the last.* And how many blessings are heaped upon the heads of overcomers, you may see by the epilogue of every epistle to the seven churches of Asia, recorded in the second and third chapters of the Revelation.—Here is encouragement both to the work and to the war.

10. And lastly, Hence see the *duty of all the people of God*, who desire to be blessed and favoured of him, and to show themselves his friends and followers at this day, namely, to *imitate the builders here in a spiritual way*, that *every builder have his sword girded by his side, and so build.* You ought all to be thus employed. But

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many here are not yet in a spiritual state, capable for being spiritual builders, and spiritual soldiers, yet in a state of nature, strangers to the state of grace, and union to Christ. Therefore, I would first tender an exhortation to you; and then offer a few advices.

In the *first* place, I would *exhort* you to *come to Christ*, the sure foundation, that you may be capable to be builders upon it; and to come to him as the Captain of salvation, and enlist with him, that you may be capable to fight under his banner. While you are out of Christ, you are but *destroying yourselves*, instead of *building up ourselves in the most holy faith; fighting against God*, instead of *fighting the good fight of faith*.—O come, Sirs; come to Christ, and do not remain enemies to God, and to your own salvation! A whole *Trinity* calls you to be reconciled to God; the *Father* says, *Come*; *It is his commandment, that you believe in the name of his Son*: the *Son* says, *Come*; *Whosoever will, let him come*: the *Holy Ghost* says, *Come*; *The Spirit and the bride say, Come*. Your *circumstances* say, *Come*; you are guilty, O come and get righteousness; you are weak, O come and get strength: your *wants* say, *Come*; come and get them all supplied: your *heart-plagues* say, *Come* and get healing: death says, *Come*, that the sting of death may be taken away: *judgment* says, *Come*, that you may be able to stand in judgment; *eternity* says, *Come*, that you may be happy to all eternity. Come and build upon the sure foundation; come and *fight the good fight of faith*, and *lay hold on eternal life*. But now,

In the *second* place, I would offer a few *advices* to you, who having come to God in Christ, would desire to be honest builders and faithful soldiers, in a spiritual sense.

(1.) I would advise you to be *students of the times*, the proper time for building and fighting, that you may apply yourselves to the duty of the times. Tho' these duties are called for at *all* times, yet there are some *special* times, wherein we ought to be employed, in a special manner. It is given as the character of the sons of Issachar, 1 Chron. xii. 32. *that they were men*

that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. The want of this seems to be what our Lord reproves, Matth. xvi. 3. *Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but, can ye not discern the signs of the times?* Intimating, that they who are wholly ignorant of the signs of the times are hypocrites; they have skill and knowledge in things that are natural, but are wilfully ignorant of spiritual things, *not knowing, in their day, the things that belong to their peace*: such hypocrisy is like to end in apostasy; for they that do not know or consider the times, and the duty of the time, are in the utmost danger of being taken in the snare of the time, like these spoken of, Eccl. ix. 12. *For man also knoweth not his time: as fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon him.* This is one of the reasons why our time just now abounds with such hypocrites and apostates, that are caught in the snares of the times, not knowing or considering, that if ever there was a time for building or fighting, these times we live in are building times, and fighting times, and proper times for working and witnessing. But, alas! the hypocritical generation we live among, have been for more than half a century of years, saying, with the people mentioned, Hag. i. 2. *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built; to whom the Lord says, ver. 4, 5. Is it time, for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house ly waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* So say I, consider your ways, and consider the times.

(2.) A second advice I offer is, to consider likewise *the case of the walls of Jerusalem*, where you are called to build; see if the call and command of God do not concern you in a spiritual way, as it concerned Israel of old, Jer. li. 50. *Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still, remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.* How applicable is this call to our times? wherein the sword of the Lord is drawn, and wherein he has opened his armoury, and brought forth the weapons of his indignation, in the heaviest

heaviest of spiritual judgments, worse than sword, famine, and pestilence, even the sword of God's wrath in awful delusions of Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, and putting on the mask of religion and holiness! This sword of the Lord has killed many souls that seemed to be alive; it has killed their zeal for God and his cause, killed their concern for public church Reformation, and for the rebuilding of the ruined walls of our Jerusalem: but, *you that have escaped the sword* of dreadful delusion, sent to punish a generation of apostates, that refuse to remember their solemn Covenant with God, *stand not still*, haste to fly out of Babylon: if the body, with which you have been formerly incorporate, be become a Babylon in a spiritual and scriptural sense, a Babylon for defection, apostasy, and corruption; a Babylon, for persecution of, and opposition to the covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house: *Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind*; while you mind the Lord, mind Jerusalem, and the ruinous walls thereof; you that have escaped the sword, that is destroying Reformation-work, and is busy killing the witnesses for it: if you truly remember the Lord, Jerusalem will come to your mind.— Let them deceive and delude themselves who will, that pretend to remember the Lord, and yet forget Jerusalem, and her ruinous walls, yet you that are honest builders, when you remember the Lord, it is not possible but Jerusalem will come into your mind: the more ruinous it is, the more will you remember it, so as to *take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof, till the Lord arise, and have mercy on Zion*; for he has promised to *appear in his glory and build up Zion*. And happy are they, that through grace, are honest workers with him.

(3.) Another advice I give is, beware of *flying* when God is calling you to *fight*, as well as to build. *Should such a man as I fly?* said Nehemiah, chap. vi. 11.— When Sanballat was practising by craft, by false reports, and by false prophecies, to terrify him and to fright him from his work; no, says he; *Should such*

a man as I fly? Enemies are still at work to hinder the spiritual building, either by violence or deceit; but, as the Lord has promised to *redeem the soul of his people from deceit and violence*, Psalm lxxii. 14.; so they are not to be frightened from their work by the lies, calumnies, false prophets, or false reports and reproaches that enemies raise against them; for God promises to take their part, Jer. l. 34. *Their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet to the inhabitants of Babylon*, by whom his people were oppressed, verse 33. And see what he says to the enemies, Jer. xlvi. 27. *Was not Israel a derision unto thee?* And what says he of the enemies, ver. 29, 30. *We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the Lord; it shall not be so; his lies shall not effect it.*

(4.) I would advise you further, to beware of *corresponding with the enemies of the work*, whether in a secret or open way. It contributed much to weaken the hands of Nehemiah, and the builders with him, that secret intelligence past between the enemies and the nobles of Judah, while many letters past between Tobiah and them, Neh. vi. 17. When Israel was called to go out of Babylon, and betake themselves to the building work, they were called also to *touch no unclean thing*, Isaiah lii. 11. This call the apostle adapts to his times, 2 Cor. vi. 17. *Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* It is dangerous to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; it is dangerous to strengthen the hands of the enemies, and weaken the hands of the builders: see how God observes this; *I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem an horrible thing, they strengthen the hands of evil-doers*, Jer. xxiii. 14. These indeed were false prophets, mockers of the true prophets, as we see from ver. 33. and downwards of that chapter. But if a true saint should be so far left, as to correspond with, and strengthen the hands of the enemies, God's fatherly wrath will go forth against him; though

though he cannot, being a child of God, become a child of wrath, yet he may be a child under wrath. You have a remarkable instance of this in good Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xix. 2. *And Jehu the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.* It is next to impossible to have fellowship with some societies, and not be involved in the common guilt with them, and exposed to the judgments that are coming upon them. If Lot had not obeyed the command, of hastening out of Sodom, he had perished in the fire. If Noah had not, at God's command, made the ark, and run into it, he had perished in the water with the rest of the world. If we partake with wicked enemies in their sins, we may expect to partake with them in their judgments. See Rev. xviii. 4. Eph. v 6, 7.

(5.) A fifth advice I would give you is, Know your *great assistant*, both in the work and in the war, namely, the Spirit of God, Zech. iv. 6. *This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, (by whom the temple was to be rebuilt) Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.* Whatever mountains of difficulty were in the way, yet by this great assistant the work was to be carried on and completed; *Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it,* verse 33.—Christ is our Zerubbabel; it is he, *even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory,* Zech. vi. 13. And spiritual builders are to know, that it is not by *power*, nor by *might*, but by his *Spirit*, the work is to be carried on. Therefore, know your great assistant, the Spirit of Christ, and endeavour to be well acquainted with, and to depend upon his assistance. It is taken for granted, that all true believers, or spiritual builders, know and are acquainted with him, though the rest of the world are not. He is called, John xiv. 17. *The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwel-*

dwelleth in you, and shall be in you. It is here taken for granted, therefore I may say to you, believers, ye know him, and his inhabitation in you. How do I know that, say you? Why, he is in you *as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life*: this is the water that Christ gives, John iv. 14.; yea, the well itself is in you: and how do you know a spring-well, but by the bubbling up of the water? Even so, you know him by his *gracious operations*, particularly by his *testifying work*; *He shall testify of me*, says Christ: by his *glorifying work*; *He shall glorify me*, or shew my glory. You may know him by his *awakening work*; for which you pray, saying, *Awake, O north-wind; and come thou south, blow upon my garden.* You may know him by his *quickenings and strengthening work*; quickening you to pray, or *pour out your hearts before God*; and strengthening you to *wrestle with God for the blessing*; and to wrestle against sin, as in an agony sometimes. You may know him by his *humbling, sanctifying, sealing, and comforting work*; *After ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.*—Thus you may know him by his *assisting work*. O know your assistant in the spiritual work and war. Pray for the Spirit; and depend upon his assistance, without whom you can do nothing.

(6.) I would advise you further, let the *word of God*, and not the *Spirit*, be your only rule for the building, and sword for battle; for, *the sword of the Spirit is the word of God*, Eph. vi. 17. And the word of God is the only rule to direct us, how we may glorify God, by building up ourselves in the most holy faith: *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* Let not, therefore, the *feelings and motions* of the Spirit be your rule, or your sword; the *sword of the Spirit* is not the *SPIRIT himself*, but the *word of God*. The law and testimony of God; the revelation of his will, in the scriptures; and the doctrine of his grace, in the gospel; these are the *weapons of our warfare, mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.* The gospel of Christ is the *power of God to salvation*, 2 Cor. x. 5. Rom.

Rom. i. 16. In pure believing, spiritual building, and *fighting the good of faith*, the true Spirit of Christ makes the soul build upon nothing else but the word, and so to build its faith and hope upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone*, Eph. ii. 20. Faith may be confirmed afterwards by the feeling and sealing of the Spirit, as I formerly said, *after ye believed ye were sealed*; but in nothing does the power of the Spirit more exert itself, in the day of believing, than in bringing the soul to be denied to all internal feelings, and to reject all other grounds of faith, than what are laid down in the word. So many and dangerous are the delusive operations of evil spirits on the hearts of men, at this day, that we need to be fenced against the enthusiasm that prevails, and to ground our faith allenerly upon God's word. *Faith cometh by hearing*, and not by feeling; it comes by *hearing what the Spirit saith to the churches*, and not by feeling what he works upon the heart: though he works there; yet true heart-work brings the word to the heart, and the heart to the word. The false quakerish spirit leads people to a Christ within them, in their hearts; in whom feeling, they rejoice with a joy unwarrantable, and full of delusion: but the true Spirit of Christ leads the hearts wherein he works, to a Christ without them in the word; *in whom believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Therefore I say again, true heart-work brings the word to the heart, and the heart to the word: and true spiritual builders and fighters stand upon that word, as the ground upon which they build and fight; and they build by that word as their rule, and fight with that word as their sword. *The sword of the Spirit is the word of God.*

(7.) I would advise you again, that you beware of every thing that may *endanger* the spiritual work and spiritual warfare. Here I will lay before you some things very dangerous, which you should beware of.

1. It is dangerous to mistake a *sleeping* enemy for a *slain* one; or a sleeping lust for a slain or mortified one: for if sin be not mortified by the Spirit, the sleeping
lust,

the sleeping enemy, when awake, may soon marr and hinder the building. Again,

2. It is dangerous to *sleep upon the wall* where you build, or to give way to spiritual sloth. Let a man be never so well armed, yet if he be asleep, or in a sound nap upon the bed of sloth, he is an easy prey to the enemy; therefore, *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

3. It is dangerous to *watch but one half hour*, and think you may sleep safely the other half. The Philistines are upon you, if ye let down your watch, though you be never so strict and spiritual for a little while. Again,

4. It is dangerous to *dally with the enemy*, and give any little bit of ground to him. A half look towards a distant idol may bring on a broad look; and a broad look may renew an old acquaintance with the lust that was subdued; and *lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin*, James i. 14, 15.

5. It is dangerous to *consult with flesh and blood*, or to be conducted in your work and warfare by the rule of carnal policy: this made the chief priests and Pharisees consult the death and destruction of the great Master-builder; *What do we? this man doth many miracles: if we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation*, John ii. 47, 48. The measures they thought would raise and preserve them, did ruin them and their established church too. Carnal politicians, instead of being up-builders of the church, are down-breakers of it; destroyers of the building, and the builders too: they pull down their house about their ears, and leave it desolate, as these rulers in the Jewish church did.

6. It is dangerous, in our spiritual building, and spiritual work that concerns your soul, to give *God no more service* than what you think is his *due*, and what you allow him at his set times of devotion, whether secret or social: if he get not many a stolen look between hands, the devil and the world will steal away your heart from him. It is dangerous, whenever duty is over, to think then your heart is at liberty to turn where it pleases;

it needs to be bridled with many a look to heaven, by ejaculatory prayer in company, and in the interval of duty, otherwise when you return to duty, you may find it a difficult matter to bring back your heart to your work, from the mountains where it has been wandering. Again,

7. It is dangerous to *keep no guard* upon the *back of a victory*, no watch upon the back of a manifestation : whereas the greatest danger may be upon the back of the greatest victory, or the sweetest manifestation ; for Satan, if he can, will seek to throw you down from the pinnacle of the temple.

8. In a word, it is dangerous to *yield to the enemy* in any the *least point of truth* ; for, by tempting you to pull out any small pinnings of the building, he aims at the loosing and dissolving the whole fabric. If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, we will regard every thing, and all things whatsoever he has commanded. Some are reckoned too nice and scrupulous, that will not yield in some small matters ; but we see the best of God's servants in scripture, and the most eminent builders, have been such as the world would call the most nice and scrupulous. What think you of Moses, that would not part with a *hoof* ? What think you of Mordecai, that would not yield in the *bow of a knee* ? Of Daniel, that would not yield even in the *shutting of a window* ? And of Paul, who would not yield for an *hour* ? He would not give place to the false apostles no not for an hour. If the word of God be our rule, we will regard every thing that has his authority stamp upon it, however small the world may reckon it. Some pretend a great regard for what they call *fundamental points*, but as to other things, such as the *discipline* and *government* of the church, they can easily dispense with these, however much the honour of God be concerned therein : though yet they would be very ill pleased to want the least compliment of their worldly honour and dignity, or the smallest penny of their worldly gain and commodity. Though some things may be called fundamentals *intrinsically*, as abso-

lutely necessary to salvation ; yet the smallest matters of revealed truth are also fundamental *authoritatively*, and as necessary to be regarded, by virtue of the divine authority as the former. *Baptism*, for example, is not absolutely necessary to salvation ; this we assert against the church of Rome : yet the *contempt* and *neglect* of it, when it can be obtained, is damnable because of God's authority interposed. To disregard and despise the smallest matters in religion, which are necessary to be received and maintained, if not for themselves, yet for the authority of God speaking in the scriptures, bring as certain a curse and condemnation, as ignorance and error do in matters that are in themselves more essential and substantial. Will it ever justify the apostates of our day, that they say they still cleave to these things of God that are of greatest concern to salvation, while they know how much his glory is concerned in other things, and that the contempt of his authority in the smallest things is damnable ? Our Lord says, Matth. v. 19. *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* If men will call any of these things of God small things, yet what will this distinction avail them ? Will they ever be absolved for their regard to the greatest, when condemned for their neglect and contempt of the smallest things of God ? True builders are well directed, Ez. vii. 23. *Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done for the house of the God of heaven ; for, why should there be wrath against the realm of the king, and his sons ?*

(8.) The last advice I offer is, *Never attempt to build without your sword ;* let every builder have his sword girded by his side, and so build. As there is no fighting, so there is no building to any advantage, without the *sword of the Spirit* ; therefore take it to you, Eph. vi. 16, 17. He who enjoins you to take the *shield of faith*, says also, *Take the sword of the Spirit.* Christ is our armoury and magazine for military provision ; and this piece of armour among the rest he has to give, and wills you to take. He gives you his sword, *his word*, John xvii. 14. Therefore take what he gives :
he

he gives you his word of grace and promise, even great and precious promises ; and every promise believed is a sword drawn against the enemy, and matter fit for building with. Search the scriptures, and hide the word in your heart, and thus gird the sword by your side. He gives you his word, saying, Take this sword of mine ; it is better for you than the sword of Goliath ; there is none like it. You may build with this sword, and build to purpose ; you may fight with this sword, and fight to advantage. Satan flies before you, and enemies may be driven away with it. *This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith of this word ; all the saints overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, Rev. xii. 11.* Never go about any part of your building work without your sword : never pray without your sword ; you may wrestle with God himself with the word of promise in your hand, in your heart ; and while you wrestle with God, pleading his promise, and prevail, then you win the day against the enemy. Thus shall you be furnished for your daily work and war, your daily building and battle : and, O Sirs, may this text be spiritually verified in all the communicants in Stirling, *The builders every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.*

S E R M O N CXXVIII.

WITNESSES cited for GOD; and all their WITNESSING WORK summed up in this one Point, *viz.* their Attesting THAT HE IS GOD*.

I S A I A H xliii. 12.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.

WE are professing to be a witnessing congregation. It would be our mercy if we all knew what we are called to bear witness unto. A communion-time is a special witnessing time, wherein the Lord calls his people to bear witness to his Being, and his being a God in Christ; to bear witness that he is a God of grace and mercy in Christ; to bear witness to his goodness in the doing and suffering of Christ for us; and wherein God is calling us forth to, and setting us upon this work to be his witnesses, saying, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

When the people of Israel were led aside into idolatry, and when strange gods, idols of the nations, were brought among them, assuming the throne of God, and claiming equal honour and homage with him, the great God condescends to call forth a number of his people to bear witness to his omnipotency, and to his

* This sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 17th, 1743. To which is subjoined, A DISCOURSE on the same subject, delivered at the conclusion of the solemnity. — We are told in the first edition of the sermon, that the Author's notes were lost; and that it was gathered from the short-hand characters of some who wrote it down as it was delivered. On this account, probably, it is neither so complete, nor appears with such advantage as it would have done, had it been copied from the original.

being the only true God; to bear witness that he, and he only, is God; God the Saviour, in the 11th verse, *I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.* Ver. 12. *I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you.* Are you not, might the Lord say, eye and ear-witnesses how I have declared myself, how I have saved you, how I have shewed my glory amongst you, even when there was no strange god among you? Therefore, *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.*

In which words we have these three things observable, 1. The most *honourable work* that any can be called unto, *viz.* to be *God's witnesses.* 2. Here is the most honourable and *glorious truth* that any can be called to witness unto, namely, the truth of all truths, that **GOD IS GOD; that I am God.** 3. Here is the most *notable call* and *authority* by which any can be called forth unto this honourable office. It is the great God that says it, and by his saying it he makes them his witnesses; *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

Without taking up time further, the subject I proceed to speak upon, is the following doctrine, namely,

That the whole witnessing work of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one point, their being witnesses that he is God; or, their attesting that he is God. YE ARE MY WITNESSES, SAITH THE LORD, THAT I AM GOD,

We have here God, the great God, who needs no testimony from any of his creatures, appealing to his people, and appealing to them three times in this and the following chapter, Isa. xliii. 10. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; not only you that are my people, and you my servant the prophet, but also my righteous Servant, Jesus Christ, whom I have chosen; Jesus Christ, the chief of God's servants, is called here to bear witness to this truth, Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord; and my Servant whom I have chosen.*—Another time you have it mentioned in chap. xliv. 8. *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from the time, and have declared it?*

Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me?—
And here it is again said in the text a third time, *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.*

In the prosecuting of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, we propose to do the following things.

- I. To *premise* some things for clearing this doctrine.
- II. To shew *how* it is, or by what *means* we are to be God's witnesses; and how *his people* are his witnesses.
- III. We would speak a little of the *import* of these words, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*
- IV. We would demonstrate and prove that the *whole witnessing work* of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one, their witnessing *that he is God.*
- V. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application.*

I. As to the *first* of these general heads. There are some things I would shortly *premise* for clearing of the doctrine. And,

1. We premise, "That the great God has seen fit to call a *court*, to which he cites and summons all his people to bear testimony for him and his truth, and to witness particularly to this, *That he is God.*" God may be said to have called a court for this purpose, when he brings a people to be his professing people; when he forms them into a visible church, professing his name, and *calls them his people, that were not his people,* Rom. ix. 25.

2. We premise, "That God is both *Judge* and *Witness* present in this court, to see who is there, to mark down all that compare to witness for him." He marks down who are his witnesses; and who refuse to witness for him that he is God: for, *he is not a God afar off; he searcheth Jerusalem as with lighted candles.*

3. I premise, "That there are *competitors* with the great God, who do pretend unto that headship and sovereignty which belongs only to God." Not only the

the idols of the nations, that are nothing but dumb and dead idols, but also every thing that is set up in the room of God. Ever since the human race did depart from the living and true God, they have been setting up other Gods. The world is become their God; and the god of this world has always been assuming the throne of God; yea, every man is setting up himself for his God, ever since that original temptation prevailed, *Ye shall be as Gods*, Gen. iii. 5. And therefore I remark,

4. “That the great question that is to be discussed at this witnessing court, is just this, *Who is God?* “And whether God be God, or any other thing ought to be acknowledged as God?” It comes, I say, to that question of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 21. *How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.* And if the Lord alone, if JEHOVAH only, be God, then it is he only that you are to be witnesses for: *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.* Again,

5. I premise, “That there are many, yea, the most part of the children of men, that refuse to be witnesses unto this matter, *that he is God.*” They will not receive his testimony concerning himself that he only is God; and therefore they will not give their testimony unto him that he is God. Such is the degenerate state of mankind, so far are they departed from God, that they will not so much as acknowledge that he is God: they say, upon the matter, that the devil is God, for his works they do; that the world is their God, for they give it the throne of their hearts; or themselves their God, self having the throne. Whatever they do in shew, or in profession, or with their mouths, yet they practically refuse to acknowledge that God is God, or to witness for him: they *profess to know God, but in works to deny him.*

6. I premise, “That God is pleased to recover some of the race of Adam from this universal idolatry, from this natural atheism, and to shew his glory to them, so as that he can commit unto them the de-
“siding

“ciding of this question, *Whether the Lord is God?* “He can intrust them with it, and employ them, and “boast of them as his witnessess, saying, *Ye are my witnessess, that I am God.*” It is true, there are some that are believers in Christ by profession, to whom Christ cannot commit the deciding of this question, and to whom he will not commit himself.—We read of some that believed in him, to whom he *did not commit himself, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man,* John ii. 23, 24. Indeed, many profess to be believers in Christ, unto whom Christ will not commit the deciding of this question, Whether he is God or no?—Such is the blasphemous Spirit of the time; this question could scarcely get fair play sometime before the judicatories, whether Christ was God; or whether one that denied the supreme deity of Christ was to be *deposed or excommunicate*; yea, or no†? Again,

7. Another thing I premise, is this, “That altho’ “the great God stands in no need of *man’s testimony,* “yet he is pleased for his own declarative glory, to ad- “duce many witnessess to prove that he is God; and “particularly some are select and special ones.” There are two sorts of witnessess for God. There are passive and active witnessess. On the one hand, the *passive* witnessess are many; yea, they are innumerable. All the inanimate creatures, sun, moon, and stars, are witnessess that he is God: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work,* Psalm xix. 1. Sensitive and vegetative creatures they are witnessess to the being of God. Even heathens have observed, that God was to be seen in every herb of of field,

Præsentemque refert qualibet herba Deum.

God is to be seen in all the works of his hands. In the rational world some are passive witnessess for God, that yet are active witnessess against him. The devil and

† Plainly alluding to the process carried on against professor Simson, briefly laid open, Vol. I. p. 304, 466.

the wicked world are witnesses against God *actively*; and yet, whether they will or not, they are passive witnesses for him that he is God; for God gets glory upon them. The Lord is many times known by the judgment he executes on them, known in his power and justice, as it is said of Pharaoh; *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh; Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth*, Rom. ix. 17. Their wickedness, and God's vengeance following it, witness that he is a true God in his threatenings. In this respect God has many, yea, innumerable passive witnesses in the rational world, that are yet active witnesses against him, and will not directly witness that he is God.—But there are some whom God creates for his glory, and forms for himself, whom he makes his *willing subjects* and his *active witnesses*, to bear witness directly in open court, as it were, that he is God: and of these he speaks here; *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*. And therefore,

8. I premise, “That God claims a *special relation* to those whom he thus calls forth to be his faithful and honest witnesses: *Ye are MY witnesses, that I am God*.” This imports both his relation to them as *their God*; and their relation to him as *his witnesses*: ye bear witness that I am the Lord your God. And, indeed, his calling them to be his witnesses makes them so. He makes them his witnesses, just by saying, *Ye are so: Ye are my witnesses*. As he calls them his people that were not his people; so he calls them to be his witnesses that were not his witnesses; for, he *calls things that are not as though they were*. He manifests forth his glory to them, and then says, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*.

9. I further premise, “That the special work of God's people, after they are effectually called, is *witnessing-work*; and the matter of their testimony is God's *being* and *attributes*.” All the duties they are called to, are but branches of this one duty of witnessing for God, and of knowing and acknowledging

that he is God, and their God; for this leads them to worship and glorify him accordingly.

10. I premise, "That there are *special times* wherein God calls forth his witnesses to attest that he is God; and particularly times wherein strange gods appear on the field: *I have declared and have saved, and I have shewed when there was no strange god among you; therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.*" He calls them forth to it, when there are strangers to compete with him, and when he is denied in his Godhead; when he is denied in any of his truths, any of his names, any of his attributes and perfections, for then he is denied to be God. So his witnesses are called forth to attest, at such a time, that he is God.

II. The *second* thing I proposed was, To shew *how* and by what *means* they are his witnesses. How are they to witness for him? His people are called to do so,

1. By *believing* with the heart; for, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. Faith in God, as he is a God in Christ, is a notable way of witnessing, and it is the root of all right witnessing; namely, by *setting to our seal that God is true*. If we receive his testimony concerning himself, and concerning his Christ, then we witness that he is God, that he is the true God.—By unbelief we bear false witness against God, and make him a liar, and so deny him to be God; but by faith we *set to our seal that God is true*.

2. They are to witness also by *confessing* him with the mouth; *With the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. We believe with the heart, and then confess with the mouth. And thus here we are called to confess God to God himself, and then to the world; to acknowledge God first to himself, as the Psalmist, when he said, *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God*. We are to acknowledge God even unto God, and then to acknowledge him before the world; to confess and not to be ashamed of him: *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I*

confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven, Matt. x. 32, 33.

3. We are to witness that he is God, by a *holy practice*, a holy life and conversation; by religious duties and attendance on God in ordinances: holiness in our family-religion; *I will walk before my house*, says the Psalmist, *with a perfect heart*: holiness in social religion, in keeping society with other of God's witnesses in Christian converse and communication: *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name, Mal. iii. 16.* And holiness in the whole of our walk and conversation. We are to witness for God by a gospel-conversation, and such as shall adorn, before the world, the *doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

4. We are called to witness for God, sometimes even with our *hand-writing*; giving up our names, as it were, to the Lord, is sometimes called for, as a notable way of witnessing for God, and against the enemies of his glory. I remember a word you have in Isaiah xxx. 8. *Now go, write it before them in a table; and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever.* This is a way of witnessing that God sometimes calls to, Isaiah xlv. 5. after that promise, ver. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, &c.* it follows, ver. 5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and firmame himself by the name of Israel.*

5. We are called to be his witnesses sometimes by suffering for him and his truth; *If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me.* We are to follow Christ who *endured the cross, and despised the shame*; we are to *follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach*; and thus to witness for him by suffering: *For, if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together with him.* When truth falls in the street, it is an ho-

nour to fall in with it; for they that will fall with it, shall rise with it. We are not to be ashamed, but to *account it all joy*, when we are brought to tribulation for the cause of Christ.

6. We are to witness by *dying*, as well as suffering; even by dying in the faith, and dying in the Lord; *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*, Rev. xiv. 13. *All these died in faith*, Heb. xi. 13. This is one of the noblest ways of witnessing, especially if it be not only a dying *in* the faith, but dying *for* the faith, in a way of witnessing thereunto, as the proto-martyr Stephen, the first witness for Christ in this manner. But,

III. We go on to the *third* thing, *viz.* To enquire into the *import* of this expression, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

1st, As to this character, *Ye are my witnesses*, it takes in and imports these two things.

1. As if the Lord should say, Ye, in a particular manner, are these whom I have *created for my glory*, as it is, verse 7. *I have created him for my glory.* So it is in verse 21. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* Ye are my witnesses; I have separated you from the rest of the world. Observe the phraseology; he says, *Ye are*, in the present time; it is spoken of in the present tense; the present time, a fit time for witnessing. The interest of truth, and of my glory calls for it; and it is dangerous to neglect the opportunity of witnessing for God.

2. *Ye are my witnesses*; that is, Ye are upon *my side*, upon the side of truth, and for me. When others are against me, *ye are my witnesses.* Ye are my acquaintances; I know you, and you know me. Ye are my advocates on earth, as I am yours in heaven; ye plead my cause. Ye are my lovers, while the rest of the world are haters of me, and of all my people. Ye are my remembrancers, as it is said in the close of the chapter, *Put me in remembrance. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence*; the words are, *Ye that are his remembrancers. Ye that are my witnesses.* Ye are my followers, when others forsake me. Ye are my

fidents and trusty friends, whom I may credit to bear my testimony, and whom I can intrust with this question to be decided in open court by you, that I am God. But again,

2dly, As to their testimony, *that I am God*. O what a great matter is here, that they are called to attest! *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*. O what is that! Who can tell what it is! They witness.—That he is God, that he is what he is. Ye are my witnesses, that I am what I am; my witnesses that I am a *Spirit*, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am *Being* itself; that I am wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness itself.—O! ye are my witnesses, that I am *God all-sufficient*; that I am all in all. It is a bearing witness to all things relating to the Deity; that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God; and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God: *O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*.—*Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*; that I am a God in Christ, God the Saviour that is here spoken of; *Besides me there is no Saviour*.—Ye are my witnesses that I am *God in Christ*: that God is in Christ *federally*; for he has *made a covenant with his Chosen*: that is in Christ *fully*; for *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead*: that God is in Christ *graciously*, reconciling the world to himself: that God is in Christ *gloriously*, shewing forth all his glory, the glory of all his perfections: that God is in Christ *immutably*; for he says, *I am the Lord, and change not*: and that God is in Christ *perpetually*; because he declares, *This is my rest, here will I stay*. God dwells in Christ, and he is in Christ delightful and merciful; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*; *it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*: *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*. It pleased the Lord to raise him; it pleased the Lord to glorify him; *By him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God*.

Men and angels will never be able to tell what is imported in this, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*; that

that I am God, in the revelation that I have made of myself in the word. I need go no further than his name.—In this chapter, verse 1. *Now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob; and that formed thee, O Israel; fear not: for I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.*—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, in that sweet word that follows, *When thou passest thro' the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest thro' the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.* What think you of God in such a word as this?—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, according to that word, verse 3. *For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*—Again, that he is God, according to the revelation he makes of himself, (not to read all the chapter) ver. 15. *I am the Lord, your holy One; the Creator of Israel, your King.* Ver. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters:* ver. 17. *Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power: they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.* Verse 18. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.* A God that says, ver. 19 *Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall bring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.* Ver. 20. *The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.* Ver. 21. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* Is there not much of God to be seen here, Sirs?—Again, what think you of this account of God, as a promising and pardoning God in Christ, that you have, verse 15. after it is said, *Thou hast made me to serve me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;* yet it follows, to the wonder of men and angels, *I, even I, am he that bloteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* Ver. 26. *Put me in remembrance; put me in mind of this name of this*

word.—*Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, in all the revelations that I have made of my name in the word. Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow: that I am the God that brought you to the foot of mount Sinai, and discovered my awful terrible majesty to you: that I am a consuming fire out of Christ: that I am the God that brought you to mount Zion, and shewed you the glory of my grace: that I am the God, that brought you out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock. Many times ye are my witnesses, that I am the God that brought you to the wilderness, and there spake comfortably to you. Witnesses, that I am JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord your righteousness; that I am JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner; that I am JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord that healeth you; that I am JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God that beareth prayer; and that I am your God: that I am not only what I am, but that I am the Lord your God, according to my covenant, thy God, and the God of thy seed, if thou art a parent.—You are to be witnesses, that I am God, even thy God, and the God of thy seed; and to witness it by believing, and laying hold on my covenant, and the intail of it.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God in all the providences that are past and do pass over your head, that I have fed you all your life long, and led and clothed you.—Ye are my witnesses that I am God, that I am Scotland's covenanted God, hitherto maintaining a banner for the truth, and a testimony for my name.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of ordinances, that sometimes have met with you there; ye sat down under my shadow, and my fruit was sweet unto your taste. That I am God, a promising God, and a God that calls you to witness for me.—When at a communion-table, the sacramental feast, ye are to be witnesses, that I am an incarnate God: that I in Christ am become meat and drink for you; *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*: that I have finished the work of redemption, paid the price of it,*

and

and satisfied justice to the full; and that I am your Saviour, your Redeemer: that I am God in Christ, and so a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and open to you. *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.* —But, as I said, it is impossible to speak of all that is imported here, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.* I shall speak a word,

IV. To the *fourth* thing I proposed, namely, To prove that the *whole of the witnessing work of the Lord's people*, is comprehended in this, their *attesting and witnessing that he is God*. This is plain, if you consider these four things:

1. That the sum of all *duties* lies in this witnessing that he is God. No duty whatsoever can be rightly performed, without carrying in it an acknowledgement of, or a witnessing to this, that he is God. This is the sum of all duties, when we own and acknowledge that God hath commanded so and so, and have a respect to all God's commandments; and do whatsoever he calls us to do upon the account of the authority of God. Then we are practically witnessing that he is God.

2. The sum of all *sin* lies in *refusing* to witness, that he is God. All sin is summarily comprehended in this refusal. It is a practical denying that he is God the Lawgiver, and a bearing false witness against God. Every transgression of the law of God, is a trampling upon God and his authority; a denying our obligation to God as our God: and is either an implicate or express denying that he is God. All sin is comprehended therein.

3. The sum of all *truth* we are called to witness for, is imported in this truth, that he is God. This is the radical and comprehensive truth, that hath all truths in the bosom of it. We will find every truth of God comprehended in this, *that he is God*. For example, The truth relating to the *election* of some from eternity is summed up in this, that God is the sovereign Elector. The truth relating to *redemption* is summed up in this, that he is the God Redeemer. The truth relating

ing to our *reconciliation* with God, is summed up in this, That he is *God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself*. The whole truth relating to *justification* is comprehended in this, that he is *the Lord our righteousness, God the justifier, that set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin, that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus*. The truth relating to *sanctification* is summed up in this, that he is God, the holy God, the sanctifier.—All truths, every truth points at this truth, that he is God; and all the truths of the Bible, and of the glorious gospel centre in this. This is the substance and sum, and the all of them; that he is God: *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*.

4 The sum of all the *errors* that we are called to witness against, lies in this, not witnessing that he is God. I say, they are all summed up in this, the denying that he is God. Every error is a denying of God; and the refusing to witness against any error, is a refusing to witness that he is God: for every error in principle or practice is so far a denying of God; therefore it is said of some, *They profess to know God, but in works do deny him*, while they live an ungodly life. Evil works are just a denying of God; or, a denying that he is God. And all errors in principle are also summed up in this, a denying of God, or saying, with the *fool in his heart, There is no God*. And to embrace any error is just to deny God, or some attribute of God, and some part of his name. To deny the truth of God, is to deny the God of truth. The root and spring of every error, is the same with that of the error of the Sadducees, to whom Christ said, *Ye err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*. Every error flows from ignorance of God and the word of God. As the first command requires us to *know God*, so it forbids to *deny God*; intimating, that a not knowing God, is a denying him. Arminians deny the grace of God; Legalists deny and darken the gospel of God. Corruption in doctrine is a denying and destroying the truth and veracity of God; corruption in worship is a denying the purity and spirituality of God; corruption in dis-

discipline is a denying and discrediting the power and authority of God as a just correcter of the disorders of his family; corruption in government is a denying the dominion and sovereignty of God in Zion, as the *great Ruler in Jacob, to the ends of the earth*. Christ's name and his government are put together, Isa. ix. 6. *The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace*. To pretend to give him his name, and yet to rob him of his government in the visible church, is to separate what God hath joined, and hath made inseparable, without sacrilege. It is true, some now-a-days make discipline and government small things, as being neither essential nor fundamental; but, if they be not so in themselves, yet they are so much so, by virtue of the authority of God stamped upon them, that contempt thereof, when once made known and attained, is as damnable as is ignorance of, and error in fundamentals. In a word, every error, every corruption in the church of God, is a denying of some letter of God's name; denying of some word of God, and of some thing whereby he makes himself known: and not to witness against the errors and corruptions of the time wherein we live, it is just a refusing to witness for God, or to be witnesses that he is God.—The witnessing work then of God's people, is summed up and comprehended in this, their being witnesses that he is God.

V. We proceed now to make some *application*. Is it so, *That this is the sum of our witnessing-work, to witness that he is God, to what he is, and what he hath revealed himself to be in his word?* Then, by way of *information*,

1. Hence, see what an *honourable work* it is to be called forth to *witness for God*. It is a great honour and dignity. And whatever truth of God we are called to witness for, it can be no trifle you are employed about, for it is summed up in this, and carries in it a testimony, *that he is*: and God reckons himself concerned; his very being is concerned in any faithful testimony that is

is lifted up for his truth and name. And they that are his witnesses have this testimony; he intimates it to themselves: therefore he says, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

2. Hence see the *nature of sin*, it is a saying, upon the matter, *There is no God.* Every sin and error strikes at God, and denies that he is God. The malignity of sinners is such, they witness against God. They are so far atheists, that will not join in, but rather oppose any faithful witnessing work; they will not bear witness that he is God. The devil hath so far blinded the world, as to make them practically assert, *there is no God*, or none but the *god of this world who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*, so as they will not set to their seal, that *God is true*, or that *God is God.* Oh! how degenerate is the human race from the happy state in which they were first created, that there is none to bear witness for their Creator among them! None saying in earnest, *Where is God my Maker?* till by a new creation, he form a number of witnesses for himself, to *show forth his praise, and create them for his glory*, Isa. xliii. 7.

3. Hence see the *nature of faith*: it is a giving God a testimonial, as it were; a bearing witness that he is what he is: it is a witnessing that he is what he hath said in the word he is; it is a witnessing what he is in himself, what he is in Christ, what he is in the Spirit, what he is to Zion, what he is to them in the promise. Your faith of the law, is a believing that he is a terrible God out of Christ; that in the law, he is a God dishonoured by our sin, a God threatening wrath and damnation against all sinners, and against you in particular. Your faith of the gospel, is a believing what he is in Christ, a God reconciled in Christ, a God calling you to be reconciled to him, because he is pacified in Christ toward you for all that you have done; a God calling you to return to him, and come in to his bosom, and to be his witnesses, first before God and conscience, that he is a God of peace; and then before the world, by confessing him with your mouth, and making your

light shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify God: therefore,

4. Hence see the *duty of the day*. Why, what are we called to? Sirs, when the enemies are saying; *Where is your God?* When there comes to be, as it were, competitors with our God, the *God of glory*, when there are, as it were, different-like Gods upon the field; when their God leads them one way, and our God leads us another way: Why, Sirs, how shall it be known whether the God whom we worship is God? Why, it seems to be brought to a question, as it was once, 1 Kings xviii. 21. *How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him: But if Baal, then follow him.* Why, Sirs, we need to enquire at this day, when there seem to be strange gods, and strange principles, strange delusions, strange apoftracies from our reformation-work. We need to put it to a trial, and see whether Baal be God, or if the Lord is God. What way shall we try it, say you? You are to try it two ways; 1. By what is past; 2. By what is present.

(1.) By what is *past*. See what the Lord says, in the text here, Isa. xliii. 12. *I have declared, I have shewed, I have saved, when there was no strange God among you.* O let us enquire, Sirs, hath not God shewed himself in Scotland unto our reforming fore-fathers, which carried on a work of reformation in a way of solemn covenanting with God? Did he not declare when there was not such strange gods as there are now? Did he not save, did he not shew his glory, did he not declare his name, did he not manifest himself, so as to pour out of his Spirit from on high at times in remarkable ways? But, to come yet nearer home, hath not God declared his name, and saved his people, by giving sweet experience of his powerful presence among us, even in our day, particularly on solemn sacramental occasions? Hath not the Lord sometimes shewed himself, and discovered his glory in the sanctuary, even here, before there were any such strange gods, such strange principles and opinions, such strange novelties, distractions, and delusions, as now take place?

place*? Hath he not shewed himself? I remember, that at the first communion in Dunfermline, after the Lord brought me in his holy providence to this place, he led me to speak on the back of it in the evening on that word, *The name of the city from that day shall be JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, The Lord is there, Ez. xlvi. 35.* Although many here were not then born, yet there are many people witnesses to attest, that from time to time, from sacrament to sacrament, God hath been pleased to shew forth something of his glory; he saved, he shewed himself, he declared his name, before there were any such strange gods amongst you; therefore, *ye are his witnesses that he is God, that he is the God of Bethel; that he is the same God, the same immutable God.* Whatever changes are now taking place, whatever strange appearances there are on the field, yet know that he is God. *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

(2.) By what respects the *present* time. May it not be said, *Ye are my witnesses?* What way shall it be known at present? I shall allude to a word said, 1 Kings xviii. 24. *Call ye, says Elijah, upon the name of your gods, and I will call upon the name of the Lord: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God.* Let us meditate a little upon this, *The God that answers by fire from heaven, let him be God.* It may be supposed that many of the strange gods answered by strange fire, by wild fire; I say, there seems to be some very strange fire amongst Baal's priests, Baal's prophets here, that had strange effects on them, as ye see, ver. 28. *And they cried aloud, and cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.* Why, there was a fire, the fire of hell in their bosom; their god it seems was a cruel god, he had no mercy on their souls or bodies. Yea, you know it is possible for Satan to transform himself into an *angel of*

* We have had occasion already to unfold what our Author here, and in several of his former discourses alludes to, Sermon. CXXIII, CXXIV, CXXV. The affair was become trying, stumbling, and shaking to many; which, no doubt, was the reason of his so frequently hinting at it.

light; and when he is transformed into an angel of light, his light may also have heat accompanying it; the heat of strong fancy and imagination. How then shall we know what is the fire of God, the fire of the Lord, fire from heaven? I think, we may further allude unto this history, and examine into the matter, particularly in these four respects;

[1.] Then, fire from heaven is that which comes in the way of *acknowledging* of God, as the covenanted God of our fore-fathers; for, as you see it in Elijah's prayer here, ver. 36. *Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel.* Here he acknowledges God, as the covenanted God of their fore-fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The fire then that comes not this way, but rather in a way of rejecting and abandoning our fore-fathers covenanted God, this seems plainly to be strange fire.

[2.] The fire from heaven, it is of such a nature, as it burns up all things that are *combustible* about our sacrifices. It burns up all things about our services, that we are ready to gaze on and trust in. What was the effect of the fire from heaven? ver. 38. *Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.* It left nothing but the sacrifices to be trusted unto; it left nothing to be seen but God, the invisible God. It seems to be strange fire that does not burn up the sacrifices, that does not lick up the water, but leaves something to be gazed on, and removes the proper object of faith; and that makes the object of it the same with the object of sense and imagination; something visible to the eye, something perceptible to the imagination. The fire that does not burn all these things, is strange fire. The fire from heaven burns up all, that there may be nothing to be a ground of faith, but the great, the invisible God; for, true faith is a *seeing him that is invisible.*

[3.] Fire from heaven, is such fire, as inflames men with *zeal, witnessing zeal for God.* It makes them acknowledge that the God of Israel, the God of Abraham,

ham, Isaac, and Jacob, is God; ver. 39. *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.* And true fire from heaven makes people fall a witnessing for God, as the people here did for God, the God of their fore-fathers, that was in covenant with them. To be sure, it appears to be strange fire, that doth not lead people to witness for God, but rather leads people away from witnessing for our covenanted God; who is Scotland's covenanted God and King, and is rather ashamed of that name, and want to bury it.

[4.] The fire from heaven, it fires them with zeal against the *false prophets*; ver. 20. *And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape: and they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*—And whatever was peculiar and extraordinary in this case, I am not to insist on; only, it plainly shews us, that true fire from heaven fills people with zeal for God, and against all the enemies of God, as enemies of his glory; against false prophets and false teachers; against all corruptions and corrupters. Then it must be strange fire in our day that fills people with zeal against these that are witnessing for God, and for the reformation-work, and that makes people cordially embrace and bear with all the intruders and all the corruptions, and all the boars and foxes that are in God's vineyard, with all the thieves and robbers there; and that leads people to a countenancing of them, strengthening of their hands, instead of witnessing against them. This strange fire that is burning here and there through the land, what is it but the fire of hell, mixed with the fire of God's wrath against an apostate generation! And if God be saying to us this day, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*, let us witness for our covenanted God that he is God, that he is King, and that he is our God.

But I would apply the subject next in a word by way of *examination*. Try and examine yourselves whether or not you be fit for witnessing openly at a communion-

nion-table that he is God : whether you be of those who are true, faithful, honest witnesses for him, of whom he says, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*—How shall we know it? Why, if you be true witnesses for him, then,

1. Ye are witnesses *against yourselves*. You are surely witnesses against your own sins ; witnesses before God, and content to be witnesses before the world, with reference to your sinfulness. O you are witnesses that your heart and nature are corrupt ; *That your hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. ; that your hearts are hearts full of wickedness ; that your hearts are a hell full of devils, full of all abominations ; that you are sinners, the chief of sinners. If you are witnesses for God, you are witnesses against yourselves, and all your sins and abominations ; and are loathing yourselves.

2. If ye are true witnesses for God, then you will be ready to witness *for every truth of God, and against every error*, and every thing that tends to dishonour the name of God, that tends to the denying that he is God, in whatever revelation he makes of his name ; *Thou holdest fast my name*, Rev. ii. 13.

3. If ye are witnesses that he is God, your *faith and hope* will rest and depend on this leading truth, this truth of all truths, this centre of all truths, *That he is God* : I say, your faith will terminate and rest upon God the object of faith. He is not the object of fancy or imagination. The object of faith is God, the eternal, invisible God in Christ. It is but a delusive faith, if your faith does not terminate on God. The object of faith is not *Christ* ; but as he is the *Christ of God* ; and it looks to God in Christ. It is not the *word* ; but as it is the *word of God*. It is not the *promise* ; but as it is the *promise of God* : Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God. The object of faith is not the *blood of Christ* ; but as it is the *blood of God*. It is not the *righteousness of Christ* ; but as it is the *righteousness of God*.—Faith looks to God and rests upon a God. The faith and hope of a true believer terminates and rests itself upon this, *That he is God* ; hopes for eternal life in

in him, and from him, because he is God, 1 John v. 11. And if God be giving you his testimony this day, saying, *Ye are my witnesses*, then you will be giving him your testimonial, saying, He is God; he is IMMANUEL, *God with us*; JEHOVAH, *our righteousness*.

4. Your witnessing for God, will be a *practical* witnessing; endeavouring in your conversation, by your profession, by your walk, to glorify God before the world; *Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ*; *stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind, striving together for the hope of the gospel*, Phil. i. 27.

In a word, if you be witnesses for God, you will have the *witness in you*; for, *He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself*, 1 John v. 10.—You have the Spirit of Christ in you: and, indeed, when the Spirit of Christ is in a man, it leads him to a dependence on Christ without him; on Christ in a word, and upon a God in Christ, and to witness, *that he is God*.

I shall now close with a word of *exhortation*. O Sirs, let these that never were witnesses to this great truth, that *God is God*, that the *Lord is God*, O let them bear witness *that he is God*, by coming to Christ, and believing in him; this is to witness, and the leading way of witnessing, that he is God; 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. John vi. 40. *This is the will of God, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life*. And God gives testimony for Christ that he is God, *the true God and eternal life*, 1 John v. 11. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. As we are called this day to believe in the Son of God, so to believe in God and to attest that God is true; for, he that hath received God's testimony concerning Christ, hath *set to his seal that God is true*.

Why, Sirs, if you believe in Jesus, that is the great thing that you are called to, in order to witness for God. If you believe in him, then you witness that God is a God of infinite *wisdom*, providing well for his glo-

ry and your good ; that he is a God of infinite *power*, that supported Christ under the load of infinite wrath, enabling him to satisfy infinite justice, and enabling him to destroy principalities and powers, and conquer death : you will witness that God is a God of infinite *holiness*, and see the glory thereof in Christ's obedience unto death : by believing you will see that he is a God of infinite *justice* ; that he is the infinitely just God. This is to be seen most clearly in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus offered up of himself to the satisfaction of justice. O how justice shined in the man Christ Jesus, when upon the cross, between heaven and earth, deserted of God, the heavens darkened above him, and the earth trembling below him, and he bearing the whole load of wrath, that would have pressed us down for ever and ever ! O you will be witnesses that he is an infinitely *just* God. And also, by believing you will witness he is the *true* and *faithful* God : you will set to your seal to his truth, believing that he is truth, and that his truth is sealed by the blood of Christ ; and that he, in and by death, satisfied all the threatenings of the law, and sealed all the promises of the gospel at once, and so cleared the truth of God in both. In a word, you will witness that God is a *merciful* God, by believing in Christ. You will be a witness to the *grace* of God, as it reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life.

Well, by believing in Christ, you come to bear witness to this truth, *that he is God* ; that he is a God of all glorious attributes and perfections : By rejecting Christ, not coming to him, not believing in him, you deny God ; you make God a liar, instead of being a God of truth ; you make God an impotent Deity, instead of being a God of power ; you make him a cruel tyrant, instead of being a God of mercy : you deny all the attributes of God by refusing to come to our Lord Jesus Christ. You deny God, and you make yourself God. O Sirs, by unbelief you make God no God, you make him nothing at all ; and you make yourselves God, and yourselves all : but by faith in Jesus you will make yourselves nothing, and God to be what

he is, *All and in all*; and unto you *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

Tell me, O sinner, can you receive the record of God concerning his name? *What is his name?* He hath a name bearing relation to you; his name is *the Lord thy God.* He not only says in the covenant of promise, that he will be, *I will be thy God*; but he tells what he is to you, *I am the Lord thy God.* O Sirs, are you able to receive this? May the Lord make you able this day to receive it on the bare word of God, and to drink in this name, that *he is God*, and that he is *the Lord THY God?* Why does he say, *I am the Lord THY God?* Why *yours?* Even because he is IMMANUEL, *God with us*, God with you, God with me; your God, and my God. How may we give God such a name, or define him after this manner, by his relation thus to us? Because we may define him, as he defines himself. Here we are called to witness what he calls himself. He calls himself, *the Lord our God; I am the Lord thy God.* Here the whole of his name, bearing a relation both to himself and us; what he is in himself, and what he is to us, *I am the Lord thy God.* The Lord JEHOVAH has mixed our name and his own together. This is the good news of the glorious gospel, that comes to us, *I am the Lord thy God.* We dare not give him another name, because, as he thus defines himself, so the SON of his bosom defines him this way; when he ascended to heaven, he said, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.* He left his Father's name behind him: he is my Father and your Father; he is my God and your God: *I am the Lord thy God.* It is true, it is a general name, that belongs indefinitely to all the visible church; but if it be received by the *hearing of faith*, then it infers a peculiar privilege, and your special interest in him as your God for ever and ever. Can you therefore receive this name of God, when he says, *I am the Lord thy God?* God knows best how to define himself. Is it the worse for us, that he mixes our name in with his; that he puts us in his name, as he is a God in Christ, saying, *I am the Lord thy God?*

His name is, I AM THAT I AM; and as sure as *I am*, so sure I am *thy God*. *I am that I am*, says it; I am *thy God*, and thy assurance of faith; and of my being *thy God*, is to be founded on the faith of my being what *I am*. As sure as *I am God*, thou may depend upon it, *I am the Lord thy God*.

O Sirs, can you take this name? Can you take it to you upon his bare word? Whatever you are, whatever wicked nature you have, and however greatly you have offended this God, yet when he comes to you this day, with this name and proclamation, *I am the Lord thy God*; I am JEHOVAH thy God, because I am IMMANUEL: he is IMMANUEL, *God with us*; a God for us, and God to us; a God to save us, a God to bless us, a God to be a heaven and happiness to us through all eternity. O! what think you of this name of God? Tell me, O sinner, can you gladly receive this name? *Know you the Lord, that he is God? Not we, but he us made*: not we, but he us saves; not we, but he is God. *Ye shall be as gods*, was the first temptation: the power of it is never broke till you can say, *Not we, but he is God*.—It is he that is God: and he is *the Lord our God*.

O poor soul, are you gladly welcoming this name of God? are you receiving and embracing it? Are you glad that God comes to you with such a name as this? Do you receive, and believe, and take it on God's word, *that he is God*; and being *God*, he is *the Lord, thy God*? Why, then, he is taking you for his witness this day; and he is glad to have your testimonial, in the midst of this atheistical age, when so many are denying God, making themselves and other things to be gods. He is calling you to witness for his name; and if you answer his call, he is marking your name in Zion; for, *when God writes the people, and counts that this man and that man was born there*, he records their names as witnesses for him, saying, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*.

A

DISCOURSE

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

SEEING, on this occasion, you have been hearing what God says to you in these words, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God*; it may, perhaps, be enquired, 1. Why, and upon what *considerations* are you to witness? 2. In what *cases*? 3. How, and by what *means*, and in what *manner* may you do so?

1st, Why, and upon what *considerations* are we to witness?

1. The *command* of God should sway us. We are commanded to *hold fast the form of sound words*, 1 Tim. i. 13.; to *hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering*, Heb. iv. 14. and x. 23. *Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*, 2 Tim. i. 7, 8.

2. You are called to this duty, because it is for the *honour* of God that we be witnesses for him that he is God; and for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that we be witnesses that he is God. God has sworn that to him *every knee shall bow*. By honest and faithful witnessing for him, we bow and pay homage to him.

3. You are called to this, because it is *commendable*. God not only commands, but commends this duty.—We find the church of Pergamos commended for this; *Thou holdest fast my name*, Revel. ii. 13. It was commendable in Paul the apostle, that he had *fought the good fight of faith*. It was commendable in John, that he *confessed the Lord Jesus*, and denied not, but *confessed that he was the Christ*. It was commendable in the church, that *they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*, Rev. xii. 11.

4. You

4. You are called to it by the *example* of our Lord Jesus, who *witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate*: when he asked, *Art thou a King?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest that I am a King, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth,* John xviii. 37. Again,

5. You are called to it from the consideration of the great *advantage* of being his witnesses. O Sirs, what great advantage is it? Why, I shall inform you of seven advantages thereof.

(1.) They who are true witnesses for God and his truth, they are *honoured* of God. As they are not ashamed of him, so he is not ashamed of them. The witnesses spoken of, Heb. xi. it is said of them, *God is not ashamed to be called their God,* verse 16. He owns them; and is not this an advantage?

(2.) He *strengthens* them. This he did to Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 16. *At my first answer no man stood with me; but all men forsook me: verse 7. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.* And is it not a great advantage likewise to his witnesses,

(3.) That he puts honour on them, even *before the world?* Indeed, they are the most hated persons in the world; *Ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake.* Yet the Lord order matters so, that they are honoured, not only by God, but sometimes by men also: *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed,* 2 Sam. ii. 30. Again,

(4.) The advantage of it lies in this, that they came to be *preserved in a day of temptation*; *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,* Rev. iii. 10. How comes it that many have fallen in the hour of temptation at this day? They have been careless about, and have not made conscience to keep the word of Christ's patience. Again,

(5.) It is an advantage to these that are his witnesses, that they are admitted to *communion with him*. The more they witness and declare with the apostle, 1 John i. 1. that *which they have seen and heard, and handled of the word of life,* the more communion they have with

God;

God ; for, after this witnessing for the Lord, it immediately follows, ver. 3. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Again,

(6.) Honest witnessing for Christ gives evidence that they are of God. We read, 1 John iv. 3. *Whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,* [together with all the truths that relate to, depend upon, and are necessarily connected with it, he gives evidence that he] *is of God.*

(7.) It is a great advantage to *ourselves*, and I may add, to *others* also ; for, honest witnessing may excite others to embrace the truth, and confirm other witnesses therein : whereas, not confessing the truth may be *stumbling to the godly*, as Peter's *dissimulation* was, Gal. i. 13.

6. Another reason or motive for encouraging to witness for God, is the great *disadvantages* of not witnessing. I will tell you three disadvantages of not witnessing for the Lord.

(1.) It tends to bring on *temporal* judgments. We read, Jer. ix. 9. after it was said, verse 3. *They are not valiant for the truth upon the earth ;* it is added, *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?* Alas ! what vengeance from heaven is awaiting this generation, that will not witness for God, but rather stand up against him and his cause, particularly his covenanted cause in this nation !

(2.) Another disadvantage is, that as it brings on temporal, so it likewise procures *spiritual* judgments. When people *receive not the truth in love*, God justly gives them up to *strong delusions to believe a lye*, 2 Thes. ii. 11.—And these who do not witness, they expose themselves to *apostasy*. God may justly leave them to *partial* apostasy, as Peter, who denied his master ; or *total* apostasy, as the Jews, who were rejected from being the people of God.—Another spiritual judgment is, that it brings *fore anguish* and *terror to the consciences* of those who refuse to witness for God in their day. There is a word, 1 Tim. vi. 10. *For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they*
have

have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. In the margin it is, *They have been SEDUCED from the faith.* People who have voluntarily erred from the faith, or been seduced by the snares of the time from it, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

(3.) Refusing to witness God brings *eternal* wrath, the wrath of God upon them who continue to reject the testimony of God, and to neglect to witness that he is God, in the several relation he makes of himself to them in his word: *If any man draw back, says God, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. x. 38. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, Prov. xiv. 14. If we deny him, he will also deny us, 1 Tim. ii. 12. As for such as turn aside after their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, Psal. cxxv. 5. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels, Mark vii. 38. No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God, Luke ix. 62. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven, Mat. x. 33.*

7. Another motive may be drawn from Christ's *appearing* for us in heaven; therefore we should be his witnesses on earth. Thus the apostle argues, Heb. iv. 14. *Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. See Heb. x. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

8. Another motive is, the *preciousness of the truths of God* we are called to witness for. What is the great thing you are called to witness? Even to witness *that he is God*; to be witnesses for the truth of God, and the God of truth. Every truth is a part of God's name, and of his word; and though there are many precious truths, yet they are all one thing in God. Our God cannot be divided; therefore, by your refusing to witness for God, in any of the precious truths which

which he has held out to us in his word, you refuse to witness *that he is God*, in this revelation of his name. Every truth is a precious pearl of the Mediator's crown.

2dly, In what *cases* are we to witness? I shall only say a few words upon it. We are sometimes called to witness *publickly*, if God should call us before courts, as in the case of the apostles: and sometimes more *privately*, perhaps to particular persons, to *give every one a reason of the hope that is in you*: sometimes called in *company* to defend the truths of God, and his name, when blasphemed by others; and to do what we can to witness for God. We should endeavour every one to have that for our motto, the apostle speaks of himself, *I am set for the defence of the gospel*. This should be our motto also, *I am set for the defence of the name of my God*, because we are his witnesses that he is God.

There are two or three cases especially wherein we are called to witness for him; namely,

1. In times of *defection*. The neglect of this was complained of, Jer. ix. 3. *They were not valiant for the truth upon the earth*. When many of Christ's disciples *went back, and walked no more with him*: Then said he to the twelve, *Will ye also go away?* John vi. 66, 67. When there are defections from the truth, or any strange errors, or strange apostasies, or strange principles taking place, then we are called to cleave to, and witness for the truth.

2. In times of *doubting*. John bore witness to the truth, when the Jews were not come the length of *denying*, but in a *suspense* about the coming of Christ, John iii. 33. When some of the Lord's children may be in a doubt about such and such a truth, then we are called to witness. Our Lord Jesus says, John v. 33. that *John did bear witness of him*; and it was in a time wherein many were doubting about the truth. We ought to witness for the truth, in order to the fortifying of the faith of those who are ready to waver.

3. We are called to witness, particularly in a day of *temptations*. When there are many snares and temptations to lead us away from the Lord and from the truth, then it is a time of testifying and witnessing. Our

Lord gives us an example of this : whenever Peter began to tempt him to that which was contrary to his name and truth, and glorious design, he says, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Why, can a faint be a Satan? Yes, When he tempts to any strange principles, and to desert the cause of God ; then we may say to a faint, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* In times of temptation we are called to witness for him.

4. In times of *persecution* ; when the cause of Christ is a persecuted cause. You see Peter and John, Acts iv. 8,—12. when they were imprisoned and persecuted, how readily did they witness at such a time before their judges? They told them, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner,* verse 11. When prohibited to preach in Christ's name, they undauntedly reply, *Whether we should obey God or man, judge ye,* ver. 19, 20.

5. In a word, a time when there is *few* to witness, is a time we are called particularly to witness for God. I remember the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. i. 15. after he had said, ver. 8. *Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord* ; then he adds, *All these in Asia have turned away from me : therefore do not ye turn away ; Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.*

3dly, The next question was to enquire, How or by what *means*, and in what *manner* are we to be his witnesses?

[1.] By what *means*. Would you be honest witnesses for God, and witnesses that he is God? I would advise you,

1. To seek the *lively faith*, the *rooted faith of all the truths* ye are called to witness for ; *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,* Rom. x. 10. And as David said, Psalm cxvi. 10. *I believe, therefore I have spoken* : so let this be your way, *I believe, therefore I speak* ; I believe, and therefore witness. I close by faith with such a truth, and therefore witness. Seek to be established in the faith of the truth.

2. Call in the *help of the Spirit of God*, and make use of the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the *word of God*, for the defence of the truth ; for, it is your safety to cleave

cleave to the cause of Christ, whatever be the consequence: let no event be your rule, but let the word of God be your rule. Remember the warning Christ hath given you, John xvi. 1, and 33. verses compared, *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.* Christ warns them of what they might expect, that so they might not be discouraged when trials for the truth come on. Well, *These things have I spoken to you: they shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.* And ver. 33. *These things have I spoken to you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation.*

Again, call in the help of the Spirit of God for *furniture* in order to witnessing-work. What furniture? Even that which is treasured up in the glorious Head. In Christ, the Head, it is to be forthcoming for the members. Christ is anointed with the *Spirit above measure*; *I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*, Isa. xlii. 1. It is that Spirit that is promised to all his members, Isa. lix. 21. *My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever.*—Therefore, O Sirs, call in the help of the Spirit. And,

[2.] As to the *manner* of witnessing. O Sirs, seek of the Lord to help you to witness in the following manner; namely, to witness for the truth *fully*; for all truth, without mincing any of the truths of God: and to witness *freely*; without constraint or compulsion: to witness *openly*, without shame; and to witness *boldly*, without fear; and with *holy courage*: also to witness *meekly*, without pride. It is said, 1 Peter iii. 15. that we are to *give the reasons of the hope within us with meekness and fear*; in the margin it is, *with meekness and REVERENCE*. O Sirs, have a regard and reverence to all these truths ye are called to witness for. Remember, God is in every truth; and when you witness for any truth you witness for God.—Therefore, see that your witnessing be done with reverence and

godly fear. Reverence every truth of God. See that your witnessing be a *humble* witnessing. O! how humbly did John the Baptist witness for Christ, when he witnessed for him, and said, *He that cometh after me is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose!* We ought to witness *uprightly*, without hypocrisy; and out of love to Christ, and zeal for the glory of God, the credit of his cause, and the honour of his truth. Again, O! endeavour to witness *joyfully*; be not disheartened whatever trials you come under: witness, I say, joyfully. It is said, Acts v. 41. *They rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.* We ought also to witness *innocently*, without giving offence, or any just occasion to any to speak evil of us. Again, you should witness *constantly*, without fainting or giving over, till we have finished our testimony; *He that endureth to the end, shall be saved. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.* Lastly, O endeavour to witness *dependently*, without *confidence in the flesh*; depending on the grace of Christ. Though you had as much grace as the apostle Peter, yet, if you depend not on the Lord Jesus, you will, with Peter, deny him; *Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice.* Endeavour to witness dependently on the grace that is in Jesus Christ; otherwise, who knows how soon you may, as it were, be thrown on your back with the temptations of the times, that have carried so many down the stream. Think what a trial the poor apostles were brought unto when Jesus was crucified and laid in the grave; there was no appearance of him as yet, and they began to say, *We thought it was he that should have redeemed Israel,* Luke xxiv. 22.—They began thus to doubt of the great truth they seemed to be established in; this fundamental truth.

This is the time wherein precious truths, and some truths wherein you thought yourselves established, and laid up in your mind, as beyond debate, are now turned controverted points, and debateable questions.—Who would have thought that it would have been debated in Scotland, that our solemn covenanted work

of Reformation, was the word of God ; and that these Covenants were binding and obligatory upon posterity ? Who would have thought that it would have been debated in Scotland, that Christ the King of Zion hath a fixed government in his visible church ? Some great truths, both relating to the doctrine and government of Christ, come now-a-days to be disputed †. Therefore, I say, there is need of close dependence, that you may exonerate yourselves by honest testimony. Now, consider how you will exonerate yourselves at the hand of God and of Christ, who lays no other burden upon you than this, *Hold fast till I come*, Rev. ii. 25. How shall you be exonerated at the hand of men ; at the hand of your witnessing *forefathers*, who transmitted truth pure to us, at the expence of their blood, and of whom many travelled night and day to get the work of Reformation brought to the scripture pattern ; to get Confessions of Faith adapted and conform to the scripture-purity. How shall we be exonerated at their hands, if we in this generation be transmitting nothing to posterity but lumber and trash, instead of precious truth ? How shall we be exonerated at the hand of the *present generation*, or our children and posterity after us ? What will we answer for betraying the trust of reformation-principles and treasures, which God, by our forefathers, left at our door ? If we be not faithful witnesses for God and his truth, and if we leave nothing to our seed and offspring but counterfeits, instead of gold ; poisonous errors, instead of wholesome food ‡. Covenant-breaking Scotland never thinks upon this !

But,

I shall just close with a word particularly to the *people of this congregation* ——— There may be some here of Dunfermline people, that, with many others, have turned their backs on witnessing-work, and have fallen in with the defections of the day, the delusions of the time, and the intrusions of the place. I think the Lord is

† The Reader may see more of these disputed points condescended upon, by consulting Vol. V. p. 357, 425.

‡ This topic may be seen more copiously handled, Vol. V. p. 426. saying

saying to them as the prophet Ezekiel, chap. ii. 4. *They are impudent children and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them, thou shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house) yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.* So I may say to many in Dunfermline, Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, yet they shall know that there hath been a witness among them; I mean, not one witness, the poor man that hath been so long dispensing the word amongst them; but manifold witnesses that God hath against them: they shall know that God hath a manifold witness among them; and God hath been setting up a multitude of witnesses at this occasion against many in Dunfermline: a witness against all profane drunkards, whoremongers, Sabbath-breakers; a witness against every unbelieving hypocrite and legalist; a witness against every backslider, that have turned their backs upon Christ and upon his cause; a witness against every Demas, who hath *forfaken us, having loved the present world*; a witness against every Judas, who betrays the *Son of God with a kiss*, and betrays the cause of Christ; a witness against all and every Elder in Dunfermline, who have deserted their office, and turned their back on the cause that they solemnly engaged in; a witness against every intruder in the parish or presbytery of Dunfermline, that have not *entered in by the door of the chief Shepherd*, opened in the everlasting gospel; a witness against every man and woman in Dunfermline, who have no regard to the *testimony and warnings* I have particularly given, at several times, and read before them, and have allowed to be published, that none may pretend ignorance*.

God

* To unfold this affair a little to the Reader, which our Author here speaks so warmly and affectedly about, it may not be improper to observe, That the General Assembly, 1740. having passed the sentence of *deposition* against eight Ministers, of whom our Author was one, for their faithfully testifying against the prevailing corruptions of the time, and their steadfast adherence to our Reformation principles, several of the inhabitants of Dunfermline, on this occasion, deserted the ministrations of their lawful pastor. The Presbytery of Dunfermline, in order to implement the sentence of the supreme Judicatory,

God, I say, hath been setting up witnesses against all such. Why, whom is he adducing witnesses? Not only the poor man that hath been left so long in the ministry here, but all his brethren associate with him; not only the people of this place, that cleave still to the lawful minister that God hath continued with them, but also God is saying, with reference to Dunfermline, I will bring in among them witnesses against them, witnesses from their neighbours, from all parishes round about Dunfermline, that shall witness, when many in the parish of Dunfermline are *going out*, rejecting the testimony of the day, and the witnessing-work of the day. I will bring into it others from parishes about, to be witnesses in Dunfermline, against Dunfermline, for their apostasy and rebellion against the Lord. And what if the Lord be calling us to say, as in another case the apostle said to the Jews, Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the gospel should be first preached unto you; but in regard, and as far as you reckon yourselves unworthy of eternal life; lo, we turn to the Gentiles:* Even so, it was necessary that the gospel should be preached to you in Dunfermline, and preached by us to you these thirty and two years; and now that the ministry, at last, should be accompanied with a testimony for all the truths that are deserted by the generation: it was necessary that this should be done; and if you reckon yourselves unworthy of it, know it, that lo we turn to another congregation; and turn, as it were, away from the old congregation of Dunfermline, to a witnessing congregation there, that shall witness for God, against all the perfidious, treacherous persons in Dunfermline, that have disregarded all the warnings of God. Consider therefore what you are doing; how many witnes-

appointed his pulpit to be supplied. This induced our Author, at sundry times, to emit three different WARNINGS to his congregation. The first on Sabbath, June 6th, 1742. when Mr. Hardie, at Culross, first took possession thereof. The second was read August 22d, said year, when the Presbytery, in concurrence with some in the parish, had taken some steps towards calling a minister in his room. The third on Sabbath, May 1st, 1743. when intimation was made of the admission of one to be minister in his place, on Thursday thereafter. — See the WARNINGS themselves, at full length, at the end of the Sermons.

ses God has been adducing against you. Consider there are two or three thousand that have come to the table of the Lord at this occasion; some of them, and we hope a good part of them, honest witnesses for God; but they are all, by their profession, witnesses against these that have turned their backs on us and our ministry: they are all professed witnesses against such; and all that are witnesses now, will be brought forth as witnesses against you at the last day, unless you return and repent, and unless the Lord arise, in his infinite favour, in and through Jesus Christ, and have mercy on you. Therefore, O poor soul, seek that this occasion may not be lost; that you may not perish, and be involved, not only in the guilt of your own sins, but also in the public guilt of the sins of the generation wherein you live. O that you would go to God alone, and cry to him, that there may be some saving good done to your soul by this solemnity, that it may not be produced as a witness against you! O Sirs, be restless till you be brought among the number of God's true and honest witnesses, whom he will make honourable mention of, saying, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*

S E R M O N CXXIX.

COVENANTED GRACE FOR COVENANTING WORK*.

DEUT. xxvi. 17, 18.

Thou hast avouched the Lord, this day, to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments.

THE solemnity of this very day hath been great and remarkable, and somewhat exactly parallel to it you have in these words. From the preceding verse, God, by his servant Moses, binds all duties of obedience to his divine commands, upon this people of Israel, by a threefold argument. The *first* is drawn from the *authority of God*, ver. 19. They were not the commands of Moses, but of God: infinite Wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them: *This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes, &c.* The *second* argument is drawn from his being their *covenanted God*, ver. 17. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, to be thy God, &c.* A *third* argument is drawn from their being his *covenanted people*, ver. 18. *And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, &c.*—

* This Sermon was preached at Stirling, December 28th, 1743. in the evening of that day, on which the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY did, with uplifted hands, solemnly renew the NATIONAL COVENANTS.

Here he covenants to make them his peculiar people, his obedient people, that they should keep all his commandments; and farther, verse 19. to make them a *high people*, and to make them *high above all nations which he had made, in praise, and in name, and in honour*; and make them a *holy people*; *That thou mayst be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.* But I confine myself especially to the verses first read.

I know the way wherein some go to work, in commenting upon this, and such like texts, is, as if there were but *one mutual covenant* between God and them here spoken of; whereof *their part* was a promise and oath of *obedience*; and *God's part*, a promise, that upon *that condition* he would do so and for them; and thus turning it to a covenant of works, with stipulation and restipulation. But, *we have not so learned Christ*, nor *the truth as it is in him*, as to conceive it in this manner: it was a gross view of it, this way, that made the most part of that Israel of God, so soon to break all their engagements; they made a *covenant of duty* with God, without *taking hold on God's covenant of grace*, exhibit to them; and hence they so perfidiously brake their covenant: and therefore, when God returned to them, he put them in mind of his covenant which they had forgotten, and put a difference between that covenant of theirs, and his covenant; *Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant in the days of thy youth,—and thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed*; and I will do so and so for thee, *but not by thy covenant*, Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. Whatever peculiar privileges, and temporal blessings, were promised to Israel of old, yet they being all typical of spiritual blessings, and the heavenly Canaan; and however dark this legal Old-testament dispensation was, yet it was a covenant of grace they were under: and hence they were under a special obligation to serve and obey him in a covenant of duty.

In the words, then, you have, more generally, these three things.

1st, Their

1st, Their *covenant of duty* and service to God, wherein they *avouch him to be their God*, and engage to *walk in his ways*, &c.

2dly, The *foundation and ground* of this their covenant of duty, and the grand encouragement they had to enter into it, namely, *God's covenant of grace and promise*, wherein he *avouches them to be his*; and promises to make them a *holy and happy people*: and happy would they all have been for ever, if they all had taken hold of this covenant of promise. But though a *promise was left to them*, yet *many of them entered not* into the earthly Canaan, nor to the heavenly either, *because of their unbelief*, Heb. iii. 19. They were not *all Israel that were of Israel*. They were all avouched to be God's people in an external federal way, as they were a visible church in general; but there was only a *small remnant* that were his people, in a special, internal, spiritual, and distinguished sense, as being true believers, who laid hold on his *covenant of grace*, in order to their being capable to stand to their *covenant of duty*, and so shew themselves to be his dutiful and peculiar people: however, the outward dispensation of the covenant of promise respected them all equally, that they might build their engagement to duty, upon this foundation of God's covenant of grace, wherein alone their furniture for all duty was provided.

3dly, You have in the words the *solemnity* of this twofold transaction, relating to *their covenant of duty*, and *God's covenant of grace*, as the ground and encouragement of it: and the solemnity appears,

1. In the *manner* wherein they assert their covenant of duty, and God asserts his covenant of grace; it is by a *solemn avouching*: they openly own, acknowledge, and confess him to be their God; and he openly owns, acknowledges, and confesses them to be his people.

2. There is a solemnity in the *particularity* of this twofold transaction; they are led to deal with God by *their* covenant, and God with them by *his* covenant, in such a particular way, that they act in a body as *one man*, acting and transacting with that *one only*, the liv-

ing and true God; but with him as a promising God in Christ, covenanting with Christ, leading them to take hold of that covenant, every one in particular for himself, that they may be capable to devote themselves to him and serve him. Hence the words are, *Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and the Lord hath avouched thee to be his people.*

3. There is a solemnity in the *universality* of the matter engaged unto in this twofold engagement; they engage to *walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice*: and, in order hereunto, God in his covenant engages, by his promise, to make them *his*, to make them *holy*, to make them *happy, to do all their work in them and for them.*

4. There is a solemnity in the *date* of this double engagement, *this day*; intimating that a remark is to be put upon the *time* wherein such a solemn thing is transacted; therefore, in the preceding verse, together with this text, *this day* is three times mentioned: *THIS DAY the Lord thy God hath commanded thee*; *THIS DAY thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God*; and *THIS DAY the Lord hath avouched thee to be his people.*

Moses took instruments upon it; and dates his instruments, that *this day* it was done: so we, in the afternoon of *this day*, before all that were witnesses to this work, in the former part of the day, do hereupon take instruments, that *THIS DAY we have avouched the Lord to be our God, and to walk in his ways*; and *THIS DAY the Lord*, by his presence, we hope, and countenance in the work, *hath avouched us to be his servants, and of the number of his peculiar people*, by engaging, in his covenant of grace and promise, to be our God, and to help us to keep all his judgments, and to do them with all our hearts, and with all our souls. This is the alone ground and foundation upon which we have come under any such engagement to him.

The date of the time, *this day*, applied here, both to his engagement, in the *covenant of grace*, and our engagement

agement in the *covenant of duty*, points out the necessary connexion between these two; or the absolute necessity of his engaging for us, in order to our engaging to him; and though his engagement is last mentioned in the text, yet it is the first intended: for, tho' it is ordinary in scripture, that the *duty* is sometimes first named, and then the *means* and *motives* afterwards; yet surely, in the *order of nature*, the means and motives to the duty are first considered, and then the duty practised accordingly. Hence, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return to the Lord, for he will abundantly pardon.* Here the motive is *last* mentioned, but yet it is the *first* thing intended and viewed by the returning sinner, in order to excite him to a compliance with the exhortation, and induce him to return. Thus, Isaiah xlv. 22. *Return to me, for I have redeemed thee*: the motive and argument comes last, *I have redeemed thee*: yet it is first in view; for redeeming love believed, influences the gospel-return; *Return to me, for I have redeemed thee.*

Thus the ground and foundation of our solemn engagement is God's engaging *first* in a covenant of grace to us through Christ; and though this be last here mentioned, it is the first in order of nature and time both, as being the spring and fountain of the former: and if we who are ministers, have been honestly avouching the Lord this day to be our God, and to serve him, it is an evidence that he hath been before-hand with us, avouching us to be his servants, and engaging by promise for us: and, therefore, in accomodation of this subject to the present circumstance, the doctrine I observe from the text, is the following.

DOCT. *That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and to be faithful to our solemn engagements unto him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.*

By our *solemn engagements*, I understand our *vouching the Lord to be our God, and that we will walk in his ways, &c.* By *GOD's solemn engagements*, I understand *his vouching us to be of his peculiar people*: and promising to enable us to keep all his commandments, and to make us holy and happy: and because, by these arguments drawn from God's being Israel's covenanted God, and hence their being his covenanted people, Moses binds all the duties of obedience to God's commands upon them; therefore, I say, that this is a strong argument and encouragement to be firm and faithful to our engagements.

I hope I need not stand upon the confirmation of the truth of it; the Preface to the Ten Commandments teacheth us this doctrine; "That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments." We are bound to vouch them, to know and acknowledge him to be the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer; we are bound to serve and obey him: which is much the same with this doctrine I am upon.

In speaking to it, through divine assistance, following the order of the text, I would essay these things.

- I. Touch a little at the engagement of a *covenanted people* here, their vouching God.
- II. At the engagement of a *covenanted God*, his vouching them.
- III. Touch at the *solemnity* of these engagements, both of his and theirs.
- IV. Prove the doctrine by scripture and reason, *That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, brings us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and be faithful unto our solemn engagements to him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.*
- V. To make some *application* of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak of the engagement of a *covenanted people*: they are expressed in the first verse of the text,

text, *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, &c.* Where we may observe,

1st, The nature of this engagement; it is an *avouching*; that is, a solemn confessing and acknowledging the name of God, according to that word, Psa. cxlvii. 12.

*The Lord praise, O Jerusalem;
Zion, thy God confess.*

And it is confessing him with the mouth, flowing from a believing in him with the heart; *For with the heart men believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,* Rom. x. 10.

2^{dly}, Observe the matter of this engagement; which consists of two general points.

[1.] A solemn *profession of faith*, or of laying hold upon God's covenant of grace; that is, an *avouching the Lord to be thy God*. The foundation of this claim we have to him as our God, is not only the command of God, saying, *Thou shalt have no other God before me*; and thereby requiring us to "know and acknowledge him to be the Lord our God and Redeemer:" but also his *promise*, saying in his covenant, *I will be thy God*; and a declaration of his name, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*. This is his name: and when we take hold of this name, we not only acknowledge his *sovereignty over us*, as THE LORD; but also his *propriety in us*, as OUR GOD; otherwise we tear asunder, and rend to pieces his name, which is *the Lord thy God*; by which he declares upon the matter, *As sure as I am the Lord, so sure am I thy God*. Here is the great name of this covenanting God in Christ. We have no other warrant, but one and the same, to acknowledge his *sovereignty over us*, as *the Lord*; and to acknowledge his *relation to us*, as *our God*. And shall we confess the one part of his name, and not the other? Or rather, shall we acknowledge the most awful, and reject the most amiable part of it? Wo would be to us for ever, if he be *the Lord*, and not *our God*! But our everlasting welfare lies in this, that he is *the Lord our God*: his name

name is, I AM THAT I AM; and when he explains this name to us, he says, *I am the Lord thy God*. O solid everlasting foundation, for the assurance of faith! As sure as I AM, so sure *I am the Lord thy God*.

Now, here is the chief and leading matter of our engagement, our taking hold of God's covenant of grace, or of God as our covenanted God in Christ, and avouching him to be our God; and so to be our righteousness and our strength; our *righteousness*, that we may stand justified in him, as JEHOVAH, *our righteousness*; and our *strength*, that we may be *sanctified* in him, and have ability and furniture for our work and warfare from him. And so our avouching the Lord to be our God, is also a saying, *We will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and his only*, Pſal. lxxi. 16. Hence,

[2.] The next general, in the *matter* of the engagement, is a solemn *profession of obedience*, or a resolution, in the name and strength of this our God, *To walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice*. Here is a five-fold expression of what may be supposed to be one and the same thing, but yet under distinct considerations: and so,

1. *To walk in his ways*, or an engagement to do so, may import, a regard to his laws, as they are the *beaten path*, wherein he wills all his people continually to go on, by a progressive motion; and the ways wherein alone they can expect to meet with him, and enjoy his company and fellowship.

2. An engagement to *keep his statutes*, may import, a regard to his laws, as they are *statute* and *ordained* in the court of heaven, to be a standing and established *rule of faith* and *practice* unto us.

3. An engagement to *keep his commandments*, may import, a regard to the same laws of God, as they have a *stamp of divine authority* on them; we engage to regard them, as they have engraven upon them the authority of a commanding God.

4. An engagement to *keep his judgments*, may import, a regard to the same laws, as they are the *result of infinite*

finite wisdom, or as they have engraven upon the image of God, as a *God of judgment*, or whose *understanding is infinite*. And whereas these are all spoke of in the plural number, namely, *ways, statutes, commandments, and judgments*, it imports an engagement and resolution to observe *all things whatsoever he hath commanded*, Matth. xxviii. 28. without reckoning any thing too little or small, that hath his authority stamped upon it; for, *whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven*, Matth. v. 19. It imports, then, a regard to whatsoever truth God hath revealed, or duty he hath enjoined in his holy word, which principally teaches us, “What we are to believe concerning God, and what “duty God requires of us.”

5. An encouragement to *hearken to his voice*, as in the text, may import, a regard to the same statutes, commandments, and judgments, as they are the *voice of God* from heaven, to us upon earth; which is called, *The more sure word of prophecy, whercunto we do well to take heed, as unto the shining light in a dark place*, 2 Peter i. 19. A more sure word than any other voice from heaven; yea, more sure than that voice that came from the excellent glory, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*, Mat. iii. 17. To hearken to his voice may also import, a due regard to the voice of God, as in his word, so in his providence, explained by, and in an agreeableness to his word, the “only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy “him.” Hence we are to hear and regard the voice of God in all his dispensations: in his *mercies*, with thankfulness; and in his *judgments*, with reverence. We are called to hearken to him both in his word and rod; *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it*, Micah vi. 9.

In a word, these expressions import a resolution to cleave to *all the ordinances* he hath established among them; for, *He gave his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he dealt not so with any nation*, Psalm cxvii. 19, 20.

Thus it includes a solemn engagement to adhere to all the degrees of reformation once attained to ; and so of the same kind with that which we this day have been called unto.

II. The *second* thing proposed is, To touch a little at the engagement of our *covenanting* God in Christ, by a covenant of grace, which is the ground and foundation of this forefaid covenant of duty. This is exprefsed in the second verfe of the text ; and, *The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promifed thee, &c.* Here let me obferve alfo the *nature* and *matter* of this engagement.

1st, The *nature* of it ; it is his *avouching* : and that is his solemn confefling and acknowledging us to be his peculiar people ; which we are to conceive of in a way agreeable to the glorious majefty of God we have to do with, who, fince our fall in Adam, the firft covenant-head, cannot tranfact with us immediately, but in a new covenant-head, *viz.* the Lord Jesus Christ, who was *given to be the covenant of the people* ; and in whom the covenant of grace ftands faft. God could not promife to be *our God*, or to make us *his people*, but upon honourable terms ; terms confiftent with his infinite dignity ; terms vindicating the honour of God's holinefs, declared in the precepts of the law that we broke, and fatisfying the juftice of God, declared in the threatening of the law that we incurred : and becaufe God, in a confiftency with his declared purpofe, could not engage to be any thing to us, but a *confuming fire* to deftroy us, except upon thefe honourable terms ; therefore he fent his eternal Son, according to the eternal concert between the Father and him, to affume our nature, and come into our law-room, to be *the Lord our righteoufnefs* ; and his engagement to do and fuffer in our room, is previous, not only to any engagement of ours, in a covenant of duty and gratitude, but previous to God's engagement to be a God to us, or to make us his people : and Chrift having both come under and fulfilling his engagements, with his whole heart and foul, faying, *Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will,*
O my

O my God, &c. See how the great God notified this to the world, some times with a *behold*; *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold* Isa. xl. 1.: some times with a *who is this?* Jer. xxx. 21. *Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord.* And, as the product of this engagement of Christ in our room, God not only came under a new engagement to Christ, and a new relation to him, to be *his God and Father*, upon this new-covenant footing, Psalm lxxxix. 26.; but also under a new engagement and relation to us in him, as *our God and Father* in him, John xx. 17.: and therefore it immediately follows, in the forecited Jer. xxx. 22. *You shall be my people; and I will be your God.* And hence,

2dly, The matter of this engagement, in and through Christ Jesus, is,

1. To make us *his people*: or to avouch, confess, and acknowledge us as his *peculiar* people, as he hath promised us in Christ Jesus, *In whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God*, and the promise, *You shall be my people*, necessarily imports the other, *I will be your God*; for, our relation to him, as his people, presupposes his relation to us, as our God in Christ. God appropriating us to himself, and we appropriating God to ourselves; he publicly owns us to be his, and we publicly own him to be ours. His acknowledgement of us to be his peculiar people, imports, that as we are not our own, but his, so we are honoured with peculiar privileges; to be the people of his peculiar *choice*; *Being set apart for himself*: the people of his peculiar *delight*; *His delight are with the sons of men*: the people of his peculiar *desire*; *He shall greatly desire thy beauty*: the people of his peculiar *pleasure*; *For the Lord takes pleasure in his people*: they are the people of his peculiar *pasture*; he feeds them *among the lilies*. In a word, to be his friends, his favourites, his jewels, his crown, his glory; *I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.*

2. The matter of his engagement in Christ unto us, in a covenant of promise, is to make us a *holy* people. This is both the end and design of his covenant of grace

and promise; and it is the end and design of his bringing us under a covenant of duty and gratitude, that we should *keep all his commandments*. This is expressly promised in his covenant of grace; *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. And though we are bound no farther to do, than he hath bound himself by promise to enable, (whence we go forth depending only upon the grace and strength of our promising God) yet, for exciting us to our duty, and strengthening our hands therein, God hath called us to *vow, and pay our vows to him*: and so there is, upon the matter, a superadded obligation lying upon us, by our covenant of gratitude and duty; which, though it binds us to nothing but what we were materially, antecedently, or authoritatively bound to before, by the word of God; yet, corroboratively, it strengthens the obligation with the solemnity of an oath; upon which instruments are taken, such a day and date, *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, and the Lord hath avouched thee this day*. Hence,

III. The *third* thing I proposed to touch a little at, was, The *solemnity* of these engagements; both of *ours*, in a covenant of gratitude; and of *his*, in a covenant of grace.

1. The solemnity of the *people's* engagement.—Here I shall only observe, as in the explication, there is a solemnity in the *way* and *manner* of their covenanting; it is in a way of open *avowing* and *avouching* the Lord to be their God.—There is a solemnity in the *particularity* of their appropriating God to themselves; *Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God: THY God*.—There is a solemnity in the *universality* of the engagement; it relates to *all things* imported in keeping his *statutes, commandments, judgments, and hearkening to his voice*; as already explained.—And there is a solemnity in the *day* and *date* of the instruments taken upon the whole: *THIS DAY thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and to serve him*.

2. The solemnity of *God's* engagement here, in a covenant of grace, is equally great.—There is a solemnity in the *way* and *manner* of his engagement; it is in a way of open *avowing* and *avouching* his relation to, and propriety in them.—There is a solemnity in the *particularity* of the choice he openly makes of them, as his peculiar people.—There is a solemnity in the *universality* of the promise in Christ Jesus unto them, as it respects *all things* that he calls them to engage unto, namely, the keeping of *all his commandments*. In Christ, our *justifying head*, they are all kept already as a covenant, and kept perfectly; he hath *finished the work the Father gave him to do*: but in him, as our *sanctifying head*, we are called to keep them gratefully and obedientially; not as a rule of *justification* and *acceptance*, (for, *We are accepted only in the Beloved*;) but as a rule of *sanctification* and *obedience*: and, for this end, he hath promised his *grace to be sufficient for us*; *his strength to be made perfect in our weakness*: and his promise in the gospel extends to all things commanded in the law as our duty.—And lastly, there is a solemnity in the *day* and *date* of God's engagement to and for them, upon which also instruments are taken by Moses, the typical Mediator between God and Israel: even so by Jesus Christ, our true Mediator between God and us, may I say, instruments are taken, that God's covenant of grace, for our behoof, is dated the same day, the same time with our covenant of gratitude with him; and it is well for us that these go hand in hand together: which leads me,

IV. To the *fourth* thing proposed, which is, to shew, *That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, in his covenant of grace, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and to be faithful to our solemn engagements to him in our covenant of duty.* For clearing and evincing this, let it be considered,

[1.] We are by nature *without God in the world*, and highly guilty before God, through the breach and violation of the covenant of works; and, having broken our credit, God cannot trust us, nor enter immediately
into

into any covenant again with us, nor suffer us to enter immediately into any covenant with him, but only in and through a Surety: therefore, the covenant is not made with us immediately, but with Christ; *I have made a covenant with my Chosen*, Psalm lxxxix. 3. We were never proper parties in that covenant, nor could ever subscribe to it as parties; but only as consenters in a day of power. Therefore, God's covenant of grace is a thing quite distinct from, and yet the ground and foundation of our covenant of gratitude and duty towards him, that hath provided such a well-furnished, new-covenant head for us.

[2.] Consider, *we are by nature without strength*: having lost our God, we have lost our strength and ability to do any service acceptable to God; therefore, in vain would we promise and swear to serve him in a covenant of duty, if he had not first given his word and oath in a covenant of grace, that he would be our God and our strength, who *gives power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength*.

[3.] Consider, that God exhibiting himself to us in a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under a *manifest obligation* both to *come under* and to be *faithful to our solemn engagements*, in a covenant of gratitude and duty towards him.

1. *Gratitude* itself obliges us to promise ourselves to him that hath promised himself to us; solemnly to avouch ourselves to be his who solemnly avouches himself to be ours. How should he regard our fits and starts at his service, if we would not resolve, through his grace, to be his fixed, settled, and engaged servants? As in gratitude, so,

2. In point of *ingenuity*; we can do no less, since he hath the best right to us: if he hath *loved us, and given himself for us*, we ought to love him, and give ourselves to him. Also,

3. In point of *equity*; it is requisite, seeing he hath such a right to us, and shews such mercy on us, that we come under engagements to him again. *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God,*

God, which is your reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1. It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, Luke ii. 22. that Joseph and Mary, *When the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.* Was our Immanuel presented to God in our room! And is it not equal that we, through his grace, present ourselves to him? Again,

4. In point of *evidence*, for shewing that we are interested in the covenant of grace; and for shewing the sincerity of faith in it, and love to the Mediator of it, and concern for his glory, we are obliged to give ourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude; for, *grace shall be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, Eph. vi. 24. Further,

5. In point of *honour* done to God, and for glorifying him on earth, and before the world, we are obliged openly to avouch him that avouches us; *Zion, thy God confess.* And as we ought to glorify God by *making*, so by *keeping* covenant with him: but still we are to beware of confounding his covenant of grace with our covenant of duty, by thinking the former is broken when the latter is broken. Finally,

6. In point of *interest*; the covenant of grace promises unspeakable advantage to them that are faithful engagers in a covenant of gratitude, and in a way of *taking hold of his covenant*; for, to such there is a promise, Isa. lvi. 7. *Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar.* There is nothing more pleasant and acceptable unto God; for, *Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?* It is spoken of Christ, the great and first engager, whose solemn engagement in a covenant of grace, God declares his acceptance of, with a *Who is this?* But then it takes in all the faithful engagers, who come in at his back, and declares their faith and love by a covenant of gratitude and duty. But then,

[4.] Consider, that *every thing* in and about a covenant

venant of grace, binds and obliges us to a covenant of gratitude, and to stand faithfully to it.

1. The *order* of the covenant binds us; it is *well-ordered in all things*: and this one part of the order of it, that *duty* follows upon *privileges*. The order of the covenant of works was indeed first *doing*, and then *life advantage* by it; but the covenant of grace promises life and salvation, God in all his fulness to be ours; and then follow all the duties of gratitude.

2. We are bound to gratitude and duty by the *God* of the covenant; the first leading promise of it is of God himself, *I will be thy God*; therefore thou shalt be mine.

3. We are bound thus by the *Mediator* of the covenant; he is the Surety, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant; and it *stands fast in him*, that we may stand fast to him.

4. We are bound by the *Spirit* of the covenant; he is promised in these words, Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.* For what end? Why then it is said, *They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the waters courses.* Then shall one say, *I am the Lord's, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

5. We are bound by all the *promises* of the covenant; therefore it is said, *Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

6. We are bound by all the *blessings* of the covenant; light, life, liberty, strength, and comfort, are blessing thereof to be bestowed for this very end, that we may be in case to glorify God, by a solemn dedication of ourselves and our service to him. See 1 Pet. ii. 9. *We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* Again,

7. The *blood* of the covenant is binding blood; it was sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God: it is justice-

justice-satisfying and sin-pardoning blood; and when this blood is sprinkled on the conscience, it is cementing blood for binding us to God, and to grateful acknowledgment of him.

8. The *oath* of the covenant is a binding oath; God swore to Christ and said, *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lye unto David, his seed shall endure for ever*, Psa. lxxxix. 35, 36. It is an oath to him relating unto us, and binding us to swear allegiance of gratitude, and grateful service to him that hath interposed his oath in our behalf.

9. The *holiness* of the covenant is a binding thing; God hath *commanded his holy covenant*; and one of the great ends and designs of it is, that his peculiar people might have this name written upon them, in letters legible by all the world, *Holiness to the Lord*. See Jer. xxxii. 4. Ezek. xvi. 18, 19, 20. Finally,

10. The *perpetuity* and *immutability* of the covenant of grace is a binding thing; it stands always steadfast and immoveable, and therefore obliges us to be *steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, and in the duties of gratitude towards him, who is *the Lord and changes not*, and is faithful to his promise to us; and therefore we are bound to be faithful to our promise to him.

In a word, his *grace* binds us to gratitude, and his *love* should constrain us to his service.

V. The *fifth* thing proposed, was, To make some *application* of the subject. Many inferences might be deduced from this doctrine.

1. We may see the *danger of every legal method of covenanting with God*, whereby people come under a covenant of duty and solemn engagements to serve God, and resting upon their vow, promise, resolution, and covenant; while yet they were never acquainted with, nor laid hold upon God's covenant of grace. No wonder than their building fall to the ground, when it is not erected upon this sure foundation. It is possible some serious persons make a covenant with God, and think they do it with all their heart, and in the

strength of promised grace ; but then their dependence is more upon their covenant they made with God, than upon the covenant made with Christ ; more upon their promises to God, than upon God's promise to them through Christ : and so, upon every failure, they plunge themselves into a mire of discouragement, disorder, and confusion. Legal ways of covenanting have been the ruin of many souls : as the old covenant of works is a broken covenant ; so all legal covenants influenced by the old legal spirit, will be broken covenants : they are a bed too short for any to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow to wrap himself in. Again,

2. Hence we may see the *kindness of God* to these *covenanting lands*, in that, though they *broken and forgotten* their covenants of duty to God, yet God hath not broken, nor forgotten his covenant of grace towards them, but hath graciously reserved a remnant in the land to bear witness for God, that he is yet our covenanting God. No doubt, when this time hundred years, these lands came under a Solemn League and Covenant, and this land came under National Covenants also, avouching the Lord to be their God, many went about that work only in a legal way, and in a formal, carnal way, depending upon their covenant and solemn engagement ; and so came of it : it hath been broken and burnt, laughed at and ridiculed, and buried in the grave of oblivion ; for which God is threatening *a sword to avenge the quarrel of it*. However, we have reason to think, that there was a number of honest covenanters, who, when they avouched the Lord to be their God, and promised obedience to him, did it in the faith of his avouching them to be his people and in a way of trusting to his covenant of grace and promise, and not to their own covenant and engagement : therefore, however we and our fathers have sinned, and forgotten our covenant of duty to God, yet God hath not forgotten his covenant of grace and mercy ; and therefore hath this very day, set up a number of living witnesses openly to profess their remembrance of his
cove-

covenant of grace, and openly to renew our covenant of duty. And though this our covenant, that we have through grace begun to renew, should prove also in process of time, to be again a broken covenant, by us or our posterity, and we should forget that we have avouched him to be our God; yet, in so far as we are helped, we hope to go about this work in a dependence upon, and on the warrant of God's covenant of promise to be forthcoming for us: we may therefore take it as a token for good, that whatever be the effects, God will remember his covenant of grace and mercy towards us and this land, and that he will not forget that he hath avouched us to be his covenanted people.

But, leaving other inferences, I come to close with an *address* to two sorts of persons before me, namely, 1. To to those who have this day been avouching the Lord to be their God. 2. To all that have been witnesses.

1st, I would address myself, in a few words, to my dear and reverend brethren, including myself among them, however unfit I am for such a task; yet, since you have put this exercise upon me, I presume to put you and myself in mind of three things*. 1. Let us consider what *we* have been doing this day. 2. What *God* hath been doing this day. 3. What is *incumbent* upon us from this day while we live.

1. My dear brethren, What have *we* been doing? We have been *avouching the Lord this day to be our God, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and to hearken to his voice.*

We have professed this day, that we will have no more ado with *idols*; that we will have no other God but the living and true God: that this world and the god of this world, and the lusts of the world, shall never be our Gods; but only the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and, upon this profession, we have taken instruments before God, men and angels, that this day we have done it.

* During this *address* to the Brethren, they all rose up and stood till it was over.

We have professed, that we have parted with our *self-righteousness*, and closed with Christ, as *the Lord our righteousness*, and esteem our own righteousness as dung; that we have taken hold of God's covenant of grace, and of the Mediator of it, as our only strength, our only Saviour and salvation: whereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we have *gifted ourselves*, and our all to the Lord, and have taken the Lord Jehovah for our all, in time and through eternity: and thereupon have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we will *walk with God*, in a way of duty towards God and man; that we will not live in the neglect of any known duty, nor in the commission of any known sin; but, through grace, *keep ALL God's statutes, commandments, and judgments, and hearken to the voice of God*; that we will be faithful in our ministerial work, and walk exemplarily before our people, as *he-goats before the flock*: and hereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we, according as it is given to us of grace, will *suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, if we be called to it; and that we will be content, not only to be bound, reproached, persecuted, and imprisoned, but even to *die for him*: and when our name and honour, and Christ's come in competition, we will be content that our honour be laid in the dust, that his honour may be advanced, and his name exalted: and hereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have made this profession.

We have professed, that we are willing to be *instruments in his hands*, to lift up the *crown royal* of our IMMANUEL, that hath been so long profaned upon the ground, and instruments of reviving has long-buried work of Reformation; and that, through his grace, we will appear more and more for him, and his oppressed cause, truth, and heritage, notwithstanding of whatever oppositions are laid in the way; and that we shall

be in nothing terrified by our adversaries : and hereupon instruments are taken in heaven and earth, that this day we have done it.

But, that we be not discouraged, disheartened in such great work, let us consider,

2. What *God* hath been doing this day, and that he is as solemnly engaged for us as we are for him ; for, *the Lord hath avouched us this day to be his peculiar people ; as he hath promised us, and that we should keep all his commandments.* Our being led and determined to make such a confession and acknowledgement, and avouching of him this day, is a proof and evidence that he hath been here making a solemn confession, acknowledgement, and avouchment of us.

He hath confessed, professed, and acknowledged, that he is *our God*, which is presupposed to his avouching us to be his people or servants ; and this he hath done in the declaration of his name, *I am the Lord thy God* ; and in the publication of his covenant, *I will be thy God* : whereupon, by his allowance, I hope we have taken instruments, that this day he hath done it.

He hath professed and acknowledged, that we are his *peculiar servants*, whom he hath called forth to serve him in very peculiar circumstances ; and that therefore, for our peculiar work, he will give us peculiar aid ; that *he will not let us go a warfare at our own expence* ; but that *his grace shall be sufficient for us* : and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he has done it. Again,

In his avouching us to be his, according as he hath promised to us in his covenant of grace, he hath professed and acknowledged, *that he will be surety for us for good*, and be forthcoming for all that we have engaged to in our covenant of duty, and gratitude, knowing *that without him we can do nothing.* And that only *by him strengthening us, we can do all things* ; therefore he hath promised *that his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness* ; whereupon, by faith in his promise we take instruments that this day he hath done it. Again,

He hath, by avouching of us, confessed and acknowledged, that it is his *will* we should and his *promise* we should *keep all his commandments*: he hath not extended or enlarged the obligations of duty upon us, without extending and enlarging the encouragement and furniture for it; for, when he declares this is his will, saying, *This is the will of God, even our sanctification*; he says also, *This is his work, I am the Lord that sanctifieth you, and that worketh in you both to will and to do: I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes*: and hereupon, I hope, we are taking instruments in his own hand, which is the best hand, that this day he hath done it, by avouching us to be his. Again,

By avouching us to be his, as he hath promised to us in his covenant of grace, he hath confessed and acknowledged, that he will make *all his promises good*, according to all our necessities. If, in his *providence*, he says, *Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves*; in his *promise* he says, *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am thy God*. If his *call* to us is, *Go and teach all nations*, his *promise* is also, *Lo I am with you always to the end of the world*: and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he hath done it.

In a word, God hath come under a *bond* and *engagement* to us this day, and his bond is, in another sort, more *firm* than ours; his is the *bond of an everlasting covenant* but ours is a *mutable covenant*, lasting no farther than as it hath a relation to his covenant of promise, and is maintained by it. We may break our covenant with him, but he cannot break his covenant with us. He hath infinitely more to lose than we, if he should break his word; for his honour is engaged, his name and glory is at the stake; and *what will he not do for his great name?* Therefore, if we have taken instruments upon his covenanted engagement and avouchment this day, he will never allow us to withdraw our instruments but allow us to plead it at his heavenly court, his throne of grace, from this day and forward. Therefore I would, in a word, shew,

3. What is *incumbent* upon us from this day and foreward. I sum up all in one advice. If we would be faithful to our solemn engagement this day, *let us live by the faith of God's solemn engagement this day*, for his engagement to us in a covenant of grace, is the ground of our engagement to him in a covenant of gratitude: therefore, let us never depend upon our own solemn engagement this day, but upon God's solemn engagement to us this day, in his covenant of promise.

From this day let us depend upon his *covenanted Spirit*, his promised Spirit; for, by the power of his Spirit, the work is begun and must be carried on; *This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6.* Let us rest on his word, that said, *I will send the Comforter, John xvi. 7.*

From this day let us depend upon his *covenanted counsel and conduct*; for he hath said, *I will lead the blind in ways they know not, and in paths which they have not trode, Isa. xl. 16.* Let us trust in him, that he will *guide us by his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory.* We have many proofs of his making darkness light before us, and crooked things straight; let us therefore still hope in his word.

From this day let us depend upon his *covenanting presence*; that when we *go through fire or water he will be with us, Isa. xliii. 2.* and bring us *through fire and water to a wealthy land.* Let us bless him, that hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5.* Many will be against us, but if God be with us, and for us, no matter who can be against us, *Rom. viii. 31.*

From this day let us depend upon his *covenanted blessing*; for he hath said, *From this day will I bless you, Hag. ii. 19.* From what day was it? Why, in the first chapter, God complained of that generation, that they still put off temple-building work, saying, *The time is not come to build the Lord's house*; just like this generation, that have been saying more than fifty years, It is not time to renew our solemn Covenants, or revive a

Reformation-work ; but God stirred up a remnant in the days of Haggai, who laid the foundation of the house of the Lord. And now, says the prophet, Consider, *from this day* ; and again, Consider, *from this day*, verse 15, 18, 19. and a third time, Consider, *from this day*, even *from this day will I bless you* : from this day men may curse you ; but *from this day will I bless you*. Let this encourage us to faithfulness against all discouragements from without. We may depend upon his promised blessing in life and death : *his blessing maketh rich* ; and hath more unsearchable riches comprehended in it, than men or angels can tell. It may encourage us to follow him, whithersoever he goeth ; and to be faithful to our engagement ; for in this way his blessing will follow us, through death and the grave, to the glorious appearance of our Master in the clouds of heaven : *For, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. v. 4. In this faith let us stand fast, depending upon him that hath said, *From this day will I bless you*.

So far, I hope, my dear brethren will allow this address to them.

2dly, I would address myself in a short word to all that have been *witnesses* to the solemnity of *this day* : some of you are friends to this work, and some of you are enemies.

(1.) To you that are *friends*, I have two words to offer, if you be indeed the friends of Christ and his cause ; friends to a covenanted work of Reformation.

1. From what you have seen and heard this day, you may take *witnesses* and take *instruments*, that God is yet the *covenanted God of Scotland* ; though a covenanted people have departed from him, yet our covenanted God hath not quite departed from us. We forgot our covenant of duty, but God hath not forgot his covenant of mercy ; and therefore hath mercifully revived his work in the midst of the years. Before the year 1643. was at an end, God brought these lands under a solemn League and Covenant, besides our National Covenants at other times ; but these have been broken,

broken, burnt, and buried, and trampled upon; yet now, before the year 1743. is at an end, God hath begun to set up a memorial of that reformation-work that was carried on by a solemn covenanting, from time to time: and therefore take instruments, from *this day and date*, that he hath *not left himself without a witness*, and that *he will yet return and leave a blessing behind him*, and repair all the breaches that have been made upon the carved work of his house, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof; and that he will yet be *as the dew unto Israel; and make us revive as the corn, and grow as the lily, and cast forth our root as Lebanon*.

2. From what you have seen and heard *this day*, and at this time, you may learn, that, when *God's call* to this *covenanting work* shall come to *your door*, you need not be afraid to avouch him solemnly to be your God; for, he will not be behind you, but will avouch you as solemnly to be his people. If you take hold of his covenant of grace, you need not fear to enter into a covenant of gratitude and duty; for the grace of his covenant will carry you through all the duties of your covenant: he will not be a day behind you; for the day that you avouch *him*, that day will he avouch *you*; yea, his avouching of you goes foremost, for he hath prefaced his commands with it, *I am the Lord thy God*. But when he calls us to such solemn work, he delays his open avouching of us, till once we have openly avouched him. Think it not enough, that your hearts have joined in this work with us this day; for though it is well, if your hearts have closed with God's covenant of grace, and you have devoted yourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude, if it be only between God and you, this may be your safety: but is there not something farther incumbent on you, for reaching the end of God's *declarative glory*, when that hath been so much darkened in this day? It must come to an open avouching of God, if we would glorify him before the world, or confess him before men, in the hope of being confessed by him in the great day. When *God*

appears in his glory, and builds up Zion, and bears the prayer of the destitute, and looses his prisoners: what end does God propose by all this? See it, Pſal. cii. 21. It is,

*That they in Zion may declare,
The Lord's moſt holy name;
And publiſh in Jeruſalem
The praiſes of the ſame.*

Therefore, let us pray for the accompliſhment of that word, Zeph. iii. 6. *Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, and ſerve him with one conſent.* But,

(2.) I would next addreſs myſelf to you who are *enemies*, and have no good will to ſuch work as this, of avouching the Lord to be your God. I have a word to ſay to you; and it is in ſhort a very awful one. You hate to come under engagements to ſerve the Lord, and ſure I am you are not ſerving ſuch a good maſter as he is. You are ſerving the God of this world, and rejecting our God and maſter. Our Maſter is a Saviour, but your maſter is a deſtroyer; ours is a Redeemer, but yours is a murderer: your carnal mind is enmity againſt God, and againſt the work of God, and the city of God; but know, that *God will make Jeruſalem a burdensome ſtone for all people; all that burden themſelves with it ſhall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered againſt it,* Zech. xii. 3. You that hate to be engaged for God and his cauſe, what if I muſt tell you, that God is engaged againſt you? He is engaged by promiſe to Chriſt, *that he will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him,* Pſal. lxxxix. 23. Yea, I muſt tell you, that ſince this is a ſolemn inſtrumenting day, we muſt take inſtruments againſt you, if you remain ſlighters and rejecters of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and reſuſe to pay allegiance to Zion's King. We hereupon take inſtruments againſt you, that *this day* we have been avouching him to be our God, and promiſing through his grace to ſerve him; and *this day* you have been rejecting

ting him, and are resolving to continue in the service of the devil, the world, and your lusts. Alas! How dreadful is your case, if God be taking instruments against you, saying, *This day* you have rejected ME, and *this day* I have rejected you; your souls abhor ME, and my soul abhors you! If this be his *farewel* word to you, then I will tell you what will be the *last* word that ever you will hear him say, even, *Depart from me, ye cursed to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!* In that *great day*, you must answer for what you have seen and heard *this day*, by the recognition of conscience. Then this day will be 2 witnesses against you on that day: and we who are professing to be witnesses for God, must be witnesses against you, that we avouched him, and you avoided, and turned your back upon him.

But since it is not yet come to the last day with you; nor is God come yet to his last word, so long as the day of grace lasts; therefore hearken you this day to his word of grace; for, *now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* We make, in our Maker's name, an offer of him to you; yea, he makes an offer of himself, saying, *Whosoever will let him come.* O Sirs, *will y u go with this man*, who is IMMANUEL, *God with us, and God for us?* We have avouched him this day to be our God; and you have as good right and warrant to avouch him to be yours, as ever we had: and tho' you should not do it with the outward solemnity of your hands lifted up to him, at this time, yet we we call you in his great name, to do it with the inward solemnity of your hearts lifted up to him; for he hath come down to you in a declaration of his new-covenant name, as well as to us, saying, *I am the Lord thy God.* He speaks to you not only authoritatively, saying, *I am the Lord;* but most affectionately, as a Saviour, *I am THY God.*

Well, Sirs, will you not this day avouch him, and avow and acknowledge him to be the Lord your God and Redeemer? Does he claim relation to you, and will you claim none to him? This is the day that the Lord hath made, for giving you this offer; and every day is not an avouching day, every day is not a cove-

nanting day. O Sirs, you never saw such a day, and perhaps never will! Let not this day be lost; let not the evening of this day be lost; but, when God is yet saying, Come, come to me, *I am the Lord thy God*; O take him at his word, saying, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

May the Spirit of power accompany the call, and make it effectual, that instruments may be taken upon it in your behalf, as ours, That *this day we have avouched the Lord to be our God, and this day he hath avouched us to be his peculiar people, formed for himself, to shew forth his praise.*

SERMON

S E R M O N CXXX.

THE HAPPY HOUR OF CHRIST'S QUICKENING VOICE *.

JOHN v. 25.

Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.

I THINK there is no lover of Christ here, but will wish, in his heart, upon the hearing of this text, that this may be indeed the day and the hour wherein this word may come to pass. There is not a dead soul, nor a dead case amongst all this company, but this scripture opens a door of hope to it. The communion table, we have in view, is not for the *dead*, but for the *living*: this sacrament is called the EUCHARIST, a *thanksgiving*, a *song of praise*; but, who are capable to sing it? Why, it is said, Isa. xxxviii. 19. *The living, the living, he shall praise thee.* But if we be a dead company this day, the end and design of the sacrament will be lost, and God will not get praise amongst us. If any here be fearing lest this be the case, and saying, O minister! is there any ground to hope that such *dead and dry bones shall live*? We answer; Yes, yes: there is hope; for the Lord of life hath given you this word for it, on which you may build your faith and hope, both that a quickening hour is coming, and a quick-

* This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 5th, 1744. Together with a DISCOURSE both before and at the tables, and also after the solemn action was over. It hath undergone four impressions.

ening hour is come; *Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of God, and they that hear, shall live.*

Our Lord's having cured a man here of his thirty-eight years infirmity on the Sabbath day, the Jews maliciously persecute him as a Sabbath-breaker, because he ordered the man to *rise, and take up his bed and walk*, that thus the work of God, in this miraculous cure, might be manifested to the onlookers: but, under a mask of zeal for the Sabbath, they sought to darken the light of that miraculous work; not being able to disprove of the work in itself, they quarrel the circumstance of time, and represent it as being a violation of the Sabbath. Religion was never more violently persecuted than under a mask for religion. Men pretend, yea, and think they do God service, even when they kill the servants; as they did the Master himself. Our Lord having answered his accusers, by saying, *My Father worketh hitherto and I work.* ver. 17. they were yet more enraged and exasperated, because he said, *God was his Father, making himself equal with God,* ver. 18. Christ was so far from refusing this charge they laid against him, that he thence takes occasion more plainly to assert this truth; for, he proves himself to be the *natural son of God*, by solid arguments, of which this is one in the words of our text; wherein he ascribes to himself another work, which none but the Son of God, equal with the Father, can effectuate.

The words contain two general points. 1. The serious matter here asserted; *The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.* 2. The solemn manner in which it is asserted, *Verily, verily I say unto you*, it shall be so.

1st, As to the matter here asserted, it relates to the *spiritual resurrection of souls*; this is evident from the context: in the preceding verse it is said, *He that hears my words, and believes on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.* This seems exactly to agree with what is here said of *bearing his voice*, called in the
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former verse, *a hearing his words.* Verses 28th and 29th speak plainly of the *second and general resurrection*, of which he says, *Not it now is, as here; but it is coming*: but this verse, together with the former, speaks of that *spiritual resurrection*, called the *first resurrection*, Rev. xx. 5. and the *quickening* mentioned, Eph. ii. 1. which comes by hearing the voice of Christ in the gospel, so as to believe in him: neither is this verse a vain repetition of what was said in the former, though the matter is very serious and momentous, and deserves to be resumed; yet the repetition is with a variety of different circumstances: for,

2dly, As to the solemn manner in which it is asserted, it is under the form of a *oath*, with an AMEN, AMEN; *Verily, verily*: and with an express mention of the *time and season* wherein his word shall have this effect; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, &c.* It is observable, that this is the third time that Christ uses this asseveration, *Verily, verily*, in his answer to the cavil of the Jews here, against his being the Son of God, ver. 19, 24, 25; and each of these asseverations are brought in with a relation, especially to his being the God that quickens the dead, *that quickens whom he will*, ver. 21; *that quickens dead souls by his word*; and *that makes them hear his voice, and live*, as in the text. Such a solemnity of speech is not used about the *resurrection of dead bodies at the last day*, spoken of ver. 28, 29. Why, it seems to point out how much his heart is set upon the work of raising *dead souls from death to life*, wherein his *power*, and the *exceeding greatness* thereof, is more exerted, than it will be in raising the dead out of their graves: and he speaks with repeated solemnity, both to shew the greatness of the subject he speaks of, and to excite the assured faith of these that have ears to hear; *Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*

More particularly, in the words you may observe these six things following,

1. The *sad case* sinners are in, they are *dead*; so are all by nature.

2. The *suitable relief* and notable privilege promised, namely, *life*; they *shall live*.

3. The *powerful mean* of this spiritual life, namely, *the voice of the son of God*.

4. The *method* of the *application* of this blessed mean, namely, *the hearing* of this voice of the Son of God.

5. The *certainty* of this relief, or the assurance given that it shall take effect; we are assured of it by a double oath, *Verily, verily*; and a double promise out of the mouth of Jesus, I say unto you, the *dead* SHALL *hear*, and *they that hear* SHALL *live*.

6. We have the happy *season* fixed for all this, or the time set to an *hour*; and that faith and hope may not be faint and languid, but have something in hand, as well as in hope, something in hand, as well as something future to look too; therefore, the happy hour, on which it depends a happy eternity, is represented both as a *coming hour*, and a *present hour*: *Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*. Here is a good foundation for faith and hope this day. I might here

Observe, *That the happy time wherein the dead shall certainly hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that shall live, is a time set to an hour*.

It is not only set to a *year*, called *the acceptable year of the Lord*; and to a *day*, called *a day of power*; but in a manner to an *hour* of a day; yea, to a *moment* of an hour: we read of *watering every moment*. There is no moment of time, wherein we may not look to Christ for life, and for a quickening power, and a quickening hour; for, *the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*.

But, because the particulars here are many, I pass over the formality of a doctrinal proposition, and design only two things.

I. A short *explication* of the particulars in the text.

II. The *application* thereof.

I. For the *explication* thereof, I shall, as the Lord may assist, offer a word upon each of the six particulars I have just now mentioned, as contained in the text.

Ist, Here is the *sad case* we are all into by nature; we are DEAD men, and in a *state* of death. *You shall not surely die*, said Satan, *though you eat the forbidden fruit*; but he is a liar: for, behold we are all surely dead; and that in a twofold sense, *viz.* both relative and real.

1. In a *relative* sense, by virtue or our relation to the first Adam, and the violated law or covenant of works: we are relatively and legally dead, being under the sentence of death, Rom. v. 12, 15. We are guilty, cursed, condemned creatures; and the curse of the law and wrath of God as an enemy.

2. We are dead in a *real* sense; the sentence of the law being in part executed, and that both as to body and soul. As to the *body*; it is now subject to death, and to all the miseries and maladies that are the forerunners thereof: yea, and in hazard of hell-fire, and the torment of the second death for ever: *The wages of sin is death*. And as to the *soul*, it is many ways dead; *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3; spiritually and eternally dead; and liable to everlasting separation from God; for death may be viewed, as either *external*, that makes the body lifeless; or *internal*, that makes the soul graceless; or *eternal*, which makes both the soul and body for ever comfortless.

In natural death, the body is *without* the soul; so we are dead men, because our souls are without God.—Death *defaces* the body; so hath sin defaced our souls, and deprived us of the image of God.—In death a man loses his natural *heat* and *warmth*; so our soul hath lost all heat and warmth of affection towards God.—In death a man loses all *right* to his goods; they pass to the next heir: so by sin, we have lost all right to any blessing; far less have we any right to the heavenly inheritance.—A dead body hath not the use of

understanding in natural things ; so the dead soul has not the use of understanding in spiritual things ; *The natural man receive not the things of the Spirit of God.*—A dead body hath no *fitness* for natural actions : so dead souls have no fitness for spiritual actions ; they are just a burden to them.—A dead body can take no *pleasure* in natural things : as little pleasure can a dead soul take in spiritual things.—A dead body cannot *raise* itself to life ; as little can a dead soul.

Christ will have little employment here this day, as a quickening Spirit, among these that do not know and believe that they are *surely dead*. All the saints that are quickened by the Son of God, in so far as they know they are *past from death unto life*, 1 John iii. 14. ; in this they acknowledge they were *surely dead*.—All true *believers*, according to the verse preceding my text, do, by faith, pass from death to life ; which declares, that while they remain in unbelief, they are *surely dead*.—The necessity of *regeneration*, and of being born again, John iii. 3. declares that we are *surely dead*, and need to be created a-new in Christ Jesus.—The end and design of the *gospel*, which is the word of life, proclaims that we are *surely dead*.—The end and design of *faith*, and all the exhortations to come to Christ for life, do proclaim that we are *surely dead*.—And the end of Christ's death, which we celebrate the memorial of this day, proclaims that we are *surely dead* ; 2 Cor. v. 14. *If one died for all, then were all dead.*—Why, the devil is proved to be a liar, with a witness : and if we believe in Christ this day, we will first believe the contrary of the devil's lye, even that we are *surely dead* ; yea, twice dead, *viz.* both by original sin imputed and inherent ; “ The guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of “ original righteousness, and the corruption of your “ whole nature ; and also by innumerable actual sins, “ miseries, &c.” Perhaps there is scarce any here that hath formerly been made alive in Christ Jesus, but they are fallen into a dead case again, though delivered from a state of death, a dead state ; yet, perhaps, they are in a dead frame, and need a new quickening hour. Are we *surely dead* ? Then,

2dly, The next thing to be considered, is the *suitable relief*, exhibited and promised, namely, LIFE; *The dead shall live.* The case is sad and deplorable, that we are *all dead men*; but the cure is suitable, the privilege is great, and agreeable to the case; *Life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel*, exhibiting Christ as the life; and the life that is to be had in him answers exactly to the death, or dead state that we are into by nature. Are we in a *relative* sense legally dead, and in a *real* sense spiritually dead? Here, in answer thereto, there is,

1. A *relative* life here imported; a life of *justification* in Christ, as the *Lord our righteousness*, giving the *pardon* of sin; *To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall have the remission of sin*, Acts x. 43.—Removing the *curse* of the law; *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13.; *being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.—Delivering from the *sentence* of the law, so as *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1.—*Reconciling* us unto God, and *making peace by the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20.—Taking away the *curse* of all *temporal* plagues, and making *all things work together for their good*; taking away also the *sting of death*, and the *victory of the grave*, and making us *heirs, according to the hope of eternal life, by being justified by his grace*, Tit. iii. 7.

2. A *real, spiritual* life is here imported, whereby we pass from *real spiritual death*; *We, who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened*, Eph. ii. 1. For, we come by faith, to be united to Christ, who is our life; and being unite to this living head, we must live: *He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*, 1 John v. 12. This life is the *contrivance* of God the Father; the *purchase* of God the Son; and the *alone work* of God the Holy Ghost, by the means of gospel ordinances; it is a *spiritual change* upon the soul; whereby the *shape of iniquity and sin* is in every faculty partly removed, and the *shape of holiness and righteousness* put on: it carries

ries in it *deliverance* from the power of sin and corruption, and being *possessed* of the *new heart*, the *new Spirit*, and *all spiritual blessing*: it is the *Spirit*, and his *graces* dwelling in the soul, *as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life*, John iv. 14. This relative and real life is just that *everlasting life* spoke of in the verse preceding; *He that hears my words, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.* It is a *restoration* of all, and more than we lost in the first Adam, by the second Adam; his being made of God to us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* We lost the *knowledge* of God; this is restored in Christ, as our *wisdom*: we lost the *favour* of God; it is restored in Christ, as our *righteousness*: we lost the *image* of God; it is restored in and by Christ, as our *sanctification*: we lost the *enjoyment* of God; but it is restored both in grace here, and glory hereafter, in Christ, as our complete *redemption.* Here is that blessed *pass* from death to life? *The dead shall live, and live for ever*; for, all these parts of life are everlasting: they are but the beginnings of eternal life, which will be consummate in heaven; for, as Christ is *the bread of life*, so he that *eats this bread shall live for ever*, John vi. 58. *The dead shall hear, and live*; as it is said, Isa. xxvi. 19 *Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise, and live for ever*; for, every property of this life bends towards and stretches forth unto everlasting happiness and glory; where there is life there is motion, appetite, and growth: this spiritual life *moves* to, and *breathes* after, *longs* for, and *grows* up to glory. Christ's dead body mystical must arise, and live for ever with the glorious Head; for he hath said, in the forecited, Isa. xxvi. 19. *Awake, and sing ye that dwell in the dust*; and his word must take effect. Therefore,

3dly, The next thing in the words is, The *powerful means* of this spiritual life; and this is *The voice of the Son of God.* Here is two things observable.

1. The *person* speaking, the glorious Preacher; namely, the *Son of God*; the second person of the glorious Trinity,

Trinity, clothed with our nature, and clothed with the office of a Prophet, that he might *preach good tidings to the meek*, Isa. lxi. 1. He is the *only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, sent to declare the Father's mind; *For no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*, John i. 14, 18. And for this end he was declared to be the Son of God by the Father, with an audible voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him*, Matth. iii. 17. This was repeated several times; and then after all, he was *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*, Rom. i. 4. The preacher here then is the *Son of God*, equal with the Father; which here he is proving himself to be against the Pharisees, who accused him for asserting it; but though he was clothed with his Father's commission, yet, *he and his Father are one*; and none of them ever thought it a robbery, that he should *be equal with God*; even he *who was born King of the Jews, of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all blessed for ever*.—Here is the person speaking, the glorious Preacher.

2. Here is the *joyful sound* of his words; namely, *The voice of the Son of God*: by which I understand, *The word of his grace, accompanied with the power of his Spirit*. And so his voice is to be considered either as *external*; that is, his *ministerial* voice, in the preaching of the gospel, which is his word; and the gospel minister is called his *mouth*, Jer. xv. 19. *Thou shalt be my mouth*; hence it is said, *He that heareth you, heareth me*: or as *internal and efficacious*, while *the gospel comes not in word only, but in power*. The *external* ministerial voice of Christ is the *organ and instrument* of conveying his almighty voice through the ear to the heart: there is here a voice within a voice; an *internal efficacy*, giving life and power, as it were to the sound of ram-horns, to make the walls of Jericho fall to the ground, even all high towers of sin and enmity in the sinner's heart to give way: thus the weapons of the gospel are

not carnal, but mighty through God, for the pulling down of strong holds, 2 Cor. x. 4.

But more particularly, by the *voice of the Son of God*, I understand his *word of truth, the gospel of our salvation*, Eph i. 13. The whole word of God, in the scripture, is his voice; as also the voice of the *rod*, the voice of the *Spirit*, the voice of *conscience*, the voice of *providence*, is his voice as God: yet there is a voice of his in the *gospel*, that is peculiarly his voice, as he is the *Son of God*, and the *Sent of God*, to be our Saviour; by which, he makes way to the heart of sinners, and opens it, Rev. iii. 20. It is the *voice of our beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me*, Song v. 2. It is called the *joyful sound*, which, whosoever hears and *knows* are pronounced blessed persons; *Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound*, Psal. lxxxix. 15. It sounded sweetly afterwards in the ears of Abraham, saying, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. which is called the *gospel preached to Abraham*, Gal. iii. 8. And, indeed, here is a part of spiritual wisdom, to distinguish betwixt GOD's voice in the *law*, and CHRIST's voice in the *gospel*; betwixt God speaking in the law by *commands* and *threatenings*, and the Son of God, the Christ of God, speaking in the gospel of *grace* and *promise*.—The voice of God in the *law*, is like a voice of *grumbling thunder*; by this is the knowledge of sin and wrath, and so of the need of a Saviour; wherefore the law is called a *schoolmaster to lead to Christ*, Gal. iii. 24. But the voice of Christ in the *gospel*, is like the *calm still voice*, that Elijah heard; and it hath neither law, nor wrath, nor death in it, but mere grace, and life, and salvation. Mercy and truth meet together, and kiss each other here: for, *The law came by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17.—The law is a word of *wrath* and *condemnation*, opening up the sentence of death passed against a sinner, saying, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. But the voice of Christ in the gospel hath not a word of wrath or condemnation in it, but *life*, and *salvation*, and *absolution*; for, *God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the*

the world, but that the world through him might be saved, John iii. 17.

Indeed, ordinarily the Lord makes use of the law, in a *subserviency* to the gospel, and so conveys fear and dread, and conviction of sin and wrath, by which he paves the way; but the proper voice of Christ, as he is the *Son of God*, the Saviour and Redeemer come to mount Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, is a voice that sounds nothing but love, grace, mercy, salvation to the greatest sinner that hears the gospel. The voice of the Son of God here is a voice of pardon, to guilty sinners, saying, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, and will remember thy sins no more.* It is a voice of healing to diseased sinners, saying, *I am the Lord that healeth thee.* It is a voice of Salvation to lost sinners, saying, *Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.* It is a voice of cleansing to polluted sinners, saying, *Behold there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* This voice is the voice of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and committing to us the word of reconciliation. It is a sound of good news to all people, that to us a Saviour is born, which is Christ the Lord. It is the voice of a Friend in heaven, and a wonderful Lover; a voice to be heard founding over the top of all the mountains of sin, and guilt, and separation; *The voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills,* Song ii. 8.

I cannot now stand to give the properties and effects of this voice, which may afterwards occur. We may be sure, it is a voice *full of majesty*, divine majesty, declarative that it is the voice of the Son of God; when it is heard, it fills the soul with awful impressions of the majesty of God. It is a voice *full of mercy*, divine mercy: also, it is a joyful sound of mercy to a miserable sinner; salvation is conveyed with it. It is a voice *full of power*, divine power; for, it is the *rod of his strength sent out of Zion*, whereby his people are made willing in the day of his power. And so it is a voice *full*

of

of life : it is a vital voice, even the vital breath of the Son of God, whereby the dead are made to hear and and live ; for, it is the *living and life giving voice* of the Son of God : why, this voice is no less than the Son of God himself, speaking by his word and Spirit, and issuing out his royal orders, his powerful command, and sovereign will, that the dead rise and live : and it is the animating vital breath of the omnipotent God in Christ, quickening dead souls.

4thly, The *fourth* thing then that the text leads to, is, The *method* of the *application* of this powerful mean of life, namely, HEARING of this voice ; *The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live.* The hearing spoke of in these words, is not the outward hearing of the ear, but the inward hearing of *faith* : a hearing the voice, not of men, but of God ; nor of God absolutely, but of God in Christ, the voice of the *Son of God*. It is a hearing accompanied with that believing spoke of in the preceding verse ; and the hearing spoke of, Isaiah iv. 3. *Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live.*—And it imports these four things.

1. The objective *external* revelation in a divine testimony ; *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17.

2. It imports an *internal* revelation of what is outwardly revealed ; for, *God reveals them to us by his Spirit, whereby we know the things freely given us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. *He revealed his Son in me*, says Paul, Gal. i. 16. *The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory.*

3. It imports an *assent of faith* to the divine testimony, in the truth and goodness of what is revealed ; either concerning the *person* of the Mediator, the promised Messiah, saying, with the Samaritans, John iv. 42. *They say to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world* : or concerning his *doctrine* and *promise*. This hearing of faith is an assent to the truth and goodness of Christ's *doctrine*,

trine, as it is the message of God ; it is a *receiving his testimony*, and a *setting to the seal that God is true* ; and that what is true, is also good, and *worthy of all acceptation*, 1 Tim. i. 15. This is a *receiving of the truth in the love of it*, 2 Thess. ii. 10. And this hearing is also an assent to the truth and goodness of the *promise*, as *Yea and Amen* in Christ ; *not staggering at it through unbelief, but being strong in faith, giving glory to God.* And it is an assent with cordial, close, particular application ; for, it is *with the heart man believes unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. And being persuaded we *embrace the promise*, Heb. xi. 13. ; and believe the message of life and salvation to us in particular, saying, *We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved*, Acts xv. 11. And rest upon the power and faithfulness of God, for the accomplishment of all his words of grace ; *being fully persuaded that he that hath promised is able to perform*, Rom. iv. 21.

4. It imports such a hearing of his voice, as to *apprehend and acknowledge the divinity* of that voice ; as a voice declarative of his DEITY, and declarative of his being the Son of God, equal with the Father : *It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. A believing ear who hears his voice, honours him in the divinity of his *person*, as the Son of God ; in the divinity of his *offices*, as the sent and sealed of God ; in the divinity of his *blood and righteousness*, as the blood of God, and the righteousness of God ; in the divinity of his *word*, as the word of God : and thus the divinity of his *voice*, as the voice of God, the voice of the Son of God.

Concerning this hearing of the *voice* of the Son of God, we offer the following six remarks.

(1.) The voice of a man strikes the *ear* with an external sound ; but the voice of the Son of God strikes the *heart* with an internal efficacy and energy. To hear the voice of the Son of God, then, is not only a hearing with the ear, but a believing with the heart ; *The dead shall hear ; and they that hear shall live.*

(2.) All that *hear, shall live* ; but, indeed, all that *are dead, will not hear* : for, many have ears, and hear

not ; and hearing, they do not hear in the sense I have explained : but *all that the Father hath given me*, says Christ, *shall come unto me* ; all whose ears God bores and opens, to take up the voice of his Son Jesus Christ, which quickens them.

(3.) Yea, Christ here distinctly commends and extols a twofold *grace* and *virtue* of his voice ; the dead *shall bear* the voice ; and, it being heard, they *shall live*. It is no less preter-natural for the dead to *bear*, than it is for the dead to *live* ; it is equally above nature to effectuate the one as the other ; but it points out the method of the application of divine grace, and the order of the Spirit's operation. Sovereign efficacious grace, makes first the dead to *bear* the voice of the Son of God, and then the hearer shall *live* : the almighty hand of God first *bore the ear* of the soul ; and then, by the bored ear, lets in life to it.

(4.) But these are the *secret effects* of *divine power* ; the Lord speaks as he did to Iſaiah, chap. viii. 11. *With a strong hand*, making the voice sound to the centre of the soul. What is spoken only to the ear, dies in the ear ; but this still voice of the Spirit, makes its entrance by secret passages into the heart, on which it leaves a stamp and impress of God. Others hears the sound of words and syllables, as well as they ; but they do not hear the voice of the Son of God, touching, and reaching, catching, quickening, and captivating their whole soul.

(5.) It is no *delusive oraculous* voice, sounding into the natural ear, and giving an imaginary idea and representation of Christ, *as a man*, so and so glorious and comely ; no, no : may God deliver his people from such Satanical delusions, too much supported by some in our day † : but here there is no sound of human voices, no sight of human shapes ; but a *spiritual view* of the *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, as he is the *wisdom of God*, and the *power of God* ; and a spiritual hearing of his quickening word of grace in the gospel, *coming not*

† The Reader, if he pleases, may see a short account of this affair, by consulting, Sermon. CXXXIII, CXXXIV, CXXXV.

in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, 1 Theff. i. 5.

(6.) It is God's *prophefying* upon the dead and dry bones, faying, *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord, Ezekiel xxxvii. 4 Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon thefe flain, that they may live, verfe 6.* The fame words are heard by others, but not with the fame power and efficacy; for, now the *fecrets of the heart are manifefl*; and God is acknowledged to be *in that word of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 25.* The power of Chrift comes along with the voice of the preacher; and there is no more power to refift, becaufe in the voice of men they hear the voice of God: and till it comes to this, the word hath no faving operation on the foul; yea, till it come to this, people have *eyes, and fee not; and ears, and hear not, Ifa. vi. 9.* Yea, the gofpel to them is the *favour of death, not of life.*

5thly, The next thing is, The CERTAINTY of this relief, of this quickening of dead finners; or the affurance given that it *fhall* take effect. And now a door of faith and hope is here opened to all the dead fouls in this houfe; none of the dead are here excepted in this difpenfation of gofpel grace: affurance is given *that the dead fhall hear and live*; and that,

1. In general, with a *Thus faith the Lord, it fhall be; I fay it unto you,* faith Chrift. Why, who is the fpeaker, but the *Son of God,* equal with the Father, *with whom are the words of eternal life!* He that fpake the world out of nothing into being is the fpeaker here; and fhall not his word take effect? Here is a foundation for the affurance of faith, namely, the testimony of God fpeaking in his word. God is invifible; and there is no other glafs wherein we can favingly fee him, but the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. God is an infinite Spirit, and cannot be feen with bodily eyes, nor heard with bodily ears, nor felt with bodily hands; fenfe cannot perceive him, and reafon darkened by the fall, gives but obfcure, imperfect, and unbecoming thoughts of him: for God, and *the things of God, are foolifhnefs to the natural man*—— We muft look to God therefore in a word, a faying, a faithful faying; fuch as, *That Chrift came to fave finners,*

and to quicken dead sinners ; and here he says it, *That the dead shall hear his voice, and live.* Our faith stands not upon *the wisdom of men*, but *the power of God* ; that is, upon the divine testimony : which proves itself to be powerful, by commanding the assent of the soul to it, upon its own authority, as being the word of God.

2. The assurance is given not only thus in general, with a *thus saith the Lord*, but also with a *solemnity of speech*, wherewith his word is accompanied, for bearing it home upon our hearts : why, here he delivers his word with two *verities*, and with two *shall be's*.

(1.) With two VERILIES ; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, &c.* He that is the AMEN, the *faithful and true witness*, makes frequent use of this form of an oath : it is the holy oath of a holy Jesus, saying, AMEN, AMEN. *Amen* is his name ; and *Amen, Amen* is his doubled oath : and we may say, *Because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself, That the dead shall hear his voice and live.* We may be assured of what he *says*, and shall we not be assured of what he *swears*? We have sometimes GOD swearing by his *life* ; or, *as he lives, that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners*, Ezek. xxxiii.

11. And here we have the SON of God swearing by himself, that dead sinners *shall live*.

(2.) With two SHALL BE'S. Assurance is here given ; for, there are two *shall's* in the text ; *The dead SHALL hear ; and they that hear SHALL live.* Here is a twofold promise, with a twofold Amen. We have not only elsewhere his *commanding* word, to found our duty and warrant ; *Hear, and your souls shall live* : but here we have his *promising* word, to found our faith, hope, encouragement ; *The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live.* There is a necessity ; the promise must be accomplished upon a number of dead sinners : *Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice*, John x. 16. *I must bring them, and they shall hear, and they shall live.* Here is more solemnity than in that *creating* word, that said,

said, *Let there be light, and there was light*: that was but one word, *Let it be*; and the effect followed: but here there are two words; *it shall be, it shall be*: two *shall be's*; *they shall hear, and they shall live*. Why did God speak but once, and it was done, when he made all things out of nothing? And why does he speak more than once when he is to make all things new? Why, indeed his heart is more set upon this new-creation work of redemption, than upon that of the old creation; and his glory is more concerned in it: the glory of his power, mercy, and truth, and all is here concerned. In that work he was an absolute God, having nothing to oppose or resist him; but here is the concern of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; reconciling a rebellious world, and reviving a dead world: therefore it is not only a command, but a promise, repeated many a time; and here repeated twice in one text, *The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live*; and undoubtedly it shall take effect: *God hath spoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongeth to the Lord; also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy*, Psa. lxxii. 11, 12. It is a God of power that utters this word of grace and mercy.—O! may dead souls here lay hold upon the double assurance he gives, that *they shall hear, and shall live*.—But when may this be expected? Why,

6thly, The *sixth* and *last* thing I observed in the text, is, the HAPPY SEASON fixed for all this work of his, who says in the context, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*, ver. 17. The time is set to an *hour*: *The hour cometh, and now is, when it shall be*.

1. To take a more *general* view of this. Our Lord here speaks, as it were, of a thing unknown and unusual; and, indeed, the new promulgation of the gospel, in the New-testament dispensation of it, and the sudden resurrection of a dead world by it, was a new thing; and we find the world was amazed at his unusual doctrine. It is said, Mark i. 27. *They were all amazed, in so much that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they obey*

obey him! And, when Paul preached the resurrection of the dead, Acts xvii. 2, 3. some of the philosophers, of the Epicureans and Stoics, said, *He seems to be a setter forth of strange gods*, verse 18. Why? *Because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection*. If it be asked here, Did not the word of God always give life unto men, even under the Old-testament dispensation? The answer may be this, That the doctrine of the law and prophets, since it was destined for the people of God, the office of it was rather to nourish up those that were already quickened, and made his people, than to recover them from death as a visible church: but with reference to the gospel-dispensation, there was a different reason for it; the Gentiles, that were not the people of God, but *aliens from the common-wealth of Israel*, and quite *without God*, were to be made his people; and, in this respect, to be brought from *death to life*, Eph. ii. 11, 12. But then,

2. To take a more *particular* view of the time and season spoke of in the text. It relates not merely to the *gospel dispensation*, whereby people are brought to be a visible church, and so enjoy an hour of grace, or a day of salvation; but it relates to the *glorious ministration of the Spirit*, accompanying the dispensation of the word, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It is not only an *hour* that he *sets to us*, saying, *Now is the accepted time of coming to Christ*; but it is an *hour* that Christ *sets to himself*, for his coming in the power of his Spirit, to quicken dead souls, by the vital breath of his word, *The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God*, &c.

Here is a twofold hour, for the faith and hope of gospel-hearers to work upon; a *future* hour, and a *present* hour.

(1.) Here is a *future* hour, or a *coming* hour; *The hour is coming: Verily, verily, I say unto you, the quickening hour is coming; I am on my way. O! poor soul, that hath long been looking for a remarkable hour of life from the dead, and a day of power, and thinks it is never yet come; the hour is set from all eternity: the*
time

time is fixed; and he *who waits to be gracious*, doth patiently *wait for it*, Isa. xxx. 18. He that gave wisdom to the storks and swallows, the turtles and the cranes, to know their appointed seasons, and observe the time of their coming, he well knows the fittest season, and most proper time for his coming. Christ said, in some other cases, *Mine hour is not yet come*; this says, He hath his hour, for which we are to wait upon him in the use of appointed means: he hath his *calling* hour, in which *he calls his sheep, as it were, by name*, and calls them effectually; his *quickening* hour, his *saving* hour, his *sealing* hour, his *assisting* hour, his *comforting* hour, his *strengthening* hour, his *restoring* hour, and at last his *glorifying* hour, when he comes to receive them to himself, to be for ever with him.

Our Lord many times defers many of his gracious actions; yea, always defers them to the fittest season; and that for the manifestation of his *majesty and sovereignty*; that it may appear to be the hour that he hath fixed, and the day he himself hath made; *This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it*, Psal. cxviii. 24.—And for the manifestation of his infinite *power*: that it may appear, *This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes*, Psal. cxviii. 23.—Also he does so, with reference unto *us*, that his quickening mercy may be the more wonderful, and the more welcome to us; he comes when he sees *our power is gone, and there is none shut up or left*. He comes in a *time of need*, is the nick of extremity; that when he *remembers us in our low estate*, we may see and say, *That his mercy endureth for ever; I was brought low, and he helped me*.—Yea, he defers many times his coming to exercise his people's *graces*, and excite them to their prayers and duties, O poor drooping soul, the voice of Christ is indeed worth the hearing; but what think you if he be wanting to hear your voice? *O my dove that are in the clefts of the rocks,—let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice*, Song ii. 14. He defers sometimes your sweet and sensible hearing of his voice, till he hear your voice: let your hearts then cry for his coming.

And

And since he says, *Verily, verily, the hour is coming*, O wait his hour; it is a great sin to limit the holy One of Israel to your time and hour: waiting gives glory to God's sovereignty, who comes when he pleases. It gives God the glory of his power, who works when he will: it gives him the glory of his truth and faithfulness, knowing that all things, even the delaying his coming, will work together for good, while we judge him faithful who had promised.

You see then what advantage it is to our faith, that our Lord Jesus here speaks of a *future* hour, the hour *is coming*. O then let us wait his time, without limiting him; and believe that he *that shall come, will come*: but *he that believes makes not haste*.

(2.) He speaks of a *present* hour; *The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear, and live*: And now it is the hour, says Christ. This is a part of the voice of the Son of God to us just now: and therefore, though we may not limit him to our time, yet when, by his own word, he limits himself, as it were, to this present hour; then we may venture to put him in remembrance, that he hath limited himself to a present hour, and gives us allowance to take him at his word, and say, *Now, now, now*, it is the hour wherein the *dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, shall live*.

If any be thinking, it is a long time, even so many hundred years since Christ uttered these words, and said, *Now is the hour*; and therefore, how shall my faith view it with respect to the present hour? Let it be remembered, That as our Lord Jesus *lives for ever*: so *the word of the Lord endureth for ever*: and as he hath said, *Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world*; so, as long as time is not swallowed up in eternity, and as long as his hour-glass of time is running, and his silver trumpet of the gospel blowing, so long you may conclude, that *now* is the hour: yea, there is not an hour of this present day, nor a moment of this present hour, wherein you may not warrantably look up to the Son of God, through the glass of this word, and expect

pect a quickening word from him, and a hearing of his life-giving voice. And now, while he is just saying, The blessed hour that was coming, is *now* come, for quickening the dead; it is well, if any dead soul here that knows its dead state and case, be taking the advantage that the word of the Lord is giving, and taking him at his word, saying, AMEN; *Lord, let this be the hour: even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly,* with the living and life-giving word; *and blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Do your hearts say, AMEN, that this be the very hour and moment of a powerful quickening; then we hope, that now shall it be verified in deed, as well as in word, that *the hour is now come, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, shall live.*

II. The *second* general head proposed, was, To make some *application* of these particulars. I might apply all these six particulars at length, if time allowed; but I only offer a short inference from each.

1. Hence see the *deplorable case of sinners out of Christ*, before they meet with him, and before he meet with them, by his quickening word: they are just lying dead in the grave of sin and sloth, though naturally alive; and it may be living in pleasure, yet spiritually dead; dead in sin, and dead in law. Many such dead men are among us. O that the Spirit of God would convince you that you are *surely dead!* Yea, even the case of *believers* is a heavy case, while they are not hearing and listening to the voice of their Lord: when he is speaking to their hearts they are alive; but whenever he forbears, and they forget his quickening word, deadness seizes them, till he speaks again another word of life, or restore their souls, and bring them back again from the gates of death.

2. Hence see the *marvellous grace of God*, in providing a suitable remedy for such dismal and desperate maladies, as that of spiritual death, and a sentence of eternal death. *The God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were,* hath mani-

fested this name of his, in providing for us a quickening Head, a living and life-giving Saviour. He hath appointed and appointed Jesus, his eternal Son, *to give light to whom he will. He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*; opening a fountain of living waters with a free proclamation, *Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely.* O what a fit match is Christ for us! A living and life-giving Saviour for dead sinners, in order to their being quickened to a life of grace here, and glory hereafter. But tho' life be provided in Christ, the Lord of life, yet we have neither life nor power, nor will to come to him for life, till drawing power come from on high. Therefore,

3. Hence see where we ought to go, or to whom we ought to look, for the powerful application of that life and salvation that is provided in Christ. Why, where should we go, but to him in whom all the treasures of life, as well as all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up? *To whom shall we go, says Peter; thou hast the words of eternal life?* Even thou whose voice can make the dead to hear and live. He only is the powerful preacher, that preaches to the deaf and dead, and makes them both hear and live. Without this quickening voice of the Son of God, we will be like so many dead corpse and carcases about a communion-table, incapable to eat and drink spiritually: let us look to him for a quickening word. I have read of the lioness, when her young are brought forth dead, that she roars over them till they revive. It is true of the Lion of the tribe of Judah; he roars over these that are born dead, and awakens them to life. O Sirs, do you believe that he is able to speak you to life? *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him.* His voice is just a word of power. Therefore,

4. Hence see how we are to go to him for life; why, just by *hearing his voice* with a believing ear. This is the method of the application, *hear his voice*: you need not go out of your seats, he is near in this word of his; he is speaking to you. O give him a hearing; for God requires you to *hear him: This is my beloved Son, in whom*

whom I am well-pleas'd, hear ye him Listen to a voice within a voice; to the voice of Christ within the voice of the minister. This hearing implies faith or belief; and it is a suitable mean for his quickening a dead soul.

1. Because it is the *outgoing* of the soul from itself to what it hears. 2. This mean suits the *forlorn* case of the dead man, that can do nothing for his own quickening, but just hears what the Lord will speak, and is speaking; and what the Lord will do, and is doing; and heartily welcomes him to come, and *do as he hath said*. Hear what the Almighty will say and do; hear not the minister only, but hear the Master: *Hear, and your souls shall live*.

5. Hence see, what *ground* there is to hope for a *quickening word*, though the disease be *death itself*, when such assurance is given out of the mouth of Jesus with a double *verily*, and a double *shall be*, with a double oath and a double promise; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live*. The apostle Paul said in another case, *O death! where is thy sting?* So may we say, in the case of spiritual death and deadness, *O death! where is thy power?* Art thou able to stand before the voice of the Son of God? O dead soul! art thou able to resist the quickening voice of the Son of God? Do you know who is hear speaking, and how he is swearing and promising, that the *dead shall hear and live?* If thou knowest that it is the voice of the Son of God, then, how art thou able to withhold thy assent to what he is so solemnly affirming? Yea, but I know not, say you, that it is to me he is speaking. Why, what art thou? Art thou truly dead, and free among the dead, like the slain that ly in the grave? Then thou art the man of whom he speaks, and to whom he says, *The dead shall hear*: behold! the Master calls you, O dead man, dead woman, dead and hardened sinner, who hath been long dead, and rotting, and stinking in the grave; to you he is saying, *Lazarus, come forth*. O poor soul! dost thou hear the voice of the Son of God? Then thou shalt live. Nay, but say you, I do not hear *his* voice; I

only hear *your* voice. Well, but remember I am speaking to you in his *name*: therefore, his voice is to be heard within ours: the minister's voice alone will be but a killing voice, a deadning voice; but when you will hear Christ's voice within it, it will quicken, and beget you to a new and living hope. And, O Sirs! Is there not a door of hope you see open in his promise, *The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live.* Why, say you, here is some ground of hope; and, I think, I have some hope of quickening; but I am not quickened. Why, perhaps there is a mistake you are in; one may be quickened to a living faith, and to a lively hope, upon the ground of God's word, and yet think they are not quickened, because they want a lively feeling, and sensible fruition and enjoyment: but as it is matter of praise, if *faith comes by hearing*, though feeling is not yet come; and if one be gotten to a lively hope, though sensible fruition is not yet come: so, in as far as faith and hope are quickened, so far the heart and soul are quickened; therefore, do not think it a small thing, but indeed a great matter, if by the assurance here given from the voice of the Son of God, that the dead shall hear and live, you that was before a dead sinner, and ready to despair of life, be so far quickened by his word, as to be begotten to the hope of life. Why, but say you, *Hope deferred makes the heart sick*, Prov. xiii. 12.: O when, when may I hope to be made alive? Why,

6. And *lastly*, See here the time set to an HOUR; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The HOUR cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.* Here is, (1.) A door of hope for the *future*; the hour is *coming*. (2.) A door of hope at *present*; the hour is *coming*, and *now is*: and therefore wait his *coming* hour, and take his *present* hour. 1. Wait his *coming* hour; for he says, *The hour is coming: the Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.* If you do so, you are so far made to hear and live: the waiting soul is a living soul. 2. Take his *present* hour; for he says, *It*

now is: then take his hour; and believe it is come while he is speaking to you.

Is not the Son of God opening to you just now, and to you in particular, the door of faith and hope, while he is saying, *Now, the hour is come when the dead shall hear and live.* What are you? Are you among the dead? Is that your name? Are you a dead man, a dead woman, a poor dead creature, that neither men nor angels can make alive? Are you deaf as well as dead, so as you cannot hear any other voice but a man's voice? Is this your case? Is this your name that he is telling you of? Then he is speaking to you by name. What think you, is it you that he is pointing out, as it were, and picking out among all this multitude? Is it your case that he is speaking to? Are you conscious to yourself that the watchman hath found you? That the word hath found you out, and named you?

Who then but the Son of God is speaking a word to your case just now, when the hour is come?—O Sirs, do you hear the voice of the Son of God? Then part of his word is here accomplished, *now is the hour when the dead are hearing the voice of the Son of God.*

What! is the Son of God making you to hear, that it is you he is speaking to just now? Neither men nor angels know what a dead state and case you are into, nor can relieve you. But the Son of God is speaking here; “I who know both the case and cure, am speaking to you, man, woman; what a dead heart is that of yours? What a dead sleep is that you are into, that neither word nor rod hath been able to awaken you? But now, since I am speaking to your case, know, that *I who speak unto thee am he; I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I am come to give life, and to give it more abundantly.*” O tell me, do you hear his voice? Then *they that hear shall live.* Do you believe the hour is now come, when the Son of God himself is speaking to you, as a dead sinner? Then the hour is indeed come when the dead shall hear and live:

Said I not unto thee, If thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?

Now is the hour of the day wherein we live, that requires his powerful *life-giving presence*; now when the devils are raging, and delusions abounding; now when defections are growing, and damnable errors increasing to a dreadful pitch; now when the bottomless pit is opening, and the sun and the air are darkened with the smoke of the pit; now when the great guns are firing from presses and pulpits against a little essay at witnessing and covenanting work; now when reproaches and bitter calumnies are spreading, and enemies crying, *Where is your God?* Now, when in this generation, it is just an hour and power of darkness, the hour and power of death, shall we expect a reviving? That now is the hour wherein the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and now, when so many dead souls are here present before the Lord of life, the God that quickens the dead, shall we think that now is the hour when the dead shall hear and live? What shall we say? We may even speak to God what we would say, "*It is time for thee, O Lord, to work*; it is time for thee to speak to the dead and dry bones, when death is riding in triumph: *Come from the four winds, O breath; breathe upon these slain, that they may live,*" that God may be glorified in exerting his power over death and devils, when matters are brought to an extremity.

Now is the hour for *acting faith* upon the word of life, when it is the dead hour of night; when Christ in his cause is crucified, when the grave-stone is laid upon his truth: it is said, *At midnight there was a cry, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.*—It is at midnight he comes in *mercy* as well as in *judgment*: the midnight hour is his quickening hour; the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, commands life to arise out of death. If the question be, *Watchman, what of the night?* What hours is it? Oh! is it not the dead hour of the night with you? Why then, now is the fit hour for faith and hope to act upon this great promise of life from the dead. Man, woman, the Master calls you;

you : though you be dead, and *lying in your blood*, he says unto you, *Live ; yea, he says unto you while lying in your blood, Live.* Though you have been lying dead in sin all your days to this very hour, yet behold now is the accepted time, now is the hour, the happy hour, on which may depend a happy eternity ; therefore listen to the voice that speaks from heaven, *O earth, earth, earth ! hear the word of the Lord ;* and if, in hearing with the outward ear, there is a stirring among the dry bones, a shaking, and yet no breath in them, *O refuse not him that speaks from heaven ;* turn not away your ear, if you be not a refuser and rejecter of his call : the work of faith with power is a beginning ; you cannot contribute a mite of help towards spiritual life in you : but give way to him, who can do all without your help ; give way to him while he is yet speaking to you this very hour, and this hour it is done. Let your heart say, AMEN to his word, while he is saying with a *Verily, verily, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live.*

May the almighty Speaker say, AMEN ; and let all the people say, AMEN. To his name be praise.



A

PART OF THE DISCOURSE

BEFORE

SERVING OF THE TABLES.

MY friends, public ordinances are of two sorts, *teaching* ordinances, and *sealing* ordinances ; the *word* is for teaching, the *sacrament* we have in view is for sealing : the word is for *quickening*, or giving life to the *dead* ; the sacrament is for *nourishing*, or maintaining life in the *living*. These that remain dead in sin, lying

lying still in the grave of their natural state, are not capable to eat and drink spiritually at the Lord's table, no more than a dead corpse, set down at a table, can eat or drink naturally. This sacramental feast, therefore, is only designed for these that have been made to *hear the voice of the Son of God, and live* : they only have life to be maintained, and a capacity through grace, to be fed with the flesh and blood of the Son of God ; therefore this table of the Lord's must be fenced, &c. The dead are to be debarred, &c. These that are made alive by the word to be invited, &c.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat : examine if you have been *raised to life* by the *hearing of Christ's voice* ; for this is the mean by which dead souls are raised to life.

If you have been thus raised, then the voice of Christ hath been a *wakening* voice to you, making you see your dead state, and see your sin, and guilt, and filthiness, and folly : it hath made you *turn in*, in order to *turn out* ; to turn in to yourself, and consider your ways ; and then turn out towards the way of the Lord : *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies.*

Again, if you have been raised to life, by hearing the voice of Christ, then his word hath been a *heart-searching* word ; it hath opened the door of that sepulchre, and let you see into some of the dark chambers of death, and set your secret sins before you ; you have found *the word of the Lord to be quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,* Heb. iv. 12.

Again, if you have been raised to life, by hearing Christ's voice, then this word hath been a *heart-affecting, heart-breaking, heart-melting* word ; it hath brought you to that, *Oh ! what shall I do to be saved ! Alas ! what have I been doing ? How have I been provoking the wrath of God against me ? It hath broken your heart for sin, and from sin ; your sin hath been set before you, and made to ly heavy upon you.*—The

man-child of grace is not born without some pangs and throws.

Again, if you have been thus raised to life, it hath been an *enlightening* word ; discovering this to you, that though there is no help in yourself, yet God hath *laid help upon One that is mighty ; one that is able to save to the uttermost.* This light bears up the soul.

Again, it hath been a *heart-opening* word ; whenever spiritual life is begun, the heart is opened, the soul sees its absolute need of a Saviour, and the willingness of Christ to save and receive poor sinners. A sight of Christ has been like a key, to open your hearts to him, as the heart of Lydia. It hath been a *heart-winning*, and *heart-gaining* word ; a *heart-drawing* voice is the mean of raising a dead soul to life, making it to close with him, and follow him ; *His sheep know his voice, and follow him :* they were never made alive, that were not made to follow him.

Again, They are made alive by his word, they live by *faith* upon him, and cannot live without him ; and hence, there is such breathing of the soul towards him, such panting and longing after him, *O when wilt thou come unto me ? Haste, my Beloved ; be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*—Hence also they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Again, the voice of Christ, speaking in his word, will be most *sweet* unto you ; *Sweeter than the honey, and the honey-comb :* why ? Because his word is not only the *word of truth* that begets his people ; *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth :* but also it is a *word of life ;* and so *nourishing them up to everlasting life :* therefore, *as new born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.* It is the food they live upon ; for, *Men live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God :* they embrace the promises, hugging them, as it were, in their arms, as being their treasure of securities for heaven and eternal life in Christ, *In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.*

Where the soul is made alive, by the voice of Christ, the word lives a *stamp* and *impress* of itself ; the soul is

cast into the mould of the word, Rom. vi. 17. It is a voice that hath an *abiding* efficacy; the soul, that is made alive by the word of Christ, never dies again.—He may fall into a dead frame, and think himself in a dead state again, but, as *the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, so the effect of it remains for ever: they can never altogether forget it; *I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.* The quickened soul can never forget the word of grace, or promise that quickened him: he may lose the sweet and sensible relish of it; but while he is in his wits, he can never quite lose a dark remembrance of it.

Is there any soul here complaining, and sensible of *deadness*, and ready to exclude itself, because dead? This you ought not to do; for, there is some life, where there is some sense of deadness: and they that are wholly dead, have no sense of it at all.

It may be some here have known the time when their souls were *quickened* by the word of Christ; but now that liveliness is quite gone. O believer, why say you it is gone, when this moment you have a living remembrance of it? Do you not remember how he met *with you in Bethel, and there he spake with you?*—What a quickening visit he gave, in such and such a place, with such and such a word? Perhaps I no sooner mention this, than you have a quick and lively remembrance of it: why then, thou art not quite dead; *The God of Bethel liveth*: and because he lives, you shall live. O! come and get your life recovered, and nourished at his table.

What though you have no life, nor liveliness at present; yet, are you content that you have life in your glorious Head; that your life is hid with Christ in God; that your whole stock is in his hand, and not in yours; and that you have his promise, his word, his bond, though you have nothing? O Sirs, come, come; for the Lord's sake, come; your life is secure enough: a lively *faith* in his word, is better than a lively *frame* in your heart.

THE
DISCOURSE

AT THE
SERVING OF THE FIRST TABLE.

NOW, my friends, as the *word of life* hath been set forth to you as a word to be heard *believingly*; so the same word is now set before you to be handled and tasted *sacramentally*: our eyes may look upon, and our hands may handle, the *word of life*, while *Jesus Christ* is evidently set forth *crucified among us*. In his death we have a fountain of life opened to us: here is the *word of life, the bread of life, the water of life*; and, may we not add, *the Spirit of life*, we hope, is here? And under his influence, and, according to his warrant, we are to administer to you the symbols of his broken body and shed blood.

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and having blessed it, &c. You that have heard the voice of the Son of God to the quickening of your dead souls, the same bread of life that you had in the *promise*, you have now among your hands, in a *pledge* for the confirming of your faith, and for the nourishing of your life: while you take the break in the hand of your body, and eat it with your mouth; take the word in hand of faith, and hide it in your heart.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, &c. Let faith now drink, and drink abundantly of the blood of the covenant; and it is a covenant whereof one great promise is, *That the dead shall bear and live*. This, among the rest, is a promise sealed with the blood of Christ; and there are two things in it that relate to dead sinners. 1. A blessed hearing. 2. A blessed living: *The dead shall bear, and they that bear shall live.*

The blessed *hearing*, is a hearing *the voice of the Son of God*: this voice is not a passing sound, but a perpetual word; *The word of the Lord endureth for ever*: as it lasts for ever in the fruit and effect of it; so you may be ever hearing and rejoicing in the faith of his word, saying, *The Lord hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice: thy word was found of me, and I did eat, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.* His voice raises the dead; and therefore whenever you find deadness coming upon you, remember his word, and it will restore your soul. *Remember how he spoke to you while he was yet in Galilee*; when you was under the fig-tree, he saw you, and spake with you by his word and Spirit: and though he will see you again, and speak with you again; yet, even in the interval of his visit, his word may be your continual comfort, support, and cordial.

Again, the blessed *living* here promised; *They that bear shall live.* You are not to understand by it a lively passing frame at a time, nor a quickening gale, that is soon over and gone: this *life* or *living* imports infinitely more: it imports everlasting *union* with the living Head; it imports everlasting *righteousness* that you have in him, for your having a life of justification; everlasting *strength* you have in him, for a life of sanctification; everlasting *fulness* that you have in him, for supplying all your *needs*, according to his riches in glory, until you come to the full enjoyment of himself in glory. This is the blessed *living*, for time and eternity, imported in the promise, *They that bear shall live.* They that have a little interest in this world are said to have a *living*; but, O believer, that is not worthy to be named, in one day, with this blessed living you have in Christ and in the promise.

But, for the confirmation of your faith, as there are two things here promised in behalf of the dead, *The dead shall bear, and they that bear shall live*; so, besides the consideration of the Speaker and Promiser here, who is the Son of God, equal with the Father, so as you may be fully persuaded, that what he hath promised

he is able to perform ; the manner in which he speaks is such, that you have three pair of strong pillars to build your faith and hope upon, two *Verities*, two *Hours*, and two *Shall be's* ; for there is not a syllable in that text spoken in vain

1. The first pair of pillars to build your faith upon, is two VERILIES ; *Verily, verily, I say unto you*. These two you have to secure you in the blessed hearing and the blessed living here promised to you. One *verily* had been too much condescension, for confirming this word, whose bare word is enough to warrant your faith ; but, for more security he solemnly swears what he says ; *Verily, verily, I say unto you*.

2. Another pair of pillars, is TWO HOURS spoke of, for fixing the time wherein you may expect these blessings, namely, a *coming* hour, and a *present* hour ; *The hour is coming, and now is*. There is no word of a past hour : whatever blessings you have got out of his hand, and whatever experience you have of his goodness, that is nothing to what is a-coming ; and you are to *forget these things that are behind, and reach forward to these things that are before, pressing forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. But the *coming hour* lays a foundation for a *waiting faith* ; and the *present hour*, a foundation for a *taking faith*.

What better ground can you have for a *waiting faith* than this, that Christ says, *The hour is coming* ? Though deadness of heart and frame should again seize you ; *The hour is coming, when the dead shall again hear the voice of the Son of God, and live*. More and more of this blessed hearing and living is to be expected, as long as his word lasts, and as long as he himself liveth ; and behold *his word endureth for ever, and he lives for ever and ever* : therefore, wait his hour ; and expect always more and more a-coming from him that says, *The hour is coming*.

Again, what better ground have you for a *taking faith*, or a present applying faith, than his saying, the hour is not only coming, but that *now it is* ; now when he is speaking to you, and now when you are sitting at his table. Now is the hour, the present hour

for taking what he is giving; take his word for it, though death and deadness be in the way, that the *dead shall hear his voice*. Is it a present hour of deadness and darkness with you? Why, but he is saying, *The hour is come, when the dead shall hear*: take his word, by hearing his voice and believing his word; *Hear, and your souls shall live*. Is it his present hour of giving you his word? Then it should be your present hour of taking his word. The communicating hour is his giving hour, and your taking hour: you have been taking the sign; and, I hope, you are for taking the thing signified, his word and himself; and the *life and living* that he gives. As long as he is saying, the *hour is now come*, you have the warrant for the present acting of faith. *Now, is the accepted time*: and as long as Christ is saying, *Now is the hour*: there is room for present faith, present receiving, present application to the throne for present help.

3. Another pair of pillars to build upon is, two *SHALLS*, OR *SHALL BE'S* in the text; *The dead SHALL hear, and they that hear, SHALL live*. If God had given you but a *may be*, faith might rely upon it, as when he says, *It may be you shall be hid in the day of his wrath*. *It may be God will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph*. His *may be* is a foundation for faith; but when he says, *It shall be*, and doubles it, there is no room for doubting.

The two *shalls* here seem to relate to two *lives*, or two parts of life, *The dead shall hear*: there is *one life*, namely, *life to hear*; for the dead cannot hear till they get life; so that it is a promise of the Spirit of life, putting life into the dead soul, that it may hear the voice of the Son of God. Again, *They that hear shall live*: there is *another life*; namely, *life to live*; life to live a spiritual life, and an eternal life. Though life be given you, you cannot live, unless the same power maintain life, that at first infused it. Here then, is *bearing life*, and *living life* promised; life to hear, and life to live: and therefore there is a *shall be*, for each of them; *The dead shall hear, and they that hear, shall live*.

And, O believer, how great is the goodness of God to you, that under these *shall be's*, in the text, are comprehended all the sweet *shall be's* in the covenant of promise, that you stand in need of!—You have a double *shall be* for your provision and support in the wilderness; *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.*—You have a *shall be* for your protection in dangerous times; *The place of your defence, shall be the munition of rocks.*—You have a *shall be* for the Spirit to quicken you from time to time, in the way of duty, and in case of decays and deadness; *The water I will give you, shall be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life.*—You have a *shall be* for a cordial to you when you pass through the valley of the shadow of death, *That death shall be swallowed up in victory.*—You have a *shall be* for your happy welcome at the day of judgment; *They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels.*—And a *shall be* for a happy eternity; for the word says, *So shall we be ever with the Lord.*—Here is good food for the present, and food for the time to come. Here is feeding for you in evil days, in days of error, corruption, defection, reproaches, blasphemy, snares, temptations, and delusions, and threatened desolations. O Sirs, is it not good to have some of God's *shall be's* to look to; such as that, *Upon all the glory there shall be a defence.* Again, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will be found.* And again, *A man shall be a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* They shall have, as we use to speak, the calm side of the bush whatever way the wind bloweth, whatever air the storm beats, that live by faith upon this man, this IMMANUEL, God-man: *For this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; when the bloody sword, that is drawn abroad, may pass over, and our apostate land become a field of blood: it is safest resting in the bosom of a promising God.*

S O M E N O T E S
O F A
D I S C O U R S E,
A T T H E
C O N C L U S I O N O F T H E S O L E M N W O R K,
O N T H E S A M E T H E M E.

O BELIEVER, when you want sensible quickenings, yet you may live well enough, by listening to the voice of Christ, and giving credit to what he says. He is not always the strongest believer who hath most of sensible presence: weak faith may need these stilts and supports, while strong faith can stand without a staff, and walk without crutches. Indeed the life of the best saints, in this world, is but a falling and a rising; but they stand most firm who stand by faith upon the promise of life they have in Christ Jesus, even when they want the feeling of life, or liveliness: they live nobly who have even a feeling of death in themselves, and yet a faith of life in Christ; *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, 2 Cor. i. 9.* Many never think they have sensible joys and comforts: but if that were all their life that they have, what a little short, transient, passing life is it? But they that live by faith, they live upon the fulness of grace and life they have in Christ, and upon his *word that endureth for ever.* They live more upon what they hear, than what they feel; yea, most upon what they hear, for, *as faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;* so faith lives by hearing the voice of the Son of God; and therefore it lives in the sight of death, and in spite of death: *For the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.* Therefore, when the shadows of death surround you, the shortest cut to a

new reviving, is to hear the voice of Christ, and to listen to what he says, *That the dead shall hear, and live.* Look not into yourselves, or your own heart, or frame, to seek for life there; that is but a seeking *the living among the dead*; it is to seek life in the house of death: but listen believingly to the voice of Christ, who says, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* He can speak you to life in a moment: therefore, still remember who he is that speaketh to you from heaven; that he is the Son of God, who hath all the grace of God, the fulness of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the life of God. This hearing of him, as the Son of God, and the Sent of God, to give life to the dead, is God's mean and ordinance for quickening the dead: the hope of life is begotten in a moment this way; and, I hope, some are conscious this day that it is so.

What! have you no hope, that you who are dead shall be made alive? Is this such a great matter? But, O Sirs, you will not think so much of that, if you hear the voice of the Son of God, from heaven, saying, *I was dead, and am alive*: I the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit, I borrowed your human nature, that I might die for your sins, that I might be the death of living sins, and the life of dead souls: *I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death,* Rev. i. 18. I have the power of the keys, to shut the gates of death, and open the gates of life: therefore, when I am uttering my voice and speaking to you, think it not strange, that the dead shall hear and live; therefore, *Hear, and your souls shall live. Awake and sing you that dwell in the dust of death.*

O! may we hope that some ears have been opened to hear, and some hearts have been quickened, by hearing the voice of the Son of God this day? O happy hour, wherein this life-giving voice is heard!

The voice of the Son of God, in the gospel, is not a *killing*, but a *quickening* voice; it neither destroys souls nor bodies: and hence it cannot be the voice of the Son of God, that casts down bodies into dead fits, and

dread-like distortions and disorders: whose voice can this be? Oh! how awful is the delusion of the day! that work cried up for a work of the Spirit of God, that instead of *quicken*ing, hath a *kill*ing influence upon bodies and souls both!

How delusive is the work that dashes people down into dead fits, and then raises them with raptures, and yet leaves them as they were before, if not worse, enemies to God, and to the work of God, the most glorious work of reformation that ever God wrought for this land, and carried on by solemn covenanting! The quickening voice of the Son of God never tended to destroy the life of bodies, nor to destroy the concern of souls about his declarative glory, and about confessing him and his cause.

The gospel of the grace of God it cannot be, (whatever legal thunders may do) that tends to destroy the life of the body, and also to kill the life of the soul, by destroying all soul-concern about public reformation, and the declarative glory of God, and to turn people desperate enemies to the present covenanted work, and witnessing work, against the too palpable defections of the day.

O seek, my friends, to be delivered from the strange delusions, the strange deities, the strange gods of the time wherein you live. Besides, the evident errors of the time, some that profess to be contending against errors, which is so far right and well done; yet are plunged over head and ears, in the gulf of new imaginary doctrines of their own; particularly, that strange doctrine of *imaginary ideas of Christ as man*. O beware, beware, of an imaginary idea of Christ as man, and of reckoning this to be knowledge or faith! For, that is nothing but a dead image of Christ in the brain, and is no part of rational knowledge, far less of revealed religion. As long as you have but an imaginary idea of Christ, as *man*, you have no view of the *person* Jesus Christ; for Christ, as *man*, was never a person; the eternal *Son of God*, in our nature, is the *person* of our IMMANUEL. While you look to a Christ painted in the fancy, as man, his voice will never quicken

en your dead souls; but when, by faith, you look to the man Christ, as IMMANUEL, God-man, and listen to his voice, as it is the voice of the Son of God, then the *dead shall hear, and hearing, shall live* *.

O cry mightily to God, that the hour which Christ says is *coming, and now is*, may not pass over without your *hearing the voice of the Son of God*. The hours of the natural day are passing; and so are the hours of the gospel day. The conjunction of the word and Spirit of Christ makes up that blessed hour, that happy nick and season of salvation, the time of *love*, and the time of *life*; *There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; this river of the water of life, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: every thing liveth, whithersoever the river cometh*, Ezek. xlvii. 9, 10. Therefore, cry for the promised Spirit, the promised run of that river; *I will pour waters on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*, Isaiah xlv. 3. There are signal periods of the Spirit, and happy seasons wherein Christ utters his almighty voice in the word. When such a season cometh, it is an hour that is ever to be remembered; it opens up secrets that were in God's bosom from eternity, and brings to light the cabinet councils of heaven; *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost*, 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. This is the hour of spiritual resurrection; a greater and a more glorious resurrection than that of your bodies at the last day; even as much greater as the value of the soul is above that of the body; and because the blessedness of your bodily resurrection depends upon this spiritual resurrection by the voice of Christ: and terrible will the voice of Christ be at the

* We had occasion formerly to observe, Vol. VII Serm. CXXV. intitled, *The true Christ, no new Christ*, that the promoters of what was called an extraordinary work of conversion at Cambuslang, and some other places, were led, in order to support the visionary representations that attended that work, to defend, among other absurd propositions, *That imaginary ideas of Christ, as man, belonged to saving faith*. Our Author laid open the absurdity of this doctrine, in his above mentioned treatise of *Mental Images*, which the reader may consult. And also, if he pleases, the *Preface* to the second edition of Mr. FISHER'S *Review* of that work.

resurrection of your bodies, unless you first hear this vital voice of Christ quickening you to a spiritual life.— Therefore, O cry to God, that the gospel hour may not pass over without a quickening power coming along with the word, making it sink deep into your heart, as well as found in your ear. If a heart-concern of this sort were created in you, it would argue some beginnings of *life from the dead*, and some *hope in Israel concerning you*.

SERMON

S E R M O N CXXXI.

THE BEST SECURITY for the BEST LIFE;
or, a LIFE HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD*.

COLLOS. iii. 3.

Your life is hid with Christ in God.

THOUGH the communion-table of the sacramental supper is covered openly with visible elements of bread and wine; yet by these are represented such hidden mysteries, and spiritual provision, as none are capable of apprehending, or feeding upon, but those who have a hidden and spiritual life, and who are pointed out in this text; and, as it were, singled out from all the rest of the congregation, so as it can be said to them, You, man, woman; you that have a right to sit down at this table of the Lord, you that can feed upon this hidden manna, you have, through grace, got a life that bears some suitableness to, and that can only be maintained by, such hidden food and provision; *Your life is hid with Christ in God.* The text, then, may soon be seen to be suitable to the work of the day; and it bears also a great fitness and relation to the subject treated on last occasion of this sort here. The text spoke to the *dead*, or of them, saying, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,* John v. 25. This

* This sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 11th, 1745. Together with the DISCOURSE before the Tables, and at the service of the first Table, and at the conclusion of the Work. It hath undergone four impressions.

text speaks of the *living*; yea, and particularly to them; and describes the life they are brought unto by the quickening voice of the Son of God: *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*

I have, in providence, been led to preach, for some Sabbath-days by-gone, upon the preceding context, from the beginning of this chapter; where, verses first and second, the apostle exhorts believers to seek and mind those things which are above: and also I have insisted, for some days by-gone, upon the first branch of this verse, *For ye are dead*; where I have taken occasion to characterize the believer, by his being dead to the *world*, dead to *sin*, dead to *self*, and to the *law*, as a covenant; and now this part of the verse remains to be treated, *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*

The verse contains some of the motives and arguments, by which the apostle presses the preceding exhortation: and the motives here are such as shew, That the Christian's life is composed of divine paradoxes; they can do nothing, and yet they can do all things; they are *dead*, and yet *alive*.

In the words we have two things observable; an account of the believer's death and his life.

1st, Here is the Christian's DEATH; *Ye are dead.*
 1. Not dead *in sin*; for so they were by nature; and so are all that remain in a state of nature. 2. Not dead *for sin*; our Lord Jesus Christ had the sole honour of that undertaking. But, 3. Dead *to sin*; and every thing in the world that is an occasion to sin, Romans vi. 11.

2^{dly}, The Christian's LIFE; *Your life is hid with Christ in God.* This is not a *natural* life; for this we have, and Christ came to restore what man had lost: it is not a *carnal* or *sinful* life; for thus we are alive without Christ; but it is a *spiritual* and *supernatural* life; a *life hid with Christ in God.*

Here are some precious properties of the believer's life; it is *hid*, it is hid *with Christ*, and it is hid with *Christ in God.* And more particularly, we may observe here a treasure, a treasurer, and a treasury.

1. A *treasure*, and that is LIFE ; a hidden treasure, to the believer, to whom Christ came to restore it ; and it is a hidden treasure both in respect of *secrecy*, that it cannot be seen ; and in respect of *safety*, that it cannot be lost.

2. A *treasurer*, with whom it is hid ; it is hid with CHRIST ; it is in his hand ; he is the dispenser of it ; for, *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. It is hid with Christ.

3. The *treasury*, or *treasure-house*, in which it is hid with Christ ; why, it is hid with Christ in GOD.

From this comprehensive view of the words, the doctrinal proposition that natively offers itself from them, is the following.

OBSERV. *That the believer's life is closely hid, and safely laid up with Christ in God.*

In speaking to this observation we shall essay, thro' divine assistance, to do the following things.

- I. Speak a little of the *treasure* itself, the believer's life.
- II. Speak of its being hid ; and shew in what respect it is so.
- III. Shew with *whom* it is hid ; and what is imported in its being hid *with Christ*.
- IV. Where it is hid, namely, in GOD ; and what that imports.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak a little of the believer's LIFE. As he is a believer in Christ, all the life he has, is in Christ ; and his life is *Christ in him*, who says, *Because I live, ye shall live also* : and, in the verse following our text, Christ is called the believer's life. And this life the believer has in Christ may be reduced to these three kinds, namely, the life of *righteousness*, the life of *grace*, and the life of *glory*.

1. The life of *righteousness*, or *justification*, whereby all his sins are pardoned, and he accepted as righteous

in God's sight, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, Rom. iii. 22. By this means all his long-tailed account, that he owed to the law and justice of God, where original sin was written down *imprimis*, and then all the *items* of actual transgressions, are fairly cancelled and blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, with a *thus saith the Lord God, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*, Isa. xliii. 25. By this life the curse of the law is abrogated, and the sentence of condemnation reversed; so as there is *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1.; and so as the believer may say triumphantly, without fear of death, hell, or wrath, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again*, ver. 33, 34. For as he died for our sins, so he was raised again for our righteousness, or justification, Rom. iv. 25. This life of righteousness, or justification, is equal in all believers; *The righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, is upon all them that believe; for there is no difference*, Rom. iii. 22. It is perfect, everlasting, and uninterrupted; because *the righteousness of Christ, is still upon them*, ver. 21.; and their union with Christ standeth firm.

2. The life the believer in Christ has, is a life of *grace*, or *sanctification*; which, though it be inseparable from the life of justification; yet it is vastly different from it. Justification is the sentence of a judge; sanctification the work of a physician. God, as a judge, justifies the person; but, as a physician, he sanctifies and heals the nature. And tho' justification and sanctification flow both from Christ; yet he is not our sanctification and justification one and the same way. Both are purchased indeed; but sanctification flows not so immediately from the priestly office of Christ. Sanctification flows immediately from the Spirit of Christ, but justification from Christ in the execution of his priestly office; and his righteousness is not only the meritorious, but also the material cause of it. The life of grace and sanctification is that whereby the soul is garnished
with

with the graces of the Spirit of Christ, and the King's daughter is made *all glorious within, and her cloathing of wrought gold*; and surely it is well wrought, when the workman is God himself, who never put his hand to an ignoble work: *We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Ephes. ii. 10. This is a life of which Christ is the food, the medicine, the pattern, the author, the preserver, and the perfecter. By this we are partakers of the divine nature; by this we glorify God, and are useful and serviceable in the world; and it is the sweet beginning of heaven: and that is,

3. The life of *glory*, of which the following verse speaks; *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye shall also appear with him in glory*. The life of grace is the same specifically with the life of glory; though the gradual difference is as great as between the life of a child in the womb, and the life of a man come to the full exercise of sense, reason, and judgment.—However, grace is the seed of glory, and is called glory; *Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Every believer in Christ has, according to the measure of faith and hope, the beginnings and first fruits of glory; the faith of glory, the hope of glory, the Spirit of glory, and sometimes *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, when he has joy and peace in believing. *He that believeth hath everlasting life and glory*. He hath it in the promise of it; he hath it in the title to it; and he hath it in the seed and root, which will spring up to glory; for, he hath the *Spirit in him, as a well of water springing up to everlasting life*. This life Christ prepares for them, and prepares them for it.—These three comprehend the kinds of the believer's life. But then,

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To speak of this property of the believer's life, that it is *hid*; *Your life is hid*. It is hid both in point of secrecy and in point of safety.

1st, In respect of *secrecy*, it is wholly hid from the world; and partly hid from believers themselves.

1. It is *wholly hid from the world*; from the wicked and unregenerate world this life is altogether hid.—The *author* of this life is hid, Jesus Christ; for, *the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*, that they cannot see him. In all ages he has been hid; *hid from ages and generations*. Few under the Old Testament beheld him in the types and sacrifices of old. The Jews, under the New Testament, who saw him in the flesh, yet in seeing they saw not; they took him but for the carpenter's son. How few still are there of these that hear of Christ, who know him in the power of his resurrection!—The *subject* of life is hid; for, *he only is a Jew that is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God*, Rom. ii. 29. The believer's life of grace is *in the hidden man of the heart*, 1 Peter iii. 4.—The *means* of this life are hidden; for the believer may say as Christ did, *I have meat to eat the world knows not of*: his life is maintained by the word and Spirit of God; now the *word* is a hidden word, not indeed as to the history, but the mystery of it; nor as to the letter of it, but the operation of it upon the souls of believers: hence the word of the gospel is called *hidden wisdom*, 1 Cor. ii. 7.; and verse 4. it is said, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*. Natural wisdom, improved to its utmost, cannot see them; hence Augustine once said, *Surgens indocti, et rapient cœlum*. Many learned wits, with all their learning, will drop into hell, when others take heaven by violence. But as the word, so the *Spirit* is a hidden Spirit; hence compared to the wind, *none knoweth whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit*. It puzzles the learned to tell what the wind is; and how much more hid are the operations of the Spirit!—Again, the *actings* of this life are hid. O! what hidden things are the pangs of the new birth, the work of conviction, the way how sin is a burden, the way how the soul receives Christ, and rests upon him, the inward longings and desires of the soul after Christ, the heart-embracings of the promise, and the out-pourings of the heart before the Lord, under

der the out-pourings of the Spirit upon the soul! A person may be sitting at your side, and you know not what a sweet work is upon his soul; it is like the white stone and the new name, that no man knows but he that receives it—Again, the *privileges* of this life are hidden privileges; the *seal* of the Spirit is a hidden privilege, when *after they believe they are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise*; the *pardon of sin* is a hidden privilege, intimations thereof are secret; *peace with God*, and *communion with God*, are hidden privileges.—In a word, the *comforts* of this life are hidden; *strangers intermeddle not with these joys*.

2. It is *partly hid* from believers themselves. Their life is hidden from themselves.—Sometimes, through the *remainders* of sin in them; the spark of grace is so covered with the ashes of corruption, as to be hid from their sight.—Sometimes, through the *temptations of Satan*, when he sifts them as he did Peter; when the wheat is sifted, the chaff is uppermost, and the wheat is hid.—Sometimes, through the *pressures of affliction*, and winter-storms; then their life may be hid from them, as the life of the tree is hid in the root, during winter.—And sometimes, through *desertion*, their life and comfort is hidden; when *God hides his face, they are troubled*; they may *walk in darkness and have no light*, Isaiah i. 10. Their life of *righteousness* and *grace* both may be hid under the dark clouds of unbelief, doubts, and fears. And as to their life of *glory*, this more especially is hid from them in time; for, though they are *now the sons of God*, yet it does not appear *what they shall be*, 1 John iii. 2.

2dly, The believer's life is hid in respect of *safety*; it is hid so as it cannot be lost. Though they may lose sight of their life sometimes; yet their life cannot be lost: it is well hid and secured, as you see, John x. 28, 29, 30. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* And what can encourage a poor soul in troublous times more than this, that he

has a life that cannot be lost, a treasure that cannot be stolen, a better part that cannot be taken from him. Well, but how is this life secured, where it is hid and kept in safety? It is *hid with Christ in God*. This leads me then,

III. To the *third* head, *With whom* it is hid: it is hid with CHRIST; and that in many respects, which I only mention, and leave it to faith and spiritual understanding to enlarge upon.

1. The believer's life is safely hid with Christ in respect of *indissoluble union*. There is a close, spiritual marriage-union between Christ and the believer: Christ is in the believer by his Spirit; whence it is said, *Christ in you the hope of glory*; and *he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*. The believer is in Christ by faith; hence Christ is said to *dwell in their hearts by faith*. This union can never be dissolved; for he has said, *I will betrothe thee unto me for ever*. This union with Christ secures the believer's life in Christ; for it flows from a twofold gift of God, namely, his giving them to Christ from eternity, and his giving Christ to them in time. God's giving them to Christ in the covenant transaction before time, John xvii. 6. This is the ground of their *federal union* with him. And then his giving Christ to them in the dispensation of that covenant of grace in time, and making them to receive him, John vi. 44, 45. This is the ground of their *actual union* with him. And from this everlasting union flows an everlasting vital influence from this glorious Head. For,

2. Their life is hid with Christ in respect of *safe custody*, he having the believer's life a keeping. The Father has made him the keeper of their stock, their store, their life; for, *the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*; and particularly has intrusted him with them and their life; *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, John xvii. 2, 6.—The believer also makes him the keeper of his life, saying, as it is, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that*

that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. The believer commits his life, and every thing related to it, unto Christ, and Christ reckons himself obliged to keep it for him, as being both the Father's trustee and his.

3. Their life is hid with Christ in respect of *federal security*, whereby this life is well secured to them in Christ, as the Head of the new covenant.—Their life is hid with Christ; that is, with his *finished work*, whereby he hath *fulfilled all righteousness*, and so fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and thereby secured their eternal life.—Their life of faith and hope here by the way is hid with Christ; that is, with and in his *death, resurrection, and exaltation*; for, by him, we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God, 1 Peter i. 21.—Their life is hid with him in his *victory over sin, death, and the devil*; for therein their life of triumph and victory for evermore is hid; *Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord*.—In a word, their life is hid with Christ in his *life*; because he liveth, they shall live also. Here their life is absolutely safe and secure: their life being hid with Christ says, that their life is as sure and safe as the life of Christ, that has succeeded to his death. We use to say, Such a thing is as sure as death; meaning death to come: but the believer's life is as sure as death past and over; even as sure, as it is sure that Christ *was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, having the keys of hell and death*.

4. Their life is hid with Christ in respect of his *mediatorial station and relation* to them particularly.

(1.) Their life is hid with him as the *Lord of their life*, the Lord-treasurer, the Lord-dispenser, who came to give life, and to give it more abundantly, and who begins their spiritual life, by giving them the Spirit of life, whereby they are born again, and born to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. The Spirit is the *earnest of the inheritance*.

(2.) Their life is hid with Christ as the *purchaser* of it. He is the meritorious cause of it; he has paid for

for it with the price of his own blood ; *They are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb, without blemish and without spot.*

(3.) Their life is hid with Christ, as the *root*, where the sap is hid, in the winter time ; hence, says Christ, *I am the vine, ye are the branches*, John xv. 1.

(4.) Their life is hid with Christ, as he is their *representative*. He is gone to glory, and has taken possession of these mansions of glory for them, and in their room and stead, John xiv. 23. ; and there *they sit together in heavenly places*, Eph. ii. 6. : hence they drop the anchor of their faith within the veil, *whither the Forerunner is for us entered*, Heb. vi. 12. Thus their life is hid with Christ.

In a word, our life is hid with him, as he is the *Prince of life*, with power and authority commanding life to the dead soul ; as he is the *tree of life*, quickening all that take and eat ; as he is the *bread of life*, enlivening and reviving all that feed upon him ; *he that eateth this bread shall live for ever* ; and their life is hid with him, as he is the *resurrection and the life*, John xi. 25. *I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live* ; and as he is the *God that quickens the dead*. Hence,

IV. The *fourth* thing was to observe, That this life is hid *with Christ* IN GOD. There is certainly some depth here, that we have not yet looked into, even the fountain-head where this life is hid : it is hid with whom ? With Christ ; in whom ? In God ; *with Christ in God* : so that both Christ and the believer are hid together in God. May God open our eyes to see what is here : though there be more than men or angels can tell, yet we may dip a little into it, as far as we have scripture-ground to set our feet upon, that we sink not out of sight into the depth. And,

1. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *acceptance* with God, as belongs to Christ himself ; *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6. Christ, having

having finished the work the Father gave him to do, was justified in the Spirit, and accepted of God the Father: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father,* John x. 17, 18. Christ being accepted of God, believers are accepted in him, and favoured in him; their life is a life of favour with God, upon the ground of the favour he bears to Christ. They that are *without God in the world*, are *without hope*, without mercy, without the favour of God, being out of God; but to be in God, is to be in favour with him through Christ, or accepted and favoured in Christ; and thus the believer lives in the love of God, and is filled with the fulness of God.

2. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *union* to God, as Christ the Mediator lives, who is one with him. This wonderful life is spoken of as a thing that will be better known in the other world than it is now; *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you,* John xiv. 20.; and it is a branch of the Mediator's prayer, John xvii. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;* and verse 22. *That they may be one, even as we are one.* Here is an ocean too deep for you and me to dive into in time: O! may we swim in it to eternity.

3. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *dependence* upon God, as Christ the Mediator hath upon him. The divinity hides the humanity of Christ; the divine nature hides, supports, and maintains the human nature. CHRIST, *as man*, is indeed personally, (by such a hypostatical union as is peculiar,) hid in *Christ as God*; yet Christ, as *Mediator*, and Head of the new covenant, is sustained and upheld of God in his mediation and mediatory work; *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold,* Isa. xlii. 1. Thus the believer's life is upheld, supported and maintained by God; it is his God that holds his soul in life. Christ, the Head of the new covenant, and all his seed and members subsist in, and depend on, God as their covenanted God; *I have*

have made a covenant with my chosen ; I have sworn to David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, Psal. lxxxix. 3, 4.

4. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *dignity, glory, and honour*, as Christ himself lives and is advanced unto. Christ is exalted to *sit at the right-hand of God*, and they, being *quickened together*, are said to be *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places*, Eph. ii. 5, 6. This glorious life of the believer in Christ doth not now appear to any eye, but that of faith: however, the day cometh when every eye shall see it; *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*, says the words following the text. O! what a high and honourable life is that of the saints in Christ! He lives in the glory of God; and the believer, whose life is hid with Christ in God, is said to be *received into that glory of God*; Rom. xv. 7. *Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.* Hence the church invisible is called *a woman clothed with the sun*, Rev. xii. 1. *with the moon under her feet*; sitting, as it were, in the throne of God, who has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool. How do they resemble God in his glory, who have also heaven for their throne, and the moon, the earth, for their footstool, which they tread upon! Again,

5. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such perfect *security and stability* as Christ lives; for he lives in God, and there life is hid with Christ there, where it cannot but be safe and secure; as sure as the very life of God. It is hid in all the attributes of God, as glorified to the highest in Christ, whose throne is established upon all the magnified perfections of God, Psal. lxxxix. 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne*; or, as in the margin, the ESTABLISHMENT of it: *Mercy and truth shall go before thy face*; for, *mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* Hence the believer, whose life is hid with Christ in God, is said to *dwell on high, the place of his defence is the munition of rocks*: The meaning is, God is a rock round about him; a rock

on every hand of him; all the attributes of God, like so many strong ramparts and bulwarks, do surround him.

6. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *rest* and *happiness* as Christ lives in. God lives in himself, Christ lives in God, and the believer lives with Christ in God, who rests in the Father's bosom, and so in the blessedness of God. It is the happiness of God to enjoy himself; and it is the happiness of the soul to enjoy God. God is called the *resting-place* of his people. God rests in himself, Christ rests in God, and the believer rests with Christ in God. When, through unbelief, he is out of his resting-place, he is like a wandering sheep, or like Noah's dove, when sent out of the ark, that could get no rest to the sole of her foot till she returned. Let the wandering soul therefore say, *Return to thy rest, O my soul*; for, when he rests here, he partakes of the same happiness and felicity, the same joy and satisfaction, with God himself; he lives in God: and, O what a joyful and pleasant life is the life of God! *In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand there are pleasures for evermore.* Hence,

7. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such *duration* as Christ lives in God. God lives for ever, Christ lives in God for ever, and the believer's life is hid with Christ in God for ever. God is the *eternal* God; and to live in God is to have eternal life.—Christ, who was *dead, is alive, and lives for evermore*; yea, Christ is the *true God and eternal life*, and being the true God, he cannot but be eternal life. When we distinguish Christ from God, we only speak of Christ as *Mediator* between God and man; but Christ as *God*, is eternal life; and the life that is hid with Christ in God, is eternal life. O believer in Christ, your life is hid and secured to eternity: you may lose your friends, and lose your means; you may lose your name, and lose your frame, but you cannot lose your life, that is hid with Christ in God: it is hid with him who lives for ever and ever.

8. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such unspeakable *nearness* to God as the life of Christ is : it is not only a living with God, but in God ; that is, a life of communion with him, and conformity to him, flowing from a living in him, so as to live, as it were, a life of God. Natural men are said to be *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them*, Eph. iv. 18. ; but the believer, by virtue of union to Christ, and acquaintance with him, may be said to live the life of God, because he lives with Christ in God, and so a life of as great perfection as a finite creature is capable of.

In a word, a life hid with Christ in God, is a life not only *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him, but also *in* him. It is said, Rom. xi. 36. *Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever*. Now, this life is,

(1.) *Of* God, as the *efficient* cause : it is hid in God, as the cause hides the effect, or as the effect is hid in the principal cause. Christ is hid in the meritorious cause : God is the prime original and efficient cause of it : therefore Christ is said to be *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.— Thus it is *of* God.

(2.) It is a life *through* God, as the *disposing* and *conserving* cause ; and it is hid in God as the conserved is hid in the conserver, or the preserved is hid in the preserver : so believers are called *the preserved in Christ Jesus*. The God that quickens the dead, is the God that supports the living.

(3.) It is a life *to* God, as the *final* cause ; and hence all the promises of God, relating to this hidden life, are said to be *Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God*. But not only is this life of him, and through him, and to him ; but also,

(4.) It is *in* him, as the *material* cause : it is a life in God, who is the very matter of our life ; the life of our life, the all of our life, the substantial life. The life of God is the life of the believer in Christ : hence such language as that comes natively from a believing soul ; *My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God, the God*
that

that quickens the dead: Say to my soul, Thou art my salvation; thou art not only my Saviour, but my salvation; not only the author of my life, but my life itself: In God is my salvation and my glory, Psal. lxxii. 7. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, Isa. xii. 2.

But, for further clearing this great point, it may be a question, How are we to understand GOD here, when contradistinguished from CHRIST, *Your life is hid with Christ in God?*

ANSW. We are to understand GOD here either or both these following ways, *viz.* either *personally*, for the first person of the glorious Trinity; or *essentially*, for God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. And,

1. If we understand it of the *first person* of the glorious Trinity, God the Father, then a life hid with Christ in God, is a life hid in God, as the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is the giver, and sender, and sealer of Christ: Him hath God the Father given; for, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life: him hath God the Father sent; and him hath God the Father sealed.* Now, our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is the God and Father of Christ, giving, sending, and sealing him to be the *resurrection and the life* to us.

2. If it be understood of God *essentially*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God; then the import of the text is, Our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a *God in Christ*; I say, it is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ. A glorious Deity, the three-one God, is a God in Christ, *reconciling the world to himself; a reconciled God in Christ, and a reconciling God in Christ.* Thus our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God *pacified* and *well-pleased* in Christ; as he is a God *in love* with Christ, and with us in him; as he is a God *in promise* to Christ, and to us in him; as a God *in covenant* with Christ, and with us in him; and a covenant is more than a promise: it is a paction; and according to paction with Christ, who has fulfilled

the terms of the paction, the covenant-bleffings must be communicate; the faithfulness of God is engaged to make out all the promises.

Thus our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ, a God *dwelling* in Christ, and making all his fulness to dwell in him; *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*; yea, that *all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in him bodily*: and our life is hid in that immense treasure that is hid in Christ.

Thus also our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ, or *rejoicing* in Christ, in whom his soul delighteth. O Sirs! is it not enough to secure our eternal life, which is hid with Christ, that Christ is in God, and God is in Christ, in so much that God's life, and Christ's life, and our life, are wrapt together? *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*

V. In the *fifth* place, I proposed to make *application*; but I must confine myself only to some few *inferences*. Is it so, that both in point of *secrecy* and *safety*, the life of the believer is hid with Christ in God?

1st, If it be so, in respect of *secrecy*, then hence see,

1. The difference between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, which yet is hard to discern, because the life of the righteous is hid: they are not *of the world*, and therefore the world *hates* them: their life is not a natural, but a spiritual life; not a visible, but an invisible life; not an exposed, but a hidden life: the best part of it lies in *the hidden man of the heart*; therefore many times their religion goes for a sham, and their sincerity reproached and reviled as hypocrisy. Their hidden life will one day appear, when Christ their life shall appear. Hence,

2. Many believers have *doubts* and *fears* about their own state, because their life is so hid that it doth not always appear to themselves. Their life is a life of faith, not of sense or sight; and it is the *faith of things not seen*. Herein God designs the glory of his invisible perfections, his faithfulness and truth particularly, when we trust in him for more than we see. Herein appears *the excellency of faith*. The apostle speaks of three precious

cious things, the *precious promises*, the *precious blood of Christ*, and *precious faith*: why, it will be able to live comfortable, when all outward props are gone, even upon an unseen Jesus; *In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice*: hence compared to an anchor, Heb. vi. 20. When the anchor is cast out, it keeps the ship in the midst of the sea stable, by taking hold of something not seen by the mariner: thus faith and hope enter within the veil.—The believer casts out his anchor, and it takes hold of things unseen, and as invisible as Christ in God, and God in Christ. Thus,

3. The believer's hidden life bears some *conformity* to the life of Christ; *We are predestinate to be conformed to his image*. When Christ was on earth, his divinity was much veiled by his humanity: though rays of divinity sometimes shone forth in his miracles to convince the world; yet the wicked world said, He did what he did by Beelzebub; his divine person and glory was hid from the world, and so is the believer's spiritual life; and, as Christ had *meat to eat, the world knew not of*, when it was his *meat and drink to do his Father's will*; so believers have hidden meat, hidden manna, a hid and secret feast, Prov. ix. 17. *Bread eaten in secret is pleasant, or bread of SECRECIES*, as it is in the Hebrew. Our Lord Jesus, shewing the excellency of the things of his kingdom, does it by the secrecy of them; therefore it is compared to a *treasure hid in the field, which when a man hath found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he hath, and buys that field*, Matth. xiii. 44.

4. Hence let none satisfy themselves then with the *external part of religion*, and seek no more; this is not the hidden life.—The true believer values outward means indeed, as the channel of life; but he sees this is not the water of life: therefore he cannot be satisfied without *union* to Christ; for, his life is hid *with Christ*; or without *communion* with God; for, his life is hid with Christ *in God*. The hidden part of duty is the best part; and they have only a shadow of life that want this hidden life.

2dly, Is their life hid with Christ in God in respect of *safety*? Hence see, not only what *hidden provision* believers have for maintaining their hidden life, but also what *good security* they have for their life, to all eternity. O believer, your life of righteousness or justification is secured, your life of grace or sanctification is secured, and your life of glory is secured; for it is *hid with Christ in God*. When you are to celebrate the Eucharist, do it with a song of praise, for Christ as your life, and for the security of it, as hid with Christ, and hid in God. O Sirs, how great is the blessing of eternal life, secured in the hand of the eternal God! Had God left our life and salvation in our own hand, we had certainly lost it; but, O what cause have we to bless God, that has done this for us, to lay up our life where neither men, death, nor devils can reach it; and where the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against us or it! Happy they that have fled to Christ, and are born again: they were born children of wrath, but now they are children of life; whose life being hid with Christ in God, is as safe and secure for ever, as the life of Christ in God, and consequently as the life of God himself.—But who may lay claim to this life, and so to the seal of this security in the sacrament? This leads to another inference.

3dly, Is the believer's life *hid with Christ in God*, here then is a hidden mark of these who shall be *worthy communicants* in God's sight; they have that spiritual life, which I told you consisted in a life of righteousness, a life of grace, and a life of glory. The last of these I need not speak of, except in so far as the two former, being the beginning and first fruits of it, afford them ground for the hope of glory: but all believers in Christ, for whom this communion-table is covered, they have actually a life of righteousness, and a life of grace hid with Christ in God.—Therefore, try and examine, whether you are brought from a *state of death*, in the first Adam; to a *state of life*, in the second Adam. And,

1. Are you brought to a life of *righteousness* and *justification* before God? If not, then you are dead in law,

and

and under condemnation; but if otherwise, then tell me, where is your life of righteousness hid: where lies it? Can you say it is not in you? It is not in your works; it is not in your duties; it is not in your graces; it is not in your frames; it is not in your experiences; Where then is it? Can you say, before God, I have been shaken out of all hope of life and justification upon any other ground but the righteousness of God, the doing and dying of the Son of God, his obedience and satisfaction? *For now without the righteousness of God the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe,* Rom. iii. 21, 22. Have you been made to fly from the wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven, in the law, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, to the blood of God revealed from heaven in the gospel, to cover you from that avenging wrath? For it is said, Rom. v. 9. *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* Are you brought to a lively hope of justification through the resurrection of Christ; and have no life at all this way, but by faith, saying, *In the Lord have I righteousness?* I have no righteousness for acceptance with God but in him, who is the *Lord my righteousness.* Then you have a life of righteousness hid with Christ in God, and a right to the sacramental seal, which is a seal of the *righteousness of faith.*

2. Are you brought to a life of *grace or sanctification?* If not, you are dead in sin, and under the power and dominion thereof; but if otherwise, then where is your life of grace hid and stored up? Some find all their life in *their hand*, as it is said, Isaiah lvii. 10. but the true believer has his life in his Head, even in Christ, *The head of the body the church,* Eph. ii. 22, 23. The life of grace is indeed in us *subjectively*; yet so as Christ only is the *fountain* of it. This life of grace makes a change of nature, heart, and life, in all that are the subjects of it. Restraining grace only ties up the wolf, but regenerating grace makes him like the Lamb, hav-
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ing some likeness to the holy Lamb of God.—Christ, by his Spirit, is the *life* of this life of grace, according to the promise, John iv. 14. *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.*—Christ is the *root* of this life. Separate the branch from the root, or break it off from the root, and then the life of it is gone, it dies; *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing,* John xv. 4.—Christ is the *fountain* of this life; just as the sun is the fountain of light, and the fountain of these beams that shine into the house. Can the beams have any subsistence if they were kept by themselves, separate from the sun? Nay, you cannot shut the windows and keep the beams, or preserve them by keeping them by themselves, separate from the sun: take away the sun, and the beams perish for ever.—Thus your life of grace has no bottom itself; the separation of it from Christ is the destruction of it. Self-dependence then is self-destruction; for the new creature has no dependence on itself, without Christ, no more than a beam has on itself, without the sun.

Well, have you such a knowledge and experience of this, with reference to the life of grace, as you see that this life is not in your hand, but in your Head, Christ Jesus? Are you content and well-pleased with this divine disposal, even when you find no life or liveliness, no strength or ability in yourself, that you have it to say by faith, *In the Lord is my life and strength; In the Lord have I righteousness and strength?* When you find yourself empty, can this satisfy your heart, that *it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,* and not in you; that your stock should be in his hand, and not in your's; that he should be the glory of your strength, the Lord of your life, and the dispenser and disposer of it as he pleases? Even when you find yourself dead, yet can the faith of this, that *Joseph is alive,* or that *Jesus lives,* bring in more contentment to your heart than if you had life at your own command? Dare you say, with David, Psalm xxvii. 1, 3. *The Lord is the strength of my life;—in this will I be confident?*

fidem? This says, your life of grace is hid with Christ in God; and that you, dead as you are in yourself, shall be welcome to his table, who says, *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

4thly, Pulling other inferences, I would close with this, that hence we may see the *duty* both of all these who *want* this life, that they may get the *possession* of what they want; and these who *have* this life, and are possessed of it, that they may get the *comfort* of what they have.

[1.] To you who *want this life*, I would say a word about your duty. If you would not wish to remain for ever in a state of death, destitute of righteousness and grace; and if you have a life of righteousness, grace, and glory secured, then you must *come to Christ*, that you may have a *life hid with Christ in God*. And, in order that you may comply herewith, we shall, 1. Lay before you some *motives* to excite your compliance with the duty. 2. Offer some *directions* for your acceptable doing thereof.

(1.) We are to lay before you some *motives* to excite your compliance with the duty.

1. Consider, by way of motive, that while you remain in *unbelief*, you remain *dead while you live*. True believers, who have a life hid with Christ in God, they are *dead to sin*, and *dead to the law*, as a covenant; but you are *dead in sin*, and *dead in law*, under the curse and condemnatory sentence of it; and therefore you must be made alive, or else be miserable for ever.

2. O consider, that life is a *precious* thing; even natural life is very precious: *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for this life*, Job ii. 4. I have read of a Roman drowning, that took hold of the boat with his right-hand; and when that was cut off, he held with his teeth, till his head was cut off. Men will do much for their life; and, if natural life be so precious, what must spiritual and eternal life be?

3. Consider, that better you had never had *natural* life, if you have not this *hidden* life; better Judas had never been born, than to have betrayed the *Lord of*

life; better you had never been *born*, than not to be *born again* to this life, or not to come to Christ for life; or, that this should be a part of your doom, out of the mouth of Christ, *Ye would not come to me, that ye might have life.*

(2.) We next offer some *directions* for your right complying with this duty. Therefore, by way of direction, we exhort you,

1. To *know* and be *persuaded* of it, that you cannot have life in yourselves, nor quicken your own souls, you are surely dead; and, it is as sure, you cannot raise yourself, no more than dead carcases in the grave can put life into themselves. It is the *God that quickens the dead*, who can breathe this life into you, and make you live this supernatural life, by faith; which faith sees there is no life but in Christ, saying, *I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.* The life of faith is a mysterious living upon life in another; a *life hid with Christ in God*: and yet it is not only his life, but our's in him; for, it is said, *Your life is hid with Christ in God* — What is this? A life *not in ourselves*, but *hid with Christ in God*, and yet must be *yours* by faith, that it may be said of you in particular, *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*

2. *Hear* and *believe* the word of Christ for it: his word is the word of life: *To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68. Now, neither men nor angels can give life by their words; for, no minister on earth, nor angel in heaven, has the words of eternal life: but if Christ has warranted me to speak them in his name, then he can make them the powerful channel of life to your souls, who are dead sinners hearing me: And I must tell you, these words of eternal life, that Christ only has, are put in my commission to speak unto all and every one within these walls, according as the angel of the Lord says, Acts v. 20. *Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.* Why then, since there is a warrant given by him who says, *Go, preach the gospel to every creature*; and a warrant in his name to speak to you *all the words*

words of this life, that is hid with Christ in God; then he that hath ears to hear, let him hear the voice of the Son of God, who has the words of eternal life, so as to be able to convey life by a word; and who saith, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear, shall live, John v. 25.

Your dead and lifeless state is no valid objection; your dead and lifeless heart is no objection here; a dead and lifeless frame is no objection: it is quite out of purpose to make these objections, when that is the very case he takes in hand to cure. Dead and lifeless souls are these he is speaking to.—Life can answer all; and it is the *Lord of life* who is speaking.—Death can be no bar in his way; nay, death is the desperate case itself, which he has come to cure with his word; what word? *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,* John xi. 25.

O Sirs, *do you now believe?* Alas! say you, I do not feel life coming into my soul. O mistake not the matter, poor soul; you speak as if you were called to believe that there is life in you, or that you should first feel that there is life in you, before you believe. This is cross to believing. The question is not, if you *feel* life in you; it is better that you feel death and deadness, and sin and misery in you: the question is, if you will believe there is life in *another*; even life hid in CHRIST for you. Do you believe, that the life you need and want is in him; and, that he will give it out as he pleases? Though you had been dead and stinking in the grave of sin and death for four days; yea, four years; fourscore of years, it is all a matter to him, when he, as the Lord of life and death, is speaking to you, and saying, *Lazarus, Come forth: arise, the Master calleth you. Said I not unto you, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God.*

If the eternal life of your souls were not hid in Christ and unseen, it would not be the object of faith, which is the *evidence of things not seen*, but the object of sense

and feeling, like things visible and sensible; and therefore, if ye now believe, though you have no sense or feeling of life in yourself; and believe that *this life is hid with Christ in God*, and that God is infinitely wise and merciful to you, in storing up your life and salvation in such a sure hand for you; then I will assure you, that, in due time, *after ye believe, ye shall be sealed with the holy Spirit of promise*, and shall experience the power and efficacy of his believed word. Therefore,

[2.] We should now speak to those who *have this life*, and are possessed of it by faith, that they may get the comfort of what they have hidden and laid up for them in Christ. Referring what I would say to you till afterwards, I shall only now say, your special duty is to *believe yet more and more*; and to be *strong in the faith* of what life you have in Christ; and *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. Though you were never so dead and lifeless, dark and destitute of yourself; yet, having *no confidence in the flesh*, your duty is to *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, in whom are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; all the treasures of light, life, grace, truth, and fulness of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and all that is hid with him in God, for maintaining your spiritual life in time and eternity; saying, *In this will I be confident*: and, in this confidence, it is your duty to go to his table, praising him, and confiding in nothing that can be either seen or felt in you by sense; but looking to him through the glass of his own word by faith, and relying on that which is hidden and unseen; because your hidden life must be maintained with hidden manna; and thus *believing*, ye shall have the *witness in yourselves*, that *your life is hid with Christ in God*.

A

PART OF THE DISCOURSE

BEFORE

SERVING OF THE TABLES.

THE sacramental supper, which now we are to celebrate, is an open seal of an hidden life, a visible seal of an invisible life; and these who are to be admitted with God's allowance, are only these who have a *life hid with Christ in God*, who have Christ for their life: therefore, all the DEAD are to be *debarred*, &c.; and all the LIVING are to be *invited*, who live by faith, &c*.

That believers in Christ may go with the more confidence of faith to a communion table; I shall lay a few evidences before you of the *life hid with Christ in God*, both in point of *secrecy*, and in point of *safety*.—
And,

1. You may know that you have a life hid with Christ in God, if you truly judge your life to be *more safe* in the hand of Christ, than when you have life and liveliness in your own hand. Do you think your own life safer in his hand than in your own? and can you bless God for putting all things into his hand, and your life also? Do you think the Father ought to be loved and adored, because he *loved the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*? John iii. 35.

2. You may know that your life is hid with Christ in God, if you reckon your *hidden security* your *best*, and even better than felt enjoyments. Though felt enjoyments be sweetest, for the time they last; yet, do you know and believe that your hidden life in Christ is the surest? And hence, can you not live upon a

* If the Reader inclines to see a specimen of the manner in which the tables are usually fenced, he may consult Vol. I. pag 82, & 93.

promise believingly, even when you find not the performance sensibly, because you know that *all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God?* If you can do this, through grace, then you have a *life hid with Christ in God.*

3. You may know this mysterious privilege by this evidence, namely, your *believing in him, as a Christ in God, even when you cannot feel him to be Christ in you.* It is true, they are happy to whom God makes known, *what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory, Col. i. 27.* *Christ in you* is a great matter; and yet *Christ in God* is a greater and deeper part of the mystery. Christ in us spiritually, is a great mystery; Christ in God, hypostatically and supereminently, is a deep and adorable mystery; and Christ in God sœderally, as Christ's God and your God, is a profound mystery. I confine myself to such a way of speaking about it, as I hope ordinary believers may understand. When you cannot feel him to be Christ in you, in respect of his gracious, comfortable presence with you, can you believe him to be Christ in God, in respect of glorious, ineffable presence with the Father, as your representative, knowing you have an *Advocate with the Father?* Then you have a *life hid with Christ in God, if you can live by faith, upon the fountain of life, even when the streams of sensible enjoyments are dried up.*

4. You may know if you have a life hid with Christ in God, if you *see Christ in God's light, and God in Christ's light; Christ in the light of God, and God in the light of Christ; I mean, if you are brought to some knowledge and acquaintance with God in Christ by the light of the word, which is the light of God; and in the light and illumination of the Spirit, which is the Spirit of God. God is not known but in the light and revelation of Christ; No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, John i. 18. Christ is not known but in the light of God, by the Father's teaching; No man can come unto me, except the Father*
which

which hath sent me draw him, John vi. 44. And how doth he draw to acquaintance with Christ? Why, *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God: Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me*, ver. 45. Tell me then, has the Spirit been sent from the Father and the Son, so to testify of Christ in the word to you, as you *have seen his glory, in that glass, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, making him matchless in our eye, and so as *beholding his glory, you were changed into the same image?* This says, *your life is hid with Christ in God?*

5. You may know this mysterious privilege, that your life is hid with Christ in God, if you know *where* your life is hid, or if you know *with whom*, and *in whom* it is hid, by knowing the mutual union and relation between Christ and God. Indeed, it is one of the most deep points of knowledge that can be spoken of, to know Christ in God, and God in Christ; of this our Lord speaks to Philip, John xiv. 9. When Philip had said, *Show us the Father; Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.* And ver. 10. *Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works.* And ver. 11. *Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.* Why, what is it to believe that? It is even to believe that Christ is in God, and God is in Christ: to know this, is to know where our life lies.

But one may justly alledge, That the time is not yet come for knowing this mysterious point of knowledge, since Christ speaks of *another day* for knowing it; *At that day ye shall know, that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you*, John xiv. 20. Indeed, the *day of glory* will make it known in another manner; but yet the *day of grace* makes it known, so as to make it the object of faith, though not the object of sight and vision: and of this knowing of it, as the object of faith here in time, our Lord seems to speak; for he is promising

missing the Spirit of truth, ver. 16, 17. to be sent after his ascension, by whose illumination they should see him; for, *yet a little while*, says he, *and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also*: and then it follows, *At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. So that this hidden life is hidden in this knowledge, even as that word, *because I live, ye shall live also*, stands between the *seeing* that is before, and the *knowing* that is after it: *Ye see me; and because I live, ye shall live also; at that day ye shall know*. When the Spirit lets you see me, in whom your life is hid, then *ye shall know that I am in the Father*.

QUEST. *How shall a person know that he understands such a deep mystery as this?*

ANSW. As it cannot be known but by believing it; so, then you believe it truly, when, though you must confess your ignorance about it, yet your faith of it brings in a kind of *pleasure* to the soul, as it exhibites to your view the ineffable sibness and oneness between Christ and God, the near and dear relation between them; yea, such a natural, fœderal union between them, as that their life and interest is inseparably wrapt together, and your life wrapt in, as it were, between them, while it is *hid with Christ in God*, as *his God and your God, his Father and your Father*. This is life eternal, to know God in whom our life is hid; *Ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you*. This is such a great matter, that Christ speaks of it to his Father, as well as to his brethren; *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, John xvii. 3.

6. You may know your life is hid with Christ in God by this evidence, namely, your knowing that the *things of Christ* are the *things of God*, John xvi. 14, 15. by the Spirit's being sent to glorify Christ, and shew these things of Christ unto you, and thereby guiding you into all truth, and so to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and all the lines of truth relating to Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer, centering in God, so as to be seen as the truths of God in Christ, and

of Christ in God; then you may conclude your life of faith, upon these truths, is a *life hid with Christ in God*.

To make this more plain and particular, tell me, Have you seen all Christ's *mediatorial aēings* to be in the name and authority of God? And do you on this account, depend upon him, and lay the weight of your eternal life upon him, knowing that all *his works were wrought in God*, according as it was prophesied, Micah v. 4. *He shall stand and feed, [OR RULE] even the babe of Bethlehem, there spoken of, In the strength of the Lord, in the name of the Majesty of the Lord his God.*—Have you seen that Christ, in his *doing and suffering*, was sustained of God; that is, both by the power of his *eternal Godhead*, as the second person of the glorious Trinity, and by the power of his eternal Father and eternal Spirit, as *one God* with him, and thus strengthened and upheld of God, who said, Isa. lxii. 1. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles?*—Do you see the *blood and righteousness* of Christ to be the blood of God, and the righteousness of God? and that therefore your life of justification is happily secured with Christ as he is *JEHOVAH our righteousness*, and so a righteousness hid with Christ in God?—Do you see the *grace* that is in Christ, to be the grace of God, and the *fulness* that is in Christ, to be the fulness of God? and that therefore the life of grace that you have is not so much life and grace handed to you, as it is life and grace hid in Christ, and with Christ in God; knowing that grace and life communicated to you is but water in a vessel, soon spent and spilt; but the grace and life you have in Christ is water in the *fountain of living waters*, still flowing and overflowing, still unchangeable and inexhaustible; and therefore, are you brought off from leaning upon any grace received, and from relying on any grace, life, or liveliness in you, so as not to be desperate and hopeless, even when, to your sense, you are dead and lifeless; but can bless and adore him that

your life is secured elsewhere; and can leave it to his infinite wisdom to let forth and send the Spirit of life as he pleases, and in a way and time that shall be most for his glory and your good? If so, then your *life is hid with Christ in God*. And therefore in his name and authority, I invite you to come to his table, that you may get your faith confirmed, perhaps your soul filled with *joy and peace in believing*.



THE
D I S C O U R S E

A T T H E

S E R V I C E O F T H E F I R S T T A B L E .

NOW, my dear friends in Christ, you whose *life is hid with Christ in God*, whether ye are sitting at, or coming to this table of the Lord, though your life, as to *secrecy*, is wholly hid from the world, and much hid from yourselves; and, as to *safety*, is well hid and secured for you: if you know where your life is hid, you may know that your life is not far to seek; your God is *essentially* every where, and your head, Christ Jesus, is *personally* every where, though his human nature is in heaven; his divine person is wherever God is, because he is God-man in one person: and may we not hope he is *graciously* and *spiritually* present, by his grace and Spirit, when now also he is *symbolically* present in the elements of bread and wine. Your life is not far to seek, if you knew but the place where it is hid. It was once said by an angel, after Christ was risen, and not yet ascended to heaven, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*: this was spoken of his human body; and the place where he lay might be seen by the eye of the body: but now that Christ is ascended to
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heaven, I have a greater word to say, relating to his divine person, and that is, *Come, see the place where the Lord lies*; come and see him in the bosom of the Father; come and see *Christ in God*: this you cannot see but by faith, and believing that he is *Christ in God*, or that he is the *Christ of God*. If, with your bodily eyes, you look upon the elements of bread and wine; yet, look to them no otherwise, but as they are the place not where he lay, but where he now lies. Why, say you, how can this be understood? Is the bread and wine the place where he now lies, when you injoin us to come and see him in God? I will tell you how you may see the bread and wine to be the place where he lies; why, it is just by opening of the eye of faith to see that this *bread* is the *bread of God*, and this *wine* is the *blood of God*; that this bread is the *bread of God that came down from heaven*, that this is the *blood of God shed for you*: then will you see where your life lies hid, even with *Christ in God*, and that it is not far off. Faith has not far to go to see where your life is hid.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c. saying, Do this in remembrance of me: remember I am the bread of life, the hidden manna, for maintaining your hidden life: My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

After supper he took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, &c.

Now, this new covenant of promise, sealed with the blood of Christ, is the glass wherein to see that your *life is hid with Christ in God*: and therefore, now let your faith be confirmed in this, O believer, that your life is hid with Christ in the *promise* of God; or, in a promising God; for, *All the promises of God are in Christ; Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God;* and *this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life, the life of righteousness, the life of grace, and the life of glory.*

See now, your life hid with Christ in the *bosom* of God; for, he is *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father*. O what a well secured life is this

that you have, when hid with Christ in God's bosom, even in the bosom of his everlasting love, which led him to say, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*

Your life hid with Christ in God, is a life hid with Christ in the *blessing* of God; for, God hath blessed him, and *made him most blessed for ever* , Psalm xxi. 6.; or, as in the margin, *Set him up to be BLESSINGS* , saying, *Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed.* O believer, God has blessed him and you; and God has blessed him, to be a blessing to you: he has blessed him for the love he bore to him and you; he has blessed him for his love that he bore to you: and he has blessed his doing and dying for you, and accepted of it; he has blessed his flesh and blood, to be meat and drink to you.

See now, your life hid with Christ in the *seal* of God, the privy seal appended to his commission, and to his names, and offices, and relations to you; for, *Him hath God the Father sealed* , and sealed to be the food of your life for ever, and to be the meat, that endures to everlasting life.

See now, your life hid with Christ in the *purpose* and *decree* of God, *who hath saved and called you with a holy calling, not according to your works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given you in Christ Jesus before the world began* , 2 Tim. i. 9. Now, you may see your calling and election sure, in the calling and election of Christ, who was called and chosen of God to be your Saviour and Surety; according as he hath *chosen you in him, before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy.*

Now, also see your life hid with Christ in the *relations* wherein he stands unto God, as he is the *Son of God* , and the *Sent of God* ; for, while his Son-ship stands good, your life of adoption and son-ship stands: *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* Do you know and believe, that the *Son of God* is the *Sent of God* ? This is much to be observed; for, what you thus know and believe upon the words of Christ, as they are the words of God, Christ in his prayers

commends you to his Father for it; *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely, that I came out from thee, and they have believed, that thou didst send me,* John xvii. 8.

Again, let faith be confirmed, O believer, that your life is hid with Christ, as in the relations wherein he stands unto God, so in the relations wherein *God stands unto him*, even as he is Christ's God and Father, according to the new-covenant prophecy, *Thou art my Father, he shall cry, thou art my God alone*; and accordingly, he went up to heaven, crying, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*. O happy life, hid with Christ in God, as his God and your God, his Father and your Father! *And because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ABBA, Father.*

Again, let faith here see, that your life is hid with Christ in the *favour* of God. It is said, Psalm xxx. 5. *In his favour is life*; and, Psalm lxxxix. 17. *In thy favour shall our horn be exalted*: What favour? Even the favour he bears to Christ; for, verse 33. where (though it is promised, that *he will visit our iniquities with rods*, yet) it is said,

*My favour I will not take from him,
Nor false my promise make:
My covenant I'll not break nor change
What with my mouth I spake.*

Your life is hid in the favour that God bears to Christ; you are favoured and accepted in the Beloved.

O believer, eat and drink; yea, drink abundantly of the strong wine of consolation, so as to be filled with joy and peace in believing, that your life is hid in the *wisdom* of God: and, indeed, infinite wisdom cannot contrive a better hiding place for your eternal life, nor a better security for it.

Your life is hid with Christ in the *power* of God; for, as Christ is the *wisdom of God*, and *made of God wisdom to you*; so he is the *power of God*, and *made of God*

God

God your strong Redeemer, *mighty to save*, and *able to save to the uttermost*: and a life hid in the Almighty power, is it not well secured against all the power of earth and hell? The life of many, even of our countrymen abroad at this day, is not secured, you hear, from the power of a bloody sword. The life of this generation in Britain is not secured from the power of France and Spain; we know not how soon the life of thousands may be a prey to the devouring sword*: but, O here is comfort in threatening times; for, I cannot only tell you, *It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger*, if you live by faith upon these hidden securities you have with Christ in God; but, without all peradventure, your spiritual life, come what will, is securely hid with Christ in the power of God; and you shall be *kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation*.

Again, feed upon this meal, that your life is hid with Christ in the *holiness* of God, who has *sworn by his holiness that he will not lye unto David, his seed shall endure for ever*: yea, his holiness in Christ secures your being *holy as he is holy*, and the perfection of holiness at last.

Feed upon this meal further, that your life is hid with Christ in the *justice* of God. It is true, *sin-revenging* justice secures the eternal death and destruction of all the wicked; but, O believer, the *satisfied* justice of God in Christ secures your eternal life, your life of justification and freedom from eternal death and condemnation, and from all obligation to vindictive wrath;

* We had formerly occasion to observe. Vol. VI. pag. 21, that this nation was engaged in an open war with France and Spain: and Germany becoming the seat of the war, occasioned many of our forces to go over thither; numbers of which fell a prey to the devouring sword, in the several bloody engagements they had with the enemy. And France, the better to effectuate her designs in Germany, was at this time, [*viz.* 1745] meditating an invasion upon Britain, in favours of the Pretender. His son, accordingly, undertook the enterprize, and had even before this time, [*viz.* on July 18th,] privately landed on an island in the North-west of Scotland, with a small party, and was soon joined with a number of disaffected persons at home, which was the beginning of a very unnatural rebellion, and soon involved the whole nation in confusion and intestine disorder; and terminated, in the issue, with the effusion of much blood.

for, *God is just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.*

Again, your life is hid with Christ in the *mercy* of God, as it vents through the blood of Christ; and the *grace* of God, as it reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life. Yea, it is hid with Christ also in the *faithfulness* of God; for, *Mercy and truth have met together in him, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; and God says, Psal. lxxxix. 24. My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.* What! are these perfections of God hid with him, and your life hid with him in these perfections of God? It says, your life is bound up in the same bundle.

In a word, your security, O believer, is such, that your life is hid with Christ, in all the *other attributes* of God, that I have not yet enumerated, and shall not now insist upon farther; but shall only add, that the cup of strong consolation you have to drink has this in it, that your life is hid with Christ in God, as he is *one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*: for, as you are joined to Christ by the Spirit, of which he says, *Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me*; so, he being anointed for you, and you anointed with the same oil of gladness, wherewith he is anointed above his fellows, when, by virtue of this unction and union with him, your life is hid with Christ the second person, the middle person of the Godhead, then is it not hid, as it were, in the centre of the glorious Trinity? O drink at this cup of consolation! Can you wish for, or imagine better security for your life in time or eternity? My text allows me to give you all the comfort and assurance that is imported in a life hid with Christ in God.

You have now got some food for your faith; live therefore a life of faith, that by faith, ye may live a life of holiness and comfort to the praise of his name.—Has he provided so well for your life, and seen to the security of it? O then, live to the honour of his name, a witnessing and warring life against all your sins, and against all the enemies of his glory. Be not ashamed of him nor of his words in this adulterous and sinful generation,

ration, but appear for him now ; for, *When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory* : whereas, these that are *ashamed of him, and his words and truth, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them will he be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.*



A

12

D I S C O U R S E

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

I SHALL close with a word, *first*, To those who are *dead in sin* still. *Secondly*, To those who are *made alive in Christ*, and have a *life hid with Christ in God.*

1st, To you who NEVER yet were made *alive* by the hearing the *quickenings voice of the Son of God*, and are strangers to this *life hid with Christ in God* ; I would offer two advices to you before you go.

[1.] Be *sensible* of these things which relate to your *present case*, your *dead state*.

(1.) Be sensible of the *signs* of a *dead state* about you ; you want the *signs of spiritual life* : I name a few of these, particularly four.

1. *Heat and warmth* is a sign of life, which you want. Every one that is made alive in Christ, they have something of a warm breath toward God and man ; toward God in prayer, toward man in conference, and speaking of divine things : but in these things ye are *key-cold* ; and your cold breath evidences that ye are *dead in sin* ; for, where life is, there is heat.—If you be made alive, by a *spiritual life*, then there will be some *spiritual heat and heart-burning* in love toward the Lord Jesus ; *Did not our hearts burn within us ?* Where the mind is enlightened with some saving insight into the things

things of God, the heart is heated with love to them; they *receive the truth in the love thereof.*

2. Life may be known by *appetite* and desire after nourishment; spiritual life is attended with spiritual hunger after Christ, the true bread of life. The living soul pants and breathes after the living God: but your want of appetite shews you are dead in sin.

3. *Growth* is a sign of life; but ye are not in case for growth, unless it be to grow worse and worse; you do not *grow in grace, nor in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* That which lives grows till it come to full maturity; so, where spiritual life is, there is growth and progress. It is true, believers are sometimes under a decay, and corruption remaining, and lusts prevailing, may, like a thief in the candle, waste his graces: but, if they be living Christians, they strive against them, and recover again; and grow, if not in the bulk of grace and duties, yet in more sweetness; like apples at their full growth, if they grow not bigger, yet they grow riper and sweeter; so a believer, if he grows not more to the bulk of duties and graces, yet he grows more to the substance and sweetness of duties, and more to a rootedness in Christ: he grows in grace and in humility; and hence, though he grows in knowledge, he grows in a humble sense of ignorance; he grows in faith, and yet in a humble sense of unbelief; in love, and yet in a humble sense of remaining enmity, &c.

4. *Motion* is a sign of life: the believer is in a perpetual motion, even when he is *stedfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; unwearied in the service of Christ.—Life has a two-fold motion, a *foreward* motion to every thing that tends to advance it; and a *backward* motion from every thing that tends to destroy it: so the believer has a *foreward* motion, a propensity, habitually to every thing that may contribute to the advancement of his spiritual life; hence the word and ordinances, and means of grace, are loved and prized by him: also a *backward* motion from, or habitual hatred of every thing that may contribute to destroy his spiritual life; hence sin and error, temptation and delu-

sion, will be abominable to him ; and the more life, the more hatred of sin, which is destructive to it. As nature shuns its own dissolution ; so the new nature, the new creature, shuns whatever tends to the destruction of it ; and hence sin is most hateful to the believer, when he is most lively, or, when spiritual life is most active : but, this sign of life, this spiritual motion, is what you want. It is true, hypocrites move ; but it is as the clock moves, only by weights that hang at it : so hypocrites may move in some duties by the weight of law-threatenings, or the weight of credit, custom, and the like ; but the believer moves from an inward principle ; *The water that I give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John vi. 14. This inward principle of spiritual motion you want that are in a dead state ; your duties are dead duties, your faith is a dead faith.

(2.) Be sensible of the *evils* of this your dead state. Particularly,

1. Be sensible of the *sinfulness* of your dead state.— To be *dead in sin* is the worst of death ; to be dead in the grave is nothing ; for Christ was once there ; but to be dead in sin, is a death he could never die. To die a shameful, painful, ignominious and cursed death, is consistent with the favour of God, and with the holiness of God ; for, Christ died such a death ; but a sinful death is every way opposite to God.

2. Be sensible of the *dreadfulness* of your dead state ; you therein are under the loss of all things that are desirable : as when a man is dead, he loses all right to his goods, they pass to the next heir ; so you being dead have no right even to temporal blessings on earth, nor to the heavenly inheritance in the life to come.— You have no right to any thing but hell and divine wrath ; and, indeed, you have a manifold right and title to everlasting wrath ; a title by your first father's treason ; a title to it by your original and universal corruption of nature ; a title by your innumerable actual sins, and acts of rebellion ; and a title to it by refusing God's indemnity, and rejecting the remedy God has provided in the gospel.

3. Be sensible of the *deformity* of that dead state : as a dead carcase ready to putrify is a loathsome sight ; so are you loathsome in God's sight, and in the sight of all living Christians : your person and prayers are abominable to God, and you are an abomination to the just.

4. Be sensible that it is a *destitute* state. A dead body is destitute of the soul ; and a dead soul is destitute of God. You are destitute of the holiness of God, the image of God, the grace of God, the favour of God ; destitute of, and alienated from, the life of God ; destitute of strength and ability to help yourself ; yea, destitute of the will of God that should help you. You are not so much as willing to be saved from your sin, from your carnal walk and carnal company ; having no life, you have no will to be delivered from death : *I would have gathered you, but thou wouldest not. Why will ye die ?*

[2.] Be restless in the *use of the means* of life, till you partake of this spiritual life, and having a *life hid with Christ in God*. What means, say you ? Why, there is a *hearing* that is attended with *life* ; *Hear and your souls shall live* : there is a *reading* that is attended with *life* ; *Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life* : there is a *praying* that is attended with *life* ; *Your hearts shall live that seek the Lord* : there is also a *coming*, a way of coming to Christ, that is attended with *life*, for want whereof Christ complains ; *Ye will not come to me that ye may have life*.

O then, dead sinner, come to Christ for life ; for, eternal life is hid with him ; *And he that hath the Son hath life*.

OBJECT. *Why do you desire a dead man to come to Christ ?*

ANSW. Because we do it in the name of the *living God*, the God that quickens the dead. Why, did God command Ezekiel to prophesy to the dead and dry bones ? Ezek. xxxvii. 4. Because God, in whose name he prophesied, could make the spirit of life to *enter into them* : therefore, hear who speaks to you ; *I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*, John xi. 25.

OBJECT. *But what if he be not willing?*

ANSW. Why, indeed, I can assure you from his word, he is more willing to give life, than you are willing to ask it; and if you be made willing and ready to ask, he is willing and ready to give; John iv. 10. *If thou knewest the gift of God,—thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water,* even the Spirit of life. Luke xii. 13. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Therefore, O sinner, as you would not die for ever, go away from this occasion to a secret corner, and ask of him this *living water*, this *living Spirit*, lest you never get such an occasion, or such an offer again.

2dly, We tender a word to you who ARE made *alive in Christ*, and have a *life hid with Christ in God*. I would essay this by offering you a few advices.

1. Give God the *glory* of your life, even though you have a life of death about you, Rom. vii. 24, 25. and chap. viii. 1. saying, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*

2. Be much in the *actions* of spiritual life, much in the *exercise* of spiritual graces, and in the *performance* of spiritual duties; *Be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, 1 Cor. v. 58.

3. Are you *risen with Christ*, and brought to life? Then *seek the things that are above*, Col. iii. 1, 2. *Set your affections on things above*; there is your life hidden.

4. When you come under any decay or deadness, take still a *fast* hold of Christ, and live by faith upon him, and you shall not want life; *He that hath the Son hath life*: and the more of the Son you have, the more life.

5. Improve your life to the *quicken*ing of others; and, by your example, your walk, your talk, your whole deportment, let the world understand that you live a better life, and have better joys, than these vanities they take pleasure in.

6. Beware of every thing that may *mar* your spiritual life, or mar the *comfort* of it. Beware of spiritual pride; beware of carnal company; the dead and the living

living cannot be good company to one another: beware of unwatchfulness; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

But the main *advice* I designed was, that you maintain the *comfort* of your life, by *rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, so as the *joy of the Lord may be your strength*. This then is your duty and privilege both, to *rejoice in the Lord*, Phil. iii. 3. iv. 4. Rejoice in his *love*; that he hath loved you; and given himself for you.—Rejoice in his *merit* and *righteousness*, as the ground of your access to and acceptance with God.—Rejoice in his *strength* and *ability* to save you to the uttermost, to subdue all your sins, to heal all your diseases, to supply all your wants.—Rejoice in his *covenant*, as *well ordered in all things and sure*.—Rejoice in his *victory* over the world and the God of this world, and over death: *Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and which always causeth us to triumph in Christ*. Spiritual joy in the Lord is a part of the life you have to live.—And, finally, rejoice in this, that *your life is hid with Christ in God*.

Many topics of *consolation* I have already offered upon this; and shall close with some more. Many times have we spoken of *God in Christ*, but never so directly of *Christ in God*. The reason of the variation of that phrase in scripture flows from the close union betwixt God and Christ, as Christ says, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*; that is, Christ is in God, and God is in Christ. This ineffable union is both natural and foederal, as Christ is both the Son of God, and the sealed of God: and hence arise these following grounds of strong consolation to believers.

1. Is it not comfortable that your life is hid with Christ in the *will* and *pleasure* of God, who says, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*? Our salvation is owing to the will of God, and the will of Christ, who came to do the Father's will with good-will, saying, *Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God*. By which *will we are sanctified and saved*.

2. Is it not matter of comfort that your life is hid with Christ in the *glory* of God, or in his design of glori-

glorifying all his excellencies and perfections to the highest, by giving and securing your life this way, that you might *be to the praise of his glory*, as it is said, Eph. i. 12. ? Your life cannot be lost any more than God will lose his glory ; and so his loss will be infinitely greater than yours.

3. Is it not comfortable, that your life is hid with Christ in the *unity* and *individuality* of God ; not only in the Trinity of persons, as I said above, but in the unity of the Godhead, the persons being distinct, yet not divided, but united in Christ ? Christ speaks of the security of his people's life and happiness as in his Father's hand and his own hand, from this argument, that *He and his Father are one*, John x. 30. ; for, being one in essence, they are one in interest and design.

4. How comfortable is it, that your life is hid with Christ in the *spirituality* of God ; or, as he is a Spirit, the Father of Spirits, and the fountain of spiritual life, and of all spiritual blessings ? Spirit and life are joined together ; *My words, they are spirit and they are life*. Our life could not be hid with Christ, if it were not in God, as a spirit.

5. How glorious is the mystery, that our life is hid with Christ in the *infinity* of God ; as he is an infinite spirit, whose understanding is infinite, and who is infinite in his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness ! Though we are finite creatures, yet our happiness and life cannot ly in finite things, because they have bounds and limits ; whereas, the cravings of the rational soul are boundless and insatiable. Again,

6. How comfortable is it, that your life is hid with Christ in the *eternity* and *immortality* of God ! and therefore, says he, *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*. And hence we may say, *This God is our God for ever and ever*.

7. What comfort is here, that our life is hid in the *immutability* of God, or in God as he is the unchangeable God, who says, *I am the Lord and change not ; therefore the Sons of Jacob are not consumed !* Hence, what-

whatever changes come, sword, famine, and pestilence; come darkness and desolation; come death and judgment; yet your life is secured in him who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

8. O what comfort is here, your life is hid with Christ in the *invisibilty* of God; or in God, as he is the invisible God! Things visible and temporal are transient and vanishing; but things invisible and unseen are durable and permanent: therefore, says the apostle, *We look not to the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal,* 2 Cor. iv. 18. The more we live upon the invisible God, the more we out-live all the visible turnings of time, and master all the difficulties of our way, and overcome all adversaries and adversities, were it the wrath of men and devils: hence it is said of Moses, *He endured as seeing him who is invisible,* Heb. xi. 27.

9. Is it not also good and comfortable, that your life is hid with Christ in the *omnipresence* and *omniscience* of God, as well as in the *omnipotent* power, as I said formerly? It is hid with Christ in the God that is every where present; and therefore says, *Lo, I am with you always: Do not I fill heaven and earth?* Wherever you go, I will go with you, were it through fire and water; wherever you dwell, I will dwell. He who inhabiteth eternity dwells every where, and can be with his people in a fiery furnace, in a lion's den, in a whale's belly, in a dungeon; and he will always know their case, and hear their cry, and bottle their tears, and hearken to their most secret sighs and groans, because he is the omniscient God.

10. In a word, O how comfortable is it, that your life is hid in the very *life* and *being* of God! For, Christ is in God, and God is in Christ; *I am in the Father, and the Father in me:* their life is wrapt together, and your life is wrapt in with theirs. O what is this! You will never reach to the bottom of this cup of consolation: here is a depth you may dive in to eternity.

A life hid with Christ in God, has all these things, and infinitely more than I can tell, included in it: all

the springs of everlasting comfort are here, and that on four accounts.

(1.) Because Christ himself is God, equal with the Father and Spirit, in power and glory; and therefore *has life in himself, and can quicken whom he will*, John v. 21, 26.

(2.) Because, as *Mediator*, God-man, he is fully furnished to *quicken* his members; for *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9.

(3.) Because this stock of life he has, is *communicative*; hence it is said, *Of his fulness have all we received*, John i. 16. He got it that he might give it out to dead sinners; for, *he is the bread that came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world*, John vi. 35.

(4.) Because you who are believers are, by faith, united to the *fountain* of life, and to the *Lord* of life, who says, *Because I live, ye shall live also. Your life is hid with Christ in God.*

O then, Sirs, go away rejoicing in the life you have; not merely in the life you have handed to you, or communicate, which is but a *filling of the vessel*; but mainly in the life you have secured for you, and hid with Christ in God: for, this is the *fulness of the fountain*. Bless God for what is handed to you: this may be the object of spiritual sense and experience; here you taste that God is gracious: but glory in what you have hid and secured for you; for, this is the object of faith, which you may always live upon, by believing that he who is your life is *Christ in God*, even when you cannot feel him to be *Christ in you*: and thus you shall live by faith upon the fountain of life, even when the streams of sensible enjoyments are dried up; and this ye shall be always able to do, so long as you believe, that *your life is hid with Christ in God.*

S E R M O N CXXXII.

HEAVEN POSED and PRESSED with *Questions* and *Demands*; or, FAITH'S *Freedom* with GOD warranted*.

ISAIAH xlv. II.

Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me things to come, concerning my Sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me.

THEY that truly seek *Jesus who was crucified* †, have liberty and allowance to seek any thing that is agreeable to the will of God, and that is promised in the new-covenant. The ground of this liberty and freedom that God allows his people, is the *righteousness of Christ* †, which is the ground of justification before God. God is so well-pleas'd for this righteousness' sake, that all who lay hold upon it are allowed the greatest freedom with God; such as this, *Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me.*

From the beginning to the 9th verse of this chapter, we have an historical account of God's delivering Israel from their captivity, by the hand of Cyrus, an eminent

* This Sermon was preached at Glasgow, on Monday, July 21. 1746. after the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered there: And enlarged at Bruntsland, on Monday 28th of the same month, after an occasion of the same nature there. The fourth impression.

† Which was the subject of the Action-sermon, preached the preceding day, by the Rev. Mr. FISHER.

† Which was the subject of the Sermon delivered immediately before this, by our Author's brother, the Rev. Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

type of Christ, our great and glorious Deliverer. From the 9th verse and downward to the text, we have God asserting his sovereign authority over all the rational world, and thereupon challenging their submission to him, and also claiming employment at their hand, such as is spoken of in this verse.

We may therein observe two things, 1. The *employment* that God challenges. And, 2. The *authority* by which he doth so.

1. We have here the *employment* which God challengeth: it is wonderful employment; *Ask me, command ye me.*—*Ask me things to come*: consult my word, my prophets, and their prophecies, with reference to these things; for, *things to come*, so far as they are revealed, *belong to us, and to our children.* And *command ye me*: I present myself, as it were, at your service; and you are allowed, by faith and prayer, to use such freedom and liberty as if I were at your command. Here is, indeed, a wonderful thing; the great God commanding us to command him!

Again, the *matter* about which the employment here is challenged, is *concerning his sons*, and the *works of his hands*; his church, his children, which are the special works of his hand, and wherein he is more concerned than any thing else in all the world. It is as if he had said, If any thing trouble you concerning yourselves, or any other of my children, directly or indirectly, so as you are puzzled and difficulted therewith, then come and put the question to me, and I will satisfy you; and if you would have any thing done for you, or any of my children, come and put it upon me, and put me to it, as confidently as if you could *command me*.

I know some read this text with an interrogation, as carrying on the proof in verses 9th and 10th, as if the meaning were, Are you so bold as to ask me concerning things to come? Or, dare you be so impudent as to command me concerning the works of my hands? Will you prescribe to me? But with the current of interpreters, we take the words in the former sense, as our translators also have done, *viz.* God's calling here for employment at his people's hand. Though God doth

doth not allow us to strive with him by sin and unbelief; yet now he here tells us, how we may wrestle with him by faith and prayer, for all things, for which he said he would be *enquired of by the house of Israel.*

2. We have the *authority* by which this employment is challenged; *Thus saith the LORD, the holy one of Israel and his Maker.* He challenges this employment; he calleth us to this freedom by his own awful authority: (1.) As he is the *sovereign Lord*, the great JEHOVAH. (2.) As he is the *holy One of Israel*, our covenanted God. Yea, (3.) As he is our *Maker*, who made us and not we ourselves.

I enlarge not upon the farther explication. My purpose is to speak a little to the following doctrine, namely,

That such is the unspeakable condescension of God in Christ, that he not only allows his people, but charges them, in all regular ways, to pose him with their questions, and press him with their commands.

In the prosecuting of this subject, we propose, thro' divine aid, to essay the following things.

- I. To *confirm* the doctrine.
- II. To touch at some of these *questions* that he allows us to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands.
- III. To shew how and wherein he allows us to *press* him with our commands.
- IV. To give some *reasons* of the doctrine.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We return to the *confirmation* of the doctrine, *viz.* *That such is the condescension of God, as to allow poor sinners to pose him with questions, and to press him with commands: ASK YE ME; COMMAND YE ME.* No creature durst have spoke in this language, unless God himself had put it in our mouth. And that God condescends this way, may be proved from these several steps of divine condescension I shall mention.

1. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows people to *cry* to him, and encourages them with a promise, that he will answer, and that he will be, as it were, at their command. Read that word in the same prophecy of Isaiah, chapter lviii. 9. *Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I.* Here I am, what is your command? What service have you for me? O the wonders of divine condescension, saying, Here I am to give what you want, and to do what you desire!

2. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows us not only to come to him and cry, but also to come *boldly and confidently*; Heb. iv. 16. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.* Again,

3. This may be confirmed from the *experience* of those that have entreated the Lord, and he hath been entreated of them. Isaac is said to have entreated God for his wife, when she was barren, and the Lord was entreated of him.—The disciples going to Emmaus, Christ made as if he would go away from them, but they *constrained him*, and he was entreated of them; yea, Manasseh, one of the greatest rakes that ever was, and one in compact with the devil, when he was caught in the thorns and briars of Babylon, and brought under afflictions, it is said, *he besought the Lord*, and the Lord was entreated of him.

4. It may be confirmed by considering this. Such is the condescension of God, that he is content to be *held*, as it were, in the arms of his people: *The King is held in the galleries: I held him, and would not let him go*, says the church. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*, said Jacob. Yea, he subjects himself sometimes so far, as to let his servants hold his hands, when they are lifted up in justice, to avenge the highest treason; see a remarkable instance, Exod. xxxii. 10, 11, 12, 14. *Let me alone, that I may consume them*, says God: No, says Moses; and so he fell a arguing with God, why his *wrath should not wax hot*, &c. When God is, as it were, upon horseback, ready to ride them all down
with

with a vengeance, he gives his servants leave to hold the bridle. Again,

5. Such is the condescension of God, as that he grants to *satisfy* his people sometimes about the great mystery of his providence, and the equity of his procedure, as in the case of Abraham, when God was about to destroy Sodom; *Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. And, O what wonderful freedom did Abraham use with reference to Sodom and Gomorrah? *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? If there be fifty righteous there; wilt thou destroy it? No, says God. If there be forty-five, wilt thou not spare them? Yes. Then he uses more boldness yet, and comes down by degrees, till he comes to ten: if there be ten righteous persons in Sodom, wilt thou spare it for their sakes? Yes, says God, ver. 23,—33.* God continues granting as long as Abraham continues seeking. Abraham thought shame to go farther down: but it seems if there had been but one good person among them all, Abraham might have got Sodom delivered for that person's sake; however, you see, he satisfies him to the full concerning the equity of his judgment, as far as he demands.

6. Such is the condescension of God, that he is pleased to communicate the *secret of his covenant* to his people: *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,* Psalm xxv. 14. He says to his disciples, *Ye are no more servants, but friends; the servants know not the master's will, but ye are friends; for whatsoever I have heard of the Father, that I make known to you,* John xv. 15.

7. The condescension of Heaven is such, that he is pleased to allow, as it were, his *affections* to be ravished with the act of faith, or with the prayer of faith: *Thou hast ravished my heart.* O! it is a wonderful word that Christ says to the church in the Song, chap. iv. 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of the neck.* And again, chap. vi. 5. *Turn away thine eyes from me; for thou hast overcome me.*—O! what is that! The Lord knows where our eyes are looking: he takes notice if you give but a kindly look towards him at his call; and if you give but a greedy look

look to him, you overcome him. One glance of the eye of faith has like a commanding influence; it commands salvation, as it were, to come out of God's hand: yea, such pleasure does he take in it, that he not only allows, but commands you thus to look; *Look to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved; for I am God, and there is none else*, Isaiah xlv. 22.

8. Such is the condescension of God, as that he puts the *keys of heaven* into the hands of his people, that they may open the gates of heaven both for themselves and others: sometimes for themselves; for he says, *Whatever you ask in faith, it shall be given you*: sometimes for others, as Samuel, by prayer, opened, as it were, the gates of heaven, and brought down rain from thence. *Ask of me things to come, &c.*

9. Such is the condescension of God to his people, that he allows them to *press* him, even after a *refusal*; or after he seems, by harsh answers, to refuse their suits, yet he allows them to press him with their commands, with their affairs: as the woman you read of, Matt. xv. 22,—28. When she was refused at first, and when she was told in effect, that she was not within his commission: *I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and then rejected like a dog; yet she presseth forward, presseth even after a refusal: and this was so acceptable to God, that you see how he commends her faith; *Great is thy faith, O woman; be it unto thee even as thou wilt*. And, in a word,

10. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows poor sinners to come into his bosom with their polluted feet; *Tho' thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord*, Jer. iii. 1. Unbelief would say, Oh! how can I make so bold as to go in, as it were, into the bosom of God; stay till I get my feet washed? No; he allows us to come with our foul feet, that he may wash us himself; *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*. It is the language of the unbelieving legal heart, We may not come to Christ, till we be so and so qualified; let me be so and so well adorned, as it were, like a bride, and get on robes to deck me like a queen, and then, perhaps, I may be

reckoned a fit match for him. But, O proud sinner, this pride must come down; God condescends to wash you, and do not you take his work out of his hand; it will not do: he allows you to come even into his bosom, polluted and defiled as you are. Say not, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man*; but rather say, Lord come to me, for I am a sinful creature.—By these and the like instances, you may see the doctrine confirmed. I go on,

II. To the *second* thing proposed, namely, To touch at some of these *questions*, that he allows us to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands. Here we shall, 1. Condescend on a few questions he allows us to ask at him. 2. Propound a variety of such as he allows to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands.

1st, We are to condescend on a few of these questions he permits us to ask at him.

1. The Lord allows us to come to him, and ask him, *Where he dwells?* As in John i. 38. *Rabbi, where dwellest thou?* This is a question that concerns his sons, his children; for their language many times is, *O that I knew where I might find him!* Job xxiii. 3. God complains of people, that they do not ask this question, Job xxxv. 10. *None say, Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?* Jer. ii. 8. *The priests said not, Where is the Lord?* It is a question that the church proposeth. Song i. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon.* And the Lord answers the question, verse 8. *If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents.* And we find afterward, the church was in case to tell where he was, and where he feeds: *My Beloved feedeth among the lillies, untill the day break, and the shadows fly away,* chap. ii. 16, 17. She is in case to tell where he dwelleth: *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it,* chap. viii. 13.

2. He allows us to come to him with such a question as that, not only, *where he is?* But, *Who he is?* Isaiah lxiii. 1. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, &c.?* This is a question also that concerns his sons, his children. They need further discoveries of his name and glory: they want to know more and more of him, *Who he is?* And he is ready to answer the question in this manner, *I am he that speaketh righteousness, mighty to save, &c. I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the resurrection and the life.* Many ways does he satisfy them with reference to this question: sometimes at a communion-table he makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

3. It is lawful to ask him humbly, *What hour of the night it is in Zion?* Isaiah xxi. 11. saying, *Watchman, what of the night?* We may go with it to the chief Watchman, that *slumbers not, nor sleeps*: It is a question that concerns his sons, his church and children, after a long night of sin and security, to know if it be not high time for people to be raised and awakened out of sleep and security; and to know if there be any hopes of the day dawning. The Lord answers this question by his watchmen, saying, *The morning comes, and also the night; if you will enquire, enquire ye; return, come.* And this answer hath both a prediction and a direction in it. The prediction is, *The morning cometh, and also the night.* Both a bright morning of peace and comfort, and a black evening of crosses and calamities may be expected in succession: after a morning of gospel light we may prepare for an evening of darkness. The direction is, *If ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come.* Be inquisitive persons; go on in your inquiry; *Ask me things to come, concerning my sons*: and be penitent believers; *Return, come.*—Repentance here required, is a turning from sin, to God, through Christ, by faith: *Return, come.* It is not time to delay; no time to trifle: the night is coming on: the night of trouble; the night of trial; the night of death. If it be asked, *What hour of the night it is with us in Scotland?* May it not be said, *It is the dead hour of the night?* Oh! what dead hearts, dead frames! dead
preach;

preaching and praying! dead Sabbaths and sacraments! Is it not a night of division; wherein the anger of the Lord hath divided us? A night of delusion; wherein the darkness of error abounds?—Gospel truths are trodden down, and the gospel way of salvation little known, even by some that are teachers of others.—Therefore,

4. We may come to God, and ask him this question, Jer. xiv. 8. *O Hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? And, as it is, ver. 19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?* This is a question that concerneth his sons, when they are complaining before him, Alas! wherefore is the Lord such a stranger to me, and to the land? Wherefore is he angry at the prayers of his people? And whence are these tokens of his anger? Now, the Lord gives a suitable answer to this question, when he says, *Behold, his hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,* Isa. lix. 1, 2.

5. He allows us to come to him with another question, Amos vii. 2. *Lord, by whom shall Jacob arise when he is small?* This is a question that concerns his sons, and the works of his hands, especially when his work seems to be brought under any decay: *By whom shall Jacob arise?* And he will answer the question, by saying, Isa. xiv. 1. *The Lord will have mercy on Jacob.* And, Isa. x. 21. *A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God: that a Redeemer shall come out of Zion, and turn away transgression from Jacob,* Isa. lix. 20. Rom. xi. 26. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself! but in me is thy help,* Hosea xiii. 9. It is only by the God of Jacob, that Jacob shall arise.

6. He allows us to come to him with such a question as that, and to ask him, *When will he come?* As in Psalm ci. 2. *O when wilt thou come unto me? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Why so long, &c.?* This is a

question alſo that concerns his ſons, and the work of his hands. They are oft-times ſolicitous to know when he will come; but the Lord's answer to the question is, as in Hab. ii. 3. *The viſion is for an appointed time; but at the end it ſhall ſpeak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry.* God hath bound himſelf to accompliſh his promiſes; but not to our time of it: therefore, we are to wait upon a promiſing God. Again,

7. He allows us to put to him ſuch a queſtion as that, Pſalm lxxxv. 6. *Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?* This is a queſtion that concerns his ſons and children under their lamentable decays. And his answer to ſuch a queſtion may be expected to this purpoſe, *I will be as the dew to Iſrael, Hoſ. xiv. 5. They that dwell under his ſhadow, they ſhall return, and revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and ſhoot forth their roots as Lebanon: or, as it is, chap. iv. 2. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall live in his ſight.*—By virtue of Chriſt's reſurrection ſhall dead and dry bones be revived.

8. He allows us to come to him with ſuch a queſtion as that, Pſalm lxxxix. 46. *How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thyſelf for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire?* And I have mine eye here upon the four *how-longs* of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xiii. 1, 2. He allows them to come to him with their *how-longs*; and he is ready to ſatisfy the longing ſoul. His answer many times is like that of the angel ſpoke of, Zech. i. 12, 13, *The Lord answers with kind words, ſaying, For a ſmall moment have I forſaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather, &c.* Iſaiah vii. 8.

9. It is a queſtion of great concern he allows finners to come to him with, *viz. O! what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* And again, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. It concerns all his people to know what and how to do: and they may expect his answer, according to that promiſe, Iſa. xxx. 21. *Thine ears ſhall hear a voice behind thee, ſaying, This is the way, walk ye in it.* When you turn to the right-hand, or to the

left,

left, and when Christ says, *I am the way*, what should you do, but come to him, and walk in him? *This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.*

10. There is another question he allows them to put to him; and that is, *Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Josh. vii. 9. It is said from ver. 8. *O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs upon their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall bear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Oh! how will thy name be dishonoured! What wilt thou do for the honour of thy great name? When his people come by faith, and pose him with a question to this purpose, what will be his answer? It is a question that concerns his sons mightily: this is their great argument in pleading with God for any blessing, That he would do for his great name's sake: and his answer is, Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22. *I had pity for mine holy name, &c. Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake will I defer my anger, Isa xlvi. 9. And, O! it is a great matter to get hold of God's name.—* We ought always to take hold of it: they that urge him with his name may ask what they will. The Lord learns his people to make his holy name their plea, saying, *Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet do thou for thy name's sake.* They that learn the way of interesting the name of God in their favours, and who, if they want grace, are seeking it for his name's sake; and, if they want more grace, are seeking it for his name's sake; and, if they want pardon, are seeking it for his name's sake, O it is a promising thing! God would not let you lean upon his bosom in this manner, if he had not loved you with an everlasting love. An hypocrite or legalist may fall about duties, and think thereupon that God loves him, and is pleased with him: but if God loves you, he will *stop your mouth*, Romans iii. 19. and make you, on your bended knees, to know and acknowledge, that there is no reason for his love, but in his own bosom; nay, that there is all reason

againſt it: and ſo plead only for his own name and glory's ſake; and then you build upon a rock higher than all the powers of darkneſs, when your heart reſts here. Being ſolidly perſuaded of this, that if God will glorify his name, in ſaving you, none will be ſo much beholden to free grace, making the glory of his great name your plea, your hope, your reſting place. This is a ſign that you are lying in the lap of God's love. What will he not do for his name? This obliges him to *work for his own ſake*, Ezek. xx. compare verſes 6, 14, 22, 24. He cannot work againſt himſelf.

In a word, you may go through all you can find in the Bible, that the children of God can aſk in faith concerning his ſons, and the work of his hands, and may humbly put them to him; and whatever answer you can find in the Bible to them, that is God's answer to you that aſk him duly. Again,

2dly, Questions concerning *things to come* may be put to the Lord. He allows you to aſk him of *things to come concerning his ſons*, not excluding *yourselves*.—And to this purpoſe, ſuch questions may be put as follow.

Would you aſk, “O what is to come of a poor creature, that is ſenſible of *great guiltineſs*, and is oppreſſed with the ſenſe thereof, and apprehenſive of the great wrath of God upon the account of his great ſins and innumerable provocations, and dare not ſo much as think that God will have mercy on him?” Alas! what is to become of ſuch an one? God's answer is, *I, even I, am he that blotteſh out your iniquities and your tranſgreſſions, for my own name's ſake; I will be merciful to your unrighteouſneſs; your ſins and your iniquities will I remember no more.*

Again, do you aſk, “What will become of a poor ſoul, ſenſible of its great and *groſs ignorance*, ſaying, “I have been brought to God's ſchool, and he hath been at much pains with me; and yet I am groſſy ignorant of God, and the things of God; and blind like a mole?” God's answer is, *I will teach you to profit: they ſhall be all taught of God.* Let ſuch a ſoul plead that promiſe, *It is written in the prophets, they ſhall*

be all taught of God: whosoever, therefore, hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son.

Would you ask, "What will become of a poor soul, that sees its *infinite distance* from God, and fears it shall never be brought near unto him?" O! his answer is, That Jesus Christ hath brought down the *middle wall of partition* betwixt God and you; and, by his death, *The veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom*, that you may have *boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood*.

Would you ask, "What will become of a poor sinner, crossed with the *power of sin*, and of indwelling corruption, so as he fears hell will be his portion?" God's answer is, *I will subdue your iniquities; sin shall not have dominion over you*. Let such believe and embrace the promise of divine mercy through Christ; the promise of the Spirit, for sanctification; and take God's word for it, and they are safe.

Would you ask, "Alas! What will become of a poor soul that is *destitute of all good things*, that finds its want of God, and Christ, and holiness; and want of every thing that is good; and made up of wants, both temporal and spiritual?" Why, his answer is, *The young lion shall want, and suffer hunger; but they that fear the Lord shall want no good thing*. But, Oh! there is something in that word, say you, that cuts off my relation to such a promise; it is *conditional*, to these *who fear the Lord*; and I am none of these. But I advise you, whenever you find such a promise, take hold of it as your own; and if you find a want of the condition, take hold of Christ for the condition, and take him and the promise both, and there will be no fear.

Would you ask again, "What will become of a poor *impotent* creature, that hath no ability to perform any duty, or resist any temptation?" God's answer is, *That he will give power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength: my grace is sufficient for you; my strength shall be perfected in your weakness*. Rest on his word, and it shall be well with you.

Do you ask again, "What will become of a poor *tempted* soul? The fiery darts of Satan are flying about my ears, and I am not in case to resist the darts of the enemy." The answer that God gives, is, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.* Therefore, O! rest on his word; and there is no fear of you.

Again, do you ask, "What will become of a poor *deserted* creature? I find God hiding his face; I have not met with him at this occasion; the Lord hides; he is far from me: what will become of such an one?" God's answer is, *Though weeping endureth for a night, joy shall come in the morning.* I cannot stand on all these, so as to cite every chapter and verse; but all that know the scripture, will know scripture language when they hear it.

Again, do you ask, "What will become of such a poor *afflicted* one as I am, surrounded with waves on all hands, or inward and outward troubles: Oh! what will become of me?" God's answer is, Isaiah liv. 11. *O! thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, &c.* Precious things are there promised; and if you depend upon a promising God, your tribulation will end in a kingdom: *Through much tribulation, we enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

But would you ask this question, "Oh! what is to become of one that finds such a *power of sin* taking place, as that he fears he will be a cast-away, and become just a reproach to the way of the Lord?" God's answer is, *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you, to do you good; I will put my fear into your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me.*

Oh! say you, "What will become of one that is terrified at the *king of terrors*? What will become of me at death?" What is God's answer? *O death! I will be thy plague: O grave! I will be thy destruction: I will ransom thee from the power of the grave. The last*
ens-

enemy to be destroyed is death : death shall be swallowed up in victory. Just rest upon his word, and there will be no fear.

Again, would you ask, "What will become of one that is *black like hell*, that hath just the blackness of the devil upon him, and that is all deformed and defiled with the smoke of the bottomless pit?" Oh! a poor soul sighing, and asking such a question, What does God say to it? He says, *Tho' thou hast lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver; and her feathers with yellow gold: I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*

Would you ask, "What will become of one that hath no will to come to Christ, but finds a power of enmity and ill-will prevailing?" Why, if your enmity be your disease that you would have healed, God's answer is, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* It is good to see your enmity. Others think they love Christ well enough, who are yet in the gall of bitterness.

Would you ask, "What will become of one whose heart is the *most hardened heart*, in all the world; harder than a stone, so as nothing can break it, nothing can touch or affect it?" God's answer is, *That he is able out of these very stones, to raise up children to Abraham. I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh.* O take him at his word, and his word shall take effect upon you.

Well, are these your questions? and are you satisfied with God's answers? Have you any other sort of questions to ask?

Do you ask, "What will become of such and such a wicked man, that is an enemy to the cause of God, and to the King of Zion?" Why, what says God of the wicked? His answer is, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* What says he of those who go on in their sin? Why, he saith, *He will wound the head of the wicked, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.*

Do you ask, "What will become of the enemies of
" Zion,

“Zion, the church’s adversaries?” Why, God’s answer is, *The enemies of the Lord, shall become as the fat of rams; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away.*

Again, would you ask the question, “What will become of *Zion itself*, the city of our solemnities? What will become of the work of God, his witnessing work, covenanting work among the hands of professed friends, and of reformation-work, when the glorious beauty thereof is as a fading flower in a day of snares, temptations, and divisions, and dividing questions among them?” O! where shall we expect an answer, but just from that God who says, that *he hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it*: even this, that he is the Founder, and will be the Builder: and who says, *When he appears in his glory he will build up Zion.* We may rest upon what he hath said, That *the hand of Zerubbabel that hath laid the foundation, his hand also must finish it.*—Time would fail me to propose all the questions that God condescends to answer in his word. But thus you see some of these questions that he allows his people to pose him with *concerning his sons.*

III. The third thing is, *How*, and *wherein* he allows us to *command* him; *Concerning the works of my hands COMMAND ye me.* This word holdeth forth such a depth of divine condescension as we durst not have uttered unless he had said it, *Command ye me*: he enjoins us to command him.

(1.) *How* may we command him? It is soon said, but not so soon done; for in one word, it is to be done by *faith*. Why, is it possible to command God? (Let us speak of it with reverence and wonder.) Yes, *All things are possible to him that believeth*, Mark ix. 33; and so this thing among the rest. But how can *faith* do this? Even because it engages the almighty power of God, and so sets God against himself, as it were, to overcome himself: thus the prayer of faith wrestles with God and prevails. How? *faith* takes hold of such and such an attribute of God, and makes his own attributes

butes to press him, and command him. For example,

Faith takes hold of the *faithfulness* of God who hath so and so promised: What, says faith, hast thou not promised this and that, and wilt thou not be as good as thy word? Hast thou not *faithfulness for the girdle of thy loins*? Art thou not a God of truth and veracity? Will the *strength of Israel lye*? No, no, says faith; it is not possible. And so faith puts God's own faithfulness on work to press upon him; and thus commands him.

So again, faith takes hold of the *justice* of God, that most dreadful attribute, which formerly was like hell to the poor sinful creature, when it thought upon it; but now the poor trembling soul comes to God and says to this purpose, Lord, I hear there is a ransom which thou hast found out; a ransom in the bloody sacrifice of a glorious Christ, which satisfies justice to the full: I have no hope of mercy, but only upon the account of this ransom; to this I fly for refuge: and thou hast declared that thou art well-pleased for this righteousness' sake of Christ; his giving obedience to the death, in the room of such lost sinners as I am. Hath infinite justice any more to demand than this infinite ransom? No, says God: then, says faith, I look for salvation upon the score of justice as well as mercy; for, justice, thou canst not refuse to give it, since thou hast taken complete satisfaction of Christ my Surety.—Thus the Lord is bound by his own justice and commanded.

Thus faith presses him by setting his own glorious perfections to press upon him, and so it commands him; and, I assure you, there is nothing more pleasing to God than this all-commanding faith: God loves to be commanded by it, and will not be pleased with any of you that will not by faith thus command him. Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he *pleased God*; how? it was by faith; for, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 5. As it is impossible to command him in any sense without faith; so it is impossible to please him, unless by faith ye thus command him. But,

(2.) *Wherein* does he allow himſelf to be commanded? *Wherein* does he injoin us to command him? I anſwer in general, We may command him in *all things* wherein he can be ſerviceable to us, according to his promiſe. Whatever it be in God that can do you ſervice, ye may command it. As,

1. Have you any ſervice for his *power*? He allows you to preſs his power to your ſervice; you may command it. Are you not by nature without ſtrength, man, woman; without ſtrength to believe, ſtrength to repent, ſtrength to pray, ſtrength to communicate; without ſtrength to do any thing acceptable to God? Now, poor, impotent creature, I aſſure you, that the power and ſtrength of God is at your ſervice and command, if, under a ſenſe of your own utter impotency you will but give God any employment; and therefore, his call to every one of you is, *Iſa. xxvii 5. Let him take hold of my ſtrength that he may make peace with me, and he ſhall make peace with me.* Take hold of this ſtrength, and ſay, Lord, doſt thou offer thy power and ſtrength to be at my ſervice? I am ſure, I have much ſervice for it; and therefore, I accept of this power of thine to renew my corrupt nature, to ſubdue my ſtrong luſts, to beat the devil out of his old quarters in me; I accept of this power to work grace in me, and to ſtrengthen any grace thou haſt wrought, and to fit me for my work and warfare in this wilderneſs. O give employment to this power of God, while he is telling you it is at your command; or, that if you have ought ado with his power you may freely command it.

2. Have you any ſervice for the *wiſdom* of God? You may command it. Are you poor, ſenſeleſs creatures, as well as weak? Indeed the natural man thinks he has wit enough; *Vain man would be wiſe, though he be born like a wild aſſes colt.* But you loſt all your wiſdom ſince your head was cracked with the fall; Chriſt who is offered to you, is the very *wiſdom of God*; *In him dwelleth all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*; and this wiſdom is communicable; therefore, pray for the Spirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of Chriſt;

Christ; and employ his wisdom, saying, Lord, dost thou offer a poor fool thy wisdom to be at my service; I am sure, I have much service for it; for, I know not a step of my way, unless wisdom lead me; I understand not a word of thy scripture, unless wisdom teach me; if you would give this employment to the wisdom of God, it is at your service in that promise, Isa. xlii. 19. *I will bring the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.*—Thus, if you have ought ado with his wisdom, you may command it.

3. Have you any service for the *righteousness* of God? You may command it; it is at your service in that promise, Isa. xli. 12, 13. *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; behold, I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry: I will place my salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.* If you saw God's law-right, my friends, you would perceive such a perfection and spirituality in it, as that no man living can now fulfil it, and get righteousness and life by it. Now, the gospel tells you good news, namely, That perfect righteousness, answering all the demands and commands of the law, hath been wrought out by Christ, that this righteousness of Christ, is the righteousness of God, of him who is God as well as man, and a righteousness of God's providing and of God's accepting; the gospel tells you, that this righteousness of Christ, is freely and fully offered to all the hearers of the gospel; *To you is the word of this salvation sent; we offer it to you all: this offer is the ordinary appointed means of faith, Rom. i. 16. The gospel is the power of God to every one that believeth.* Why? *Because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith.* If we could preach more of this righteousness, we might expect more of the power of God to go along with our preaching. You have but a poor trade of it, that are hunting after justification and acceptance with God by your own righteousness: if you seek it in the works of the law, you must still be doing, and never have done; yea, in this way

you are but undoing yourselves, dishonouring Christ, frustrating the grace of God, and making your own justification both imperfect, and impossible; for, *By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified.*—Now, the perfect righteousness of God is in your offer; if you have any service for it you may command it: O! will thou refuse it, poor, guilty soul, that hast nothing of thy own but filthy rags! Know you not that this was the ground of God's rejecting of the Jews, because they rejected the *righteousness of God, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not submit to the righteousness of God.* They thought it below them to be beholden to another for righteousness; they thought themselves good enough; and that they might make a shift to win to heaven by their own good works, good wishes, good desires, and endeavours. Now, if any here see the absolute need of this righteousness of God, you may command it; God is not holding it from you, but offering it to you; take it and his blessing with it; take it, and say, Lord, I have no righteousness of my own, nothing but guilt and sin; but seeing in the gospel-offer thou dost exhibit this everlasting righteousness of Christ to be at the service of such a bankrupt; I desire to look, with disdain and abhorrence, upon all my own righteousness, in point of justification; and I would not be found in it for a thousand worlds, but would be found in Christ, having his righteousness, which is by faith; and I desire to say, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*—Thus, if you have ought ado with his righteousness, you may command it.

4. Have you any service for the *Spirit* of God? You may command him. O Sirs, have you no need of the Spirit to convince you, to comfort you, to sanctify you, and to seal you unto the day of redemption? If you have any such employment for the Spirit, he is at your service in that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* Accept of this promise of the Spirit; and *he shall be in you as a well of water springing up to everlasting life.* If you think you have need of the Spirit, then put God to his word.

word. It is said of the Galatians, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* importing, that there is no way of receiving the Spirit, but by the *hearing of faith*; that is, by embracing the promise of the Spirit when you hear it made to you; as when God says, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring,* &c. let your heart say, **A M E N,** Lord; even so be it. Now, when you have the Spirit of God at your command, or at your service, what want you? O! blessed be God that ever there was a promise of the Spirit. As I know nothing more frequently and fully promised in the word than the Spirit of God; so, I know nothing you can want, if you have the Spirit. Do you want grace? He is the Spirit of grace. Do you want faith? He is the Spirit of faith. Do you want love? He is the Spirit of love. Do you want holiness? He is the Spirit of holiness. Do you want a heart to pray? He is the Spirit of prayer and supplication. Now, welcome, poor soul, who wants all these things, to take the promised Spirit: you have all these things at your command when you have the Spirit. Are you complaining you have a dead heart? He is the Spirit of life. Have you a passionate spirit? He is the Spirit of meekness. Have you little wit? He is the Spirit of wisdom. Are you a fool, and know not what to chuse? He is the Spirit of counsel. Sit down and devise wants, and he hath names to answer them all.

Now, the Spirit of God, and all his grace, all his influences, and saving operations, are at your service, and at your command: and if God's rich offers of grace have so far prevailed against your natural enmity, that your whole soul is content to take what he offers, it is your own; whosoever will, let him come and take all this grace freely: it is your own fault if you go from this without an ample supply this day. If you have ought to do with the Spirit, you may command him; you may have him as a Spirit of all grace.

5. What shall I say to sum up all? Have you any service for God himself? You may command him: he offers

offers himself to be at your service, in that promise, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*, Heb. viii. 10. Some will, perhaps, make other terms to you in God's covenant, and tell you, if you be his people, he will be your God; but that is not the gospel: the gospel says not, *I will*, IF *ye will*; but it is absolute and sovereign; *I will*, and *ye shall*: *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*. This covenant does not only give life upon the terms of believing, but it gives, it promises faith, and believing also; *Thy people shall be willing: Ye shall be my people*. Let the most unworthy wretch in the world, who hears this gospel, say, AMEN, Lord; be it so as thou sayest: and if you cannot say *Amen*, beg that God would help you to say it.—I know no terms or conditions on your part, but to consent that God may work in you all the terms and conditions you want. If I understand the gospel at all, Sirs, I understand this, that I cannot go as low with the terms of the gospel as Christ allows; Christ will go lower, and seek less qualifications than we can do for our hearts. If ever some of us got good of the gospel, God behoved to reach as low as hell to take us up.

Well, all of you that think this promise can do you any service, take it to you, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*. This is the sum of God's covenant; and if you take hold of it, and welcome these news, you shall be happy in time and through eternity; for, God's word of grace hath taken you by the heart.

Now, thus I have told you, in a few particulars, wherein God allows you to *command* him. I might expatiate here, and tell you, that as far as the promises go, which you are called to embrace, God and all his attributes, all his perfections, all his fulness, is at your service; Christ and all his offices, purchase, blood, merit, and grace, is at your service to make use of, as you need them: when you command God, you command all; and he commands you to press him, and put him to it; *Concerning the works of my hands, command ye me*. You may put him to it concerning yourselves: are ye not the work of his hands? And you may put him to

it concerning his church and people; and press him with what he hath promised to them.—Where God hath bound himself voluntarily out of love, do not ye loose him by unbelief; but receive his gracious promise, and take him bound as he offers himself: believe his promise, and engagements by promise; and thus you will set a seal to his truth and faithfulness. But I come now,

IV. To the fourth thing in the general method, *viz.* The *reasons* of the doctrine, *That God allows us; yea, with all authority enjoins us, to pose him with our questions, and press him with our commands.* Here, I would essay these three things. 1. Give reasons why he allows us to pose him with *questions*. 2. Why he allows us to press him with *commands*. 3. Why he not only *allows*, but with all authority *injoins*, saying, *Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me.*

1st, Why doth he allow us to *pose* him with *questions*? To this we reply:

1. Because he knows people are ready to *consult hell*, and their *own hearts*, when they should consult God; and he knows, that when we consult the devil, or our own hearts, we get but a desperate answer from the devil, and a deceitful answer from our own hearts, and neither of the two to our advantage. The proof of this reason is couched up, Isaiah xlv. 25. *He frustrateth the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad, that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish, &c.* We are ready to believe a lye rather than God's truth: therefore he allows us to ask him.

2. He allows us to ask him questions, and pose him with them, because our questions are *very defective*, both for matter and manner, and are very subject to be mistaken; and God only understands them: Yea, such is the exercise upon the spirit of his people sometimes, that many of their questions are incommunicable to any other, but God himself. A child of God will go and ask his heavenly Father a question, that he will not

ask the nearest friend in the world. Now, their questions being unintelligible to others, and incommunicable to others; therefore, God allows them to ask him.

3. He allows us to pose him with our questions, because many of them are *unanswerable* by any other but God himself. All the wit in the world cannot answer some questions that concern God's people, in a satisfactory way: and I have little skill of that Christian, that is not exercised now and then with some doubts, that all the ministers in the world cannot answer.—Thus you have the reasons, why we are to *pose* him with our *questions*.

2dly, Why, in condescension, he allows us to *press* him with our *commands*; *command ye me*. God was at vast pains, in the former verse, to make the people know their own place, so as not to strive with him; and here, he obtests them, in their own place, to be bold with him; *Command ye me*. And, indeed, a child of God is never helped to more boldness in pleading with God, than when his heart hath been brought, by an awful impression of divine sovereignty, to know his own room, his infinite distance from God. Why doth he allow us to press him with our commands, and with all our adoes? Why,

1. His allowing us to press him thus, flows from the full benison of his own *love*; for, *his delights were with the sons of men*, Prov. viii. 31.—And therefore, he delights to be pressed, and employed by them. His kindness makes him love to have men courting his kindness.

2. Because he knows what *jealous spirits*, and *unbelieving hearts* we have; therefore he allows us to press him, and put him to it. Through unbelief we are ever ready to jealous that God is not in earnest with us; we are apt to think, that God, with Naphtali, is cheating us *with goodly words*. We look upon his offers as idle tales, and believe them not; therefore, he enjoins us to press him so hard, as if we would command; for he knows that no less than this will satisfy our incredulous

lous hearts concerning his kindness; and hardly this will do it.

3. He calls us to press him that he may thus make *all unbelievers inexcusable*. They that reject such condescending offers of grace, shall have heaven and earth, and their own consciences, to witness against the corruption, and enmity of their own hearts, when such amazing tenders of grace are rejected: this testifies that nothing but the rebellious obstinacy of your own will is your ruin; though, in the mean time, by these condescending offers, he draws out the heart-love of his chosen to himself.—Thus you have the reasons why he allows us to *press* him with our *commands*.

3dly, Why does he not only *allow*, but with all authority *injoin* us to *pose* him, and *press* him thus, saying, *This saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.* Where you see he charges us by his sovereignty, as he is *the Lord*; by his particular relation to the church, as he is *the holy One of Israel*; and by his general relation to all, as he is *our Maker*, he charges us to *ask him*, and *command him*. Why does he interpose his authority for this effect?

1. Because he knows people are *averse* from doing it. *The carnal mind is enmity against God*; and much of this enmity remains even in the hearts of the regenerate, though their aversion from coming to him, may many times be covered with a mask of humility; they may be jealous of their allowance, and doubt if God allows them to be free with him, because they are conscious of their own naughtiness.

2. He authoritatively *injoins* it, because he knows that his people are *hopeless* and *desperate* many times, as to several things that concern them; therefore he *injoins* them to *ask him*, and *command him* concerning these things. And the reason why they are oft-times desperate and hopeless, is because they find that formerly they have had so many fruitless vows, fruitless resolutions, fruitless desires, fruitless prayers, that sense and reason

make them think, *Why should we wait on the Lord any longer?* Therefore, that faith may not lose its feet in fruitless despair, he enterposes his authority to stir them up again. And therefore,

3. He charges us with *all authority*, that we come to him, and employ him with all confidence, that we may *hope against hope*, and *believe against unbelief*; seeing he charges us as he is *the Lord*, the *holy One of Israel*, and *his Maker*.

He takes three titles or designations here to himself, because of three sorts of persons he hath to deal with.

(1.) There are some that know him by his name **JEHOVAH**, *the Lord*; the great Sovereign, whose will is a law; though they dare not say they have any interest in him. To such he saith, *Thus saith the LORD, Ask me things to come, and command me.*

(2.) There are some that know him to be the *holy One of Israel*; a God in covenant with Christ, and in him with them, to make them holy and happy; and a God in covenant with Israel to be their Saviour and Sanctifier. To these that know him thus, he says, *Thus saith the holy One of Israel, Ask me, command me.*

(3.) There are some that dare say no more of God, and their knowledge of him, but that he is their *Maker*; the God that made them. To such he says, *Thus saith the Lord, his MAKER, Ask me, and command me*; ye that know him to be the Lord, ye that know him to be the holy One of Israel, ye that know no more of him, but that he is your *Maker*, he obtests and charges you, by all that he is in himself, by all his relations to you, and interests in you, that you boldly credit him with all your concerns, and ask him of your doubts, and command him with your adoes.—So much for the *doctrinal* part. I come now,

V. To the *fifth* thing, which was the *application*, in an use of information, caution, trial, and exhortation.

1st, For *information*. Is it so, That God allows and commands us thus to pose him, and press him? Then,

1. See the wonderful *grace, condescension, and goodwill of God* towards the children of men: He is not *willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*; and therefore he not only makes a most rich and *glorious offer of Christ*, and all his fulness to us, but he calls and commands us to *ask him, and press him*: that we may know he is in earnest with us in his offers, he charges us to be in earnest with him in our suits, and to force all needful blessings out of his hand: *The kingdom of heaven suffers by violence, and the violent take it by force.* This holy violence is most pleasing to God. You are not straitened in God, for the external revelation of his will; but miserably straitened in your bowels, through the internal corruption of your wills.

2. Hence I infer, that the children of God may come to him with *boldness*, and can never be at a loss what to do in their straits, as long as in all *doubts* they may ASK him, and in all their *difficulties* they may COMMAND him. "It is below a Roman spirit, said one, to say, I am undone, as long as Cæsar lives;" much more is it below a child of God, to say, I am undone, as long as Christ lives; and as long as he may ask and command what he will, or rather what he needs. He can never be in such a strait, but he may know what to do, and where to go: *To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* We may go to him, and get a word for our relief, whatever is the matter with us. It was said of Luther, That, in prayer, *he got what he pleased from God*; and there is something of this power with God, that every believer hath, according to that word, Job xxii. 27, 28. *Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; and thou shalt pay thy vows: thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall also be established unto thee; and the light shall shine upon thy ways.* I mind a word of Tertullian, *Cælum tundimus et misericordiam extorquemus*: We knock at heaven, and the merciful heart of God flies open, which we bring away with us.

3. If God allows us to pose him with our questions, then hence I infer, that well may we allow him to pose us with his questions: if we may ask GOD questions with all *humility*; then God may ask us questions with

all authority. You will say, *What questions does God ask of him?* There are some questions he is asking at the *wicked*; some he is asking at the *godly*.

(1.) I will tell you a question or two that he is asking at the *wicked*, who live in the contempt of all his rich offers of grace: He asks you, *O fools, when will you be wise?* (For gaining of time, I shall not cite all the scriptures I will mention.) He asks you, *How long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing? How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?* Prov. i. 21. He asks you, *O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?*—He is asking you, *O fallen sinner, saying, Adam, where art thou?* What a sinful miserable state art thou now into?—He is asking you, *O unconverted soul, What concord hath Christ with Belial? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? Can two walk together except they be agreed?* You have no communion with God in that state.—He asks you, *O liar and swearer, What shall be given to thee, thou false tongue?* Will it not be *sharp arrows of the mighty, and coals of juniper*, if thou repentest not?—He asks you, *O debauched drunkard, Who hath wo, who hath redness of eyes, who hath sorrow?* Is it not *they that tarry long at the wine?*—He asks you, *O whoremonger, adulterer, Sabbath-breaker, and otherwise profane persons, What fruit had you in these things whereof ye are now ashamed?*—He asks you, *O rebellious sinner, How oft would I have gathered you, as a hen doth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Why will ye die, O house of Israel?*—He asks you, *O ungrateful sinner, Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? What iniquity have you found in me, that ye have departed far from me?*—He asks you, *O self-justifying sinner, Why perceivest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thine own? For there is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their iniquities.*—He asks you, *O idle sinner, Why stand ye here all the day idle, &c.?*—He asks, *O hypocrite and formalist, When you fasted, did you at all fast unto me? When you did eat and drink, did you not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?* Was it not for
your-

yourselfes, and not for my honour? *If I be a Father, where is my honour? If I be a Master, where is my fear?*—He asks you, O lukewarm Gallio, that cares for none of these things, standing, as it were, betwixt heaven and hell, in a suspense; he asks you, *How long will ye halt betwixt two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him.*—He asks you all, *impenitent Christless sinners, What will ye do in the day of visitation, in the desolation that shall come from far? To whom will ye fly for help? and where will ye leave your glory? How shall ye escape the damnation of hell? How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?*—See what answer you give to these questions that God is asking you; and which he asks for your conviction, that ye may turn at his reproof, and answer with a *behold, we are vile; and, behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* If you will think of answering these questions thus now, I will tell you what God will say, *Because I called, and ye would not answer; the time cometh, when ye shall call, and I will not answer; yea, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolations, and your destruction as a whirlwind,* Prov. i. 23,—27.

(2.) I will tell you a question or two that God is asking *his people*; for, as they ask him, so he asks them, time about, as it were. He asks you, O *doubting* believer, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*—What reason have you to doubt of my love, and to doubt of my kindness?—He asks you, O *strong* believer, *Who made thee to differ? By grace ye are what ye are.*—He asks you, O *secure* believer, *What, could you not watch with me one hour? Is this your kindness to your friend?*—He asks you, O *careless* believer, *What do you more than others? Should you not study to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect? Are you so fleshly, having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh?*—He asks you, O *untender* believer, that takes not so much heed to your walk before the world as you ought, his question is, *Ought you not to walk in the fear of the Lord, because of the reproach of the heathen your enemies?*—Will you cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme?

Should

Should not the *love of Christ constrain you?*—He asks you, O *dark* believer of little knowledge, *Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* Might you not by this time have been *teachers*; yet you need to be *taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God?*—He asks you, O *legal* believer, that art seeking comfort in your duties more than in Christ. *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* For much of this legal temper is even in the best, seeking comfort in their own duties, privileges, attainments, enlargements, and experiences, more than in Christ. His question to you is *Why seek ye the living among the dead?* Are you not married to Christ, and so your old husband the law is dead? *We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, and married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God,* Rom. vii. 4. Should you not seek your comfort in your living Head and Husband, and in his righteousness?—Again, he asks you, O *mourning* believer, *Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?* Man, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? Fear not ye, if ye be seeking Jesus who was crucified.—He asks you, O *inquisitive* believer, *What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be granted to the half of the kingdom; yea, to the whole of the kingdom.*—Go tell him what you are seeking, and seek his grace to answer his questions, as you would wish his condescension to answer yours.

Are you seeking *great* things for yourselves? That is but a sorry matter. Are you seeking a *good* frame, a *tender* frame? That is but a little thing. Are you seeking *heaven* and *salvation*? That is not much for God to give; but he would have you seeking more. Are you seeking a *new heart*, and a *supply of all your wants*? That is something; God may get some glory this way: but he would have you seeking more. Are you seeking *grace and glory*, and *every good thing*, even all the purchase of Christ? Well that is much, but God hath more to give, and would have you seeking more yet. What then? Are you seeking *God and Christ*, and the *Spirit*, and *all the fulness of God*? That is an errand

errand indeed. Where fits that person that would have God and all his fulness? God is saying of that poor creature, My blessing be upon him; for I will get great honour and glory by that seeker: *Your hearts shall live that seek God.*—Thus, I say, seeing God allows you to *pose him* with your questions, you may expect that he will *pose you* with his questions; and see what answer you can make to them.

4. If God allows you to *press him* with your commands, hence I infer, That there is infinite reason, that he *press you* with his commands, and that you obey them. He commands you to *believe*; *This is his great commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son.* He commands you to *love him*; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength and mind.* He commands you to *love one another.* If any thing engage you to obey any of his commands, it will be the love he manifests in condescending to let you *pose him* with your doubts, and *press him* with your adoes; and in condescending to send the Son of his love out of his bosom, to purchase by his blood this freedom and boldness that you may use with God, who, among other commands, doth command you to *ask him*, and *command him.*

5. Hence see, *what things* we are especially to ask of God for ourselves and others, namely, *Things to come.* Future things that are always to come. Things of this world are vanishing and perishing things; they are not things to come: but all spiritual blessings, are things to come; and these we should seek for ourselves and for our children. I give instances of some of them.

(1.) *Regeneration* is a spiritual blessing, and it is a thing to come; for, though a child of God be but once born again, yet this blessing is never lost again; *The seed of God abideth in him, and abideth for ever.*

(2.) *Justification* is a spiritual blessing, and a thing to come; for once pardoned, and always so. The ground of justification is the everlasting righteousness of Christ: *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*; they stand for ever justified in him.

(3.) *Alop-*

(3.) *Adoption* is a blessing among the things to come ; the children of God are still so, he is their everlasting Father, and they are heirs of God and eternal glory.

(4.) *Sanctification* is a blessing that is always to come ; they that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, they have the Spirit of Christ in them as a *well of water springing up to everlasting life*.

(5.) *Spiritual consolation* is a thing still to come ; it is called *everlasting consolation* ; it grows upon an everlasting root : though it is not still flourishing here, yet it issues in *rivers of pleasure that are at God's right-hand for ever*.

(6.) *Communion with God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost*, is a thing to come. This, and all the rest of these spiritual blessings have a beginning, but they have no end : *The Lord shall be thy everlasting life, and thy God thy glory*.

In a word, the great leading blessing we should ask of God, is *God himself*, and all these blessings in him, because they are things to come, and all in him, *who was, and is, and is to come*. *This God is our God for ever and ever*.—Thus, I think, the *things to come* here, may be viewed as meant of *future things*, that are in their nature permanent and everlasting, being the better part that cannot be taken from us ; as well as of future events in the course of providence, and the spiritual acts thereof, which God exercises towards his church and children.

6. Hence see, that these things to come, are to be *asked of God*, who only hath the giving of them at command. When he enjoins us to *ask* these things of him ; he tells us we cannot *command* them : when he enjoins us to command him, he wills us to know that he hath all blessings at his command only ; and to plead that he may command the blessing : *Command ye me*. It is not a command of *prescription*, but a command of *petition* and *supplication*, concerning the work of his hands. We are not to take it out of his hand ; seeing he calls it the *work of his hand* : it is not the work of our hands. We have no capacity for spiritual work ; yea, we are under a manifold incapacity for it. (1.) We are under

a *natural* and *physical* incapacity, in regard we are *dead in sins and trespasses*, Eph. ii. 1. (2.) Under a *legal* incapacity, as being *dead in law*, and under the curse and sentence thereof, Gal. iii. 10. (3.) We are under a *moral* incapacity, by reason of our defilements and pollutions, and being, by nature, *without strength*. (4.) Under a *judicial* incapacity, by the righteous judgment of God for our original apostasy; we are in the hand of Satan, the jailor, who *worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience*: we are led captive by him at his pleasure. (5.) We are under an *habitual contracted* incapacity for the work of God, by reason of our customary sinning: *Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots? No more than we that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* (6.) We are under an *universal* incapacity. Universal, *subjectively*; in regard the whole man is corrupted; *The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are all full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores*: and universal, *objectively*; for, whatever spiritual work it is we are called unto, we can do nothing at it. Disciples themselves can do nothing of themselves: *Without me ye can do nothing*, says Christ. *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*, says the apostle. If this be the case, that we are under an utter incapacity for spiritual work, what a mercy is it, that God enjoins us to put the work in his hand, saying, *Ask of me; and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.* But,

The *second* use, is for *caution*, or *dehortation*. Does God allow you, in all regular ways, to pose him with your questions, and to press him with your commands? Then beware of *irregular* ways of doing it. There are two ways wherein people may be irregular in their demands; that is, either, 1. When the *matter* of their demands is unlawful: or, 2. When the *manner* wherein they make their demands is wrong, though the matter were right.

[1.] I say, we are to beware of irregularity as to the *matter* of our questions or demands; that is, com-

ing to God with *sinful* questions ; such as these following.

1. We are not to ask such a question as that, *How doth God know ? And is there knowledge in the most High ?* Psal. lxxiii. 11. Indeed, whenever you indulge yourselves in secret sins, which you would not have the world to see ; the language of your heart is, *How does God know ? But, He that made the eyes, shall he not see ? He that gives man knowledge, shall he not know ? Yea, His understanding is infinite. The Lord is the God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. He searcheth Jerusalem as with a lighted candle.* Do not question his omniscience ; for, as he sees in secret, to reward openly them that fear him ; so he sees in secret to punish openly them that fear him not.

2. We are not to ask him such a question as that, *Who shall ascend to heaven, to bring down Christ ? or, who shall descend into the depths, to bring up Christ ?* Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. We are discharged to say it in our hearts ? and yet the heart is ready to say it when we are hearing the word, and hearing Christ offered in it : O ! he is far away ; he is in heaven ; there is no winning to him : nay, but we are not to say so ; for he is nigh, when his word is nigh ; *He is in this word of faith which we preach.* Now, this word, says the Holy Ghost, is even in our *mouths*, and in our *hearts*. The word is in our *mouths* ; and when we find it there we should eat it ; *Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them,* Jer. xv. 16. And when the word is in your mouth, Christ is there ; and you should feed upon him in the word as well as in the sacrament. And as the word is in your mouth, so it is in your *heart* that you may embrace him. But,

3. We are not to ask such a question as that, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? Can he give us bread to eat ? Can he provide flesh for his people ?* Psal. lxxviii. 19. This is the question of *unbelief* ; Can God provide supply for my temporal or spiritual necessities ? Can he pardon such sins as mine ? Can he subdue such corruptions as mine ? Can he supply such wants as mine ? *How can these things be ?* Oh ! blasphemous unbelief !

What

What cannot a God of infinite power do? This infidelity hath a mouth full of blasphemy. What answer gave God to this question to Israel? It is said, *God heard and was wroth; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, nor trusted in his salvation.*

4. We are not to ask such a question as that, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?* Isaiah lviii. 3. This is the language of the *hypocrite* and *legalist*, who hath an over-rating thought of all his duties; *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen? Wherefore have we prayed, and thou hast not heard?*—They challenge God of injustice, for not giving them what they think they merit; *I thank God*, said the Pharisee, *that I am not as other men, no adulterer, no murderer, nor like this publican; I fast twice a week, I give alms of all that I possess.* This was no prayer; but a proud boasting of what he had done for God, and what obligations he laid upon heaven: a poor believer is of another spirit, let him do never so much, he sees all his righteousness to be rotten rags, a menstruous cloath; my tears need to be washen in the blood of the Lamb. Again,

5. It is not safe to ask such a question as that, *Lord, what shall this man do?* John xxi. 21. Some that are attached to a respect of persons, in order to follow them, may be ready to say, What will this man, or that man do? What course will this minister, or that minister take? What side will this or that man turn to, when debatable things cast up? But such a question is justly answered with another, such as Christ put to Peter in that place, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* Take you the plain road of duty, without troubling yourself with what this or that man will do. Blessed are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: follow none but as they follow Christ.

6. We are not to ask him such a question as that, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Peter iii. 4. This is the language of the *graceless* and *profane*, who would wish, with all their hearts, that Christ would never

come again, and put the evil day far from them, that they may take leave to indulge themselves in all manner of sin, because sentence against evil works is not speedily executed; but know, that Christ will come to judgment, as certainly as if just you now beheld him; *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and they also which have pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him.*

7. We are not to ask such a question as that, *Who will shew us any good?* though there be many that say so, P^s. iv. 6. This is the question of the *covetous worldling*, and which Christ cautions his disciples against, *Say not, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? Be careful for nothing; but cast all your care upon him, who careth for you.* But, if you will fill your hearts with anxious cares and covetous questions to that purpose, *Who will shew us any good?* Then see what answer you will make to that question that Christ asks you, *What shall a man profit, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

8. We are not to ask such a question as that, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* Matt. viii. 29. This is the language of the *devil*; and yet such devilish hearts are among us that say the same thing. Some say it more *closely* and *hiddenly* under the shadow of humility, *What have I to do with Christ, that am so unworthy of him? What have I to do with his blood, his righteousness and merit, his Spirit, his promise, his grace, his fulness? Is it for the like of me? Have I any concern or interest therein? Yes, you have to do with all these; and you are called to make use of them, unless you will rank yourselves with the devils to whom they were never offered.*—Again, some say it more *grossly* and *profanely*, *What have we to do with Christ? What have we to do with his ordinances? What have we to do with his sacraments? What have we to do with his Sabbaths? What have we to do with so many sermons? We are wearied to the heart with them; and we care not a fig for these things.* *What a weariness is it?* “Take a carnal man, says one, tie him to a
“ post, and you may kill him with praying and preach-
“ ing.”

“ing.” We are not so foolish as to trouble ourselves about these things. What have we do with them? Lord pity such creatures, for they are as like the devil as they can look, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?*

[2.] As we are to beware of irregularities as to the *matter* of our questions or demands, so likewise, we are to be cautious as to the *manner* wherein we make our demands. We are allowed to ask questions, such as I mentioned in the doctrinal part; and to make demands, so far as the promise goes, and to do it regularly; that is, in a way of acknowledging God’s sovereignty, and in a way of submission thereto. I mention these two, because they seem both to be pointed out to us in the preceding context here.

1. Our demands ought to be in a way of acknowledging God’s *sovereignty* and *power*, which we have expressed here, Isaiah xlv. from the beginning of the chapter; where you see the great God raising up Cyrus to accomplish his merciful purpose concerning Israel, in delivering them from their Babylonish captivity; wherein he was an eminent type of Christ, our great Redeemer: he names Cyrus here, as the instrument of Israel’s deliverance, two hundred and ten years before it came to pass; and God puts honour upon him, by calling him his *shepherd*, chap. xlv. 28.; his *servant*, his *anointed*, that was to *perform all his pleasure*: intimating to us, by the bye, that it is the greatest honour of the greatest men to stand up for the deliverance or defence of the church and people of God; for, though they were Pagans, as Cyrus was, God will put some honour upon them, and take some notice of them: and whom God honoureth we ought to honour. But Cyrus, mean time, was only the instrument; a sovereign God was the efficient cause of their deliverance: he armed Cyrus with invincible power, see ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. Here we see the sovereign power of God asserted, that though there should be *nations*, and *kings*, and *crooked places*, and *iron gates*, in the way of the deliverance of God’s people; yet when his time comes, he will shew his irresistible power in creating salvation for them, ver. 5, 6,

7, 8. Let God's children beware of thinking their case desperate; for God will create deliverance when it is needful, and nothing can withstand him. When we would come to God with our questions and demands, about the delivering of his people, or the recovering of his work; we are not to think it can be a difficulty to God, though there be mountains in the way. How easily can he effectuate what he allows us to demand? He can as easily bring about his work, as he can make the dew to fall down upon the grass, saying as here, ver. 8. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I the Lord have created it. He shall be as the dew to Israel, Hosea xiv. 5.*

2. As our demands ought to be in a way of acknowledging his absolute power and sovereignty; so also in a way of *submission* to him, and not in a way of striving with him, as you see ver. 9, 10. *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker, &c.* God allows us to wrestle with him; but it is a sin to strive with him: nay, we must stoop to him, and ask and have what we will.

QUEST. *When do people STRIVE with God, instead of endeavouring to ask and demand regularly?*

ANSW. We *strive* with God, when we *live in sin*, contrary to the challenges of the word and Spirit; when we *resist the motions of the Spirit*: we strive with him when we come to ask *counsel* of him with our *idols in our hearts*, and with a resolution to hug them: we strive with him, when, notwithstanding of his large promises, we will not *believe* what he says: we strive with him, when, instead of pressing him with our demands, according to his word, we *prescribe* to him; and, instead of waiting on him, *limit* him to our time and way: we strive with him, when, instead of *walking in his light*, and according to the rule of his word, we follow our *own light*, or any false light, and not the word; but our own views and interpretations of the word, without explaining the word by the word.

Now, we see here two things, *viz.* that it is both *dangerous* and *unnatural* to strive with God.

(1.) It is *dangerous*; for it brings a *wo* upon men that do so; *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker.* It brings even a *wo* upon the children of God themselves, when they want due submission to him: it brings much mischief upon them; for, though the Lord *pardon their sins*, yet he may take *vengeance upon their inventions*. And they bring several woes upon their own heads.—*Wo to them*; for, thus they want still *peace of conscience*, and much sweet *access to God* with boldness, that otherwise they might enjoy. *Wo to them*; for, they cut themselves off from many sweet expressions of *God's love* which otherwise they might have. *Wo to them*; for, they bring *heavy judgments*, both temporal and spiritual, upon themselves; for, though *he will not take away his loving-kindness from his own*; yet he *will visit their iniquities with rods, and their transgressions with stripes*, Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33. But again,

(2.) As it is *dangerous*, so it is *unnatural*. For a thing that is made to strive with its Maker; for a creature to strive with its Creator; for the clay to strive with the potter, what more unnatural! God hath more superiority over us, than the potter hath over the clay; are we equal matches to strive together! It is as if clay should strive with the potter, and blame his hand for not framing it aright. And further, how unnatural is it, as verse 10. for one to *say to his father, What begattest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?* Shall a child call his parents to an account for his generation and birth? A child hath not so much its being of the parent as we have ours of God, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*: and the mother doth not bear about the child so long before the world sees it, as God did bear about his children in the eternal decree, before ever they came to the world.

Thus it is odious and unnatural to strive against God. When God therefore enjoins us to ask and command, surely it is in a submissive way he requires us to do so: and when we see his sovereignty, and submit to it, then we ask and demand regularly, and successfully.—So much by way of *caution*.

The *third* ufe, is for *examination* and *trial*. You fhould examine yourfelves before you go to, and after you come from a communion-table. Now, the beft way of examining, is to put the work in God's hand, and let him examine you. Ask God fome questions concerning yourfelves, the works of his hands, and fee what he fays of you. Put all questions that concern immortal fouls upon God; and if you will put him to it, he will answer them. Here I will tell you of a few questions, both for the *natural* man, and for the *fpiritual* man.

[1.] For the *natural* man, there are thefe two or three questions may be asked of God.

1. What fays God of that man that thought himfelf *well-qualified* for going to the Lord's table; and thinks himfelf something, while yet he never faw himfelf to be a child of the devil by nature; nor ever knew what it is to be filled with self-abhorrence upon a view of the glory of God? The Lord fays to that man, *He that thinks himfelf to be something, while he is nothing, deceiveth himfelf*, Gal. vi. 3. Self-conceit is self-deceit; and fuch a conceity perfon was not fit for God's table.

2. What fays God to that man, that thinks it an *eafy thing* to communicate; that can do it as eafily as he can fit down at his ordinary meal; and never found any difficulty in it; and wonders to hear God's people complaining of difficulties, oppofitions, and temptations; but is ready to blefs himfelf, that he was never troubled with any of thefe things? God fays of him, *That while the ftrong man keeps the houfe, the goods are at peace*, Luke ii. 21. The devil was never banifhed out of that man's heart, otherwife, he would find, as God's people do, all the devils in hell, and corruption of their bofom oppofing him: he was never yet in the ftrait way that leadeth to life.

3. What fays God to that man who never faw any thing of the *mystery of iniquity* that is in his heart, nor knows the plagues of his own heart; but thinks always he had a good heart to God, and who thinks he was always fo ftrong in holinefs, that he was never fuch a
great

great sinner as other people have been ; that was always so strong in the faith that he hath trusted in God all his days ; and so strong in grace that he was never afraid for the devil, or his works ? The Lord says of that man, that he is an utter stranger to God and himself both. As to his *good heart*, God says, *He that trusts in his own heart is a fool ; for, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* And as to his *strength* that he boasts so mightily of, God says, *That even the young shall faint, and be weary, and the strong, and the young man shall utterly fall,* Isaiah lx. 30. while they that wait upon the Lord, under a sense of their own weakness, shall renew their strength. Such as thus put confidence in the flesh, shall fall into ruin.

4. What says God of these people, who think they do a *great deal*, when they go about the outside of ordinances and duties, and go to sermons and sacraments to keep up their good name, and the credit of a profession before the world ? God says, *They have a name to live, and are dead ; and that they have a form of godliness, but want the power of it ; and that many shall say to him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence ; to whom he will say, Depart from me, I know you not,* Matth. vii. 22, 23.

5. What says God of that man that ventured to a communion-table, and yet is *grossly ignorant* of the principles of religion, and *immoral* in his walk and conversation ; being a habitual drunkard, swearer, liar, whoremonger, or the like ? God says, *What hadst thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my law behind thy back ?* Psal. l. 16. Yea, God says, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body,* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

6. What says God of these that venture to the Lord's table, and yet never knew any thing less or more of a *work of grace* upon their hearts ; that know nothing of a law or gospel-work upon them ; and that were never dead to the law, nor divested of their own righteousness in point of justification ; that never were made to fly to the righteousness of Christ alone, as their only claim

for heaven, and their only ground of acceptance with God? What says God of these that never knew any thing of this, and yet ventured to God's table? God says, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having the wedding-garment? Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness,* Matt. xxii. 12, 13.

7. But what says God of all them who *despise* all these ordinances, word and sacraments, and give not a fig for them? God says to such, *Behold ye despisers, wonder and perish! If they that despised Moses' law did perish without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith Christ was sanctified, and set apart, an unholy thing?* Heb. x. 29. Do you thus spit upon God's face, and tell him you care not for his kindness, you care not though Christ had never died, and though his death were never remembered in the world? You thus excommunicate yourselves from grace and glory, and all the privileges of the Christian church.

[2.] There are some questions that concern the *spiritual* man, and which the poor believer would gladly ask God, if he durst. But seeing you cannot be satisfied till you hear God's mind about them, bring them forth.

1. Then, What says God to a man that would gladly take hold of Christ, but fears there was never such a *vile, base, ugly monster* in all the world that came to Christ and got a welcome? God says, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me; and he that cometh, be what he will, I will in no wise cast out. Though your sins be as scarlet, and crimson, ye shall be as white as snow.* Though there was never one in the world like you, yet it is not the matchlessness of your condition, that shall keep you out of heaven, it is unbelief.—Therefore, be the case what it will, come, and welcome to Christ; when you come to Christ, God gets satisfaction for all your sins, though they were a thousand times greater than you can imagine they are.

2. What says God to a man that would willingly have Christ, and strike a bargain with him, but hath
such

such experience of a *deceitful and desperately wicked heart*, that he fears he shall fall away again to the scandal of religion? God says, *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you to do you good; but I will put my fear in your heart, that ye shall not depart from me.* He says that, *If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins; and therefore, though you fall, you shall arise; and though you sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto you: only bargain honestly with him, and take him honestly for holiness as well as for heaven; and sure I am, every honest believer will take him for sanctification as well as consolation. No temptation shall take you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. What says God to a man, that, upon solid grounds, *maintains his interest in Christ*, and hath gotten it sealed to him now and then at a sacrament; yet the heart of him still goes a *whoring after some idols and sins*, not only through infirmity, but oft-times with some degree of presumption, while he turns slothful and unwatchful! God says, *Though he will pardon their sins, yet he will take vengeance on your inventions. He will visit your iniquities with rods, and bruise you in the mortar of tribulation, till the juize of the old Adam be squeezed out of you; Yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; his covenant he will not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of his mouth,* Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33, 34.

4. What says God to a man that, with humble boldness and holy fear, and brokenness of heart, is venturing, upon good ground, to *own his interest in Christ*, saying, *I am my Beloved's, and he is mine?* God says, *His desire is towards you; but let him that standeth, take heed, lest he fall: Go up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved.*

5. What says God to a person that is daily judging himself for an *hypocrite and an atheist*, and thereupon

perfuaades himfelf that God will condemn him? God fays that perfon is a liar; for, *He that judgeth himfelf, fhall not be judged*; God will never judge him nor condemn him with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. Do you find yourfelf to be a felf-condemned creature, and law-condemned, and fee no fhift in all the world for you, but Chrift, as a ranfom and propitiation, and think it a good fhift too, and thereupon hath fled to him for refuge? There are two immutable things, the word and oath of God, wherein it is impoffible for God to lye; that ftand firmer than the pillars of heaven for thy ftrong confolation.

6. What fays God to a perfon who, upon examination, finds *all wrong* with him, and yet ventures upon the mercy of God in Chrift, againft all hope, and againft all appearances? God fays, That you are one of the moft trufte friends that he hath in all the world; you are a true *child of Abraham, the friend of God*. *They that truft in the Lord fhall be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed, &c.*—Put all thefe, and fuch like queftions to God, and he will anfwer them.

The *fourth* ufe I defigned, was for *exhortation*, which I only offer in a word. If God allows you, and enjoins you to pofe him with your doubts, and prefs him with your commands; then let all know their *privilege* here, and make ufe of it. Obey his call, *Ask of him things to come, concerning his fons, and concerning the work of his hands, command ye him*; prefs him and put him to it, for his church, for her children, and for yourfelves.

1. For his *church*. Plead with him that all lands, to which he hath a mind to do good, may *have breasts, and may be fpoken for*, Song viii. 8. O let your defires be enlarged both for your *elder and younger fifters*, Ezek. xvi. 61.; your elder fifter the Jews, and your younger fifter the Gentiles. Plead with him that all the enemies of Zion may be *put to fhame*, Ifa. xii. 11, 12, &c. O Sirs, *lift up a prayer for the remnant that is left*; and plead with him, that he would raife up a generation of faithful paffors in this land, and fend them out of his own bofom; fuch as may not think fhame to own a covenanted work
of

of reformation, but may zealously appear for the reviving and restoring of it, and that will keep the good old way, and not disturb the church of Christ with new notions and principles: and since witnessing work, and covenanting work is the work of God, the *work of his hands*, therefore put his own work in his own hand; let us not take it out of his hand, nor take it into ours, or put it into mens hands; it will be marred there: but put him to it, to carry on his own work with his own hand of power. *He must build the temple, and bear the glory.*—Plead that heavy yokes may be taken off the church's neck, such as yet she groans under; and deliverance may be commanded for Jacob. It is true, God hath delivered us from the dreadful disturbance that was in this country, by a wicked insurrection since the last year †: but this deliverance, if we be not duly thankful, is but a blink before a shower, as long as no reformation takes place; and the power of godliness is under such a dismal decay among us, *There was silence in heaven for half an hour*, Rev. viii. 1. Rest in the church for a little time, but quickly followed the sound of the *seven trumpets*, ver. 2. But,

2. As you would press God, and put him to it for the mother, so also for her *children*. Plead for the spirit of *love* and *unity* among ministers and people. Plead that the Lord may save his servants and people, from every temptation that tends to the marring of his work. Satan's assaults, to undermine reformation-work, may be busked up with high pretensions to zeal for the honour of Christ; that, for example, he may not suffer shame or dishonour in the world; as when Peter said, Matt. xvi. 22. *Far be it from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.* But Christ, who saw the devil's black and foul hand under this white and fair glove, says to him, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* No doubt, it was out of real love to Christ, and zeal for his honour, that Peter spake, while he was not aware of the enemy: but it is to be remarked, that when Satan prompts any to speak for Christ's honour in one respect, he means and designs to

† The unnatural Rebellion, here alluded to by our Author, we had formerly occasion to take notice of, pag. 226.

dishonour him in another †. But this I wave. Again, plead that the spirit of *sleep* and *slumber* may be put off the children, that a drooping, drowsy generation may be awakened. Plead that the children may get all an insatiable desire to gain others that are without. Alas! Sirs, are there not vast numbers of graceless, Christless, unconverted sinners among us, together with formalists and hypocrites, in whom God is not in all their thoughts, and in whom the strong man hath his lodging? Should we not, by our prayers and pains, endeavour what we can to spoil hell and fill heaven?

3. Let us press him and put him to it for *ourselves*. Let us *seek the Lord and his strength; seek his strength for evermore*. Plead that you may be *cleansed from all idols*, according to his promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*. And plead the pouring out of the promised Spirit; *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*.—There will never be good days amongst us, till the Spirit be poured out from on high.

Now, these are things that *concern his sons*, and are according to his will, being things that he hath promised; therefore, let us command our King to command these things for us: *Thou art my King, O God; command deliverance for Jacob*. Why, say you, it is only his people and children that are thus charged; and I do not know if I be among the number of these. I tell you, Sirs, you are all welcome to put God to his word; shift not the call: God here directs his speech to all who are capable to know or understand it. 1. It is directed to all such as understand that God is *the Lord*; *Thus saith the Lord*. 2. It is directed to all who look upon him as a *holy God*, and a God in covenant with Israel; *Thus saith the holy One of Israel*. 3. It is directed to all that know God as their *Maker*; *Thus saith*

† The affair which our Author here has in his eye, was well enough understood at the time when delivered. We will have occasion in some subsequent discourses, where he touches more directly at the matter, to lay it open.

thy Maker. 4. It is directed to all that have any *questions* to ask. 5. It is directed to all that have any concern about God's *sons*, and the *work of his hands*. 6. It is directed to all who have any thing *ado* with God, or any service for him; *Command ye me.* All these he professes to employ him; and if you do it not, you sin against him, as he is *the Lord*, as he is *the holy One of Israel*, and as he is *your Maker*: you sin against him in all the relations in which he stands to you. Therefore, in his awful authority, I charge you to ask him, and put him to it, who is both powerful and willing to do all for you.

It may be, you have essayed this work formerly, without success; and now you conceive things to be desperate, and any more essays to be needless. Know, Sirs, that God is not bound to keep your time; but he hath bound himself to fulfil his own word of promise in his own time. Therefore, do not *limit* him, but *press* him, and put him to it; and, for what you know, his time may be at, or after this occasion, to give you all that you ask and demand.

If you would ask and demand with success, I give you only this *direction*. There is one whom he heareth always; that is, Christ the Mediator, to whom he hath given a commission, to ask and command what he will concerning his sons, and all the works of his hands, saying to him, as in Psalm ii. 8. *Ask me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession.* Therefore, put all your demands and commands in this Mediator's hand: send a letter of faith and prayer to him, even though, when you are writing the letter, the devil may come and jog your hand, and make it all full of blots and blurs, yet he can read it, and make sense of it; yea, he will write it over, as it were, in a fair hand, and let his Father see all the questions and commands you have in it; he will make them his own requests: he will ask and command for you; and so you shall have what you will.

S E R M O N CXXXIII.

CLEAN WATER; or, the Pure and Precious
BLOOD of CHRIST, for the Cleansing of Polluted
SINNERS*.

E Z E K. xxxvi. 25.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

THIS text is a precious promise uttered by the mouth of God; and it hath a reference to a certain time, even to a sad and sinful time, when his great name was polluted and profaned; and his people, to whom he speaks had been polluting his name, had polluted themselves, and were over-run with all abominations; and yet even then, instead of drawing his sword of wrath, he, in sovereignty, utters a word of grace to them, and opens a door of hope: let men and angels wonder at it! *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, &c.*

In this, and the following context, you may observe these six things. 1. What God will do to them; *I will sprinkle you, &c.* 2. What he will give them; *A new heart will I give you, &c.* 3. What he will take out of them: *I will take away the heart of stone.* 4. What he will put in them; *I will put my Spirit within you.*

* This sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 10th, 1746. To which is subjoined, The DISCOURSES before and at the first Table, and also at the conclusion of the solemnity. The third edition.

5. What he will *cause* them do : *I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* 6. What he will *be* unto them ; *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* Every one of these promises are uttered out of the mouth of God, the undertaker for them : they are ascertained unto our faith, as declarations of the decree of heaven, and acts of his sovereign will ; by which will we are sanctified and saved ; and which will our glorious Redeemer came to execute with infinite pleasure in his heart, saying, *I delight to do thy will, O my God :* q. d. “ It is thy will that I seal all these promises with my blood ? Then, *Lo, I come :* Let heaven and earth, men and angels, witness, that, *Lo, I come,* with infinite delight in this work ; for thy will is my will ; therefore, *Lo, I come* to subscribe thy will with my blood : and let this blood of mine run like clean water amongst a company of unclean sinners, for purging and cleansing them.” Why then, may the Father say, “ I am pleased with what thou hast done ; and, in testimony thereof, I take this clean water in my own hand, and turn my speech to these polluted sinners, with this gracious proclamation, Hear and believe ; O sinner, what my will is ; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*”

Interpreters generally explain this text, of *justification* and *pardon* in the blood of Christ ; and it seems reasonable to do so, on two or three accounts.

1. Because the promise of *sanctification* immediately follows ; both *habitual* sanctification, in the promise of the *new heart*, and the *new Spirit* ; and *actual* sanctification, in the promise of *putting his Spirit in us*, and *causing us to walk in his statutes.* And,

2. Because the *clean water* here is said to be *sprinkled upon us*, and the blood of Christ is called the *blood of sprinkling* : and though not the *blood* of Christ, but the *Spirit* of Christ, is most frequently in scripture expressed by water ; yet that water is not ordinarily said to be *sprinkled*, but *poured* upon sinners ; *I will pour wa-*

ter on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, even my Spirit: but the sprinkled water is the blood of Christ. Besides,

3. The Spirit is not said to be water *upon* us, but water *within* us; John iv. 14. *The water that I give, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*; and so in the context here: besides this water to be sprinkled *upon* us, the promise of the Spirit is to be *within* us; *I will put my Spirit within you*. These blessings go together; but yet they are distinct: the one is put *upon* us, for our *justification*; and the other put *within* us, for our *sanctification*. And so,

4. The sprinkling of this clean water *upon* us, answers the account given us of justification by the blood and righteousness of Christ applied and imputed to us, or sprinkled and put upon us; *Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe*, Rom. iii. 22. So that by the *clean water* here, we are to understand the *precious blood of Christ*. Here is the *application* of it promised; *I will sprinkle it upon you*. Here is the *effect* and efficacy of it; *Ye shall be clean*. And here is the *extent* of that efficacy; *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you*. Here we may distinguish betwixt *legal* defilement and *moral*: *LEGAL* defilement, is only cleansed by the *blood* of Christ: *MORAL* defilement, by the *Spirit* of Christ, though purchased also by that blood that justifies, yet effectuate by the Spirit, whose work is to sanctify: but all legal defilement, in the eye of the law and justice of God, is removed only by the righteousness, or the blood of Christ, imputed to us, or sprinkled upon us; *We are justified by his blood*, Rom. v. 9.—I have spoken to several doctrines from the words: another at present is this.

OBSERV. *That the blood of Christ is clean water, which God himself promises to apply, with his own clean hand, for cleansing of the unclean.*

Here you see that God, of his sovereign good-will towards a number of unclean sinners, hath provided
clean

clean water, and brought it near to you in this promise, *Here is water; what hinders you to be baptized and washed? He that believes shall be saved, and cleansed.* Here we may enquire,

- I. How the blood of Christ is compared to *water*.
- II. In what respect it is *clean* water.
- III. What way it is *applied* or *sprinkled* upon the unclean, for cleaning and cleansing of them.
- IV. Speak concerning that *cleanness*, or *cleansing*, that is the effect of this sprinkling of clean water.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. The blood of Christ may be compared to *water* in several respects. In general, as water rises from the ocean; so does the blood of Christ from the ocean of the love of God in Christ, *who loved us, and gave himself for us*, to be a bloody sacrifice for our sins. More particularly,

1. Water being *liquid*, when poured out, it *runs abroad* and *spreads*; even so, the blood of Christ, that was poured out upon the cross at Jerusalem, it *spread about*, and *spread abroad*, as it is said, Zech. xiv. 8. *And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them this way, and half of them that way.* This blood spreads abroad as far as the gospel dispensation doth, of which Christ says, *Go, preach the gospel to every creature; publish remission of sin in my blood.*

2. Water is *penetrating*; when poured out, it runs into all the secret caverns and pores of things it meets with; it sinks and sweeps through all the open gaps and chinks of the dry ground on which it falls: even so doth the blood of Christ run in through all the open gaps of a guilty conscience; it *cleanses from all sin*.

3. Water is *soft* and *penetrable*; men may easily dip their whole body into it: even so, whosoever comes to this fountain, may find it as easy to put in their *whole man*, as to put in only a *finger* of the old man; a single member of the body of sin: nay, as it is easier and better for a man, that would be wholly washed, to cast

in his whole body into the water all at once, than to step down and put in his hand or his head, or even to wade in by the side of the water with his feet; so, when faith is acted on the blood of Christ, it is acted best when it plunges wholly into this *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*. Besides particular acts of faith, in improving the blood of Christ for removing this and that particular sin, there is warrant, in the text, for a general plunge into this great depth, for washing all sin away; *From ALL your filthiness, and from ALL your idols will I cleanse you.*

4. Water is *common*; every one may come and draw at the public well: even so, the blood of Christ is a common good; a *fountain opened for the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem*. Christ is a Saviour of sinners by office; *We have seen and do testify, that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*, John iv. 14. Hence, whosoever will, is welcome to come and take, to come and wash, &c.

5. Water is *useful* in many respects:—It is a *bath* to nature, that the God of nature hath appointed for purifying things that are polluted; cloathes, and other things that are polluted, are usually washed in water: thus the blood of Christ is for washing and cleansing from all foul-filthiness here—Water quenqueth *fire*, so does the blood of Christ quench the fire of God's vindictive wrath.—Water quenqueth *thirst*: God's justice thirsted for satisfaction, and was fully satisfied with this blood; and the awakened conscience cannot be satisfied any where else, but with a drink of this warm blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God, this water that gushed out of the smitten rock.—Water *softens* the earth; it is said to be made *soft with showers*: O! nothing softens a hard heart like the water of the blood of Christ! *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn*.—Water *heals* wounds in the body: O Sirs, the blood of Christ is the healing water; *By his stripes we are healed*.—Water makes the earth *green, flourishing, and fruitful*: even so the blood of Christ, applied by the Spirit, makes all the *trees of righteousness bring forth their fruit in their season*.

6. Water is a *mean of life*; we cannot live without it; many perish for want of it: even so, the blood of Christ is the mean of spiritual and eternal life; we cannot live without it; and multitudes perish for want of it, and for not making use of it when it is offered to them; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day,* John vi. 53, 54.

7. Water is *free, cheap, and easy* to be had; it is a common element, and none are barred from it, but such as debar themselves: even so, the blood of Christ, and the blessings thereof, are *free*; they will cost you nothing: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters; he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk, without money and without price,* Isa. lv. 1. If you would have water out of a corked bottle, you must draw out the cork, or else want; but this water sends forth streams of blessings freely, without our labour or merit.

8. Water is *plentiful*; we may have enough of water if we will: even so, there is plenty of blood that Christ hath shed; here you may all drink, and be filled; here you may all wash, and be cleansed: there are waters in abundance here; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you.* In the original, it is in the plural number, *waters*.—There is plenteous redemption here; plenty of merit, plenty of efficacy in the blood of Christ; enough for you and for a thousand worlds.

II. The *second* thing proposed, was, To shew in what respect it is *clean* water. This question is of the more moment and concern to us, in regard that, if the blood of Christ had not been clean water, it could never have removed our uncleanness, or made us clean; but God here says, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.* To make us have clean souls, clean hearts, clean consciences, it behoved to be clean water; for foul and muddy water would never have done it.—

Now,

Now, the blood of Christ is clean, pure, and holy water, in the following respects.

1. The blood of Christ is clean water, in respect of the *contrivance* of it, and the fountain-head from which this water issued, namely, the *council of peace* from all eternity, betwixt Jehovah and Christ; wherein it was decreed, that our Surety should have blood to shed; and, for this end, a body should be given him, Heb. x. 5. *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me*; that is, a human nature to be a sacrifice for sin.

2. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *conveyance* of it; for, he was, “conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin;” therefore it was said, *That holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God*: that holy thing contracted no filth, by coming of the first Adam; no contamination, by being born of a sinner, as will further appear by what follows.

3. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *subject* of it, or the person in whose veins it runs, and from whose *pierced side came blood and water*. In his person there was a perfect cleanness, both in respect of his divine and human nature united in one person: he was naturally clean, as man; and infinitely clean, as God.

(1.) I say, he was *naturally* clean as MAN: *He, thro’ the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot*, Heb. ix. 14. The spotlessness of his human nature, was necessary to his being a sacrifice; and its union with the eternal Godhead was necessary to his being a valuable one.—As the legal lambs were to be *without blemish*; so was Christ a *Lamb without spot*, 1 Pet. i. 19. He had no sin *naturally* imputed to him, because he was never federally in Adam, so as to be liable to the imputation of his sin as we are, who descended from him by natural generation. It is true, sin was imputed to him, when he was *made sin*, to take away the *sin of the world*; but this was not in the covenant with Adam by a legal imputation, but in the covenant of grace or redemption,
by

by his own voluntary susception : as the promise of the *seed of the woman* was not till after Adam fell ; so, if Adam had stayed in innocency, Christ had not been incarnate to have been a Mediator for sinners ; therefore, in that capacity, he was not *fœderally* in Adam, tho' he was in Adam in a natural sense. Besides, he had no sin *personally inherent*. The pollution of our nature was prevented in him from the instant of his conception : the portion whereof he was made of a woman was sanctified by the Holy Ghost ; so that he was naturally clean as man.—The purity of the snow is not to be compared with the whiteness of this *Lilly of the valley* ; he is the spotless Lamb of God : never was there any spotless or innocent flesh in the world but his own, since the fall of Adam ; the second Adam took our nature, but not our defilement.—He was naturally clean as man.

(2.) He was *infinitely* clean as GOD ; as MAN, he was *the holy One of God* ; and as GOD, he was the *infinitely holy God* : his human nature was holy, and could not but be so, by virtue of the union of the divine with it ; and holy by the effusion of the Spirit upon him above measure ; hence he was elevated as Mediator, God-man in one person, to the highest degree of holiness. It was impossible that any spot of sin or uncleanness could be upon him who was God in our nature : if there had been any spot, which was impossible, his sacrifice could not have been for *our* sins, but must have been for his *own* ; yea, his spot had been infinitely greater than ours : it had not only been *objectively* infinite as ours ; but *subjectively* infinite also ; which is infinitely more than ours, because the person sinning had been an infinite person : yea, in such a case, which is impossible, the rights of God, and his honour, had been more invaded, instead of being repaired ; the guilt would have been as great in the sinner, as the satisfaction could have been in the sufferer ; even a subjective infiniteness in the sacrifice. But none of this was possible ; Satan could not charge him with any sin, but confessed him to be *holy*, Mark i. 24. The all-seeing eye of God could see

fec no unholiness in him, but justified him as holy, and pronounced him clean; *For such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,* Heb. vii. 26. His blood then is clean water indeed, cleaner than the heavens. Impurity had been contrary to the dignity of his person: God could as well be unholy, as the person of Christ unholy; his holiness therefore and cleanness was infinite: though the holiness of his human nature could not be of itself infinite, yet it derived an infiniteness from his person; as well as his blood and sufferings derived from it an infinite value. Here was clean water indeed, which God himself could drink, and did so to the satisfaction of his justice; and therefore he glories in it, and enjoins us to drink of it to the satisfaction of our hearts and consciences, that we may have *joy and peace in believing.*

4. The blood of Christ is clean water, in respect of the *effusion* of it. This water was drawn out of that clean vessel, with the Father's clean finger; for, *it pleased the Lord to bruise him,* Isa. liii. 10. It is true, the Jews shed his blood with defiled hands; *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,* Acts ii. 23. Godly men could not have been employed in such an action as that, of *crucifying the Lord of glory.* An artificer uses a crooked tool to do that which he cannot do with a straight one; but this does not justify their wickedness; no more than a fair and perfect child born, doth justify the adultery in which it was begotten. God may bring about his holy purpose by wicked instruments: and indeed, the *awaking of the sword of justice against the man that was God's Fellow,* was one of the most holy actions of God, as well as a most glorious work of grace and love. And when God put to his holy hand to draw this clean water, and smote the rock that the water might run out; Christ himself, the living rock, poured out the water voluntarily; and therefore it is said, that *when his soul was made an offering for sin,* that in his passion he

he was active; for, *He poured out his soul unto death*, Isaiah lv. 10.—Hence it is clean water in the *effusion* of it.

5. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *channel* in which it runs; I mean, the gospel dispensation; this water runs purely and powerfully here; for, *It is the power of God to salvation, because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16, 17. Gospel promises, and gospel doctrines, are both pure and clean basons, or conduits, wherein this clean water is brought to our hands, Psal. xix. 8, 9. It is true, the gospel dispensation outwardly may be puddled with foul feet, or *perverted* with foul mouths, Gal. i. 7. But it is not the fault of the waters of the sanctuary; but the drawers of the water: it is not the gospel that is to blame, but the preacher that understands not the gospel. However, this water cannot, in itself, be defiled; no more than the sun-beams can be by shining on a dung-hill. Error may be mixed with truth; but it will not incorporate with it: a river may be mudded and defiled; but the water will not incorporate with the mud; the mud will sink gradually, and the water will clear itself natively: so corrupt doctrine puddles the water of the sanctuary; but the water will not incorporate with the mud: hence it is not *muddy error*, but *cleanly truth*, that is the vessel wherein this clean water is conveyed unto us; it runs in the channel of the divine declaration here, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you*.

6. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *application* of it: not only the clean *heart*, from which it is poured; but also the clean *hand*, by which it is applied. Such was the cleanness of his *heart* that was pierced and broached to let out this blood, that he could say, *I delight to do thy will; thy law is within my heart*. This water was his heart blood; and the blood of a holy heart, that never had a vain, sinful thought; that never had any thing written in it but the *law of God*, nor engraven upon it, but *holiness to the Lord*. Such is the clean *hand* that applies it, that it is no other than the *Holy Spirit* of God, to whom, as the

efficient, the *sprinkling of the blood of Christ* is appropriate, 1 Peter i. 2. And here the Spirit of God, speaking in his word, puts his infinitely clean hand in this clean water, and says, *I will sprinkle it upon you.* And again,

7. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *designation and institution* of it: it is sanctified of God for the purpose of our purification. Hence their *sin* is said to be *dreadful*, and their *guilt egregious*, who *tread under foot the Son of God, and account the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*, Heb. x. 29. It is a holy ordinance of God, who appoints no other blood but this to purge away sin, and satisfy justice; nor could any other do it.

8. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the *intrinsic value, and cleansing virtue and efficacy* of it. O! how infinite is the value of this water, this blood of Christ, as it is the blood of God; not the blood of the *Godhead*, but of that *person* who was God! Hence it is called *the blood of the Son of God*, 1 John i. 7. And that it was God that laid down his life; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*, 1 John iii. 16. See also Acts xx. 28. The blood of God must be valuable blood: it was not the blood of a man only, but of him, who, from all eternity, was constitute Surety; and who, for four thousand years, was our Surety as the Son of God, before he was our Surety as the Son of man. O! what a word is this, *The blood of God!* Can men or angels speak forth the dignity of it? Or can men or angels declare the virtue and efficacy of it? O poor guilty sinner, trembling to think of the greatness of your guilt and desilement, tho' you had the whole guilt of all the men on earth, and devils in hell, and all the guilt that finite creatures are capable of contracting, yet it cannot stand before the infinite value, virtue, and efficacy of this blood, which is the *blood of God*; it is infinitely holy water, flowing from the pure fountain of living waters: it is clean, clean water; it hath a cleaning and cleansing virtue and efficacy: it is not designed, indeed, for unclean
 devils

devils in hell; but for unclean sinners of mankind, that are yet out of hell. Here is clean water ready to be applied for your cleansing. And hence,

III. The *third* general head proposed, is, To shew what way it is *applied* and *sprinkled* upon the unclean, for their being cleaned and cleansed. This sprinkling is spoken of in allusion to the many *typical* sprinklings under the law; such as the sprinkling of the *lamb's blood upon the door posts of the house*, Exod. xii. 7. as a sign of God's passing over and delivering the Israelites; and the sprinkling of the *blood upon the leper* that was to be cleansed, Lev. xiv. 7. Thus the sprinkling of the clean water doth signify the *application* and *imputation* of the body of Christ to the sinner, who believes in him for the forgiveness of sin, and cleansing of him from all legal guilt. The *blood of Christ*, here represented by *clean water*, is the blood of his sacrifice, with the power, virtue, and efficacy thereof.

The blood of the sacrifice falls under a double consideration: 1. As it is *offered* to God, to make atonement and reconciliation. 2. As it was *sprinkled* on other things, for their purging and sanctification. Part of the blood, in every propitiatory sacrifice, was still to be *sprinkled round about the altar*, Lev. i. 11. And, in the great sacrifice of expiation, some of the blood of the bullock was to be *sprinkled before the mercy-seat seven times*, Lev. xvi. 14. This the apostle, Heb. ix. 19, 20, 21, 22. expresses in a single instance: therefore the blood of Christ, as it was the blood of his sacrifice, falls under this double consideration, and hath these two effects: (1.) As offered by the *eternal Spirit*, to make *atonement*, and procure *eternal redemption*. (2.) As it is *sprinkled*, by the same Spirit, on the *conscience* of believing sinners, to *purge them from dead works*. See Heb. ix. 12, 13, 14. Hence it is called the *blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. *For we have the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus*, 1 Peter i. 2.

Now, what way this sprinkling is effectuated may be found out in the text.

1. It is by a gracious GOD, as the *efficient* cause; *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you: I WILL do it.* It is God himself that undertakes this work by the immediate efficiency of the Holy Spirit, who is the great Applier of the blood of Christ, and redemption purchased by him, Tit. iii. 5, 6.

2. It is by a gracious WORD, as the *instrumental* cause, that the application is made; *Thus SAITH the Lord, I will sprinkle.* It is his word of promise, and it is his word of power, that does the business: *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith in this word.* The Spirit takes the clean water of the blood of Christ in his hand, as it were, and applies it by a word of power to the conscience; *Awake, O north wind, come thou south, blow upon our garden.* By the north wind breeze, may he convince of our defilements; by the south wind gale, may he apply the clean water, and breathe upon the joyful sound of this word, so as faith may come by hearing it, and then joy and peace in believing.

3. It is by a gracious WILL, as the *moving* cause, that this application is made; *I WILL sprinkle clean water upon you; of his own WILL begat he us by the word of truth; by this WILL we are sanctified; by this WILL we are saved.* It is my will to sprinkle this clean water upon you. This is a reason *without me*, the clean water of Christ's meritorious blood, that hath purchased your remission and cleansing from all sin and guilt. This clean water I bring in my hand, as a good reason *without me*: why? I promise to pardon and purge you: but I have a reason *within me*, and in my very heart; and it is my own sovereign will, and even my good will to you, O sinner: it was my will to smite the rock, and provide this clean water for you; and now it is my will to sprinkle it upon you, and make you clean; and to *cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.* Now, O sinner, it is to you, and you, and you, that he is publishing his will; and, O Sirs, shall not a willing God make you a willing soul? *Wilt thou be made clean?*

4. It is by a gracious ACT of this gracious will, namely, the *sprinkling* itself, which is the *formal* cause of the application, and so of justification in the blood of Christ; that is, just God not imputing your sin to you, but imputing the blood and righteousness of Christ to you, or sprinkling the clean water upon you. And this application being expressed by *sprinkling*, seem to point out,

1. A *real* and *actual* application or imputation of the blood of Christ for cleansing the soul, and purging the conscience, as water is applied for cleansing the body.
2. A *close* application to meet with the defilement, in order to the removing thereof.
3. A *full* application, spreading the clean water over all the spots, to cleanse from all our filthinesses.
4. A *liberal* application, for sprinkling imports many drops; and though one drop of the blood of Christ is sufficient, yet abundant application is made by this sprinkling.
5. It points out a *kindly*, *careful*, and *tender* application, such as you are best able to bear.
6. A *skilful* and *gradually-repeated* application; and hence, mention is made here of *sprinkling*, then of *cleaning*, and then of *cleansing*.
7. Here is pointed out a *personal*, and *particular* application; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*: the pronoun *you* is five times come over in the text; *I will sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*
8. Here is pointed out a *divine* and an *effectual* application, for it shall gain its end; *Ye shall be clean, and I will cleanse you.*—And it is remarkable, that in this cleaning and cleansing business, that respects remission and justification from the guilt of sin, it is expressed *passively* with respect to us, but *actively* with respect to God; I will take the whole business in hand; only, stand still, and *see the salvation of God.* Why? herein you shall be passive, and I will be active; when I sprinkle this clean water upon you, ye shall be *passive*; for, *Ye shall be clean*; but I will be *active*; *I will cleanse you*: you will have little ado here; yea, nothing ado; for, I will do all. Why? are we not called to act faith? Yea, but yet in the matter of justification, faith is not so much an *actor*, as an *unlocker*? it is not here an *agent*

gent but an *instrument*, faith here stands in opposition to works: it hath nothing to do, but all to believe; nothing to give, but all to receive. Faith is not here a builder, but a beholder: God undertakes all the business here; *I will sprinkle, and I will cleanse you.*

Now, the Spirit of God in sprinkling this clean water, or applying this precious blood for cleansing a sinner, does four things.

(1.) He *convinces* of the *pollution and guilt of sin*, and of our spiritual defilement; for, the *uncleanness* here treated of, is not *physical* or *corporal*, but *moral* and *spiritual* only: and it is the work of the Holy Ghost, John xvi. 8. to give that conviction of sin that maketh the soul ashamed before a holy God, and afraid before a just God; so that, without application to the blood of sprinkling, it cannot appear before him without shame and fear.

(2.) He *discovers* the clean water, and cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ as the *only remedy*, the only mean of purification; *For, by the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12.; and he *glorifies Christ*, by *showing the things of Christ to us*, John xvi. 14. The Spirit is not sent in vain, to shew us the things we can see of ourselves: it is he that gives the spiritual discerning thereof; even of the excellency and efficacy of these things.

(3.) He works *faith* wherewith we receive Christ himself, and his benefits as tendered in the gospel; and particularly acts upon the blood of Christ for cleansing the heart and conscience: this faith of the operation of God, comes to *the fountain for sin and for uncleanness*, and addresses to God with that prayer, *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean*, Psalm li. 7. It is spoken in allusion to that general institution for the purification of all legal uncleanness, by the water of separation made by the ashes of the red heifer, Numb. xix. 4, 5, 6.; which the apostle refers to, Heb. ix. 14.; pointing out that application made to the blood of Christ, by which *alone we can be justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.* And till this believing application of this blood, or washing

in this clean water, we cannot be freed from a *conscience of sin* spoken of, Heb. x. 2.; that is, a conscience condemning us for sin, and filling us with shame and fear. But faith applying to that blood, 1. Takes a *spiritual* view of it, as proposed in the gospel-promise and offer; *Look to me and be saved.* 2. It *relies* on that blood for cleansing; because *Christ is set forth of God, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.* 3. It works herein by *fervent prayer*; because, *For all these things he will be sought by the house of Israel*; and this we are directed unto, Heb. iv. 16. *Having such an High-priest, let us come boldly to a throne of grace, &c.* 4. Finally, faith acquiesces in the truth and faithfulness of God for cleansing by the blood of Christ; and so is freed from perplexing shame, and hath *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*

4. The Spirit in this sprinkling, actually *communicates* the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ to our souls and consciences, whereby we are freed both from damping shame, and discouraging fear.—And the ground of this actual communication is three ways expressed in the text, 1. By an *application* or *imputation* of the blood of Christ; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you.* 2. By a *pronunciation* of the effect; *Ye shall be clean*: upon the sprinkling of the leper he is pronounced to be clean. 3. By an *actual operation* of the effect; *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.* These three things answer to other three things, that are in sin as it is opposite to the just and holy law of God; namely, guilt, filth, and shame: it is attended with guilt, that makes us obnoxious to justice; with filthiness, that makes us loathsome to God; and with shame in us.

Now, the *purifying virtue* of the blood of Christ does three things. 1. It takes away *guilt* and *obnoxiousness* to wrath, as it is applied and imputed: the imputation of that blood and righteousness, fences from the stroke of offended justice; for, *Being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him,* Romans v. 9. 2. It takes away all *loathsomeness* in the sight of God, not from *sin*, in the abstract, but from the *sinner*, so that he is

as one absolutely washed and purified before him, and so pronounced clean and fair; *Thou art all fair, my love.* 3. It takes away *shame* out of the conscience, and gives the soul boldness in the presence of God, Heb. x. 19. This is effectuate by that operation here mentioned, *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*—And thus the clean water of the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But this leads me next to speak,

IV. To the *fourth* head, concerning that *cleanness* or *cleansing* that is the effect of this sprinkling of clean water, or imputation and application of the precious blood of Christ. Here I may touch at the properties of it in the text. I only premise, there is a cleanness before God in point of *justification*, and a cleanness in point of *sanctification*. It is the former that this text speaks of, as I shewed before; the latter seems to be the subject of the following verses: these two, though they are distinct, yet are inseparable. Now, the cleanness spoke of in the text, hath these two properties assigned to it here. 1. It is perfect; *Ye shall be clean.* 2. It is universal; *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.* And the reason of both is here suggested, namely, The cleanness of the water sprinkled upon you.

1. It is a *perfect* cleanness. If the sprinkled sinner were not perfectly cleansed, it would detract from the value and cleanness of the water; all cleansing is the fruit of this blood: the perfect cleansing from guilt is wrought immediately by it; the gradual purging from filth is mediate by his Spirit; but it was the purchase of his blood.

QUEST. *How is this cleanness perfect, for God pronounceth it so; "I will sprinkle, and ye shall be clean?"*

ANSW. We may reply to this both negatively and positively. *Negatively*, This clean water of the blood of Christ doth not clean perfectly in time from sin, in respect of the *sense* of it; some sparks of the fiery law will sometimes flash in the conscience even of a sprinkled

led believer, and the peace of the gospel may be under a veil; evidences may be blurred, and guilt revived, and the clean water appear as if it ran low; perfect peace, and rest, and sense of divine love, remains for the people of God in the higher house.—Nor doth the blood of Christ perfectly cleanse from sin here, in respect of the *stirrings* of it; the old serpent will be sometimes stinging us, and sometimes foiling us; the most righteous man will be vexed with corruption within him, as well as the abominations of others without him, the Canaanites in the land; and therefore the virtue of the blood is more expressed here in our *wrestling with principalities and powers*, than in the glory of a triumph as yet: it is in heaven the saints shall be *presented without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*.

But *positively*, The blood of Christ perfectly cleanseth from sin even here, in respect of *condemnation and punishment*. Though the nature of sin doth not cease to be sinful, yet the power of sin ceaseth to be condemning; for the sentence of the law is revoked, a right to condemn is removed, and sin is not imputed to them, 1 Cor. v. 19. Where the crime is not imputed, the punishment is not to be inflicted: it is inconsistent with the being of God to be an appeased, and yet a revenging Judge; for, justice hath accepted of a satisfaction made by Christ: the man is legally discharged, and put in the state of an innocent person, by the imputation of the blood and righteousness of Christ: hence, *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*.

2. As it is a perfect, so it is an *universal* cleanness: *From ALL your filthiness, and from ALL your idols will I cleanse you. The blood of Christ cleanseth from ALL sin*. This clean water washeth from all guilt: for, since it is the blood of the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse from the greatest, as from the least sin; the particle *all*, is but a rational consequent upon the mentioning of such a rich treasure of blood: *Christ was delivered for our offences; not for some few, but for ALL; and as he was delivered for them*, Rom. iv. 25.; so he

was accepted for them, as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, Eph. v. 2. The sins of all that shall believe, in all parts, in all ages of the world, God made them to meet at the cross of Christ, and laid them all upon him, Isaiah liii. 6. ; even the sins of all sorts and sizes. The first sin we read of cleansed by this blood of Christ, after it was shed, was the most prodigious wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun, even the murder of the Son of God ; Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 36, 38. “ So that suppose a man, as one says, “ were able to pull heaven and earth to pieces, to murder all the rest of mankind, and destroy the angels, “ these superlative parts of the creation ; he would “ not contract so monstrous a guilt as these did, in “ crucifying the Son of God, whose person was infinitely superior to the whole creation.” God then gave her an experiment of the inestimable value of Christ’s blood, and the inestimable virtue of it ; it cleanseth the guilt of all sin, so as *it shall not be found*, Jer. l. 20. By this blood and righteousness of Christ we stand before God, not only as innocent persons, but as these who have fulfilled the law, both as to precept and penalty, Rom. viii. 4.

Now, this perfect and universal cleanness or cleansing, is grounded upon the cleanness of the water sprinkled on us in the day of believing ; infinite cleanness is necessary for the removing of an infinite filthiness ; infinite goodness, necessary to the satisfaction of an infinite wrong : the infinite value and purity of his blood flows from his Deity ; it was the same person who was *the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person ; and who upholds all things by the word of his power ; who did by himself, in that person, purge our sins*, Heb. xiii. 12. This divine person wrestled with the flames of wrath, and took hold of the tribunal of justice ; and by the value of his sufferings, smoothed
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the face of a frowning God, asswaged the tempest of provoked justice, and placed before the tribunal of judgment, a strong and everlasting righteousness of his own composure, as a veil between the piercing eye of divine holiness, and the guilty and filthy state of the sinner. So great a person, one equal with God, was necessary for restoring his honour, and sanctifying his name. So great a person's blood was necessary for the purging the fallen creature from his guilt and filth.

In short, the reason of this perfect and universal cleanness of the sprinkled soul, is the perfect and universal cleanness of the water wherewith it is sprinkled : it is perfectly clean, and wants nothing of infinite perfection : it is universally clean ; it never had a foul spot in it : it is the spotless blood of the spotless Lamb of God. —Hence, the text makes the cleanness of the washed soul to quadrate and correspond with the cleanness of the water ; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.*

V. The *fifth* general head proposed was the *application*. Is it so, *That the blood of Christ is clean water, which God, by the hand of the Spirit, applies for cleansing of the unclean?* Then,

I. Hence learn the great need of *spiritual discerning* for taking up spiritual things under outward signs ; and spiritual mysteries, under common metaphors : for, here the clean water represents, as in baptism, the pure and precious blood of Christ ; and the blood of Christ is not to be considered materially, but morally : even so, the sprinkling here, is a spiritual sprinkling ; and the cleansing, a spiritual and moral cleansing. The blood of Christ, materially considered, as it ran from the veins of his body, though Papists pretend to have enough of it in reserve, this is a vain, vile, useless, and imaginary conception of it : this corporal and carnal consideration of it, is of no more avail than the corporal and carnal application of it ; for, as Christ says, *The flesh profiteth nothing* : so, in this sense, the blood profiteth nothing. The proper use of blood is not to cleanse ; for

it defiles and bespots any thing whereon it is dropt; but morally considered, as the shedding of blood implies loss of life and punishment for a crime; so blood is the expiation of a crime, and a satisfaction to the law for the offence committed against it. As the shedding of innocent blood does morally pollute a land; so the shedding the blood of a malefactor or murderer, doth morally cleanse a land. It is said, Numbers xxxv. 33, *Blood defleth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.* Without the shedding of the blood of Christ, there would have been no remission of our sins; but, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* There is a cleansing from guilt, and a cleansing from filth; both are the fruits of this blood: the guilt is cleansed by justification, the filth by sanctification; the former by the merit of Christ, the latter by his Spirit: but the proper intention of the blood of Christ was to take off the curse of the law, and free us from our guilt.— When we consider the blood of Christ, we consider Christ as a sacrifice; and sacrifices were called *purifications*, not in regard of washing away the filth, but expiating the guilt of sin; but yet the justifying virtue of this blood is never exerted without the sanctifying virtue accompanying it. When this blood is sprinkled in the conscience, it purges from dead works. We need then the spiritual discerning of these things.

2. Hence see the *excellency* and *preciousness* of the blood of Christ; and the *value* and *virtue* of it. God himself here calls it *clean water*; and pronounces them *clean* who are sprinkled with it. It is clean and spotless blood; clean and clear water, wherein we may see clearly the infinite evil of sin, that cannot be washed away but here; the infinite justice of God, that could not be satisfied with any other water; and see the glory of God here in all his perfections. The righteousness of Christ is a clean, a perfectly clean righteousness; it is clean in God's eye, and in the sight of all that have their eyes opened: neither men nor angels can tell how clean this water is.

(1.) It is so clean that it cannot be *stained* or *corrupted*. It was not stained either upon the cross, or in the grave. It was impossible that God's *holy One* could see corruption, Psalm xvi. 10.

(2.) It is so clean, that it makes *all clean* that are cleansed in it; their *robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 14.: this is the *fine linen clean and white*, Rev. xix. 8.

(3.) It is so clean, that God cannot see a *drop of mud* in it; his omniscient eye could not see a spot in it. It is the *precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot, and without blemish*, 1 Peter i. 19.

(4.) It is so clean, that God cannot see a *spot of filthiness* in any who are washen in it. Hence, he can see *no iniquity in Jacob*: he pronounces them clean, *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*, Song iv. 7.

(5.) It is so clean, that infinite *holiness* boasts of it, and requires all the world to come and be cleansed in it; *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*; the immaculate Lamb, John i. 29. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*, Matth. iii. 17. *The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake*, Isaiah lxii 21.

(6.) It is so clean, that it is cleaner than the *cleanest things* in the whole creation of God.—It is cleaner than the *heavens* above your head; for, it is said, Job xv. 15. *The heavens are not clear in his sight*: but the God of heaven pronounces this water to be clean; and he puts his infinitely clean hand in it to sprinkle us with.—It is cleaner than the *holy angels* above; for, it is said, Job iv. 18. *That he chargeth his angels with folly*: and chap. xxv. 5. *That the stars are not pure in his sight*. It was necessary, therefore, that he in whom God's infinite holiness and justice should rest satisfied, should excel not only the dignity of angels, but transcend the condition and dignity of any finite being.—The sacrifice was of infinite value; and therefore worthy of the acceptance of an infinite nature, his person being of as great dignity as the Father's: for, though there be a distinction of *order* among the persons of the Trinity; yet no distinction of *dignity*, but a perfect *equality* of
power,

power and glory. His blood then is of more worth, than the souls of all men, and their bodies too, cast in one scale. O what clean water is here !

(7.) It is so clean, that it is *perfectly* so, and cannot be cleaner than it is. It is like the *pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*, spoken of, Rev. xxii. 1. The blood of Christ is the pure, infinitely pure river of water, proceeding out of the loving heart of God, and the pierced heart of the Lamb.

(8.) It is so clean, that it is *universally* so. The Lord our righteousness is *clean every whit* ; and hence, he that is washed here is clean every whit. His nature was a clean nature ; his heart was a clean heart ; his thoughts were all clean thoughts ; his lips were clean lips ; no guile was found there ; his actions were all clean and holy actions ; his obedience a clean obedience ; his suffering and satisfaction altogether clean. The perfect and universal cleanness of this water, is the reason of the perfect and universal cleanness of the saints even here in point of justification, and of their perfect universal cleanness even in point of sanctification in heaven, which is begun on earth, and carried on to that perfection.

3. Hence see and consider the *polluted, vile, and hopeless* state of all these that are not sprinkled with this clean water. The state of all by nature, and the present state of Christless sinners is a state of filthiness ; *They are altogether filthy*, Psal. xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 10. And this state is a dismal state. They who were legally unclean of old, were *separate from the congregation*, and so from all the pledges of God's presence, Num. v. 2. Every leper was to be set *without the camp* : even so all that are unwashed from their spiritual leprosy are abhorred of God, and separated from him. Thus it is with us all by nature, whatever we do of ourselves to be quit of it ; it does but hide and not cleanse it. Adam cured neither his nakedness, nor the shame of it, with his fig-leaves. If we die in this condition, unwashed, uncleaned, unpurified with this clean water, it is utterly impossible that ever we should be admitted into the blessed presence
of

of a holy God; *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth*, Rev. xxi. 27. Unless you are sprinkled with this clean water from the pollution of your nature, you shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. Nay, you cannot be fit for a *communion-table*, nor *compass the altar of God*, unless your hands be washed in *innocency*, even in this clean water, which alone can make clean hearts and hands, and a clean conscience, *purged from dead works to serve the living God*. You must be excommunicate doctrinally from the lower table, and will be excommunicate actually and everlastingly from the upper, if you love your defilement, and are proud of your pollutions, and not ashamed of them; if you satisfy yourselves with your outward or inward ornaments. Some have no other covering of their natural filth, but the outward ornament of the flesh; a fair skin, or a fine suit of clothes, a natural or artificial cover. Others have a moral covering of gifts, duties, profession, and a blameless outward behaviour. But such puddle water will not wash you: there is no remedy if you remain there; you must perish for ever in your filthiness: you remain under wrath and subjected to the curse of the law, till sprinkled with this clean water. All the indictments that your own conscience has against you; yea, which is incomprehensibly more, all the indictments the omniscience of God can charge upon you, remain in their full force, and are unanswerable; and you must inevitably sink under them, till the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, cancel the bond, and raze out the accusation. There is no other sacrifice for sin but this: and never can a sinner have any joy in God, but thro' Jesus Christ; nor receive peace and comfort before God, but in a way of *receiving the atonement*, Rom. v. 11.

4. Hence see, that there can be no *purgation* from the guilt of sin by the mere mercy of God; for, God says not here *absolutely*, *I will make you clean*; or, *ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you*: No, no; but he says it *relative-*

ly, with respect to, and in a way of sprinkling with this clean water of the blood of Christ: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.* The mercy-seat was not to be approached by the high-priest without blood, Lev. ix. 7,—18. Christ himself, typified by the high-priest, expects no mercy for any of his followers but by the merit of his blood. Mercy comes only by the smoke of this sacrifice. Justification implies not only mercy, but justice; and more justice than mercy in a proper sense: for, justification goes upon a *propitiation*, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 29.; and to be justified, is to be discharged in a legal way, or in a way of compensation. By the means of this clean water, this cleansing and atoning blood, a *not guilty* is entered in the court of God when this blood is *pleaded*; and a *not guilty* is inscribed in the book of conscience when this blood is *sprinkled*. No mercy but in this way.

5. Hence see, and away with all the *unclean water* of your own righteousness, and of any other merit or purgatory for washing away sin but this blood of Christ, this clean water, this true holy water. Away with the abominable blasphemy of the church of Rome, their sprinkling their material water outwardly, with a water brush upon the people, and calling it *holy water*. Such horrid abominations deserve to be ranked with diabolical delusions. Glory to God that this late popish insurrection, as well as a former one in our day*, is quelled, that fought the introduction of such antichristian abominations. To make use of any other water for cleansing the unclean sinner, is a blasphemous contempt of the wisdom of God, in ordaining this only for our purification. It is a charging of a holy and just God with folly, as if he had mistaken himself, in accepting of the blood of Christ alone, as the only purification, as if it were not available for this end, without being

* A popish party abroad, joined with a disaffected party at home amongst ourselves, made two different attempts to place the popish pretender upon the throne of Britain; the first, anno 1715, and the second, in the year, 1745. Both which attempts, the Lord was graciously pleased to frustrate; which prevented the nation from being enslaved with arbitrary government, and antichristian principles. See p. 226.

mixed with some defiled water of our own ; and as if the righteousness and blood of God needed some additions from creatures their doing and suffering. O ! how can that be infinite, which needs a finite thing to strengthen it, and make it efficacious ? He that goes to a muddy stream to wash himself, disgraces the pure fountain in clean water that God hath opened. “ We can never be saved, said Luther, unless God turn his eyes from our *virtues* as well as from our *sins*.” That which needs cleansing can never cleanse us. Our own works, our own prayers, our own tears, are but filthy water. Water out of the earth is but foul and muddy water ; the only clean water is out of the smitten rock. No mere creature can pardon sin, but only God ; no blood is available for this, but the blood of God. No water mixed with the merit of men or angels will wash us. It is not mixed water, but infinitely pure water, that God here presents ; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you.*

6. Hence see, that washing from the guilt of sin in justification, is not by water put *within* us, but by water sprinkled *upon* us. Indeed, God, in sanctification, he puts his *Spirit within* us ; but, in order to justification, he puts his *blood upon* us. There is no justification by the law, but upon a perfect righteousness, answering both the precept and penalty thereof ; and this righteousness of God, which is *by the faith of Jesus Christ*, is *unto, and upon all that believe*, Rom. iii. 22. As our *sins* were upon him, not inherently, but by imputation ; so, his *blood and righteousness* is upon us, not inherently, but by imputation : and it is equally reasonable, that the believer in Christ be accounted legally righteous, as it was reasonable that Christ was accounted legally a sinner ; for, *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we, who knew no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. He, the Surety, was *made sin*, as if he had sinned all the sin of men ; and we are *made righteous*, as if we had not sinned at all. Some have compared this way of imputation to the sun's shining upon a wall, through a green or blue glass, whereby

the true colour of the wall is indiscernable, while the colour communicated by the glass is upon it; yet this colour is not the colour of the wall, but the colour of the glass, and inherent in the glass, only reflected upon the wall: so, the blood and righteousness, whereby we are justified and washed, and which covers our sins from the sight of God, is *inherent* in Christ, but *transferred* to us. This pure water of the blood of Christ runs in his veins: it is not physically or corporally applied to us, but in a judicial or juridical way; and hence we are said to be *justified by his blood*, Rom. v. 9.; that is, *meritoriously*. The MERIT of that blood is imputed to us, or that clean water is sprinkled upon us; and we, upon the account of it, pronounced clean. No *inherent* righteousness is without works; but this righteousness is imputed *without works*, Rom. iv. 4. 6.; and therefore it cannot be a righteousness inherent in us; for hereby he *justifies the ungodly*. As we were *made sinners*, by *one man's disobedience*; so we are *made righteous*, by *one man's obedience*, Rom. v. 19.

7. Hence see the *perpetual efficacy*, and *continual virtue* of the blood of Christ, for cleansing of polluted sinners; for, it is always clean water: and here it is pronounced to be so before it was shed. The price of redemption promised under the Old Testament, and the price of redemption paid now under the New, was of equal virtue and efficacy. This blood was sprinkled and applied from the foundation of the world, though it was not shed till the fulness of time: the credit which it had for the expiation and cleansing of guilt, was as firm a foundation for the faith of believers, before it was actually shed, as after. We are to distinguish betwixt the *work* of redemption, and the *virtue* of it: the work was restrained or appointed to a certain time, but the virtue of it is extended to all ages, past, present, and to come. The antient patriarchs had the same Spirit of faith as these that live in the time of the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Christ is the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*: and, as he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; so his blood is always clean water, and has always a cleansing virtue. This sacrifice

fice is continually in the same condition, and of the same force and efficacy it was in that hour wherein it was shed. Blood was appointed to make atonement under the law; for the life was in the blood, Lev. xvii. 11.; the animal spirits were in it. Well, the blood of the sacrifice of Christ is always hot and warm, having the same spirits of life, and the same virtue still moving in it: and this blood is opposed to *corruptible things*, 1 Pet. i. 18. Hence, the way of our approach to God by it, is said to be still the *new and living way*, Heb. x. 20. Whatever was done legally, carnally, and typically, by any of the sacrifices of old for the expiation and purification of sin, that was all done really and spiritually by that one sacrifice, that is the offering and sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and abides to be so done continually. The *ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean*, spoke of, Numb. xix. and to which the apostle refers, Heb. ix. 14. it was a standing ordinance, whereby one, who was any way defiled, might immediately be cleansed, and he that would not make application thereto was to *be cut off from his people*; and to it is with respect to the blood of Christ in our spiritual defilement. As it is called *a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*, Zech. xiii. 1.; so he who neglects to make application thereto, shall perish in his uncleanness, and that eternally.

8. Omitting other uses at present, hence see the *duty* of all that would be *cleansed from their soul defilement*, and would have remission of sin, and access to God, and fellowship with him at his table, even all that would *ascend to the hill of God*; and *stand in his holy place*; and for this end, would have *clean hands*, and a *pure and purified heart* and conscience; they must come to the clean water here exhibited, the pure fountain here opened; they must come and build their house by the water side, and wash here, and have recourse to this blood on all occasions, seeing it only is able to cleanse from all sin; and there is no fellowship with God, or with the saints, but in the improvement of this cleansing blood of Christ, 1 John i 6, 7.

Alas! sinner, you have, by sin, treasured up wrath, and wounded conscience; and nothing can pacify divine wrath, or calm the stormy conscience, or purge it from guilt, but this blood, this clean water. Every infinite wrong must have an infinite satisfaction. The uncleanness of your soul cannot be expiate but by the cleanness of this water. God is opening this fountain for sin and for uncleanness; slight not his grace by refusing to drink. The glory of purging iniquity is reserved to this clean water: if you come not to it for cleansing, you deny it the glory of its cleansing virtue. This, and this alone, will do the business: let no muddy water of your own be mixed with this gospel-wine. As none died with him to expiate your guilt; so he will suffer nothing to be joined with his blood in justifying your person. Christ bears this blood only in his hand, when he pleads for you; and you must bear this blood only in your heart, when you plead for yourself.

QUEST. *But, O! what warrant have I to believe, or hope for cleansing in this clean water?* Surely I need to be in a better case than I am.—Why, man, would you be cleansed before you come to the blood of Christ for cleansing? In what case think you sovereign grace comes to sinners here? Behold, it is even when they are lying in the mire of filthiness, and among the feet of their idols: then, even *then will I come and sprinkle clean water upon you; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* Grace comes to you when you are *lying in your blood*, a loathsome sight. Is your name a vile, filthy, black sinner? Then you are named here; and therefore put not away the grace of God from you. The text speaks five times to YOU; *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon YOU, and YE shall be clean; from all YOUR filthiness, and from all YOUR idols will I cleanse YOU.* O then, sinner! wilt thou not be made clean? *To you is the word of this salvation sent.* It is spoken to all indefinitely; and to you that know yourselves to be in this loathsome case in particular.

QUEST. *But, O! how shall I believe it is to me that this word of salvation, and offer of remission comes?* For
my

my sins are of a peculiar sort ; my pollutions of my heart and way are not of a common stamp ; for, I am blacker than hell, blacker than the devil ; I am just a devil for blackness.—But, O sinner ! what think you of this clean water, this incorruptible blood ? It is not spoiled or corrupted to this day. Do you measure the value of his blood by the greatness of your sin ; when yet the marriage of his blood is as far above the merit of your sin ; as the person of Christ is above your person, or God above man ? O ! let me tell you, poor sinner, if you measure his grace by the height of heaven, it is a narrow measure ; for, it is higher than the heaven of heavens : if you measure it by the height of God, then you take a right measure of it ; but it is a measure infinitely higher than the conception of men or angels, who can never fly up to the height of divine grace, which is as high as the *high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity*.

Be your sins and pollutions what they will, for multitude and magnitude, a sprinkling of this clean water can purge them away, all of them, in a moment. As a crumb of the bread of life is able to quicken you ; so a drop of the blood of Christ is able to cleanse you. This fair water is designed of God for washing foul souls. This spotless blood is for purging spotted sinners. This clean water is Heaven's antidote against unclean spirits.

It seems an unanswerable question, Job xiv. 4. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?* But here is God's answer to that question, which men and angels cannot answer ; *I will sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean.* O ! say you, but I cannot believe ; I cannot apply and appropriate this clean water to myself for my purification. But, let me tell you, the faith of this blood doth not consist in your undertaking to do any thing which God himself here undertakes to do ; for, behold, he undertakes all the work : the question therefore is, if you will let the clean hand of God sprinkle this clean water upon you, that you may be clean. The hand of faith itself is not clean, except in so far as it allows the clean hand of God to lay the blood of
sprink-

sprinkling upon you, and in so far as ye do not resist, but give way to it, and welcome a willing God with a willing heart. Now is the day of grace, wherein God is declaring that he is willing to apply this clean water, saying, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.*—And, O Sirs, tell me, is it also a day of power, wherein you are made willing, willing that all your filthiness, and all your idols be cleansed, that all the guilt, and all the filth of all your idols and lusts be removed, both by the pardoning and purifying virtue of this clean water. Are you peremptorily willing, and presently willing, saying, Lord, thy sovereign grace, and good-will in providing such clean water for my cleansing, hath conquered my wicked will, and won my hard heart; but if in this matter there be any hidden deceit in my deceitful heart, that needs to be washed also, I bring that, with all the rest of my filthinesses and idols, to be cleansed and purged away in this clean fountain? Are you brought to this, Lord, hast thou told me what clean water this is; and art thou saying, I will sprinkle it on you? Lord, let thy will be done; AMEN, AMEN, AMEN; even so let it be: according to thy will let me be cleansed. Why then, God is saying, *I will, be thou clean!* I WILL! O forget not who is the speaker: it is not the minister, it is not the prophet, it is not a man nor an angel; but *thus saith the Lord.* It is I: I that speak unto thee, am he.—Therefore, let the word enter into your heart in the name and authority of God, and it shall take effect, and be *the power of God to your salvation*; for, *herein is revealed the righteousness of God*, and the blood of God. He that made heaven and earth with a word, can make you clean through the word which he has spoken unto you: and his word is, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*

A

PART OF THE DISCOURSE

BEFORE

SERVING OF THE TABLES.

WE now proceed to the especial work of the day, the commemorating the great sacrifice of Christ's death, and the work of redemption purchased by his precious blood. And, as under the law, the leper that was not washed and cleansed, was to be expelled from the congregation of Israel, and only these that were cleansed were to be admitted into fellowship with them; so, in like manner, we must excommunicate from the table of the Lord, all that are not sprinkled with the clean water of the blood of Christ, and cleansed; and admit to it only these that are justified, sanctified, washed.

On the one hand, then, I debar, in the name of the Lord, from this table of the Lord, all unwashed, unsprinkled sinners, who give evidence, that they are not washed by the pardoning and justifying grace of God, by their remaining unwashed by the purifying and sanctifying grace of God; that they are not washen from the guilt of sin, and their legal pollution, by their being not washen from the filth of sin, or from their moral pollution; and, consequently, all the impenitent breakers of the moral law, &c. †.

On the other hand, I invite to the Lord's table, all who are sprinkled and made clean, by the application of the clean water of the blood of Christ, and thereby cleansed from all their filthinesses, and from all their idols.

† The Author delineates the character of those who stand debarred from the Lord's table, in one of his Discourses, Vol. I. pag. 83.—89.

QUEST. *Who are these?*

ANSW. 1. You that have got a sight of the *filthiness* of your heart and nature in the glass of God's word, and in the light of the Spirit of conviction, making you cry out, *Behold, I am vile!* I am filthier than the filthiest of all this congregation; I am viler than the vilest, and blacker than the blackest; yea, I think there is not a devil in hell so black as I am. Poor soul, who told thee, that thou wast naked? It was not the devil that told you that you was a devil; or made you know the plagues of your own heart. You I invite to the table of the Lord, because the clean water has been so far sprinkled on your eyes, as to make them clean and clear, like the *fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gates of Beth-rabbim*. You clearly see what a monster of sin and pollution you are.

2. You that have gotten a sight of the *open fountain* of the blood of Christ for your cleansing, and see it to be clean, infinitely clean and pure water; and thus have been not only convinced of *sin*, the malady; but of *righteousness*, the remedy; and see it to be the righteousness of God. Have you seen that Christ is the spotless Lamb of God? Has the Spirit convinced you, not only of the *personal* righteousness of Christ, and of his perfect innocence; but also of the *sufficiency* and *acceptableness* of the righteousness he has wrought for us; that the sacrifice of his death was of such a sweet smelling savour to God, as was able to take away all the unclean savour of your sin; and here alone your guilty conscience has found quiet rest, namely, by a drink of this clean water, whereof infinite justice drank to satisfaction; and never could any other water give satisfaction to you, because you see all other water to be but foul and muddy, and this only to be perfectly clean, perfectly clear and spotless?

3. You that are purged and washed in this clean water, have got your eyes opened, not only to see the *preciousness* of the blood of Christ, and its meritorious value, but also its *victorious virtue*; and that, as Christ, by his death and blood did *overcome death, and destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*; so
your

your victory over sin and Satan must be owing to that same blood: for, as freedom from the *guilt* of sin is owing to the *price* of that blood; so, freedom from the *power* of sin to the *purchase* of it: hence, when the Spirit is sent to sprinkle this clean water upon us, or to apply the blood of Christ, he convinces not only of *sin* and of *righteousness*, but also of *judgment*, because the *prince of this world is judged*, condemned, and destroyed by the death of Christ, and drowned in the Red-sea of his blood. The least drop of this water, to this day, chokes the foul spirit, and quenches his fiery darts: and hence all your hope of victory over your lusts and idols is just to *overcome by the blood of the Lamb*. Hence,

4. You that are sprinkled with this clean water, you will desire to be *clean every whit*, from *all* your filthinesses, and from *all* your idols: you will seek after sprinkling from the guilt, for the sake of sprinkling from the filth of sin; purification of heart and life; justification, in order to sanctification; and pardon, in order to purity and holiness: and, because you cannot of yourselves apply this blood, or wash in this clean water, you are made content that Christ wash you, who says, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*: and hence the sprinkling here is ascribed to the hand of God; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*. True believers are active here, only by yielding themselves passive; for, all the activity is ascribed to the name, and blood, and Spirit of Christ; *Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. You that are sprinkled, what God has joined ye do not put asunder; but desire, with your heart, all the washing that accompanies this sprinkling; the washing of regeneration, justification, and sanctification.

5. You that are sprinkled with this clean water, you will boast of no other *cleanness*, before God, but the cleanness of this water that is put upon you, the perfection and purity of Christ's righteousness: your language with reference to yourselves is, *We are all as an*

unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away, *Iſaiah* lxiv. 6.: but your language with reference to Christ, and the cleanness of his blood and righteousness will be like that, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels, Iſa. lxi. 10. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments; the word in the Hebrew (according to the margin) is, as a bridegroom decketh as a PRIEST.* Here indeed the mystery opens. The poor believer, however unclean in himself, yet by faith decks himself as a priest: *He that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, Rev. i. 6.* Yea, the poor believing soul is decked as the great High-priest himself, being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and accepted in the Beloved, not only for his sake, but in him as the Head: hence the language of faith is, *In the Lord have I righteousness.* You have no other righteousness but the Lord himself; *Jehovah, our righteousness:* and hence, as he was made sin for you; so ye are made the righteousness of God in him, in so much that, when you win to the lively actings of faith, you are then assured in yourselves, that you can appear in the judgment of God, and before his awful tribunal, with the self-same security wherewith you would have appeared if you had lived with that innocency wherewith Christ lived, and had, by the will of God, suffered what Christ suffered; yea, more than this, can appear before God as one that is become the righteousness of God in Christ; *He made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* You may think this an extraordinary acting of faith; but yet some degree of it is imported in every acting of faith, when you come boldly to the throne of grace, or have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; for, this is just a falling upon the clean water, and venturing your unclean soul into the presence of

of a just and holy God, upon the credit of the cleanness of that water. Again,

6. You that are sprinkled with this clean water, will always be wanting a *new sprinkling* of it. Though all true believers are perfectly justified, yet but imperfectly assured of it; therefore need a new application of it, and new intimations of peace and pardon on that ground. Because you contract guilt every day, you apply to this medicine every day. You defile yourselves every day; and if you go not every day to the fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness, you will be quickly all over leperous: your conscience will be filled with dead works, so that you will be unable to serve the living God, unless they be still purged out. Is this therefore your course, being filled with self-abasement under a sense of your own defilement, to apply to God in Christ for cleansing, and that continually, with a fervency of prayer answering that conviction? Then the Lord pronounces you clean; and I invite you, in his name, to his table. Come and bring all your filthinesses, and all your idols to the clean water, even all your plagues and leprogies, all the defilements of your heart and conscience: say not, stay till I be clean, when he is saying, *I will make you clean.*—Come, as you would not defile yourselves more and more, and dishonour God; for here his glory is concerned. Here is *clean water*, even the blood of God. Here is the clean *band* of God ready to sprinkle it on you. Here is the *promise* of God, that he *will sprinkle, and ye shall be clean.* Here is the *undertaking* of God to do the *whole* work for you; *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.* Here is the *good-will* of God in Christ manifested toward you, poor defiled monsters, and his will doubled to you, *I will sprinkle, I will cleanse you.* Here is the *word* of God declaring his will, that ye may know his will by his word; for, *Thus SAITH the Lord, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean.* Yea, finally, here is God's *time* and *season* that he takes for this; even when you are lying in your blood and pollution, forever

reign grace comes to you even at your worst ; for *then*, says the text, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*

May the Lord draw you by the power of his Spirit.



THE
D I S C O U R S E
AT THE
SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

NOW, my friends, I will put you in mind of a promise, Isa. xxxiii. 16. It is said of every true believer, *He shall dwell on high ; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.* Whatever reference that may have unto temporal provision ; yet I may say God hath provided the best of bread, and the best of water for you, and presents it to you under the elements of outward bread and wine upon this table. Here is the best of bread, the bread of life.

Our Lord Jesus, the same night wherein he was betrayed, took bread, &c. Here is clean bread ; it came from a clean place ; it is the bread that came down from heaven : it is clean, wholesome, and excellent meat ; *My flesh is meat indeed.* There was no innocent flesh in the world since Adam fell, but the flesh of Christ.—But that which made the flesh of his human nature perfectly clean and pure ; yea, infinitely so, was the personal union thereof with his divine nature.

After the same manner also after supper he took the cup, &c. Now, here is the clean water of which God says, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*

This

This water, being the cleanest that ever men or angels heard tell of, is a truly medicinal water; it is a salve that suits every sore when applied; and therefore, you may now come with all your sores and sad cases.—Bring all your *filthiness* here; for, this *blood of sprinkling*, that *speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*, it is now speaking, and saying, *From all your filthiness will I cleanse you*.—Bring all your *idols* here: your lusts are ingrained in your nature; but this clean water is able to cleanse you from all the unclean devils that, like the strong man, keep the house: yet here is blood that can make a clean house; it says, *From all your idols will I cleanse you*.—Bring your *diseased* case here; for this clean water is the *healing* blood of Christ: *By his stripes we are healed*. Have you, poor soul, as many diseases as all the rest of the congregation? Yet if he be saying, *I am the Lord that healeth thee*: then you may well say, *He healeth all my diseases*.—Bring your *blindness* and *ignorance* here; for this clean water is the *enlightening* blood of Christ to open our eyes: for, as the Spirit of light and illumination was purchased thereby; so, it is a glass wherein you may see both the infinite evil of sin, the infinite hatred of God against it, and the infinite love of God to your soul.—Is *deadness* of heart your case? O know and believe that this clean water is *quickening* water; it is living and life-giving water. The blood of Christ is *living* and *speaking* blood; it speaketh better things than death and vengeance, that Abel's blood spoke for. Why, this blood of Christ purchased life on the cross, and pleads for life on the throne. It is sin killing and soul-quickening blood; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life*, John vi. 53, 54. Whenever you believe the quickening virtue of this water, it will cure your dead soul, and quicken you to a new and lively hope; it will put spirit in you, for the Spirit of life runs in this channel.—Are you in a *weak* case? O mind this clean water is *strengthening* water; when you can do

nothing,

nothing, and are not able to look up through the pressure of sin and guilt, and many burdens on your back, your soul is weakened: but as bathing in water is strengthening to the body, O! bathing in the blood of Christ is strengthening to the soul. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only*, Psal. lxxi. 16. Intimating, that the way to be strengthened is just to mind his blood and righteousness; *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*. When you act faith upon his blood and righteousness, then you will see your strength to be in him alio.—Is your soul scorched with the flames and fear of God's wrath? O! this clean water is cooling and refreshing water. When this water was poured out, justice was satisfied: when it is poured upon the conscience, the soul is satisfied. The blood of Christ speaketh peace; *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God*.—Is your case a hardened case, and your heart a hardened heart? Can nothing melt it? Perhaps, you cannot mourn, you cannot shed a tear; but, O here is the remedy: the clean water, which God says he will sprinkle on you, is softening water; the blood of Christ is softening blood: but seeing it cannot soften you unless it be applied, O then give way to the Spirit of God his applying it; welcome him, saying, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean*. Whenever the blood of Christ is applied, the adamant is dissolved, the heart of stone is melted; and hence the promise of *taking away the heart of stone* follows upon the promise of *sprinkling* here. The sprinkled soul is the soul that hears God saying, *I am pacified toward you, for all that you have done*: I am so pacified, in the blood of Christ, that I have no charge against you. What! can you hear this and not melt? O! is this clean water dropping down upon me, and clean remission of all my sin in the midst of it? O then, heart of stone, melt, be ashamed and confounded for your sin. O mercy, mercy running in the blood of Christ is a heart-melting thing! O Sirs, I think if infinite mercy were knocking at the gates of hell, the hope of mercy would melt the very heart of devils: but mercy was never

never designed for them, it was never promised, never offered to them; and so they remain hardened in their enmity and malice against God. But mercy, through the blood of Christ, not only comes to your door, but knocks to be in to your heart; you have mercy promised through the sacrifice of the precious blood of Jesus, running like clean water round your heart.

But, Alas! say you, I cannot get away my *filthiness*; I cannot put away my lusts and idols. Oh! what mean you, poor soul? do you think to put away your own sin, and take God's work out of his hand? I tell you, in his great name, he never laid such an intolerable burden upon you; for, the *cleansing from all your filthiness*, and *from all your idols*, is harder work than the making of a world. It is only the *Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*. He enjoins you to *take with you words, and say, Take away all iniquity*, Hof. xvi. 2. All your work is to put the work in his hand. Many think they cannot come to Christ, till first they put away all their sin, and give up with all their lusts: but all your pains, before you come to the blood of Christ, will be like pouring oil upon the fire, that will inflame it the more. Therefore, welcome, welcome a promising God, saying, *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*: for I have got clean water in my hand for that purpose; *I have found a ransom*. By the *blood of the covenant*, I will send forth these *prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water*: but here is water enough.

Now, if you have got a sprinkling of the clean water, O pray that others may get a sprinkling also: pray that your seed may be sprinkled, and your seed's seed, if you have or may have them; for, his *righteousness is unto children's children*. Pray for a sprinkling of this clean water to the black and backsliding generation; a sprinkling to ministers and people here; and to all the witnessing ministers and people in the land, that Satan may not get advantage against them, but that God may bruise Satan under their feet. O Sirs, a sprinkling of this clean water would make the established church a
wit-

witnessing church. Pray that this clean water may be sprinkled all around you, that, *From all their filthiness, and idols they may be cleansed*, and glory may yet dwell in our land. And lay yourselves constantly under the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. You may need it a new before you sleep; because you are still contracting new guilt, new defilement. Take the clean water along with you; and go in peace, and the God of peace go with you.



A

D I S C O U R S E

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

YOU have heard of a *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*; a fountain of clean water for cleansing the unclean: some are ready to go away with all their defilements about them; others, I hope, are washed. I would speak a word concerning the duty of each.

1st, To you that are *defiled* sinners, yet in your blood and pollution, if you would not go away from this occasion in that case, and live and die in your sin, I would direct you to the cleansing fountain. O poor souls, labour to be acquaint with this fountain of clean water, and cleansing blood: and, in order thereto,

I. O Sirs, see and consider your *corrupt* and *polluted* nature: if you search the scripture, you will see what it declares concerning it; it says that every one is become *altogether filthy*, or stinking, Psal. liii. 3. Contemplate yourselves in this glass, and not in the self-flattering mirror of your own proud imagination. He that will not learn, from the word, his natural deformity,

mity, will live polluted, and die accursed. Pray that God, by his word, may discover you to yourselves.

2. If you would be purged from your pollution, endeavour to be affected with it *suitably* to the discovery which you get of it. As the proper effect of the *guilt* of sin is *fear*; so, the proper effect of the *filth* of sin is *shame*.—Many, instead of being ashamed of their filthiness and defilement of nature and way, are *senseless* and *stupid*: they may be ashamed of some particular facts; but, for any thing in their nature, they slight and despise it. If they can but preserve themselves from the known guilt of such sins as are punishable among men, as to all other things they are secure; they have no inward shame for any thing between God and their souls.—Some, instead of being ashamed, are *bold* and *confident* in their condition, as pure enough: *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes; and yet is not washed from their filthiness*, Prov. xxx. 12. Though they were never sprinkled with this clean water, yet they please themselves with their pollution.—Some, instead of shame, do *boast* and *glory* in their sin; they proclaim their sin as Sodom; boast of that which afterwards will fill them with *confusion of face*, Jer. vi. 15. chap. viii. 12.—Others go to a greater height, even of taking *pleasure* in these who follow the same trade of sinning with themselves; *Who knoweth the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*, Rom. i. 32. Here is an open defiance to the holiness of God.—Now, such persons as these will never seek after cleansing; for, why should they do so, who are sensible of no spiritual pollution? It is necessary, therefore, that these that would be cleansed, know, and be ashamed of their natural defilement; for, where there is no sense of this, it will be but lost labour that is spent in inviting them to the cleansing fountain.

3. I would advise you to be assured and persuaded, that you can never *cleanse* or *purify yourselves* by your best endeavours. Men, in a state of nature, when

brought under any convictions, are no way able to purge themselves; though believers, in the faith of the promise, are called to it, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*: yet natural men are quite unfurnished for any purifying exercise. Many make vain attempts this way, Hof. v. 13. Jer. ii. 22. Job ix. 30, 31. Their own sorrow, repentance, tears, and sorry amendments of life, they but thereby plunge themselves into the ditch, and keep themselves at a greater distance from Christ.

4. Seek to be acquainted with the *only remedy* for cleansing.—This cleansing is a weighty matter; for all the sacrifices of old were instituted for cleansing: all the promises of old had a special reference to cleansing; and the great design of the blood of Christ is for cleansing: therefore, you see God himself making this a matter of great moment.—This is also a *difficult* matter; it is a leading part of the mystery of the gospel, which the world reckon foolishness. It is not easily admitted nor received, that we can no otherwise be cleansed from our sin, but by the sprinkling of that blood which was shed so long ago; and yet this, and no other way, doth God hold forth to us.

5. Know that the *only way* wherein the clean water of the cleansing blood of Christ is presented and exhibited unto us, for its effectual application to us, is in the *promise*, 2 Pet. i. 4. And the *only way* to be partakers of the good things presented in the promise, is by *faith*; or trusting and confiding in the fidelity of the Promiser: and whereas God hath given us *great and precious promises*, sealed by the blood of Christ, and confirmed by his oath, you are to know that they are profitable to you only as they are *mixed with faith*, Heb. iv. 2.

6. This faith is to be sought and acted in a way of *servent prayer* to God, for the Spirit of faith, and of all grace, Luke xi. 13; for, in this way the Lord communicates the purging efficacy of this blood, Psal. li. 7. Therefore, O! pray, pray; and set time apart to seek of God in earnest the application of the clean water,
and

and the cleansing here promised. A good account may be expected of you, if henceforth it may be marked of you, as of Paul, *Behold, he prayeth.*

2dly, We come now to speak a word to you that are *washed* and *sprinkled* with this clean water. These following duties are incumbent on you; particularly,

1. Continual *self-abasement* in remembrance of the defilement from which you are delivered. You are called to be still abased as one that was born a leper; and in the view of the holiness of the God you have to do with.

2. The begun cleansing from your filthiness and idols, is matter of everlasting *thankfulness*, and should be celebrated with that song, *To him that 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, Rev. i. 5, 6.* Still maintaining a high value for the cleansing blood of Christ, and the holy Spirit that makes the application of it. Had you not been washed in this fountain, you must have died in your pollution, and lien under it to eternity; for the fire of hell will never purge the defilement of sin, much less will the fictitious fire of purgatory cleanse any from it.

3. *Watch against sin*, and all the secret motions of it; for they defile the conscience. There is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. Are you washed? O believer, *sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you, Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

4. *Walk humbly with your God.* Every man of himself drinks in iniquity like water; and our own cloathes are ready to defile us every day. Our best works and duties, brought into the presence of infinite holiness, are but as filthy rags. We cannot perfect holiness, but in the fear of God.

5. Be still making *new application* to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, by faith and prayer. O Sirs, surely no true believer in this world is a stranger to this duty; and the more any abounds therein,

the more genuine is their faith evidenced to be, and the more humble is their walk before the Lord.

6. *Abide in Christ*, maintaining union and communion with him. But, perhaps, some may say, Seeing daily defilement will remain while in time, and seeing he is so absolutely pure and holy; how can fellowship be maintained betwixt clean and unclean, a holy God, and a defiled sinner? To which we may reply, There are many sins whereby believers are defiled; but the way of cleansing is still open to them in the promise: and it is not merely the remains of defilement, but the neglect of purification, that is inconsistent with the believer's state and his fellowship with God. The rule of communion with God is expressed by David, Psalm xix. 12, 13. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* God requires of all his people that they walk uprightly before him, in a dependence upon his almighty power to enable them; *I am God almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Now, to this uprightnes four things are requisite:

1. A constant humble *acknowledgment* of sin; *Who can understand his errors?*

2. A daily *cleansing* in the blood of Christ from those defilements, which the least secret sins are accompanied with; *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

3. A *fear* of sinning with a high hand, flowing from a sense of natural proneness thereto, and an ardent desire to be restrained therefrom; *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin.*

4. *Deliverance* from, or deprecating the *dominion*, notwithstanding the prevalency thereof: *Let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and innocent from the great transgression.* Where these things are, then there is a man upright, and may have daily communion with a holy God. And while believers are preserved within these bounds, though they are defiled by sin; yet communion with God may be maintained: for, our fellowship with Christ, while in this world, is with

with him as he is a Saviour, and we sinners: as we have sin to be cleansed, and he hath blood to cleanse us: and your sins and defilements, which you go to him with, and complain of, and want to be cleansed, instead of casting you away for them, they draw out his compassions towards you. And know that he never united you to himself, or drew your heart to him, because you are perfect, but that in his own time and way he may make you so; nor because you are clean, but that he might cleanse you, according to his promise, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.*

In a word, *take along* with you that clean water which is the only *laver* for cleansing you from all your sins. Keep in your remembrance the perfect cleanness of it; the infinite power and efficacy of it. How great is that blood that must have more value, seeing it is the blood of the Son of God, than all sins can have guilt seeing they are the sins but of the sons of men! All sins are, compared with it, but like a drop of the bucket to the ocean. The more that you carry of this clean water in your heart, the more will it rid you of all unclean devils within and without. This clean water will never putrify or corrupt; hence, the blood of Christ is opposed to corruptible things; *We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without spot,* 1 Pet. i. 18. Intimating, that the blood of Christ, in regard of its power and efficacy, does not corrupt: as the sun sheds his light every day about the world, yet remains a fresh spring of new light in the air every morning; so, the blood of Christ shed upon the cross, loses not its virtue, but is as operative as ever, and remains a propitiation for ever. Hence, though the sacrifice was but once offered; yet it is often commemorate, to shew the perpetual virtue of it; in regard that Christ, who was a Priest, in his *person*; a sacrifice, in his *humanity*; was also the altar, in his *divinity*; and this sanctified the sacrifice, and derived infinite dignity to it; as gold which hath a lustre in itself, yet hath a greater

greater when the sun shines full upon it. Christ was both the offerer and the sacrifice; *He offered himself*, Eph. v. 2. His blood was offered by his person. Let this clean water then be highly prized, and daily improved by faith and prayer for the purpose for which it is here promised of God in the text; *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

SERMON

S E R M O N CXXXIV.

CHRIST'S TREASURES opened by HIMSELF, declaring he hath ALL THINGS that GOD the FATHER hath *.

JOHN xvi. 15,

All things that the Father hath are mine.

THE glorious excellency, fulness, and all-sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ is inexpressibly great: none can speak of it so well as himself; and indeed he himself is the preacher here: and as here we have his word; so, if his Spirit accompany it, we may, in this glass, see his matchless glory: for here it is so wonderfully described, that neither the tongues of men nor angels can tell so much of his glorious fulness and furniture, in so few words; *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

Our Lord fairly warns his disciples of what crosses they were to meet with in this world, ver. 2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service.* But, at the same time, he assures them of what comforts he would afford them: and, as it was usual for the Old-Testament prophets, to comfort the church in her adversity with the promise of the *Messias*, Isaiah ix. 6. Micah v. 5.; so, the *Messias* being come, he comforts his people with the promise of the *Spirit*, the

* This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 17th, 1747. To which is subjoined, the DISCOURSES before and at the service of the first Table, and at the Conclusion of the Solemnity. The third edition.

Comforter, and this is the great New-Testament promise.

Christ promises the Spirit here, from ver. 5. as a fruit of his ascension, saying, *If I go, I will send him*; and that because the sending of the Spirit was to be not only the *fruit* of his *purchase* on earth, but the *answer* of his *prayers* in heaven, and of his intercession within the veil, John xiv. 16. The gift of the Spirit must be paid for, and prayed for, that we might highly value this privilege.

We are told from ver. 8. and downward, what a great benefit the coming of the Spirit should be to a blind world; *When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, &c.* Next, what a great benefit his coming would be to the disciples themselves, from ver. 13. *When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, &c.*

Again, the great work of the Spirit is summed up, ver. 14. *He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.* This I have spoken to formerly. And now this text comes in as a reason of the former; *q. d.* Would you have a reason why the Spirit, when he comes, shall glorify me, by taking of mine and shewing it to you? Even because *all things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I unto you, that he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you*: he being the Spirit of the Father as well as the Spirit of the Son, when he comes to glorify me, he comes to glorify the Father in me; and by shewing things of mine, which are not different from, but the same with the things of the Father; his shewing of mine, will shew what a glorious One I am, because *all things that the Father hath are mine.*

Our Lord Jesus never speaks of his being glorified alone, without the Father's being glorified in him; nor of his own glory abstract from the Father's glory: see this in his entry upon his suffering work; *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him,* John xiii. 31. See it in his entry upon his intercessory work on earth; *Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,* John xvii. 1. And see it here in his

his declaring what should be the work of the Spirit in his name after his *exaltation*; *He shall glorify me, by taking of mine and shewing it to you.* But will the glorifying of the Father be here neglected? No, no: by shewing my glory, he will shew the Father's glory; and by shewing my things, he will shew the Father's; for *all things that the Father hath are mine*: and these things the Spirit shall shew or make them known to you; that is, he shall so declare and evidence them to you and in you, that you shall understand and have experience of them in yourselves: and that both by *revelation*, instructing you in them! and by *communication*, imparting them to you.

It is the reason here given by our Lord Jesus, that I especially speak of at present; *All things that the Father hath are mine.* Here is the vast extent of the things of Christ which are to be shewed to believers by the Spirit; they are all the things that the Father hath; they are mine, says Christ. Now, these things may be taken, either *absolutely*, respecting the person of the Father and the person of the Son; or *restrictively*, respecting the office of Christ, as Mediator betwixt God and man.

1. Viewing it *absolutely*; all things that the Father hath are his, even the whole intire *divine nature*, by having his personality from the Father, and that by an eternal, necessary, and ineffable generation: all the things of the Father must needs be his; for, *He and his Father are one.* In this sense Christ could say, *All things that the Father hath are mine*; even all the essential properties of the Godhead: there is no difference between his things and mine; his nature and essence are mine, only our personal properties are distinct; he is the *first*, and I am the *second* person of the glorious Trinity, according to the order of the subsistence of the *three-one God*: he is my eternal Father, and I am his eternal Son by ineffable generation. But the *all things* here spoken of seem not to be in this absolute sense, they are not the all things of the divine nature which he had by eternal generation. Therefore,

2. We are to view it in a more *restricted* sense, respecting the *office* of Christ as Mediator. All things

that the Father had in his heart and purpose from eternity to discover and dispense in time by voluntary donation are mine, according to these scriptures, Matt. xi. 27. *All things are delivered to me of my Father.* Luke x. 22. John iii. 35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.* John xiii. 3. *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, took a towel and girded himself to wash his disciples feet.* ALL THINGS; that is, all the effects of the Father's love, grace, and will, whatever he had purposed in himself from eternity, and whatever his infinite power and goodness would produce in the pursuit thereof, were all given and committed to Christ: thus *all things that the Father hath are mine.*

The order of operation in the holy Trinity, with reference to our salvation, is according to the order of the subsistence of the distinct persons of the Deity: and hence you have here, 1. The things to be declared to us, and bestowed upon us, they are originally the FATHER'S things; he is the peculiar fountain of them all; his love, wisdom, grace, goodness, counsel, and will, is their supreme cause and spring; therefore here called *the things that the Father hath.* 2. They are the things of the SON; *they are mine,* says Christ, as Mediator; they are given to me and unto my disposal, on account of my mediation; by which they are prepared for us, and given out unto us to the glory of God. 3. They are actually communicated to us by the HOLY SPIRIT; *therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* He does not communicate them immediately to us from the Father. We cannot deal, nor have to do with the person of the Father immediately; it is by the Son alone we have access to him, and by the Son alone he gives out of his grace and bounty to us: it is with Christ, as the great Treasurer of heavenly things, that all grace and mercy are intrusted. The holy Spirit therefore shews them unto us, not first as the Father's things, but as they are the fruits of Christ's mediation; and thereby as the effect of the Father's love and bounty.

Here then is the honey we are to eat this day as you read, Song v. 1. *I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* This honey is presented here according to the order of the subsistence of the three distinct persons of the Deity. 1. As honey in the *flower*, which is at such distance from us we could never extract it, namely, *All things that the Father hath.* 2. Honey in the *comb*, prepared for us, in our IMMANUEL, God-man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, *All things that the Father hath are mine;* and mine for your use and behoof: for, 3. Here is honey in the *mouth*; the Spirit taking all and making application thereof, by shewing them to us, and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these all things; yea, not only eat the *honey* but the *honey-comb* with the honey; not only his *benefits*, but *himself*; his person with his benefits; himself, and all things that the Father hath intrusted him with: here is *bread enough and to spare in our Father's house*; here is the steward, saying, *All is mine to give out to you by the hand of my Spirit.*

The subject here spoken of is no less than *all things* that relate to our eternal salvation, and these are spoken of, 1. In respect of their *origination*; they are the *Father's* things. 2. Their *donation*, to Christ, as Mediator, they are *mine*. 3. Their *communication*, they are actually communicated to us by the Holy Ghost.

From the first part of this verse, we lay down the following doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. *Such is the matchless glory of Christ, in his mediatorial fulness and furniture, that he can say, ALL THINGS THAT THE FATHER HATH ARE MINE.*

He, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath for the benefit of sinners; and this is the reason why the Spirit, taking the things of Christ, and shewing them to us, doth glorify Christ; because all the glorious things of the Father are things of Christ,

they are mine, &c. How could the Spirit's revelation and communication of the things of Christ make his matchless glory to appear, if they were not the things of God? Or thus,

Christ our Redeemer is intrusted with all things the Father hath for the benefit of sinners.

If these things were only the Father's, and not the things of Christ, we could have no access to them, no share of them; we could never see them in the Father's bosom; for, *no man hath seen God at any time*, though all things that relate to our eternal life are originally there; but *the only begotten Son, that lay in the Father's bosom*, he came out thence, loaden with all the good, and great, and glorious things that were hidden there from eternity, and *he hath declared him*, and declared that *all things that the Father hath there are his* †.

In the prosecution of this subject, I would enquire, through divine assistance, into the following things.

- I. What *right* and *title* Christ hath to all things that the Father hath.
- II. Point out some of these *all things* that the Father hath which are his.
- III. Enquire *how*, and in what *sense* they are his.
- IV. Shew for what *reason* it is so ordered; or, the beauty of this dispensation, that all things the Father hath are his.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. The *first* thing proposed, is, To shew what *right* and *title* Christ hath to all things that the Father hath. And in short,

1st, He hath a *natural* right to all things that the Father hath; and that as he is God, one God with the Father and Holy Ghost: in which sense he said, *I and my Father are one*. And thus he hath the same essential right and title to all things with the Father, in regard

† If the Reader chooses to see this truth clearly demonstrated, viz. That ALL THINGS are in Christ's hand as Mediator, he may consult Vol. V. pag. 249, — 254.

of the unity of the essence among the glorious Three, and their equality in power and glory; *The Lord our God is one Lord.*

2dly, He hath a *mediatorial* right and title to all things; and this may be considered under these following properties.

1. As Mediator he hath a *fæderal* right to all things; *I have made a covenant with my Chosen, my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*, Psalm lxxxix. 3, 24. It is said, ver. 4, 11. *Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine*; intimating, that he hath a *fæderal* right to all things by covenant with his Father.

2. As Mediator he hath a *donative* right and title to all the things the Father hath: hence, *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*, John iii. 35. And hence, says Christ, *All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me*, Matth. xxviii. 18.

3. As Mediator he hath an *acquisite* right, by his own purchase of the things the Father hath to give out to the children of men: by his death, upon the cross, he hath merited and *obtained a name above every name*, and a being *head over all things to the church*.

4. As Mediator he hath a *bellipotent* right, by conquest; having *destroyed principalities and powers, and overcoming them that make war with him*, Rev. xvii. 14. *He is able to subdue all things to himself*, Phil. iii. 21. And accordingly all things are put in *subjection under his feet*, Heb. ii. 8. And he subdues his people to himself, and makes them *willing in the day of his power*, Psal. cx. 3.

5. To these may be added, that he hath an *hereditary* right, being *the heir of all things*. It is said, Psalm lxxxix. 24. *I will make him my first born higher than the kings of the earth*. And Col. i. 18. he is called *the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*.

6. He hath a right by the Father's consent; *It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell*.

We find Christ, as Mediator, hath his title to all things that the Father hath secured and confirmed with a special *solemnity*.—It is confirmed by a solemn *election*: *Behold, my servant whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth*, Isa. xlii. 1.—By a solemn *vocation* and formal call; *I have called thee, and given thee to be a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles, &c.* ver. 6.—By a solemn *commission* under the Father's broad seal; *Him hath God the Father sealed*, John vi. 24. Sealed to be all things that the Father hath to bestow upon poor sinners.—It is confirmed with the solemnity of a *promise*, Psal. lxxii. 8, 9, 10. *That his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, &c.*—Also with the solemnity of an *oath*, Psal. lxxxix. 35, 36, 37. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lye unto David, &c.* But not to enlarge.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To point out some of these *all things* that the Father hath which are his. To speak of *all things* which the Father hath that are intrusted to Christ, is impossible; but I mention a few.

I. All the *perfections* of the Father are his. There is nothing that the Father hath, except his personality, or priority of order in subsistence, but the Son as Mediator hath; yea, he not only hath, but he is the *wisdom of God, and the power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. Here is *wisdom* for poor witless creatures who know nothing. Here is *power* for the impotent that can do nothing. He that saith, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, he says, upon the matter, his wisdom is mine for your behoof; his power is mine, and all his other perfections. He that is the essential image, is the representative image of God; the *image of the invisible God*, in whom are made visible or evident to our faith, all the invisible attributes of God. See the *holiness* of God, in *this holy one of God*, who is *made of God to us sanctification*; and who magnifies the holiness of God in the precept of the law, by *fulfilling all righteousness*. See the

the justice of God in Jesus Christ the righteous, who is made of God to us righteousness; and who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: and so the guilty sinner may become more righteous in God's sight than ever he was guilty in his sight: and not only justified by his blood and righteousness, but may find and see God to be just in justifying through him, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, whereby justice is satisfied fully, and glorified highly. But, of some other perfections more afterwards may be mentioned.

2. All the glory that the Father hath is his; yea, the glory of all his Father's perfections is to be seen in him: for, *He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. And hence, *the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness*, is said to shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not only the light of the knowledge of God, but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God: where is it? Even in the face, or person of Jesus Christ.

3. All the fulness that the Father hath is his; *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. i. 19. ii. 9. O! upon what solid footing does he say, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, when all the Father's fulness is in him, and dwells in him? And, O! should not all poor souls look to and rely upon him, and out of his fulness receive grace for grace? O may we come and dwell where fulness dwelleth?

4. All the promises that the Father hath in his covenant are his; they are made to him first, and to us in him, in whom the covenant stands fast; *All the promises of God are in him, Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20. As the promises of God are all affirmed by his word, and confirmed by his blood; so, he is intrusted with the donation and application of the promises: hence he is the *Author and Finisher* of that faith whereby we see Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ.

5. All the *grace* and *mercy* that the Father hath in store for sinners are his; *Grace is poured into his lips*, Pfal. xiv. 2. And this is a notable part of the glory of God that is to be seen in him; *The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace*, John i. 14. There is such fulness and sufficiency of grace in him for us, that we need no more but this saying, *My grace is sufficient for you*. The spirit of all grace is in him above measure; he is anointed with this oil, that he may pour it upon us. And, as he hath *grace* for the graceless; so he hath *mercy* for the miserable: as all the grace, so all the mercy of God is his; *My mercy shall be with him*, Pfal. lxxxix. 24. Mercy vents through his blood, even as grace is said to reign through his righteousness. God sent his law to Christ for obedience, and justice to Christ for satisfaction, that mercy might vent, and grace might reign through his righteousness to eternal life.

6. All the *truth* and *faithfulness* of God the Father is his; *My faithfulness as well as mercy shall be with him*, Pfal. lxxxix. 24. This of *truth*, is added, with *grace*, John i. 14. *Full of grace and truth*. O what is Christ but just the love and faithfulness of God! The mercy and truth of God meet together, and wrapt up in a garment of flesh and blood! I have observed in a former discourse, between thirty and forty places of scripture, where the *mercy* and *truth* of God, or his loving-kindness are joined together. It was the work of mercy to make the promise; and it is the work of truth to make out the promise: therefore, O believer, when you have nothing to plead or prevail with a promising God for your succour or supply, remember there are two orators in his bosom, that will effectually intercede for your relief; and these are his mercy and truth in Jesus Christ: *God is not man, that he should lye; nor the son of man, that he should repent: heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away*.—Nothing did ever God say in his word but what he hath and will accomplish. He said, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent*, Gen. iii. 15.;
and

and he hath made it good, by Christ's coming in the flesh, and suffering in the flesh. God said to Abraham, he should have a son by Sarah; though the womb be dead, yet the promise lives: Isaac, the child of the promise, must come from this dead womb, to shew that God is a faithful God. God said to Moses, that he should lead Israel out of Egypt; and therefore notwithstanding of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and power of his opposition, yet God, by many miracles, made good his word: O Sirs, he hath *faithfulness for the girdle of his loins*; and the girdle being round about him we may hold by this girdle, even when he turns his back, and hides himself in the darkeſt providences; *His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth faileth never.* Man's mercy soon turns to cruelty, and his truth to falſhood; but the mercy and truth of God have met together in Christ: and when you can find no mercy nor truth in man, you may look and ſee all the mercy and truth of God in Christ, and reſt there; for he ſays, *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

7. All the *works* that the Father hath ado are his. The work of creation, providence and redemption. God's creation work was his; *All things were made by him; and without him was nothing made that was made,* John i. 3. God's works of providence are all his; for, *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power,* Heb. i. 3. *He is the Governor among the nations*; and all the reins of providence are in his hand. God's work of redemption is his: the work of redemption by *price* was his; and he hath finiſhed this work which the Father gave him to do: the work of redemption by *power* is his; and he will never reſt till he hath finiſhed that alſo: and for this end he promiſes the Spirit here to glorify him, by ſhewing all the things that are his; and for this end all the influences of the Spirit of God are his. And we may ſay, all the winds of heaven are his: theſe are what his people ſeek to blow upon them; *Awake, O north wind; come thou ſouth*: theſe are what he promiſes in the coming of the Comforter; *I will ſend him to you*; and theſe are the winds he prophieſies unto; Ezek. xxxvii. 9. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Come from the four*

winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live: O say, AMEN; Even so, come Lord Jesus; come quickly in the power of thy Spirit. In a word, all his Father's works are his; therefore he says, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*, JOHN v. 17.

8. All the *authority*, that the Father hath is his, and he is intrusted with it as Mediator; therefore says God the Father, *My name is in him*; and he *hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man*, JOHN v. 27.; yea, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; him hath God the Father sealed*, and authorized to be both the Saviour and the Judge.

9. All the *elect* that the Father hath are his; *I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, JOHN xvii. 6. They were thine by election: and thou gavest them to be redeemed by me. They were *chosen in him before the foundation of the world*, Eph. i. 4. These are called his *seed*, Isa. liii. 10. *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall see the travel of his soul and be satisfied*.

10. Hence all the *blessings* that the Father hath to give out are his; he is constitute the Dispenser thereof; for, *God hath set him to be blessings*, as the word may be read, Psal. xxi. 6. *Thou hast made him to be most blessed for ever*. Thou hast set him to be *blessings* for ever, to be the Dispenser of eternal blessings. It was promised, *Men shall be blessed in him*, Psal. lxxii. 17. and accordingly he is sent to bless us; Acts iii. 26. *God having raised up his Son Jesus sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity*. It is in him that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings; with the blessings of pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God; with the blessings of justification, sanctification, and consolation; with the blessings of grace and glory, and every good thing. Would you have God's blessing? You must have it out of Christ's hand; for the Father's blessing, and all the things that the Father hath, are mine, says Christ; they are mine to dispense, and

and they would never have been yours, if they had not been mine.

In a word, all things that the Father hath in his *mind* and *council* from eternity, and that lay hid in his everlasting bosom, they are mine to reveal to you; for, *No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*—All things that the Father hath in his *heart*, and *bowels of compassion* to the children of men, they are mine to manifest; and I am come to speak out of his heart, saying, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*—All things that the Father hath in his *thoughts*, that are an infinite depth, they are mine to put in words; though as the *heavens are higher than the earth*, so his *thoughts are higher than our thoughts*, yet behold they are *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*—All things that the Father hath in his sovereign *will* to be done for sinners, they are mine to do: and therefore, in the volume of his book it is written of me, *Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God.**—() infinitely glorious Christ, that could say, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, therefore shall the Spirit glorify me!

III. The *third* thing proposed was, To shew *how* and in what *manner* all things that the Father hath are his: I have already, upon the first head, relating to his right and title to all things that the Father hath, shewed you, that all things are his *naturally*, as he is God; and *donatively*, or *æconomically*, as he is Mediator. I add, in a few words, these following particulars.

1. All things that the Father hath are his *substantially*, not symbolically, as Christ is said to be in the elements of bread and wine in the sacramental supper; or as God was said to be in the temple by the symbols of his presence; no: it is not symbolically but substan-

* If the reader inclines to see some of these particulars more copiously handled, with a vast variety of others, of a similar nature, he may peruse a parallel subject to this, in Vol. V. p. 216,---218, 259,---269.

tially; it is not the *shadow* but the *substance* of all things the Father hath that are his: therefore it is said, Col. ii. 9. that *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; that is, substantially; and so in a glorious eminent, superlative, and transcendent way. Christ is the substance of all the types, sacrifices, and ceremonies under the law. They were but *the shadow of good things to come*, Heb. x. 1. All the good things themselves are in Christ substantially.

2. All things that the Father hath are his *communicatively*. The Mediator's fulness is communicable to us. As they are the Father's things we have no immediate access to them; but as they are lodged in the hand of Christ, whom the Father hath made the Dispenser, we have access to him immediately. Christ hath opened the door of his Father's store-house, and comes out with all things in his hand that the Father hath: and, indeed, all other shops are closed, if we may be allowed the expression, but Christ's shop stands open; and upon the door head is written this inscription, *Whosoever will, let him come, and share of all things that the Father hath*, for they are mine. Christ's fulness, which is the fulness of God, is communicative; therefore, *Out of his fulness we may all receive*, John i. 16. We needed not preach of this great store, if it were locked up in him; nay, *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead*, that we may be *complete in him*, Col. ii. 10. Christ is a cabinet of rich and rare jewels, that can enrich you, Sirs, to eternity. There are two keys that use to open this cabinet: *faith* is a key; for, out of his fulness we receive by faith; *prayer* is another key; *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God*. If these keys be not in your hand just now, yet surely they are in his hand, who says, *All things are mine*. O Sirs, beseech him to throw you the keys, and give you the Spirit of faith and prayer.

3. All things that the Father hath are his *sufficiently*; even *bread enough and to spare*, Luke xv. 17. Fulness enough for the destitute; light enough for the dark; life enough for the dead; pardon in abundance for guilty sinners; and plenty of all things for poor and needy

needy souls ; bread enough to spare. If you think there is none to spare for you, it is because you do not believe there is not enough in him ; nor believe that all things that the Father hath are his. But, O let us not thus, by unbelief, disgrace our infinitely noble and glorious Lord, by supposing there is not enough in him ! Philip said once to Christ, John xiv. 8. *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us ; q. d.* Surely there is such a sufficiency in God the Father, that if he be shewn to us, we will have what is enough to give full satisfaction to all the insatiable desires of the immortal soul ; therefore, *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* Well, what is Christ doing here this day among us, but shewing us the Father, and all his treasures in himself ; in whom alone are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;* and in whom alone they can be seen ; and by whom alone they can be opened up to us, which he is doing, by saying, *All things that the Father hath are mine ?* O then, Sirs, there is enough in him : and how easily can he *satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things ?* Nothing else in this world can give satisfaction to the soul ; he was a fool that said when he had a full barn, *Soul, take thy rest :* we may as well dream of a coffer full of grace and glory, as of a soul full of corn and wine. It is only Christ that hath suitable and satisfying fulness for the soul, enough to give complete, solid, permanent, and everlasting satisfaction.

4. All things that the Father hath are his *efficiently,* or *affectively,* so as to make us take and share of that store : he can make us comely, through his comeliness ; righteous, through his righteousness ; and glorious, through his glory ; *I have made thee perfect thro' my comeliness which I have put upon thee,* Ezek. xvi. 14. *He imputeth righteousness without works,* Romans iv. 6. *All we, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord,* 2 Cor. iii. 18. There is a power and efficacy in every saving discovery of this glorious treasure ; it enriches all that behold it ; and

completely satisfies all that have a title unto it, and an interest in it.

5. All things that the Father hath are his *unchangeably*; for, he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. Whatever supply you get out of his hand, his stock and store is still the same. Let faith draw never so many bills upon him for this and that supply, at this and the other time, and get never so much rent, *annual* rent, may I call it, or *daily* rent out of the stock; yet still the stock and interest both are in his hand; and the believer hath all his store secured for him, in Christ's hand, even when all that you get in your hand is spent: this well of salvation springs up for ever, and that to everlasting life. You may be full and empty by turns; but he is invariably the same; *I am the Lord, I change not*.

6. All things that the Father hath are his *eternally*: they are the everlasting things of the everlasting Father. The fulness of the Father that is his, is a dwelling fulness; *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him*; and in him it dwells for ever: hence the blessings he communicates are everlasting blessings: everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation: so called, because though perishing things may give people perishing comforts; yet the consolation of the Spirit are from everlasting things; such as everlasting love, everlasting righteousness, and everlasting inheritance. Here is a depth to dive for ever into, O poor mortal that would be happy for ever! all things that Christ hath to give are everlasting and eternal things; because, *All things that the Father hath are his* *.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, was, To shew *why* all things that the Father hath are the things of Christ; or, wherein appears the *beauty* of this disposal of all things.

1. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that the *right* and *property* of no party is lost or alienated. When

* The reader will find several of the above topics somewhat more fully handled, Vol. V. p. 269, 272.

Christ says, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, the Father's right is not alienated. When, among men, an inheritance is conveyed from one to another, then the conveyer denudes himself of his right; and the other only can say, *All is mine*: but it is not so here; when Christ says, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, he grants that God the Father *hath all things*; and yet he asserts his own title and possession also, they are *all mine*: yea, when God gives Christ, and all things to us, he still keeps his right to all that he gives, *All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Thus what the Father gives into Christ's hand remains still in the Father's hand; *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one*, John x. 28, 29, 30.

2. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, namely, in the *fitness* of the great Trustee to whom all things that the Father hath are committed, that he who is the centre of the glorious Trinity (so to speak) the middle person should be the centre of all things. O Sirs, how fit is it that all things should move toward their centre, and meet there! that he should be the Mediator betwixt God and man, the central place of meeting, where God and man might have all things common betwixt them; and *that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him!* Ephes. i. 10. All things, good and bad, may be said to be given to Christ's management: all *good things* are put in his hand to be secured; and all *bad things* put under his feet to be overruled for the glory of God, and the good of his people. None but Christ was capable of such a trust: no mere creature among men or angels were able to bear this glory. It is he that *shall build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory*, Zech. vi. 13. None but he was capable to be the general receiver of all things that the Father hath, and the disposer and dispenser of all things.

3. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation the *pleasure* of all parties is consulted ; even the pleasure of all the persons of the glorious Trinity ; *It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell*, Col. i. 19. The word *Father* there is a supplement, and not in the original ; therefore, this work of reposing all things, all fulness in Christ, may be looked upon as not only the work of the Father, but the work of the whole glorious Trinity ; it pleased the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that in Christ as Mediator, all fulness should dwell : the Father proposed, the Son accepted, the Holy Ghost consented, that in him all fulness should dwell : this was done with rapturous pleasure. It pleased the Father to *propose* it ; for he says, *I have laid help upon one that is mighty ; and, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*. It pleased the Son to *accept* ; for he says, *Lo ! I come ; in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God !* It pleased the Holy Ghost, to *consent* ; for he rested upon Christ, and furnished him for all his work ; *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me*, Isa. lxi. 1. This unspeakable pleasure is expressed, Isa. xlii. 1. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth, &c.* Also, Prov. viii. 30, 31. *I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, &c.* As God consulted his own pleasure herein, so the pleasure of all the redeemed, whose eyes are opened to see the glory of this method of salvation : how does it fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that in Christ they have all things !

4. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation the *credit* and *honour* of all concerned is consulted : for,

(1.) Here God hath consulted the credit and honour of his own *majesty* and *greatness*, in putting all things in the hand of the second Adam, and not transacting any more with man immediately in his own person, now when turned a rebel to his crown and dignity, by transacting immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, and giving out all things through him to us. Thus we are taught to keep at a due distance

tance from this infinitely glorious Sovereign, and to come and receive blessings, not immediately from God, but by the hand of Christ the Mediator, who saith, *I am the way: no man cometh to the Father, but by me.*

(2.) He consulted the credit of his name, and of all his other *glorious excellencies*: the credit of his *broken law*: how it might not only be *fulfilled*, but *magnified* to the utmost: the credit of his *offended justice*; how it might be not only *satisfied*, but *glorified* to the highest. Why, infinite Wisdom knew that there was nothing that the violated law or injured attributes of God could demand, for the reparation of their honour, but what the sinner's Surety, having *all things*, could answer with ease and to infinite satisfaction. The Creditor well knew that the Surety was not only creditable, but responsible and able to pay all the debt, *but mighty to save*, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give all the infinite satisfaction demanded; insomuch, that mercy to sinners vents without prejudice to justice; and the attributes of God seemingly inconsistent, harmoniously meet in Christ; *Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other*; whereupon God pardons and justifies, so as not only to be merciful, but even *just in justifying the ungodly*.

(3) He hath herein consulted the credit of his Son, *Christ Jesus*, who thus is honoured with a *name above every name*; all things being his, not only to furnish him for his mediatorial service, but also to reward him for it; because *he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross*; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, Phil. ii. 9. He is honoured with a goodly train, a throng court of supplicants; all things that the Father hath being his, that the gathering of the people might be to him for supply, and that revenues of praise might be given him to eternity. Yea,

4. Herein is consulted the *credit* as well as the *profit* of all the *redeemed*. God never honoured the church and people of God, nor advanced them to a higher dignity, than by making over to Christ an universal plentitude, as Head of the body the church; and every be-

liever may say, my Head, my Husband, my Lord, hath all things that the Father hath; and this is the *honour of all the saints*, they have all things in Christ: and he is made of God unto them, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things*, that he that glorioth may glory in the Lord*.

V. The *fifth* and *last* thing promised, was, To make application. If it be so, That our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath; then hence,

1. It is most native to infer, what our Lord Jesus himself demonstrates by it, namely, that there is good reason why the *Holy Spirit*, by taking and shewing the things of Christ, doth glorify him; even because, all things that the Father hath are his.—The things of Christ are *glorious* things: why? 1. They are the things of the *Father*, the things of God. Yea, 2. They are *all* things; nothing is wanting in our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. They are all things that the Father *actually* hath; they are actually his. They are all mine, saith Christ; and therefore, when the Spirit takes of mine and shews it to you, it cannot but glorify me, and shew my glory; because, if the things of the Father be glorious things, then mine are so: for, *all things that the Father hath are mine*. It is remarkable in the context, that every thing here that the Spirit is said to do, when he comes to enlighten the world, is done by a demonstrative light, and by an evident clear demonstration: when he shall convince the world of sin; how does he it? Even by this demonstration, *Because they believe not in me*: this will above all things discover and demonstrate the world's sin and enmity against God, when he convinceth them of *unbelief*, or of their not believing in me, but rejecting this greatest instance of divine love. *He will convince of righteousness*; how? Even by this demonstration, that *I have gone to the Father*; for, this shews, that God is well-pleas'd with this righteousness of mine,

* The beauty of this disposal, viz. Of all things, that the Father hath being the things of Christ, may be seen more fully laid open, Vol. V. P. 254. — 259.

otherwise I would not have been received thus into the Father's embraces, and to sit in the midst of the throne. He will convince of judgment; how? Even by this demonstration, *that the prince of this world is judged: I have, by death, destroyed him that had the power over death, and execute judgment in person upon enemies; therefore, judgment shall be brought forth into victory in behalf of all his people.* And now again, *He shall glorify me,* says Christ; how? and by what demonstration? Why, *He shall take of mine and shew it to you.* Well, how will this demonstrate my glory? Why, the argument shineth with demonstrative light, *All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I unto you, he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you:* where our Lord, by doubling the expression, declares what way the Spirit demonstrates his glory; for, whenever the Spirit takes and shews any thing of Christ to us, then he lets in a ray and beam of the Father's glory: because all things that the Father hath are mine, and mine are his, therefore it is impossible when he shews my glory and glorifies me, but the glory of God the Father must shine in with it.

2. If all the things the Father hath are his, then the Father's Spirit is his. He is God equal with the Father; and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. The Father's Spirit is his, not only *naturally*, as God; but *donatively*, as Mediator; and he hath the giving of the Spirit unto men in his power; for, *when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave gifts to men,* Eph. iv. 8.; and he still hath the giving of the Spirit in his hand.—The Father says, *I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth, and set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law,* Isa. xlii. 1, 3, 4. Hence he says, *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me.* And he having *received gifts for men, even for the rebellious;* see by what authority we go about such solemn work, and execute our ministerial service; why,

all the gifts and graces of the Father's Spirit are his to be communicated to us ; and therefore as he had power and authority to promise the Spirit, saying, *If I go, I will send him, and he shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you :* so he hath power and authority to accomplish his promise. His power is equally the same this day, as it was when he first gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; and, I hope, he is to this day, giving and sealing our commission : for he that said, *All things that the Father hath are mine, and, all power in heaven and earth is given unto me,* said with the same breath, *Go ye therefore and teach all nations ; and lo I am with you always.*

It is therefore in his name, that says, *All things that the Father hath are mine,* and in his authority, we execute this commission ; and who are the men upon earth, or angels in heaven, that dare take upon them to say it is *unlawful* ; or dare upon any new pretences, and new inventions of their own head, assume the power of counteracting his orders ? No power or authority did our Lord ever give to the eminent apostles themselves, but what was for *edification*, and not for *destruction* ; and what a humbling and astonishing providence is it, that any who bear the name of saints and servants of Christ, should be left of God to such amazing madness and distraction, as to assume to themselves a power for destruction, a power to commit *sacrilege* and *robbery* upon the *sacred offices of ministers and elders* ; a power of shutting the door that he hath opened ! who alone hath authority to open and shut, and who alone can say, *I have the key of the house of David, that openeth and none shutteth :* of these keys, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, no man can say, they are mine to give and take ; yea, no angel dare say, they are mine : but glory, glory to him whose prerogative alone it is to say, *All things that the Father hath are mine.* As to the dear Brethren, who are left to arrogate such *unlawful power* to themselves, the worst thing I shall say of them, is, in the Spirit of meekness, what

Christ said once to his disciples, *They know not what Spirit they are of*.*

But, to return to what I was saying. The Spirit of Christ is the Father's Spirit, and indeed a fatherly and friendly, not a furious nor violent spirit; *Thus saith the Lord, Fury is not in me*: and it is by this Spirit he seals the commission that he gives to the gospel-minister; we read, John xx. 22. that *the Lord Jesus breathed on his disciples, and said to them, Receive ye the holy Ghost*. We pretend to no new revelation of the Spirit or such extraordinary effusions thereof as the apostles had; but, yet, *what we have heard and seen, we may declare unto you, that you may have fellowship with us in the same Spirit*. I hope I can say, even since the time I began to think upon this text, that now and then, the Lord hath breathed upon my soul; and may I not hope, since I began to speak upon it, he hath been breathing upon you? Yea, what do I know, but he is breathing upon some here, and saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*? For, as all things that the Father hath are mine, so all the gifts, and graces, and influences of the

* The beautiful harmony that had subsisted, from the commencement of the Secession, amongst the Associate Brethren, was, by this time, obstructed, by the rupture which had taken place, in the Associate Synod, in April, 1746. concerning the *religious clause* in some burghs oaths. Though we will have occasion afterwards, where our Author speaks more full and clear to this point, (*viz.* in Sermon 135.) to lay it open; yet, for understanding this passage, it may be proper to observe, That when the *sinfulness* of the *religious clause* was condemned, by a small majority of a thin a meeting at the conclusion of the Synod, in April, 1746. yet the full Synod which met in April, 1747. proposed, "Whether the decision concerning the *religious clause* in some burghs oaths, in April, 1746. should now, or afterwards, be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, ay and until the making the same to be so, shall be referred, by way of cure, unto Presbyteries and Kirk sessions, in order to their giving their judgment thereanent, &c. or not?" This vote being carried in the *negative*, the party condemning the religious clause as sinful, immediately withdrew themselves from the Synod, and next day constitute themselves upon a new foundation, suddenly calling themselves, the *Synod*, and the *only Synod*; and enacted, "That all Presbyteries, Kirk-sessions, and Communities in the Association, were subject to them; and that all Courts, whether Presbyteries or Sessions, that were not subordinate to them, were *unlawful Courts*; and that all Ministers and Elders, who were not subject to them, had *lost the keys of the kingdom of heaven*:" and thus materially *suspending* and *excommunicating* all Ministers and Elders from their sacred offices, who could not yield subjection to their authority. — It is this piece of their conduct our Author here alludes to.

Father's Spirit are mine, to give out to you; therefore, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*: and so far as this takes place in any measure, so far is he sealing our ministry; let men tear it, and trample on it at their peril.

3. See wherein it is, that the real *personal glory* of Christ, as Mediator lies; and what is requisite for his declarative glory. His *personal glory* lies in this, that *all things that the Father hath are his*: and that this glory may be declared, he manifests these things, and communicates them by his Spirit. It is not possible he can keep all these things to himself, and give out nothing; no: it stands upon his honour and credit as Mediator, and the church's Treasurer, to give out of that treasure of grace and fulness that is laid up in him for our behoof. Here is a door of hope for sinners, that Christ is a faithful Trustee, must give out of his grace to make his people willing, and to bring them to himself; John x. 16. *Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, these Gentiles, as well as Jews, I must bring, and they shall hear my voice*; them I must bring. We are told, John iv. 4. *He must needs go through Samaria*; why? for what end? It was even to give out of his grace to a poor harlot, a vile sinful woman there; even so, I hope, he must needs go through this congregation to-day, to give out of that store of all things, and of all fulness, which he hath for the sake of some poor vile sinner here. As there was a blessed necessity for his suffering at Jerusalem; yea, Luke xxiv. 26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* Even so, there is a blessed necessity for his applying the virtue of his death and sufferings, by pouring out of his Spirit, and communicating of his fulness. The context here shews, that his glory and honour stands upon this, and his Father's glory too, that the Spirit be sent to shew his treasures; which are both the Father's and his. Christ is not proud of his treasures; see how high, and yet how humble our Lord Jesus is, so as not to think it below him to stoop and distribute thereof among poor beggars: unbelief says, O will he ever stoop down and wash such a leper as I, when he is so
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eminently and so infinitely glorious as to have all things that the Father hath? Yea, but his grandeur and glory does not make him disdainful and lordly; *Jesus knowing that all things were given him, he stooped down and washed his disciples feet*, John xiii. 3. O Sirs, it is strange! man, that hath *nothing*, is most proud; but he that hath *all things* is most humble: and because he is so highly exalted, therefore he stoops to wash polluted sinners, saying, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*. He is exalted for this very end, to pardon and purge guilty polluted sinners; *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel*, Acts v. 31. It is no disparagement to his exalted state for him to stoop down and wash your feet, and wash your heart: and this is the way he washeth, by giving pardon and repentance. He knows, the lower he stoops, the higher will he be honoured in the hearts of his people. Do you think the less of him, O believer, that he stoops and condescends to wash you? No; you think the higher of him. O sinner, do not through unbelief think him too high to look down towards you; nay, the higher he is the lower doth he stoop: and therefore, the higher you conceive he is, the more hope you may conceive of his pity and favour towards you; and the more divine store you see he hath, the more let your expectation arise, for faith hath the more footing.

4. Hence see, how the infinite *wisdom of God* hath outwitted the *policy of the devil*, the old serpent, in robbing the first Adam of all his stock, and thereby thinking to destroy all mankind; but, behold, the second Adam appears with a stock incomparably greater than that which the first Adam lost! It was a dismal thing to hear such sad news upon the breach and violation of the old covenant, Behold, all things that man had are lost! But Christ, the new-covenant Head, comes in with glad news, Behold, all things that God hath are mine! O happy change of Adams! Happy change of covenants, and covenant Heads! O what a well-furnished Saviour is here! *All things are mine*. And, O how well is it secured in the hands both of the Father
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and of the Son: for, *all things that the Father hath are mine!* And, O how fully and divinely glorious is the treasure! What more full and *extensive* than *all things?* And what more *divine* than *all the things of God?* These glorious things, that could never have been seen otherwise, even all the glory of God, to be seen in the face and person of Christ, who is the Father's representative, not in some things, but in all things; here is all the glory of God represented, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

5. Hence see, what a *great want* it is to *want CHRIST*; for then they *want all things*. Oh! the miserable case of the wicked, ungodly, Christless world; they are cursed in the want of all things: they want all things that God hath, while they are *without Christ*; without him, ordinances are nothing but an empty shell; the sacramental supper, without Christ, is but an empty table; sermons without Christ, are but an empty sound; heaven without Christ would be but darkness, and if the Lamb were not the light of the place.—But, on the other hand, what a *great thing* must it be to *have Christ?* For, they that have him, have *all things*, Rom. viii. 31. When God gives Christ, he cannot but with him *freely give us all things*; all things that Christ hath, and all things that the Father hath. O how happy are believers! *All things are yours; for, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*: you have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all things in Christ: it is easy with Christ to supply all your needs, and to give you *all sufficiency in all things*, 2 Cor. ix. 8. O what a well-furnished table is the Lord's table, when the Lord himself is presented upon it! There is an overflowing ocean of all good in Christ for sinner's, infinitely exceeding all our sins and all our wants: it is unbelief that doth diminish and limit the fulness of Christ; it reveals a multitude of sins and wants, but it conceals and overlooks the treasure of grace and fulness of all things that are in Christ. But passing other inferences, at present.

6. Hence see the *duty* of all *poor and needy sinners*, and where they ought to go for supply, and for a share

of all things they need : and what a broad foundation for faith is here. God in Christ is the fountain of living waters. God the Father hath all things ; but how shall we come at them ? Why, says Christ, come to me ; for, they are all mine ; mine to give out, mine to distribute among poor needy finners. Here is enough both to *excite* and *direct* your faith.

[1.] To *move* and *excite* faith. O may the Spirit come for this end. See that whatever you can object here is answered.

(1.) Do you think with yourself, Ah ! I am *universally destitute* ; I have nothing ? Well, but here is *all things* ; and they are all mine, says Christ ; therefore come to me. But,

(2) Do you think that God is *displeas'd* with you because of your sin ; and that the Father of Christ hath no favour for you ? Nay, but the *fulness* here exhibited, is the *fulness of God the Father* ; even ALL the things that the Father hath. But,

(3.) Do you think, O the Father is *far away* from me ! how can I have all things that the Father hath ? It is answered, They are all laid up in the hands of a near *friend and kinsman* ; they are all mine, says Christ, for your use. But,

(4.) Do you think, Alas ! I *hear* of these glorious things, but I do not *apprehend* them ; I am blind and in the dark, so as I cannot see any of these *all things* that Christ and his Father hath ? Well, but says Christ, my Spirit is at hand to *receive of mine*, and *shew it unto you* ; and thus to *glorify me* : he would not glorify me if he did not shew it unto you. But now, in so far as he is shewing it to you, he is glorifying me, by making me appear glorious to you, *more glorious than all the mountains of prey*.

The Spirit shews this glory of Christ just in this glass of the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And if he be shewing it to you, surely you must be moved to believe with application, that when Christ hath so much you shall not want ; and that he hath enough to spare unto you. Is it possible to believe his *immense fulness*, and that he hath *all things*, and yet hath *nothing* to spare for you ?

Nay, let faith say it is for me, for me: *He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious.* O Sirs, as the *fulness of the Godhead* is in him; so, if there were ten thousand millions of worlds, Christ could not be pinched to supply all their wants. Here is the well of life; but who knows how deep it is to the bottom? The due consideration of this, might provoke all the world to come and draw water out of this well of salvation with joy, this fountain opened for you.

[2.] Here is enough to *direct* your faith, in and by the same topics that are here before you in the text.

(1.) Remember *where* all things are to be had; and that therefore, if you would believe, you must remember, that faith to believe in the Son of God is to be had where all other things are. *Faith is the gift of God*; and Christ is the *Author of faith*: therefore seek not to bring faith out of your own bowels; for, as *faith comes by hearing*, so nothing but the power of God can produce it effectually; that is, by the *gospel's coming*, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost. This power works secretly and silently upon the heart in hearing, when, perhaps, the person little knows that it is the power of God that is dealing with his heart; when yet, while the Spirit is in the word, shewing the things of Christ, there may be a heart-beating towards him; a heart-bleeding, a heart-bursting, a heart-burning towards him: and, possibly, the heart that was hard like a rock, now melting like water before the Lord; yea, under this drawing power of the Spirit, there may be heart-panting after the Lord, and yet the poor soul, perhaps, doth not know that the power of God is present. This faith cometh not by *working* or *doing*, or forcing yourselves up to some strong actings; but it comes by *hearing*: the *actings* of faith come by hearing of the *object* of faith presented in the word, and by hearing what the Spirit says of his glory.

Why then do you stand poring upon your want of power to act faith, as if you were to pull it out of your own breast? You will be nearer to your purpose, if you pore upon the object of faith, wherein all things are.

are. The soul, in believing, considers not, what can *I* do, but what can *Christ* do; not, what have I in me, but what hath *Christ* in him: it is taken up with nothing but *Christ*; and it is the best act of faith that loses itself, and is swallowed up in his fulness.

(2.) The next direction to your faith, is, Let the *claim of right* that *Christ* hath to *all things* that the *Father* hath, be *your claim*. *Christ* is the first receiver of all things from the *Father*; and we can receive nothing but through his hand. We have no claim to any thing that the *Father* hath, but in him whom the *Father loveth*, and to whom he hath *given all things*; they must be his before they can be ours. All is mine first, says *Christ*, before ever you can share; and they are mine that they may be yours: my mediatorial right to them is on your account: his love falls upon me, that it may descend upon you; his blessing lights upon me, that it may light on you; his Spirit is given to me, and put upon me, that it may be put upon you; his fulness dwelleth in me, that out of my fulness ye may receive, and grace for grace; his promise lights upon me, that it may be accomplished to you; Psalm ii. 9. Rev. ii. 27. Therefore, let your claim of right to any thing the *Father* hath be grounded on my right; for, *all things that the Father hath are mine*. He is *your God*, because he is *my God*; and *your Father*, because he is *my Father*: he is yours, because he is mine; and all things the *Father* hath are yours, because they are mine; *All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*.—God's kindness towards us is only *through Christ*, Eph. ii. 7. We are *blessed with all spiritual blessings only in Christ*, Eph. i. 3; and *accepted only in the Beloved*, verse 6.

(3.) The third direction to your faith is, O let faith take the *testimony* of *Christ* out of his own mouth concerning his own glory, which is here wrapped into the very midst of the *Father's* glory! *All things that the Father hath are mine*. *Christ*, the *Mediator*, is the *Speaker* here: and as he declares, to his *Father's* praise and honour, that all things he hath for us are originally the

Father's, even that God, who *so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son*, &c. : so he proclaims his own glory that he hath from the Father ; *All things that the Father hath are mine*. We need not commend Christ to you, as if we could say more than he says himself ; there is ten thousand times more in this very word than men or angels can tell : therefore, O hear his commendation out of his own mouth, *All things that the Father hath are mine*. He says elsewhere, *Come to me, and I will give you rest*. Why ? what rest ? what happiness ? what good things ? Even all things that the Father hath, they are put in my hand to give. Christ himself is here the preacher, commending himself, and offering himself. O Sirs, is there none here hearkening to him, and saying, O ! *It is the voice of my Beloved ; behold he cometh, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills ?* It is the voice of my Beloved, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away ; for, lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone* : the heavy shower of the Father's wrath for your sins, hath fallen on my head, and now all the treasures of the Father's grace and love are put into my hand ; and will you not come to me ? Rise, my love, my fair one, you shall be fair in my sight, though in yourself a vile monster, and black like hell, by lying among the pots of sin and guilt ; yet, rise at my call ; let your heart rise, let your soul rise ; *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away : all things are ready, come to the marriage*. If you intend to come to the marriage supper, come first to the marriage. All things are ready for you, whatever you want ; pardon, and peace, and grace, and glory, and every good thing ; *All things that the Father hath are mine* ; and, *I that speak unto you am he* : and, *To you, O men, do I call ; my voice is to the sons of men : If any man thirst let him come to me and drink* : come and drink abundantly of all things that your souls stand in need of ; only come to me, and then drink. The Father hath put the cup of salvation in my hand ; come then, and take a large draught of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things that the eternal God hath ; for, *All things that the Father*

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ther bath are mine. A large draught of the Spirit is to be had here. See John vii. 37.

(4.) The last direction I offer to your faith is, O! would you take this testimony of Christ? Then *receive it in the demonstration of the Spirit*, who is come to glorify Christ. Look for the anointing that teaches all things; the Spirit takes and shews them to you. All the glorious things that are spoken of Christ will be tasteless, till the Spirit give you a relish of them. But, O Sirs, have you not now ground to expect the Spirit, when he that hath all things that the Father hath, hath said, *He shall come, he shall glorify me, he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you; and again, He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you?* And, O! is he not this day shewing you, that the things of God are the things of Christ, and the things of Christ the things of God? Yea, so far as he hath shewn you that all things that the Father hath are Christ's, so far hath he glorified Christ, and made all the glory of God to appear in his face. If you have heard what Christ says of himself, you have heard what the Spirit says: and, O! the voice of the turtle agrees in one with the voice of Christ. This is the turtle dove that rests upon Christ; and when the voice of the turtle is heard, it is another argument by which Christ courts his bride; *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,* Song ii. 10,—13. The voice of the turtle is again heard in Dunfermline; the Spirit is come to glorify Christ, by making the words of Christ found in our ears: *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

QUEST. *How shall I know, if I have believed what Christ here says, and what the Spirit shews; for, I think I am yet brutish in my knowledge: I think I know nothing of this mysterious glory, how all things that the Father hath are his; I think I have no right notion or understanding herein?*

In answer hereto, read and consider Jeremiah, chap. xxvi. 7. *I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people:*

people : for they shall return to me with their whole heart. Whence you may see, that the promise is not here of a *head knowledge*, but a *heart knowledge* ; for many learned heads, that have had very high notions, and lofty speculations, are lying in the bottom of hell : but, though you have not a *head* to know ; yet have you got a *heart* to know the Lord ; a heart-desire to know him, such as many learned rabbies never had ? And, though you cannot boast of knowing *what a Lord* he is ; (for his glory is infinitely great above the language of men and angels ;) yet have you got a heart to know *that he is the Lord* ? Not *what* he is, but *that* he is the Lord ; that he is *the Lord of lords, and King of kings* ; that he is such a Lord as commands your heart, and is drawing your heart to him, and away from all your lusts and idols, so as you are returning to him with the whole heart ? Then he is so far enlightening your minds in the knowledge of his glory, in having all things that the Father hath, as to be giving you what is vastly better than a head to know, even a heart to know him that he is the Lord, a heart-burning desire to know him ; yea, says he, I give you a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, that I am thy Lord ; therefore worship thou me ; for, *All things that the Father hath are mine* ; all his power, and glory, dominion, and authority is mine ; and all his treasures and unsearchable riches are mine ; and now that thou hast got a heart to know me, thou art mine too. I have given thee a heart to know me, to love, and fear, and adore me : you never had such a heart by nature ; it was a heart full of enmity against me, and my Father too : but yet my Father had a heart toward thee, a heart-love to thee : and as all things that he hath are mine ; so his heart-love is mine, and he gave it to me, that I might give it to you, and declare it by my Spirit ; and I open his heart to thee in his own words, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*

Tell me, soul, *doest thou now believe* ; and in a way of believing, welcome the Father's Sent, saying, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, and that cometh

cometh loaden with all spiritual blessings; yea, *with all things that the Father hath?* And dost thou welcome the Comforter, that is sent to glorify Christ, by taking of his things and shewing them to you, and making the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shine into your hearts? Then surely our glorious Lord is welcoming you to his table, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away:* whatever be your wants, my Father hath let me want for nothing. Do you want life, or light, or strength, or pardon, or grace? Let all your wants be upon me; for, *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

A

PART OF THE DISCOURSE

AT

FENCING THE TABLES.

WE are now to set about the work of commemorating the love of Christ, in giving himself a sacrifice to satisfy justice for our sins; and to remember the love of God in Christ, in whom is treasured up all things that the Father hath to dispense to poor sinners. Here is a feast of fat things to us; but, though it be presented on the gospel-table to all sinners that hear the gospel, yet it is presented on the communion table, only to believers and friends, who alone are capable of communion with him in all these things which the Father hath intrusted him with.

Therefore, I must *debar* enemies, who evidence themselves to be so, by their continuing to be impenitent breakers of God's commands, &c †.

† Though there be no precise form observed in fencing the Lord's table, every minister being at liberty in this matter; yet all the impenitent breakers of the *Moral Law* are generally debared: of these our Author gives a specimen, Vol. I. pag 82.—89.

But, on the other hand, I do, in the same name and authority, *invite* to the table of the Lord, all believers, and lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ, even tho' they have been formerly of the black catalogue I have mentioned; if, upon a view of the glory of Christ, they are brought to *abhor themselves*, and *repent in dust and ashes*. All who are brought to believe, that all things the Father hath are Christ's, and to be joyfully content that they should be humbled to nothing, and that Christ should be all things to them; and particularly as made of God to them, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: Are you taking with your name, *folly*, and *guilt*, and *sin*, and *miser*; and yet would willingly give Christ the honour of his name, as made of God to you these opposite remedies, *viz. wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*? Are you taking with your vile name, saying, *Truth, Lord, I am a dog*; yet, with the dogs, wanting to eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table? Are you taking with your name, *Nothing, Nothing*? Saying, I am nothing but sin, I have nothing but sin, I can do nothing but sin, I deserve nothing but hell and wrath; and yet for all this, my heart leaps within me for joy to think of Christ's being all things to me, and having all things that the Father hath. Are you content to be nothing that Christ may be all things to you? And to be worse than nothing, that Christ may be better than all things to you? Is that the frame of soul you are in, or have been in this day? Then, O come to his table, and share of all things that he hath.

Have you got the faith of this glorious truth that proceeded out of the mouth of Christ, *All things that the Father hath are mine*? and have you therein seen his glory? If so, then, 1. You have seen the *glory* of Christ, as the *glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*. And hence, 2. You have seen Christ's *treasure* to be very *great* and *extensive*; no less than *all things* that can render you happy for ever. 3. You have seen the store and treasure he hath to be *divine* and *excellent* things; to be the things of God the

Father.

Father. 4. You have seen Christ's interest and the Father's *twisted together*; and hence have seen the things of Christ to be the things of God; and the things of God to be things of Christ; the blood of Christ to be the blood of God; the righteousness of Christ to be the righteousness of God; the words of Christ to be the words of God; and the fulness of Christ to be the fulness of God. 5. You have seen that though you have nothing, yet he hath *enough to spare* for you; that in your *Father's house there is bread enough and to spare*. If you thought there was nothing to spare for you, it would flow from this unbelieving thought, that there is not bread enough, fulness enough in Christ; for, if you believe there is bread enough in him, then you will believe there is to spare also: and hence, have you not seen that your present, chief, and only good lies here? And do you boast of this as enough, and glory in Christ? for, *In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*. 6. Do you value and highly prize the *Anointing* that teacheth all things; and highly prize the Spirit's work in *glorifying Christ*, by *taking of his and shewing it to you*? And are you glad of every glance of his glory that the Spirit gives you in the word of grace; and in so far as he gives you a heart to know him, a heart's desire after him, and a heart's delight in him? O have you got some glance of a glorious Trinity in this text; and of the joint concern each person thereof hath, according to the distinct œconomy of the glorious Three-one God, in carrying on this work of redemption and salvation? And are you well-pleased with this device as most honourable to God, and profitable to you? Hath any thing like this been formerly or presently your heart-ravishing exercise? Then, O man, woman, thou art greatly beloved; Christ is here himself inviting you to his table, and saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away, resting on me for all things; for, All things that the Father hath are mine.*



THE
DISCOURSE

AT THE
SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

NOW, believer, you are set down to a feast of fat things, a feast of great and glorious things, The Master of the feast, who is the matter of it, is saying, *All things that the Father hath are mine*; and they are mine for you: all my Father's treasures are mine; and all my treasures are for you: and I am sent of the Father to give all to you to give his love to you which he gave to me: see John xvii. 23, 26.— I am sent with the word of salvation to you; and am sent with the cup of salvation; and the bread of life to you.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night wherein he was betrayed, took bread, &c. O my friends, remember, that as all things that God hath are Christ's, so all things that Christ hath are God's. This bread here sacramentally representing the broken body of Christ, is the bread of God; 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, that sin and guilt being expiated, and justice being satisfied, a vent might be made for all things that the Father had to communicate unto you.*

After the same manner also, after supper, he took the cup, &c. Now, all things that God the Father hath, all the fruits of the love of God in Christ are in this cup of blessings. You are now getting the seal of the covenant of promise, and you may be sure that the covenant is well ordered in all things, seeing that all things the Father hath are his, and committed to his management;

ment ; therefore, all things, however heavy and trying, shall be well-ordered. All the children shall have this to say in the issue of all their troubles, that *he hath done all things well*. It is unbelief that says, O ! this and that is an ill-ordered providence, an ill-ordered trial.—Tarry a little, till faith look up and see that Christ hath the management of it, and you will see therein infinite wisdom and holiness, truth and faithfulness. And in the faith of all being in Christ's hand, by the Father's appointment, you will have ground to say, O well-ordered *temptation*, that hath thus tended to humble me : well-ordered *tribulation*, that made me seek and take rest in God only as my hiding-place : well-ordered *oppression* that I met with, which, through grace, made me run to him who is a *refuge for the oppressed* : well-ordered *chastisement*, that hath sent me to my heavenly Father : well-ordered *lesses and crosses*, that have contributed to win my heart, and made Christ precious to me : well-ordered *desertion*, that imbittered sin to me, which separated between God and my soul, and made God's presence more precious to me than ever : well-ordered *victory*, that sin and Satan got over me, that tended to fill my soul with holy revenge against sin ; and made me set the power of heaven against the power of hell, and the power of Christ against the power of sin : well-ordered *disappointment* I met with at such a time, that made me know that God is a sovereign to be waited on, and not limited to my time : well-ordered *calumny and reproach* cast upon my name, that made me to seek to have my name perfumed with the favour of Christ's name, which is as *ointment poured forth*, and made me see how I was honoured to have some conformity to Christ, who was most innocent, yet most reproached ; and even to glory in the cross of Christ, and *reckon the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt* ; for I have found, that when I have been *reproached for the name of Christ*, the Spirit of God and of glory hath rested on me : O well-ordered *providence*, that hath dried up the streams of creature comforts, and worldly enjoyments, that I might betake my-

self to the fountain of consolation : well-ordered *dispensation*, that friends and brethren turned their backs upon me ; for, *when all men forsook me, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ; and, I was not alone, for the Father was with me : O well-ordered weakness and fainting*, under such and such a shaking and sinking providence, that made me run to that name of the Lord as a strong tower, the God *who gives power to the faint, and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength ; for the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary ; there is no searching of his understanding.*— The covenant being well-ordered in all things, makes even the greatest extremity to be well-ordered, for making the Lord's appearing at such a time to be the more wonderful and welcome ; and all, because Christ hath all things that the Father hath, and the ordering of all providences, and will make *all work together for good to them that love him.*

You may be sure that all things that God hath promised will be accomplished ; for, *the promises are all Yea and Amen in Christ.* You may be sure, that *all things whatsoever you ask believingly, you shall receive,* John xiv. 13, 14. and chap. xvi. 23.

Here is a never-failing fountain of joy and comfort to you, though all things else should fail you ; though flesh and heart should fail you ; though the good frame you have should fail you ; though ministers and people should fail you ; yet God will fail you never ; for, *he will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.* All things that you have, and that creatures have, may fail, because *all flesh is grass ;* but the *all things* that the Father hath, cannot fail you ; because Christ is possessed of them, he has said, they are *all mine.*

THE
DISCOURSE

AFTER THE
SOLEMN WORK

WAS ENDED.

NOW, O believer, improve the doctrine delivered out of Christ's mouth, saying, *all things that the Father hath are mine*: and therein see the new-covenant, and the superiority of the second Adam to the first: we have all things in the second Adam to greater advantage than ever we could have had if the stock had remained in the hands of the first Adam. Why, we have all things in Christ.

1. More *gloriously*, he being the glorious God, *the brightness of the Father's glory*: hence the new-covenant ministration is said to *exceed in glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 9.; and the gospel is called the *glorious gospel*; because therein the glory of God shines more brightly, than ever it did under the law, or could have done in the first covenant.

2. In Christ we have all things more *abundantly*, John x. 10. *He came to give life, and to give it more abundantly*; he came to give grace, and to give it more abundantly; he came to give glory, and to give it more abundantly; he came to give obedience to the law more abundantly, even to *magnify the law*; to give satisfaction to justice more abundantly; to give satisfaction to all the attributes of God, more abundantly than could have been done any other way.

3. In Christ we have all things more *safely*, all the stock being so well secured in his hand; the bonds of provision being all sealed with his blood: for, all the promises of God are so many bonds and obligations faith hath to rely upon; they are *all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. In Christ we have all things more *comfortably*. This is the comfort as well as the honour of all the saints, that now their store is lodged in the hand of the Father's Beloved, and their Beloved; in whom God is well-pleased, and they are well-pleased; and that their supply runs in such a sweet channel; for, thus *we enjoy God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement*, Rom. v. 11.

5. In Christ we have all things more *wonderfully*, to the surprize and admiration of men and angels. Christ's name is wonderful to all the rational world, that are enlightened in the knowledge of him; *Great is the mystery of godliness*. Angels desire to look into it; and new scenes of wonder will open out of this contrivance of infinite wisdom to all eternity.

6. In Christ we have all things more *durably*, *I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever*, Psa. lxxxix. 2. The covenant of grace and mercy is an everlasting covenant; it stands fast in Christ. The covenant of works was properly betwixt God and man, like a bridge over a river, the one end built with firm stone, the other of fading clay, and so the weak end fell down; and there is no passing to heaven by any such bridge, by any such covenant: Such is the Arminians covenant, that makes God's will one end of it, and man's free-will another; but no wonder that the weak end fall down, and there be no passage that way. But the covenant of grace is better ordered, and better built; it is made betwixt God and Christ, two divine and everlasting persons: therefore, *Mercy shall be built up for ever*. If it be asked, What is our part of the covenant? Indeed, we make no part of the bridge at all; we are only called by faith to pass along by this bridge: this faith is properly no part of the bridge itself, but a taking the bridge, when, in a day of power, we are persuaded to take it; that is, to embrace Christ, and receive him, and then to walk in him; and so to walk along the bridge till we come to heaven, and thus to live a life of faith and gospel obedience.

7. In Christ we have all things more *freely*. As the new covenant bridge is firm, so it is free to all passengers.

gers. At some bridges there is money to pay before you be allowed to pass; but there is none here: whosoever will may come and pass. But the old-covenant bridge is still the old price: it requires more money of personal obedience to the law, than you are able to give it; whereas the new-covenant bridge is such a free passage that it requires less money than you are willing to give, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. till God, by a work of humiliation, let you see your empty purse, and make you willing to be saved by free grace, and content to be obliged to Christ for all things, and that because all things that the Father hath are his. You that have a full purse, and are *rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing*, valuing yourselves upon your good hearts, your good duties, your good endeavours and meanings, your privileges, performances and attainments, you mistake if you expect passage for your money by the old bridge of the covenant of works; know, that you and your money will perish; that bridge will fail you; for, *by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified. All your righteousness are as filthy rags*; you will fall into the gulf of wrath. But, for you that are *poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked*, having no money, no grace, no good qualifications that you can see, which indeed is the case with all, though all have not their eyes open to see it; here is a good passage to you, free passage; and the poorer you come, the welcomer. As Christ hath laid himself like a bridge over the gulf of God's wrath and terrible justice, over which we may pass to the enjoyment of God; so, he hath all things provided for the poorest passenger. Christ is *the way to the Father*; and there is no fear of want of provision for them that take this way: for, *all things that the Father hath are his*.

8. In Christ we have all things more *honourably*; and this is the honour of all the saints, that Christ is their all; and that *of God they are in Christ Jesus, who of God also is made unto them, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all things*. Here is divine plenty and variety: for, in him, as a Prophet, they

they have all things necessary for their instruction and illumination: in him, as a *Priest*, they have all things necessary for their justification: in him, as a *King*, all things needful for their sanctification; in him, as a *Physician*, they have all things needful for their healing: in him, as a *Surety*, they have all things necessary for paying their debt: in him, as a *Treasurer*, all things necessary for supplying their wants: in him, as a *Counsellor*, all things necessary for their direction: in him, as a *Commander*, all things necessary for their protection: in him, as an *everlasting Father*, all things necessary for their everlasting provision.—Here, indeed, is royal provision, and honourable entertainment. Nothing is wanting where all things are: and surely, if you be a gospel believer, who are a hearer of these glad tidings, you will not be standing on dishonourable terms with God. It were dishonourable to a great man to offer money for a free feast, to which he invites his guests: how dishonourable to the great God is it to stand upon terms and conditions with him? He stands upon no terms with us, who have nothing when he invites us to come and share of all things freely.

God stood upon terms with the Surety, Jesus Christ; terms honourable to law and justice, viz. *perfect obedience* and *complete satisfaction*: but now Christ having fulfilled these terms, to the honour of law and justice, therefore God stands now upon no terms with the sinner, but allows him to come freely to him to whom he hath given all things. This is, indeed, an honourable way; more honour comes to God this way than any other, and more to the poor soul that comes to live upon this glorious and honourable steward, that saith, *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

Again, hence let all believers learn to lay *all things they want* over against the *all things that Christ hath*: when you think on your guiltiness, look to Christ's righteousness; and lay this over against that: when you apprehend your weakness, then apprehend Christ's strength; and lay this over against that: when you consider your emptiness, consider Christ's fulness; and lay this over against that. Study Christ and your condition

dition together; for if you study your condition without studying Christ, then you will be full of despair and discouragement: and if you study Christ, without studying your condition, then you will be filled with pride and presumption. If you be ignorant, think upon Christ as a Prophet; if guilty, now think on Christ as a Priest; if enslaved, now study him as a King: Christ hath titles suited to your condition; therefore lay his titles and your condition together. It is remarkable, that all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia begin with some title of Christ, suited to the condition of that church: for example, his title to the church of Smyrna, Rev. ii. 8. is, *The first and the last, that was dead and is alive*; why so? Because they were to suffer hard things, and were called to *be faithful unto death*, and so on: he shews that he hath titles suited to every case. Thus, set you his names and titles, that he suit your condition, just over against it, and assure yourselves, that Christ will make good his titles that he is clothed with: if the title be, *The Lord is my shepherd*, then I may assure myself, *I shall not want*, Psal. xxiii. 1. Thus do you; when you find distress among the saints, then remember his title, *The King of saints*: when there is a disorder among the nations: remember his title, *The King of nations*: when you find darkness overspreading your souls, remember his title, *I am the Light of the world*: when you find death and deadness taking place; remember his title, *I am the resurrection and the life*: when you are reproached, troubled, and oppressed, remember his title, that he is a *refuge in time of trouble; a present help*. Know, that as Christ and the promise is yours, in the gospel offer and publication, to be believed in, and rested upon; so, Christ is so far yours in possession, as you, thro' grace, improve him, and rest upon him; and the promise is so far yours in possession, as you improve it, and rest upon it. Thus you may be possessed of all things.

Again, hence learn how *groundless* the complaints of believers are when they *complain of wants*. Whatever you want, yet still look to him, and you will see you

want nothing. Do you say, Alas ! I want such and such a near *relation* ? Why, do you complain as long as you have such a relation as Christ living ? Will you say, I want a dear *child* ? Is he not better to you than ten children ? Do you want a *Father* as long your everlasting Father remains ? Yea, here is comfort enough even in the case of parting with all things in the world ; you may say joyfully, Farewel passing shadows and empty nothings, and welcome Jesus who hath all things that the Father hath, and who invites me to the everlasting enjoyment thereof. Let no extreme difficulty discourage you, and make you think, Oh ! it is impossible relief can now come : what ? are not all things possible to him that hath all things in his hand ? Yea, *all things are possible to him that believeth* : and it is possible for you to *do all things through Christ strengthening you*, even to *overleap the highest walls, to break bows of steel in pieces, and wade through the deepest fords in your way. What ailed thee, O sea ! that thou fledst ? and thou, Jordan, that thou was driven back ? Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.*

O believer ! let him that hath all things the Father hath, be *all things to you* : let him be the all of your *knowledge*, saying with Paul, *I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified* : what, Paul, was you not acquainted with the heathen poets, and all the learning of your age ? True ; but *I count all dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ* ; in knowing him I know all things. Let Christ be the all of your *desire*, saying, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple*, Psal. xxvii. 4. This is all my salvation and all my desire. Let him be the all of your *love and delight* : let him be the all of your *esteem*, the all of your *joy*, the all of your *gloriation*, the all of your *life*, and the all of your *trust and confidence*.

Again,

Again, O believer! hold your *claim* to all things only in him who hath *all things that the Father hath*; and reckon yourself sure of nothing but what you have in him. What claim have you to the *promises*, but in him *in whom they are all, Yea, and Amen?* What claim to *pardon* of sin, but only in his blood? What claim have you to a *comfortable life*, but in him who is the *Consolation of Israel?* What claim to a *happy death*, but in him who hath the *keys of hell and of death?* What claim to a *blessed resurrection*, but in him who is *the resurrection and the life*, and is *risen as the first fruits of them that sleep?* What claim to *everlasting life*, but in him who is the *true God and eternal life?* *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* What claim have you to *God* as your God and Father, but in him who says, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God?*—As a sound believer will hold his claim to all things only in Christ; so, he will reckon himself sure of nothing but what he hath in Christ. What you have in the world, you are not sure of for a day nor a moment: what you have in your own hand may quickly be lost, whether they are temporal or spiritual enjoyments; flesh, and heart, and frames, and comforts, and all may fail you; but of all things you have in Christ you may well reckon yourself sure; they are as safe in his hand as in his Father's; for, *he and his Father are one*, John x. 28, 29, 30.

The great promise of the new covenant is, *I will be thy God*: this promise comprehends all things that God hath to give, and all things that need to make us happy for time and eternity. But if the question be, *How shall this promise be made good to us?* We are to remember that this new-covenant promise is made first to Christ, *the seed of the woman*, spoken of, Gen. iii. 15. and who is called *the seed of Abraham*, Gen. xxii. 18. *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*; this is distinctly explained of Christ, Gal. iii. 16. *Now to Abraham, and to his seed, were the promises made; He says not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, that is Christ.* Now, the promises being all made to Christ primarily, this promise, *I will be thy*

God, lights first upon him as Mediator, and he claims it, according as it is said, Psal. lxxxix. 26. *Thou art my Father, he shall cry, thou art my God alone* : he claimed it when *hanging upon the cross*, with an *ELI, ELI, My God, my God* : he claimed it when *mounting the throne* ; *I ascend to my Father, and your Father* : *to my God, and your God*. It is therefore evident how God becomes our God, according to that promise, *I will be thy God* ; we are to look upon it as a promise made first to Christ our glorious Mediator and exalted Head : if it did not belong to him first, it could not belong to us : God and all things that he hath are his ; and in him, God and all things that he hath, come to be ours, who believe in him ; and who believe so as to receive his testimony that he gives of himself, saying, *All things that the Father hath are mine*.

But if the next question be, *How are all things that Christ hath made ours* ? We answer, By manifestation and communication, as the context shews : *All things that the Father hath are mine* ; that is, either, 1. Mine to give you a *sight* of them by *manifestation* : or, 2. Mine to give you a *share* of them by *communication* : or, 3. Mine to give you both a *sight* and *share* by *manifesting* and *communicating* them : *For this end the Spirit shall be sent to glorify me, by receiving of mine and shewing it to you*.

Hence see reason to *hearken* to Christ's voice, when he comes to open and discover the Father's treasures, and dispense them to us. The Father hath said of him, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye him* : why then, let us hear what he says ; and, 1. What says he of his FATHER ? namely, *That the Father hath all things* : yea, but what is that to us ? The Father is not our Redeemer ; he did not take on our nature ; he did not become our kinsman : well, but, 2. What says he of HIMSELF ? *All things that the Father hath are mine* : and therefore you have a concern in them, a relation to them, and a right to claim them as your own ; in him whom the Father hath given to be a *covenant of the people, the light of the Gentiles*, and to be *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* ; a *Prophet, Priest, King, and all* to you.

Our Lord speaks here of all things the Father hath as his, not *essentially*, by nature, as he is God; for thus, *he and his Father are one*; but *æconomically*, by office, as he is Mediator; for thus, he is the *Father's Servant and Commissioner*, to come and discover and dispense all his treasures that he hath to give out to us, and that we as creatures are capable of receiving and enjoying: More particularly, when he says, *All things that the Father are mine*.

[1.] He says, the *Father himself* is mine: he is my Father, and my God; and this I came to tell you, that in me you may see him to be your Father, and your God, and hear him saying, as Jer. iii. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father?* It is in Christ that he issues out that first command, *Thou shalt have no other God before me*; but know and acknowledge him to be the Lord your God and Redeemer. Thus, by the hand of Christ, God discovers and dispenses himself to us as our God and Father: this includes all things else that can be said; all things he hath are mine, because he himself is mine: and this discovery opens your right to him as your God and Father too, because of your right to me; and you have such a right to me by virtue of my being the Father's gift to you, that you must claim me as your own; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. My Father gives you the true bread, to be used as your own*; and if you reject it, you reject your own mercy, as the Jews did, of whom it is said, *He came to his own, and his own received him not*; and in rejecting him, they reject the Father, and all things that Christ and his Father had to give unto them; when Christ says, the Father himself is my God and Father, then, he discovers and dispenses to us the claim we have to the Father as our God and Father; he is mine, and therefore yours who receive me: *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. But,

[2.] And

[2.] And more particularly, as the FATHER is mine, so ALL THINGS *that the Father hath* are mine; and here is also a field to travel through, which to all eternity we can never come to the end of. Besides what I have formerly offered, there are some particulars I would mention, which we may gather from the word. What then are the particular things the Father hath which Christ speaks of, saying, They are mine to discover and dispense to the children of men? The sum of them is,

The Father's *mind* is mine to discover and disclose unto you; and, indeed, God's mind is himself, and when his mind is told, he himself is declared: see John i. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* The Father's mind is his bosom; and Christ was, and for ever is, in the Father's bosom, and he hath declared him; not only as a *Prophet*, declaring the *mind of God*, but as the *heavens* declare the *glory of God*; Christ is not only a great Prophet to teach, but a bright Heaven to declare the Father's mind; for, he is *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* When therefore he says, *All things that the Father hath are mine*, he says, the Father's mind is mine to discover and dispense to you.

QUEST. *What are the special things in the Father's mind that are in Christ's commission also to discover and dispense?*

ANSW. Many things of this sort doth Christ declare, in this sermon to his disciples, from chapter fourteenth, to the end of this chapter. I will name five or six.

1. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should tell us of a *resting place* from heart-trouble, even in *this world*; and that this resting-place is not an absolute God, but a God in Christ; John xiv. 1. *Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me*; and that thus and thus only, you will get rest to your hearts, in God even by me; for, *No man cometh to the Father but by me.* It was my Father's mind, that I should come and bring you to God; for, as it is said, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the*
the

the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Revel. v. 9. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Let not your heart be troubled then, ye believe in God, believe also in me, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, and in whom God hath found rest and satisfaction to his justice, that ye may rest safe where God rests, even in me.*

2. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should tell us of a *resting-place* in the *world to come*, after all our troubles in this world are at an end; therefore he says, John xiv. 2, 3. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* It was the Father's mind, that Christ had to discover and dispense to us, to shew us how we might enter into rest here, from all heart-trouble; for, *He that believeth hath entered into his rest*; and to shew us, what a blessed rest remains for the people of God at the end of time. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should tell of his Father's house which was to be their everlasting home; and that their everlasting rest was to be with him and his Father their.

3. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should come and tell us we were to have the Father's ear, whenever we should apply to the throne of grace; *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,* John xiv. 13, 14. It says, we should never want errands to come to God withal, but yet come when we would in the name of Christ, we should have his ear open to our suits, as *the hearer of prayer*, and the answerer of requests.

4. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should tell us of the *blessed Comforter*, John xiv.; his name, and *abode* with us, ver. 16, 17, 18.; his *attendants*, namely, the *Father*, and the *Son*, ver. 23.; his *offices*, ver. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 8, 9, 10, 14, 15.: all shewing how he was to confirm and comfort them. Again, among the mysteries of the Father's mind,

5. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should come and shew his disciples the proper and needful *purgatory* he designed to bring them through: not the antichristian purgatory, after this life; for there is no word of this in the sacred oracles: but the Christian purgatory is threefold; the first is, the *bloody* purgatory of the blood of Christ, that *cleanseth from all sin*. The second is, the *fiery* purgatory of the Spirit of Christ, and his operations, compared to fire. The third is, the *crying* and *pruning* purgatory of the cross. All these, but especially the last, seem to be spoke of by our Lord here, John xv. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There are two things in this world that he makes use of for trying, purging, and purifying his disciples; and it is part of his Father's mind to tell them of this; there is, 1. The world's *hatred*, John xv. 18, 19. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* 2. The world's *rage*, John xvi. 2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God service, &c.* It was his mind, to tell them the worst, as well as the best.

6. It was the Father's mind, that Christ should come and publish the Father's *peace*, and his peace to them amidst all their tribulations; see and compare John xiv. 27. with xvi. 33. It is another sort of peace than that of the world, which is a sinful and carnal peace, whereas this is holy; that is a crazy, brittle peace, whereas this is abiding; that, an outward peace from outward things; this, from inward and spiritual things; that, outward objectively; this, inward subjectively, solid heart peace, Phil. iv. 7. the *peace of God*; that, a peace that is soon off, indeed; but this, like that in Psa. cxix. 165. *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.* Lovers of the truth are least liable to offence: many take offence where none is given; thus Christ himself was a *stone of stumbling, and rock of offence*; he was to the *Jews a stumbling-block*:

block: they were offended at his person and doctrine; *Because, I said, except you eat my flesh, and drink my blood, you cannot have life, &c. Doth this offend you?* When men are offended at the word of God, it argues little love to the word; for, *Great peace have they that love thy word, and nothing shall offend them.* This divine peace is the part of the mind of God that Christ hath to discover to his disciples. God is the God of peace; and all things that God hath, Christ hath to give; therefore says, *My peace I leave to you; in me ye shall have peace.*

I shall only add a word in general to all. Let none go away from this occasion, complaining, and saying, There was nothing to spare for them; for, behold, before you go, I will give you something that is worth a thousand worlds, and that is an offer of Christ, and all things in him, that can make your soul happy for ever, even all the unfearchable riches of Christ: he is courting you, and commending himself to you, in these words, *All things that the Father hath are mine*: there is therefore nothing to hinder your matching and marrying with the Son of God; *All things are ready, come to the marriage, Matth. xxii. 4. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things to him*, and hath made him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things for your use, that you may receive and welcome him: he wants nothing, for he hath all things ready: and if you say, you are not ready, for you want all things; you want faith, repentance, love, and every grace; your want is no excuse, but a reason why you must come to him for all things you want; you will never share of them nor find them, but where they are; if you come not to him, you must want for ever, and live and die cursed in the want of all things. —O may your ears be opened to hear the voice of Christ, saying, *Come to me; whosoever will let him come, and take the waters of life freely*; that is, of all good things that I have to give; for, *All things that the Father hath are mine.*

S E R M O N CXXXV.

TRUE LOVERS of GOD highly Privileged;
or, the GREAT COMFORT of BELIEVERS in
the Co-operation of ALL THINGS for their Good*.

ROMANS viii. 28.

*We know, that all things work together for good to them
that love God, and are so called according to his pur-
pose.*

THIS chapter is like a string of pearls, every one of them more precious than another: if we might loose the string, and single out this one from among the rest, to take a particular view thereof, we may find an immense worth and preciousness in it. The whole of this chapter is consolatory; and holds forth some special grounds of consolation for supporting justified and sanctified ones against all evil whatsoever. We may take up the substance of the chapter in four heads.

1. We have comfort against the *condemning sentence of the law*, in the beginning of the chapter, to the fifth verse. Such as have union with Christ have no reason to fear the dreadful sentence of the minatory part of the law.

2. We have comfort against *indwelling sin*, that adheres even to them that are justified and sanctified; for it shall never hinder the indwelling of the Spirit here, nor the glorious resurrection of the body at the last

* This sermon was preached at Glasgow, on Monday, October 4th, 1747, being a thanksgiving-day, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there. The second impression.

day, nor the eternal happiness of both soul and body ; from the fifth, to the seventeenth verse.

3. There is comfort against all *afflictions, crosses, and tribulations* in this world ; from verse seventeenth to the thirty-third.

4. Not only comfort against all *adversity*, but against all *adversaries* whatsoever, and against all *charges and challenges*, insomuch, that believers are brought in triumphing in the *God that justifies*, so as none can lay any thing to their charge.

The chapter begins with *no condemnation* to the believer ; and it ends with *no separation* from Christ : and, to be sure, the top-stone has a solid foundation ; for, nothing can be more certain than this, That there is *no condemnation to them*, as to whom there is *no separation* from Christ.

This text is one of the pearls of the third part of this chapter ; and it contains a sum of the believer's comforts. There are two things especially that hinder the comfort and consolation of a Christian ; the one is *sin*, the head of the serpent ; and the other is *affliction*, the tail of the serpent : against which the apostle brings a sovereign remedy taken from the providence of God, which is the daily executor of his purpose, *Working all things according to the counsel of his will*, and making them the means to help forward the happy end : nothing shall hinder, but rather every thing shall promote their spiritual good and eternal happiness. *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.*

The words contain two general parts. We have, 1. A divine *consolation, encouragement, and privilege* ; *We know that all things work together for good.* 2. A due *limitation or restriction*, specifying the objects to whom this comfort pertains ; it is to them that *love God*, and are *the called according to his purpose.*

1. We have a *divine consolation, or great privilege*, asserted : wherein you may observe four things most comfortable and remarkable. (1.) A *blessed end* proposed, namely, *GOOD* ; spiritual and eternal good.

(2.) The *plentiful means* for accomplishing this end, namely, *all things*. Here is a general including all particulars. (3.) The *harmonious influence* that these means have for reaching this end, they *work*; and they *work together* in a wonderful harmony. (4.) The *certain evidence* hereof, *We know it*, says the apostle, both by faith and experience, *That all things work together for good to them that love God*. The operation of the Spirit, in helping the *infirmities of the saints*, of which the apostle was just now speaking, is not more certain, than this wonderful dispensation of providence; for it is emphatically asserted, in connexion with that and the other great truths here delivered; and *we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God*.

2. We have a due *limitation, or restriction*; or, if you will, a *specification* of the objects to whom this comfort pertains, to them that *love God*, and are the *called according to his purpose*. And here also four things may be observed. (1.) The *cardinal grace* by which the believing child of God is described, namely, *LOVE*. (2.) The *glorious object* on whom this *love* is terminate, namely, *God*. Every believer is a *lover*; and the principal *object* of his *love*, is a *God in Christ*. (3.) The *immediate root and spring* of this *love*, and that is *calling*; they are *called*, viz. effectually, and so have *Christ formed in them*, and are *new creatures*. (4.) The *eternal foundation* of this *call*, and that is the *divine purpose*; they are called *according to his purpose*: and this *purpose* of God, as the foundation of *effectual calling*, is more clearly explained in the following verses, 29, 30. *Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*. Moreover, *Whom he did predestinate, them he also CALLED*; and whom he CALLED, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. There is, therefore, here a remarkable chain in answering this question, *Who they are to whom all things shall work together for good?* Why, it is the *elect*.—But, *How shall we know who are elect?* Why, they are *effectually called* in time.—But *how shall we know who are effectually called?* Why, even by their *love to God*: we may know *eternal election* by *vocation*; and

and *effectual vocation*, by our *internal affection* toward God in Christ.

Observe in general, “That God’s free love and “gracious purpose, is fertile and productive of many “precious fruits.” Why, on this root grows the blessing of *effectual calling*, wherein the seed of all grace is sown, whence love particularly springs; inasmuch, that our *love to God*, if it be true and genuine, is the fruit of God’s everlasting love to us. On this root also grows the *co-operation of all things for our good*; inasmuch, that it may well be said of believers in Christ, and lovers of God, *ALL things are yours*. The God that made all things had no other design in doing so, but his own glory, and the good of his friends and lovers. O! how fruitful is his *free love*, and *gracious purpose*? I might here relate to you some of the special *fruits of his love*; but I proceed to the doctrine I mainly intend.

OBSERV. *That it is the comfortable privilege of all God’s loving children, that ALL THINGS SHALL WORK TOGETHER FOR THEIR GOOD.*

The method we propose, for handling this important subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following.

- I. To enquire what we are to understand by this note of *universality*, ALL THINGS?
- II. What is this GOOD that *all things* shall *work*? that God’s lovers may know what they are to look for.
- III. What is the *meaning* of their *working*, and *working together for good*.
- IV. Enquire a little into the *character* of these who are thus privileged, namely, as they are *lovers of God*, being *called according to his purpose*.
- V. Show *whence* it is, that *all things* shall thus *work together* for good to them; and so point out the evidences the apostle hath for saying, *We know that it shall be so*; and here also observe the *suitableness*

ableness and *connexion* between this character of *loving God*, and this privilege of *all things working together for good*.

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

I. We are first to open up this note of *universality*, ALL THINGS. This we shall essay both negatively and positively.

1st, View it *negatively*. And in general, we are not to understand it *simply* or *absolutely*, but *relatively* or *respectively*: that is to say, we are not so to view it, as if all things *indefinitely*, even these that the believer has no concern in, or notice of; such as all things that fall out in China or Japan were to work for his good who lives here: but we are to understand it *relatively*, of *all things* that relate to him, and wherein he is immediately concerned, and whereby he is exercised; such as all *afflictive* things, whereof the apostle had been speaking. Therefore,

2^{dly}, Let us view it *positively*, and more particularly; all things that he hath to do with, whether good or bad. I shall offer a short catalogue of *good* things and *evil* things that shall work for the believer's good and advantage: here is a little word ALL, but it is great in signification; and all that can be said of *all things* must be but a *few things*; for, *all things* is a subject that would never be exhausted.

[I.] I offer a catalogue of *good* things, that shall work for their advantage.

1. To begin with the best, God himself, who is the chief good, he *works for their good*. He that made all things, and orders all things, and governs all things, and to whom all things are nothing, and by whom all things subsist and move; if he work for their good, all things must do so, according as he orders them: but so it is, that God, and all things in God work for their good.

All the *attributes* of God work for their good; his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, faithfulness; his infinity, eternity, unchangeableness.—I might

might particularly instance in every one of them, but Only consider them altogether working for their good, Gen. xvii. 1, 2. *I am God all-sufficient ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. I will make my covenant between me and thee :* intimating, his all-sufficiency was to be forthcoming by way of free covenant promise ; *My grace shall be sufficient for thee :* my wisdom shall be sufficient for thy direction ; my power, for thy protection ; my holiness, for thy sanctification ; my justice, for thy justification, upon the footing of a justice-satisfying sacrifice ; my mercy, for thy commiseration ; my truth and faithfulness, for thy consolation ; my unchangeableness, for thy security and confirmation ; and my eternal being, for thy eternal blessedness.

Again, as all the attributes of God, so all the works of God that ever he made, work for his people's good : his great end in making the world, was for the glory of his name and the good of his elect. Wherefore made he heaven and earth ? Why, he made he heaven, for their habitation, in the end ; and earth, for their accommodation by the way : and hence not only are they heirs of heaven but of the earth also ; *Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth,* Matth. v. 3.

Again, not only all his works, but all his words work for their good ; both law and gospel : the law is their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, by shewing them their sin and misery : the gospel is the glass wherein they see the glory of Christ, and of God in him to their transformation, 2 Cor. iii. 18. In short all the threatenings of the word, are for their excitation ; all the promises, for their consolation ; all the precepts, for their direction ; all the doctrines of it, for their information ; and all the parts of it, even every thing in it, for their edification.

Again, not only all the words and actions of God, but all the thoughts and purposes of God work for their good : *I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,* Jer. xxix. 11. As they are called according to his purpose ; so they are justified, sanctified, and saved according

according to his purpose, and will be *glorified*, to eternity, according to his purpose.

2. CHRIST, and all his *furniture*, work for their good; for, *He is made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30.—All that Christ did in the *flesh*; all that he suffered; all that he has done, from eternity, and in time; all that he is doing in heaven; and all that he will do at the great day, work for their good.—All his *appearances* are for their good; he lived for their sakes, and died for their sins, and rose for their justification. See how the apostle triumphs in the good that comes by Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession in the context here, ver. 33, 34.—All his *offices* work for their good; as a *Prophet*, he is the *wisdom of God*, for their illumination; as a *Priest*, the *righteousness of God*, for their justification; and as a *King*, the *power of God*, for their sanctification.—O! what matter is here, were we to speak of *all things* that belong to his person and his purchase; his authority and ability to save; his fulness to supply; his fitness to redeem; his sweetness to endear, and his brightness to display, all the glorious perfections of God! See Col. ii. 9. John i. 14, 16.

3. The SPIRIT, and all his *fulness*, work for their good; all his *operations* and *influences*, John xvi. 8.: all his *fruits* and *graces* spoken of, Gal. v. 22.: all his various motions; whether as *water*, for cleansing them; as *wind*, for refreshing them; as *fire*, for warming their hearts; or as *oil*, for anointing the wheels of their souls: all the *sanctifying* operations of the Spirit; all his *comforting* operations; all his *enlightening*, *quickening*, *strengthening*, *enlarging*, and *sealing* operations: I must here but mention the fields that I might go through. The Spirit works for their good as he is a Spirit of *faith*, a Spirit of *repentance*, a Spirit of *love*, and *power*, and of a *sound mind*; as he is a Spirit of *prayer*, *grace*, and *supplication*; helping our infirmities, and teaching us to pray with *groanings which cannot be uttered*, as you see in the verses immediately preceding the text.

4. The everlasting COVENANT, and all the *blessings* of it, work for their good ; yea, *This is their salvation, and all their pleasure,* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. This covenant of promise is a bundle or heap of good things laid up for them. The *fulness* of the covenant brings good news of supply to them, however poor and empty they are. The *freeness* of the covenant brings good news of salvation to them however guilty and unworthy they are in themselves. The *stability* of the covenant brings good news of perseverance to them, however fickle, and changeable, and unstable they are in themselves. The *blood* of the covenant, which is the condition thereof, the everlasting righteousness of Christ, brings the good news of all spiritual blessings bought with his blood, *In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.*

5. All divine PROVIDENCES work for their good ; *His eyes run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to show himse'f strong in their behalf,* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. All the special *acts* of providence ; all that befel Adam before the fall, in the fall, and after the fall. He was in a state of *innocency* ; yet he sinned : and what need have I to be watchful, may the believer say, though I be in a state of grace ? Thus his innocency works for good. In Adam's fall he sees how *sin* was brought into the world, and that he hath sinned. What happened to Adam after the fall, gives a view both of the *misery* of a natural state, and of the *remedy* that God hath provided in Christ, the promised seed.—All that befel the *good angels* is a part of merciful providence that works for their good : they received their *confirmation* in their happy state by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ ; and how much more may believers expect to be confirmed in a *state of grace* by the Lord Jesus, who *took not on him the nature of angels,* to be their Redeemer, but the *seed of Abraham* ?—All the great *deliverances* wrought for the church and people of God, in all ages, work for their good. What he did for Israel in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness : what he did for them at Jordan ; what he did for them in Canaan ; how he drove out the heathen, and rebuked

kings for their sakes : what he has done for his church in general, and his children in particular, all work for the good of his people, to encourage their faith, and forward their confidence in the Lord.

6. All divine ORDINANCES work for their good ; such as, a gospel-ministry, and all the ministerial gifts, they are designed for *perfecting the saints*, and *edifying of the body of Christ*, Ephes. iv. 12. Gospel sacraments, viz. baptism, and the Lord's supper ; the one a seal of their *incorporation* into Christ, and the other a seal of their *confirmation*. If this sacramental solemnity work for any saving good to you, it is a fruit of this promise.—All the gifts and graces not only of ministers but of *private Christians*, work for their good, as well as their own gifts and graces ; for, not only *Paul and Apollos*, and *Cephas*, is theirs, but the *communion of saints* contributes for their good, Heb. x. 24, 25.—All the *prayers* of the saints work for their good : as their prayers, their *fervent prayers avail much* ; so it is a great comfort to have a *stock*, or numerous *conjunction* of prayers going up for them, when they themselves are in distress, or out of tune, or unfit for this exercise.—All divine ordinances, word and sacraments, thus work for good. The *word*, is the *savour of life* to them ; and the *sacraments*, the *medicine of life* : and no wonder ; for, in the word, there is the *breath* of God ; and in the sacraments, the *blood* of God.

7. In a word, all the MERCIES of God, temporal and spiritual, work for their good ; for, the *goodness of God leads them to repentance* : and all the *works* of the godly work for the good of believers ; their good works, and good example serving for their excitation and imitation. I might,

[2.] Offer a catalogue of *evil* things that work for their good.

1. To begin with the worst ; SIN itself, the evil of all evils, though, in its own nature, it works death and damnation ; yet, if we look to it as over-ruled by infinite wisdom, and tempered by Christ, who is the *wisdom of God*, and the *power of God*, it works for good : even as a skillful physician tempers poison and makes it

it medicinal and operative for good. Thus the *sin* of the first Adam made way for the *righteousness* of the second Adam; in this respect, the greatest evil wrought for the greatest good. It is part of the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, that he can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life out of death. Indeed, sin, of itself, works no spiritual good, it works shame and sorrow, terror and torment; and they that can encourage themselves in sin by this argument, *sin as we will, it will work for our good*, they never shared of the good promised in this text; for, the principal good that all things work for them that love God is to make them *hate sin*: and to *do evil*, that *good may come*, is to make *our damnation just*, Rom. iii. 8. It is only corrupt nature that can abuse this doctrine thus; for, where-ever true grace is, it will make the sweetest use, to the encouragement of holiness, and the discouragement of sin: because when God so wisely orders that his people get good occasionally of their sins and falls, as when thereby sin becomes more bitter to them, and Christ more precious, and themselves more humble and watchful, nothing in the world puts a sharper edge upon their hatred and opposition to sin than this doth. In this respect we may say, better is the sin that makes us humble and watchful, than the duty that makes us proud and secure: but, to go on in sin, because God can bring good out of it, is as wicked and atheistical, as if one should go to the devil, because God can bring good out of his temptations.

Sin itself will work for good to them that love God: observe what I say; I would not for all the world say, that sin would work for good to them that *love sin*, and *live* in sin; but I can say, before all the world, that it will work for good to them that *love God* and *hate sin*. It will work for good to them that *hate it*, and hate themselves because of it: it will work for good to them that *love God* and *loath themselves* for sin: it will work for good to them that are *humbled* for it, and to them that *fly* to Christ to be saved from it, and that dare not, for a world, allow themselves in the least sin; it will work for good to them that *fight* against it, and

pray against it, and who, though they must own, with David, that *iniquities prevail against them*, yet they are in arms against it; and, because they know their own weakness, therefore they set the *word of God*, the *sword of the Spirit* against it; they set the *blood of Christ* against it, and the *power of God* against it: they call in the help of Heaven against it. Why, they love God, and hate sin; and therefore, *all things shall work together for their good*. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; if a naughty reprobate world will stumble, there is no help for it. It is matter of comfort that the *election shall obtain*; and the text speaks of these: *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the CALLED according to his purpose*.

2. SATAN, and all his *temptations* and *suggestions*, work together for good to God's children; for, *God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation*, 2 Peter ii. 9. God would never have let the serpent bite their heel, if he had not designed to break his head, and to bruise him under their feet. All that the devil and his instruments can do will work for their good. They may plot, contrive, reproach, persecute, imprison, banish, yea, and take away our lives, and yet all shall work for good; because the *Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the devil*; both his in-works of deceit, and his out-works of violence.

3. All their *wants* and *weaknesses* work for their good, 2 Cor. xii. 9. From their *wants*, he takes occasion to magnify his sufficiency; and from their *weakness* to magnify his power: *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness*. Most gladly therefore, says the apostle, *will I glory in my infirmities; that the power of Christ may rest upon me*.

4. All their *inward trials* work for their good even those that issue from the Lord's hiding and withdrawing himself; whether, in point of grace withholding the influences of his Spirit; or in point of comfort, denying the light of his countenance, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He frowns a little that his after-smiles may do them the
more

more good when they get them. He orders their momentary, short-lasting desertion, for heightening the price of his everlasting comforts: his design of leaving Zion to say, *The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me*, is that he may take occasion to hug and carress them the more kindly in his bosom, as a mother doth her child; *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee*, Isa. xlix. 15. Again,

5. All the *outward trials* and *afflictions* work for their good; whether those that are *punitive* for correcting their faults; or those that are *probative*, for trying their graces; in the issue they will still have occasion to say with David, Ps. cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*. Why, physic is sometimes as good as food; yea, and more necessary many times, however uneasy it may be: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities*. It is as good for a child of God to be punished, as it is for a young tree to be pruned, John xv. 2.; yea, the pressure of affliction may press out the fragrant sinell of their graces.

6. All their *sufferings*, for the cause of Christ, work for good, Phil. i. 12, 19. This turns to the *furtherance of the gospel*, and to *their salvation*. They need not grudge any reproach or persecution they meet with for the truths of the gospel, and for their love to Christ; nor any loss they sustain of name, credit, or profit, in this cause, for it is to be repaid; even here, a hundred fold, and hereafter a thousand thousand fold. This is the particular the apostle seems especially to point at in the context, ver. 17, 18. *If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together*. And *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us*. However, this particular is so included, as that nothing else is excluded; for, *All things shall work together for their good*. All things in the world, good or bad, shall work for their good; all things past, present, or to come; the past decrees of God, the present dispensations of God, and the future

accomplishment of the purposes of God. All things in *heaven, earth, and hell*; all the *mercies* of heaven, all the *malignities* of earth, and all the *malice* of hell, shall work for their good. Let Joseph's brethren moved with envy, cast him into a pit, or sell him into Egypt; let Potiphar thrust him into a filthy prison; yet the wisdom of God comes into the game, and turns all about to a glorious and beautiful issue, to the exaltation of Joseph, and the preservation of thousands, alive in famine. What though Mordecai suffer, and Haman reign and insult for a while? Infinite Wisdom holds the balance of providence in her hand, and will soon turn the scale.—Thus I have hinted at a few of these ALL THINGS that *shall work together for good*. But now the question is,

II. What is that GOOD that *all things* shall work for? that they *who love God* may know what they are to look for. Here, as on the preceding head, we shall take both a negative and positive view of the matter.

1st, Let us view it *negatively*. They are not to expect that all things that befall them shall work for their *temporal* good and prosperity in the world. Sometimes, indeed, this good takes place, as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. i. 20. *Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good*. And as it was with the Israelites, Exod. i. 12. *The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*. Of this good the text may be understood: but it is not always to be expected; because, external prosperity is not always good for the people of God.—Neither are they to expect that all things should work to this good of *absolute exemption* from the *inbeing of sin*, while they are here. God sees it good and fit that they live by faith, in the daily improvement of Christ, for purging away their sin.—Nor are they to expect that all things shall work for their *absolute freedom* from *losses and crosses* in the world; because it is not good for us to be without them; and they are part of these things that work for their good.—Nor are they to expect that every thing should

should work for the good that THEY have in *view*: but for the good that GOD hath in *view*, whose thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts. But then,

2dly, Let us consider the point *positively*. They may expect that all things shall work together for their *spiritual* good, and *eternal* welfare. We would incline to branch this out in a few particulars.

1. All things shall work together for furthering their *knowledge* of, and *acquaintance with God in Christ*; and surely this is a notable good: *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, John xvii. 3. Now, all things shall contribute to make the saints know more and more of the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, even the *hidden wisdom* which God ordained before the world unto our glory: *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God*, Ephes. iii. 9, 10. That, with the apostle, Rom. xi. 33. they may stand at the side of this ocean and cry out, *O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!* And that, by all things, they may come to know more of the power, holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and glory of God in Christ. We use to say, *Experience teaches fools*. Surely there is not an experienced saint, but will find, that by all the good things and bad things he hath been trysted with, by all the various vicissitudes and changes of providence, he hath come to see more of God than he saw before.

2. All things shall work together for their *participation of the image of God*, in a greater degree; and surely this is good: and it is brought about by the *promises* of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. By those we are said to be *partakers of the divine nature*; and also, by the

propi-

providences of God, particularly trying ones; *He chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness,* Heb. xii. 10.

3. All things shall work together for their further *purification*; they shall purge out some particular lust and corruption; *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin,* Isa. xxvii. 9. This is a desirable good, whatever be the dispensation that contributes to that end.

4. All things shall work together for furthering their *communion and fellowship with him*: whatever they have heard, or seen, or felt of the word of God, or of the rod of God, contributes to this good end; *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus,* 1 John i. 3. We can go to God boldly by the blood of Jesus; and communicate the very secret of our souls to him, and find him communicating the secrets of his covenant to us.

5. All things work together for their further *humiliation*; and this is good indeed: *He led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; wherein there was no water: there is a sum of the evil things that befel them; but it follows, He brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; he fed you in the wilderness with manna, that your fathers knew not; there is a sum of the good things that befel them: well, but what was the end and design of all these things? Why, it follows, That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good in thy latter end,* Deut. viii. 15, 16. It is good to be humbled and have low thoughts of ourselves: we are apt to say in prosperity, *Our mountain stands strong,—and we shall never be moved*: we think, with Peter, that we are able to suffer with Christ, and to do great things for him; or with Zebedee's children, that we are able to reign with Christ: but we need to be humbled, and proved, that we may know what we are.

6. All things work together for their further *consolation*; and this is a desirable good: God doth, with all that befalls them, convey some joys and comforts of his Spirit, whether he bring them to the mountain or

to the wilderness; this good end shall be reached in the Lord's time. When he brings them to his *holy mountain*, then he makes them *joyful in his house of prayer*, Isa. lvi. 7. When he brings them to the *wilderness*, then he *speaks comfortably to them*, Hof. ii. 4. Yea, he even gives them the *valley of Achor for a door of hope*, and makes them sing there: and as their *sufferings abound* makes their *consolation abound*, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5.

7. All things work together for this good, even for furthering their *life of faith*, that they may know more what it is to *live by faith on the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. If sensible enjoyment were always allowed to believers here, in their present circumstances, they would be ready to surfeit on their provision; therefore, with their sweet meals, the Lord orders some sour sauce for helping their digestion, in order that they may live, not by *sense*, but by *faith*: in prosperity we talk of living by faith, and *darken counsel* many times *with words without knowledge*; but in adversity, we come to have the practical knowledge of what it is to live by faith. And, indeed, that is a happy and blessed dispensation that tends to the rooting of a soul further in a crucified Christ, and to a living upon a promise, when there is no visible prop in all the world to lean to: this is cleanly believing.

8. All things work together for furthering their *submission* to the will of God, and holy contentment in every case, that they may learn with Paul, Phil. iv. 11, 12, *In every state to be content; and know how to be abased, and how to abound; and to say, I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.* I can welcome reproach, as well as honour and esteem; a prison as well as a palace; a hard stone for my bolster-piece, as well as a soft pillow: though I praise, as well as others, and bless the Lord for comfortable accommodations, and favourable dispensations, when God allows them; yet, if he deny them, I am content: *Shall we receive good things at the hand of the Lord? and not receive evil?* O Sirs, how good is it to get this disposition wrought?

9. All things work together for furthering their *spirituality*, for weaning their hearts from the world, and elevating their affections heavenwards, so as they may have less of the spirit of the world, and more of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in their hearts: 1 Pet. iv. 14. *Think not strange concerning the fiery trial, which shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* Even the glorious Spirit of God, comforting and supporting you with the hope of the glory to be revealed. O! what a good thing is this to have the good Spirit of God, the glorious Spirit of God? Though a spirit of reproach be without you; yet the Spirit of glory and triumph within, will make amends. And, O what a good work is it when all things work for putting out a base, carnal, worldly spirit, and for bringing in more of a glorious and heavenly Spirit?

10. All things work together for furthering their *preparation for heaven*: nothing shall hinder, but rather further their course towards heaven. As all trying dispensations of providence work for their having more of the Spirit, of which our apostle speaks in the preceding context: so, they work for hastening their progress towards heaven, and can be no hinderance but a furtherance to it; as appears from the apostle's triumphant language in the following context, towards the close of the chapter, ver. 35,—39. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us: for, I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Man's frowns may occasion God's smiles; losses of worldly goods may make up your heavenly treasures; *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh*
for

for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,
2 Cor. iv. 17.

In a word, as there would be no end of speaking of *all things* that work together for good to them; so there is no end of speaking of all the *good* which all things work in their behalf. The God that hath all things at his command, sets all things a-working for them; and makes even the *worst* things contribute to the best advantage. Herod and Pilate, Jews and Gentiles, combined to crucify Christ, *The Lord of glory*, Acts ii. 23. Here is the worst thing that ever was done: but, behold the act of free grace and deep wisdom in God! that made this work to be the greatest good that ever was. We have a sample of all other things working for good to God's people, even the rage and fury of men and devils, contrary to their designs, working for their happiness; and death itself, contrary to its nature, working for their eternal life.

III. The *third* thing proposed, in the general method, was, To shew what we are to understand by their *working* and *working together for good*. This points out the harmonious influence that all things have upon the production of this good. How can all things, even the worst of things work for good? *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

1st, In general, all things are in God's *hand*, who is the *powerful agent*, who works by these means; they cannot work of themselves without God. They seem rather to work the *ruin* of God's people than their happiness and good; but God's infinite wisdom and omnipotent arm can bring light out of darkness, life out of death, and good out of evil. Even as the word and ordinances themselves do not save by any *intrinsic virtue*, or power of their own; but yet there is a *passive fitness* in them to serve the hand of Omnipotence for accomplishing saving ends; a fitness of instrumentality, as there is in an ax, or hammer for a workman's hand. As a sword cannot cut, or a pen cannot write, but in a hand ready for it; so neither could all things work for good to God's children, but as these are in the

hand of God. It is God that by these doth advance the spiritual and eternal good of his people. Therefore,

2dly, Their *working together* may have a fourfold reference. 1. To the *God* of providence. 2. To the particular *acts* of providence. 3. To the whole *series* of providence. 4. To the *manner* of their co-operation, wherein they are subservient for this good.

1. Their working together may have a respect to **God**, and his co-operation with providence, seeing, as I was just now saying, not one of these things of itself can do any good; but they work together with God, and in his hand. Tho' such a thing of itself be really a great evil, a crushing dispensation; yet, let God alone, and wait upon him; he can bring the greatest good out of that thing to thee. Though there be no natural or physical tendency in such an act of providence towards thy good, but rather towards thy hurt; yet there shall be such hyperphysical or supernatural virtue and efficacy attending them, as to make them *work for good*: for, they work with God, whose *counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure*.

2. Their working together may have a respect to the particular *acts* of providence themselves; not separately, but conjunctly viewed.—If we take one providence with another, we may find them working for good: but if we take them separately, we cannot see their co-operation. Perhaps one act of providence *smiles* upon you, another act of providence *frowns* upon you, and speaks ruin to you: well, if you put them together, you may see them *working together for good*, but if you separate them, and take them afunder, then you cannot see either the beauty or good, nor yet advantage of the frowning providence. One providence seems white and pleasant; another seems ruddy and bloody, coloured and terrible; but let the red and white together, and then the beautiful complexion of providence appears: they *work together for good*.

3. Their working together may have a respect to the whole *series* and *texture* of providence, from the beginning to the end. A hard beginning cannot still be

be discerned to be a good beginning, till we compare the beginning and end together. The dark side of the cloud of providence may contribute to illustrate and set forth the splendour of the bright side of it; and, when we view both the one side and the other, there will appear a harmony in all the acts of providence. The godly man may be *plagued all day long*, and *chastened every morning*, Psalm lxxiii. 14.; here is a dark side: but go to the other side and see the fair end of providence; *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace*, Psalm xxxvii. 37. whereas, the *end of the wicked shall be cut off*, though he flourish and prosper for a while.

4. Their working together may have a respect to the *manner* of their subserviency in working for good. All things work together; and so work not only *harmoniously*, but *efficaciously*. When God, and all things with him, work together for the good of a creature, then there is nothing to hinder its being made effectual. When all things work, what is there behind to let or impede the work?—Again, when all things work together, it says they work *marvellously* and *wonderfully*. Good things and bad things have, in themselves, a quite contrary nature and tendency; but as the wheels of a clock, or watch, move, some of them forward, some of them backward; yet all these contrary motions tend to the regular motion of the hand that points at the hour: so, the wheels of providence, some with a direct, and others with a retrograde motion; yet all contribute to work for good to God's children. This is owing to him who is *wonderful in counsel*, and *excellent in working*, to make these things that work against each other, yet to work together for this end,

IV. The *fourth* thing in the text is, To enquire into the *character* of those who are thus privileged, and to whom *all things work together for good*.

Why it is to them who *love God*, and are the *called according to his purpose*. In this character there are purposes that would fill many volumes; and therefore none will

will suppose that I can here treat them at any length. I shall, therefore, take a short view of this character given to God's privileged people, namely, that they are *lovers of him*, and that by considering these four things concerning this love that the text carries. 1. The *object* of it, namely, God. 2. The *act* of it, namely, *love* to this God. 3. The immediate *branch* on which it grows, namely, *effectual calling*. 4. The *head* and original *root* from whence it springs, namely, the *divine purpose*, being called according to his purpose.

1st, The *object* of their love to whom all things work together for good, is God, who is to be loved above all things, and loved allennary for himself; he will suffer no companion, or competitor, Matt. x. 37. Now, this love of God necessarily includes the love of *Christ*, or of God in Christ: for, as in Christ only he is well-pleased and reconciled with sinners; so, out of Christ we cannot love him as a friend, but fear him as a foe. God is in Christ, and all his fulness dwells in Christ, Col. i. 19.; and where God's fulness dwells, there doth the true believer love to dwell.—This love to God includes in it also a regular love to *ourselves*. It is manifest, when it is said in God's law, that we should *love our neighbour as ourselves*, that it is presupposed we ought to love ourselves: this is so much included in the love of God, that, as he that loves not himself, cannot love God; so, he that loves not God, cannot love himself. As a madman, in his fury, wounds his own body, and is pitied of all, but not of himself; so wicked men, or natural men, destroy themselves, and are pitied of God, angels, and good men; but have no pity on themselves; no true love to themselves. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*, Matt. xxiii. 37.—Again, this love to God includes love to our *neighbour*; for, love to God and man is the *fulfilling of the law of God*: and, *He that loves not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot truly love God, whom he hath not seen*, 1 John iv. 20. And this love to our neighbour imports a rejoicing at, and desiring his good; and a grieving at, and relieving his misery.

misery. The unworthiness of no person whatsoever must quench our love; but it should burn when the water of men's injuries would quench the same. See Matth. v. 44, 45. where we are called to *love our enemies*; to *bless them that curse us*; to *do good to them that hate us*; and to *pray for them that despitefully use us*; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for, *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* True love to God carries in it benevolence towards all, and especially complacency in the godly, Psalm xvi. 3. And even with respect to those that are *overtaken in a fault*, we are to express our love to them by *restoring them in the Spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted*, Gal. vi. 1.—In a word, this love to God, with reference to the object of it, includes a love to *every thing* that God loves, and that bears the stamp of his image and authority; such as this gospel, and ordinances thereof, wherein his love shines. But,

2dly, Consider the *act* that terminates on this object, *love*. What is it to love God? and, how do his people love him? As this act supposes the *knowledge* of God in Christ, without which we cannot love him, no more than we can worship an unknown God; and *faith* in him, and his love and mercy through Christ; for this *faith works by love*: so it implies the powerful work of the Spirit of God in subduing the natural enmity against God, and drawing out the affections towards him.—The Spirit of all grace having first come into the soul, and brought love with him among the rest, he blows upon this fire that he hath kindled, and the flame of it ascends towards God, in heavenly desires and spiritual delights.

As to the *manner* how the believer *loves God*, we cannot describe it better, than by considering the rule that shews how he should love him. Love to ourselves and our neighbour must be limited; but there is no measure set to our love to God. See the rule, Luke x. 27. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,*

heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.

1. With all the *heart*; that is, *cordially* and *affectionately*: with the heart, and with *all* the heart. If the world have our heart, God cannot have it: *Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him,* 1 John ii. 15. As one nail drives out another, so the love of Christ will force out the love of the world.

2. With all the *soul*; that is, *intensely* and most *intirely*; as all the *heart* takes in all the *affections* of it; so, I think, all the *soul* takes in all the *faculties* of it: and to love God with *heart* and *soul*, imports a loving him most *intensely* and most *intirely*, so as to allow no faculty of the soul to swerve from this object, but to fix and terminate wholly upon him. It seems to be like that, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my whole soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.*

3. With all the *strength*; that is, *universally* and *zealously*; employing whatever gifts, parts, powers and talents God hath bestowed upon us in his service, and returning them all to his glory; *yielding ourselves to the Lord, and our members instruments of righteousness unto God,* Rom. vi. 13.

4. With all the *mind*; that is, *wisely* and *judiciously*: people may love Christ with a hearty affection, and yet not with knowledge and understanding; for it was so with the apostles themselves, John xiv. 28. *If ye love me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father:* but they did not rejoice in this, nor know the import of it; and therefore, though they loved him with the heart and soul, yet not with all the mind and judgment, or with knowledge and understanding.—Now this is the *manner* wherein all God's children love him, or at least aim at loving him, whatever enmity and corruption remain.—Thus of the *act* of love.

galy. Consider the immediate *branch* on which this love grows, namely, *effectual calling*; they are CALLED. I speak of this as *wisble*; in regard that it is

the first evident effect of God's everlasting love breaks up above ground, which, before this, did run hidden under ground from all eternity: and because, though effectual calling be indeed internal and invisible to the world, yet it is a sensible turn of affairs within, making a visible change upon him without. Now, none love God but those that are *called effectually*, Rom. ix.

II. All men are haters of God naturally: and love to him grows not in the garden of nature, but of grace; and the first working of grace in the soul is in effectual calling. And if you ask, what that is, you cannot have a better description of it than that in our Shorter Catechism? "It is the work of God's free Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel." Where you see, that as the *outward* means of it is the *gospel*, and the *dispensation* thereof; and the *inward* mean and powerful efficient is the *free Spirit of God*, accompanying the preached word; so, the *parts* of it are four, relating to the several faculties of the soul.

1. Effectual *conviction* of *sin* and *misery*, whereby the conscience is touched and awakened, and made to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Acts ii. 37.

2. Effectual *illumination*; whereby the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, Acts xxvi. 18. It is an *opening of the eye* of the soul, and *turning it from darkness unto light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*. *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

3. Effectual *renovation*, whereby the will is renewed, according to that word, Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*. The new heart and the new Spirit promised, Ezekiel xxxvi. 26. is given.

4. The effectual *out-drawing* of the soul towards Christ, persuading and enabling the heart to embrace

Christ Jesus, as he is offered and exhibite in the gospel promise, John vi. 44, 45. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him: It is written in the prophet, They shall be all taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.*—And thus the Spirit comes, with internal power, to make the soul, by the external call working in it, both to *will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13.; and so he is called internally and efficaciously, and united to Christ.—This is the immediate *branch* that love grows on.

4thly, Consider the *origin* and *hidden root* from which it springs, and that is the *purpose* of God; called according to his PURPOSE. This is both the root of effectual calling, and the root of that love to God that issues from it: *We love him, because he first loved us.*—True love to God issues from his everlasting love to us. But this divine purpose relates here to effectual calling. I shall view it in relation thereto: and it seems to point out four things, with reference to this call.

1. It points out the *peculiar*ity of this call, not only that it is a special, *internal* call, limited by the special purpose of God, in contradistinction from the external, that many have, who yet come short of conversion; but it is a *call peculiar* to the elect, such as is mentioned, 2 Peter i. 10. *Give all diligence to make your CALLING and election sure.* It is such a *calling* as is joined with *election*; inasmuch, that they that are thus called, may be as sure of *election* from eternity, as they are sure of their *vocation* in time. O Sirs, let us admire the sovereignty of grace in dispensing this internal call to some, and not to others. Surely they that are thus inwardly and effectually called, can never enough love and praise that God that has granted this special mercy to them. And let those who are yet only *outwardly* called, as all to whom the gospel comes are, let them *hearken diligently* to that external call, and be restless till they get grace to answer it, by coming to Christ; for, this outward call is the means of the effectual one, and let them not meddle with the *purpose of God*, till once they are brought to answer the *gospel call*; for this

is the rule you are to follow : whereas the divine purpose is a hidden secret, not to be revealed till you have followed the outward rule. The gospel offer is to all ; *Whosoever will, let him come* : and, if you do not exclude yourselves, by your unbelief, from this open call and invitation, you shall never find yourselves excluded from any secret decree ; for, whenever your heart opens to Christ, then the decree opens in your favours. Therefore, be diligent in the use of gospel means that tend to the opening of the heart to Christ. Why, say you, but if God did not decree my salvation, my heart will never open to Christ ; and therefore, what need I use the means ? Why, indeed, the antecedent is true ; but the consequent absurd. You may as well say, if God decree that I should live no longer, then I will die ; and therefore, what need I take any more meat or drink, or use the means of life ? I imagine you will not argue so grossly, about the life of your body ; and why will you suffer the devil to cheat you into such a trifling about the life of your souls to all eternity ?

2. To be called according to his purpose, points out the *freeness* of the call, that it flows out from mere grace ; for, if it be a call, according to his *purpose*, it is not a call according to our *works* ; 2 Timothy i. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* It must be free ; for the *worst* of sinners, and the *chief* of sinners have been and are called effectually. Let the greatest of sinners be persuaded to look out after this sovereign grace of God, and plead that he would glorify his free grace in saving them.

3. It points out the *efficacy* and *energy* of the call ; for, God's purpose is a *standing* purpose : *His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.* Hence his call is irresistible, and yet without force and violence. It is irresistibly sweet, and sweetly irresistible : here there is no compulsion, but that of love, *cords of love.*

4. It points out the *perpetuity* of the call, because it is the fruit of an unalterable purpose; his purpose is irrevocable: *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance*, Rom. xi. 29 — Thus you see this love in the *object*, the *act*, the immediate *spring*, and the original *root* of it.—Here then is the *character* of those to whom *all things shall work together for good*; they are *lovers of God*, by virtue of his call and purpose.

V. The next thing proposed, in the general method, is, to shew *whence* it is that all things shall work together for good to such lovers of God; and so to point out the evidence the apostle had for saying, *We know* that it shall be so: and here also observe the suitability and connection between the character, of being *lovers of God*; and this privilege, of *all things working together for good*.

If you ask then, *Why all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose?*

There is a general answer in the bosom of the text, and that is drawn from the *divine purpose*; the determination of God — There is a stated law in heaven from eternity for it; they are *predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will*, Eph. i. 11. There is not any thing that falls out in this world, but was resolved upon and decreed from eternity, that things should be so and so. Men and devils may as well go up to the court rools of heaven, and there cross and cancel the eternal statutes and decrees of God, as hinder our good, *who love God*, and are the *called according to his purpose*. *The foundation of God standeth sure*. More particularly,

1. The first reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose, is drawn from the *nature* of God: why, he is the *Lord of hosts*, the *God of armies*, who hath all the hosts of men, and angels, and creatures, in his hand; and all the legions of devils at his back.— He can command the stars in their courses to fight for his

his people, and against their enemies.—He can create an army of frogs, and lice, and locusts; they want but a commission from him, and so they execute his purpose.

Again, he is a God of infinite *wisdom*, who knows what will work *best* for his peoples good. Let God be doing with thee, O believer; what ever thy condition be, he knows when to send affliction, and when prosperity: he knows what afflictions to send, and by what hands and means; and how long to continue them. He knows also how to *deliver the godly out of temptation*, and *trouble*. Prescribe not to infinite wisdom.

Again, he is a God of infinite *power*; he can do what he will: nothing is too hard for him to do. As he *knows all things*, so he can *do all things*; and *make all things* do what he pleases, and work what he has a mind. And he has made over himself to you, believer; and, with himself, his infinite power to make all things work for thy good.

Again, he is a God of infinite *love* and *compassion* to them that love him: *As a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them*: and his everlasting love makes him carry on his loving design by all means whatsoever.

Again, as this is the *nature* of God, so this is the *way* of God to act for his people, in a suitableness to his nature: his usual way is even by contrary means to bring about great things for his people, as you see in God's way with David, Daniel, Joseph, Mordecai, and others.

In a word, his *providential government* of the world is extended to all creatures, and more especially to his people. It extends to the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and the hairs of the head; and much more to them, Matth. vi. 28,—34. Whatever men and devils design, all shall come to nothing, and go no farther than God gives leave. Ezekiel's vision was a wheel within a wheel: though in a watch the wheels seem to go cross: yet the wise artificer knows what they mean. But,

2. Another reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, is drawn from the *Mediator*, Christ Jesus. Why, he is entrusted with them by the Father, from whom he had a special charge of them given him from all eternity: *I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6.—Now, Christ will be faithful to his trust; yea, he hath received all fulness of the Spirit, and that not for himself, but for them, that he may improve it for their souls, Col. i. 19.: yea, as Mediator, he hath the *whole world given him*; and *all power in heaven and earth*, Matth. xxviii. 18. And as he *upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 2.; so, *all things are put under his feet*, and he is given to be *head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. that he may rule and overrule kingdoms and nations as he will; and make use of all the creatures to promote the good design the Father sent him upon.

Again, by virtue of this great power and commission, he is pleased to give a special commission and charge to *millions of excellent spirits* in heaven to look to his people; *He has given his angels charge over them*: and, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. And so they are compassed about with this invisible guard: *The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him*: yea, the Lord Jehovah himself is their life-guard; *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round them. The place of their defence is the munition of rocks.*

Again, by virtue of the power of Christ, he has qualified several *men* with gifts and graces, and has given them a charge of his people, saying, as to Peter, *Feed my lambs*. When Christ ascended up on high, he *received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men*; what to do? It was for the *perfecting of the saints*. Christ, going out of the world, to be crowned with glory and honour at the Father's right-hand, he leaves coronation gifts behind him; and he is distributing some of these amongst you at this occasion,

Again,

Again, Christ has removed all things out of the way that might *obstruct* the good of his people: that *sin* might not do it, he has *condemned sin in the flesh*, by giving himself a *sacrifice for sin*: that the *devil* might not do it, he has *destroyed the works of the devil*, and *conquered principalities and powers*, so as the *gates of hell cannot prevail*: that *men* in the world might not do it, he has *overcome the world*: and that death may not do it, he has removed the *sting of death*. Why then, what remains to obstruct their *good* and hinder their eternal salvation.

Again, as he has removed all things that might obstruct their good, so he has *purchased* all things that can contribute to their good: *All spiritual blessings, in heavenly places*, Eph. i. 3. The men of the world may deprive them of their riches, honour, liberty, and good name, and outward peace; but they cannot hinder them from *peace of conscience*, and *joy in the Holy Ghost*; nor deprive them of their right and title to glory. Christ hath purchased all these things, Luke i. 74, 75. Men cannot lay a restraint upon our spirit, nor hinder us to go to God.

In a word, Christ, by his Spirit, is always *with them*: he has promised, that *he will never leave them; nor forsake them*: therefore, whatever way the wind blows, all weathers will contribute to his prosperous voyage heaven-ward. And, as Christ's own sufferings did work for his glory; so shall the sufferings of the saints in Christ. If physic be good for the head, it is good for the members of the body; but his love is mixed with the bitterest physic that he orders, and his love makes it work for their good: and nothing in the world can turn the tide of his love from them. And therefore, *All things shall work together for good to them.*

3. A third reason or argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them, is drawn from the *covenant of grace and promise*: there is a solemn vow and oath, on God's part, that he will do so and so for his people. All the believing children of Abraham have the same security with him: *God*
swears:

swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater, that in blessing he would bless them, Heb. vi. 14. And why does he confirm his promise by his oath; but to shew more abundantly the *immutability* of his counsel? *That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for him to lye, we might have strong consolation who, have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.* As all the promises are *Yea and Amen in Christ*; so, the grand comprehensive promise is, *I will be thy God: and happy is the people whose God is the Lord!* This everlasting God, is the everlasting good of his people: he is the God that was, and is, and is to come: and he is a good in the præterit, present, and future tense; therefore, all things past, present, and to come, must work for their good, to whom he is a God by covenant and promise.

4. The fourth reason or argument, whereby we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, is drawn from the *people themselves*, to whom the promise is made: why, they are his *relations* and his *lovers*.

(1.) They are his *relations*: they are the birth of his everlasting purpose; being, in time, *called according to his purpose*; and so brought under a special relation to him. He is their everlasting *Father*: before they were children, he was their Father. He is their *Husband*: and what will he not do for his spouse, the bride, the Lamb's wife? He is their *Head*; and what will he not do for his members? He is their *Physician*; and will he not take care of his patients? *I am the Lord that healeth thee*: yea, he will heal and help them in wonderful ways, by making *all things work together for their good*.

(2.) They are his *lovers*: and this leads me to another branch of this head that I proposed, namely,

To observe the *suitableness* and *connexion* between this CHARACTER of being *lovers of God*, and this PRIVILEGE, that *all things work together for their good*. This love to God has a subserviency for making all things work together for good to such lovers; for,

1. Love to God in Christ makes them *count all things loss and dung for the excellency of this glorious One*, whom they love. Why, says God, do you count all things *loss* for me? Then I will make all things *gain* to you. You shall lose nothing; all things shall work together for good to you.

2. Love to God makes them *suffer the loss of all things*, and deny themselves of all things for his sake: why then, says God, I will make all things contribute to *repair* your loss; so that, if you *lose* all things one way, you shall *gain* all things another: you shall be *co-heirs* with him who is the *heir of all things*; Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things.*

3. Love to God inclines them to *rely* upon him, and to *depend* upon him for all things they need, and to put all things in his hand: they put their wants and weaknesses in his hand, in order to be supplied and helped; they put their diseases in his hand, in order to be healed; they put their sin and guilt in his hand, in order that he may pardon them; they put their enemies in his hand, that he may rebuke them; they put their strong corruptions in his hand, that he may subdue them; they put their burdens in his hand, that he may bear them; they put their heart and soul in his hand, that he may keep them. What! dost thou put all things in my hand, and that by warrant from my own call! *Cast thy burden on the Lord: All things shall work together for good to thee.*

4. Love makes them desire to do all they do for the *glory of God*; he hath created them for himself, to shew forth his praise: and as he has given them a disposition to do all that they do to his glory; so he has a mind to make all that he doth and orders contribute for their good. As they desire, whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do all to the glory of God; so I will not be behind with them: as they would have all things contributing to his glory: so he will make all things contribute for their good.

5. Love to God keeps in the soul *good thoughts of God*, do what he will; knowing that he is most wise, holy,

gracious and loving; and therefore doth nothing but what is best, and knows best what is good for his people. The apostle says, *Love, or charity thinketh no evil*: and surely, true love to God can think no evil of him, and bode no evil at his hand: such a soul cannot be disappointed; all things must work together for good. Indeed, unbelief works by enmity, and expects no good at God's hand; but *faith works by love*, and expects no evil at his hand, and shall find none; because, whatever heavy trials, such a loving soul meets with, love makes it take all patiently and pleasantly out of the hand of God; for, as *love thinks no evil*, so it *suffers long, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, but beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7. Therefore, *all things work together for good to the lovers of God*.

6. Love to God takes the *heart off from the world*, and all things in it, and especially such things as would hurt it, namely, all that is in the world, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*; the more perfect love is, the more it casts out fear, and casts off harm, as Paul did the viper off his hand, into the fire. All things must work for good to the loving soul that overcomes all things that would work for evil.

7. Love *draws the heart to God*, the chief good. Trials and afflictions set the soul in motion; and love draws it near to God? and what is the consequence of this; *It is good for me to draw near unto God*, Psalm lxxiii. 28. Therefore, all things must work for good to the lovers of God.

8. As love draws the soul to God, so it makes the soul to *abide with God*, when brought unto him: for, *He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*, 1 John iv. 14. And he that thus dwells on high, no evil can reach him. *He dwells in the secret places of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty*, Psal. xci. 1, 10. Nothing can work for hurt to him, but all must work for good. And whatever seems to hurt

hurt him; yet this love is such a healing thing, and such a strengthening thing, *love being stronger than death*, and a powerful restorative, that by its active kind of energy it quickly makes all well again. Hence the more that the believer is in the exercise of love to God, kindled by a view of God's everlasting love to him, the more will he have of the sensible and comfortable relish of this privilege, and see all things working together for good to him: whereas the less love to God, by the faith of God's love to him; the less will he see and feel this truth to his advantage; but rather fear the contrary, with Jacob, saying, *All these things are against me.*

Thus you see the influence and subserviency of this love unto this privilege; or the connexion between the character of being lovers of God, and the privilege of all things working together for good; and so upon what solid reason and good evidence the apostle did, and all believers may, assert and say, *We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and that are the called according to his purpose.*

VI. The sixth thing proposed was, To make application of the subject.

Here is a foundation laid for a very large application; but I must confine myself within as narrow bounds as possible.

The first use I make of this doctrine is, of information. Is it so, *That all things work together for good to them that love God?*

1. Hence see and admire the *infinite wisdom of God*, and the depth of divine providence, even when he suffers all things seemingly to work for hurt to his church and people, that even then he is making all things work together for good to them. O believer! do not believe sense; it is a fool and a knave, when it speaks contrary to God: whatever appearance things have, and be as they will, all things shall work for good to the lovers of God. It shall be so toward every lover of God in particular, and much more will it be so towards the whole community of lovers, and of Christ's friends.

Perhaps there was never greater evils of one sort and another taking place in the world, and even in the midst of the visible church, than now-a-days: yet, I dare assert, that out of all the evils of our day, God shall bring forth much good to his friends and lovers. But if you cannot see to the bottom of his ways, which are unsearchable, believe upon trust, saying, as it is, Isa. viii. 17. *I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.*—See Micah vii. 6,—9. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall know thy name; hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it.*—What! will a flood of errors, heresies, and scandals, ruining the church, work for good? Yea, *There must be heresies; that they that are approved may be made manifest,* 1 Cor. xi. 19. Storms shall manifest who are built upon the rock.—Will *blasphemies* vented against the glorious Godhead of Christ, work for any good? Yea, his glory shall shine the more brightly, through the dark cloud; and his friends shall be the more stirred up to put the crown upon his head, when enemies would trample on it. O the wisdom of God! that can make divisions, discords, and confusions, in a church to work for the good of a hidden remnant; even as he made the treason of Judas, the rage of the Jews and Gentiles, and the malice of the devil, to work for the redemption of the world, and salvation of sinners.

2. See the cause why God many times denies the *outward blessing of peace*, to these on whom he has conferred the *inward blessing of grace*; and why, he orders *adversity*, instead of *prosperity*: why, he designs their good. And it is upon necessity, in some cases, that they must be given up to the hand of their enemies

mies, because, when he gives them rest, they *do evil again before him*, Neh. ix. 28.—He designs to convince the wicked, that God's children do not serve him for *outwards things*, as the devil reproached Job, when he said, *Doth Job serve God for nought?*—He designs his servants should not bear a *mercenary mind*, in making gain of his service, and turning Christian patience into carnal covetousness, making gain of godliness.—He designs his people should see need of *more faith*, and more wisdom; for, in fair weather, little skill in the mariner is required; but when storms arise, and the sea swells and grows troublesome, then he is put to it.—He designs to convince them that this is their *inn*, and not their *home*; the *wilderness*, and not *Canaan*, a place of refining; whereof yet he says, *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*, Isa. xlvi. 10. They are *chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world*, 1 Cor. xi. 31.—Outward and bodily prosperity is not always attended with inward soul-prosperity; no, no: many have fat bodies and lean souls.

3. See hence the *misery of the wicked*, who are enemies and haters of God, and live and die in that enmity. Ah! dreadful case! all things work together for evil unto such. To the godly, evil things work for good; but to the wicked, good things work for evil: *Their prosperity destroys them; their table is a snare to them*. The ministry of the word, which is a favour of life to some, is a favour of death to them. O Sirs, what is this, that the same word, the same breath, the same wind that blows some to heaven doth blow them to hell! The sacramental supper, which is an ordinance that works for the believer's consolation, works for the unbeliever's damnation: *He eats and drinks damnation to himself!* Yea, Christ himself, the greatest good that ever was sent to the world, works for their hurt; for, he is to them a *stumbling-block, and rock of offence*, Rom. ix. 33. 1 Peter ii. 7. Oh! may not this make a wicked soul to tremble! O mocker of God and godliness! is it nothing to you to understand that God is angry at you, as he is *angry with the wicked every day*; and e-

very day you are *treasuring up wrath to yourself against the day of wrath!* O man, woman, if you put not in to be among *those that love God*, and are the *called according to his purpose*; and if the gospel-call never work in you an effectual purpose of turning from sin to God, through Christ by faith; if it never work in you an effectual purpose to come out of yourself, and in to Christ; to die unto sin, and live unto God; then, O tremble at it! it is a sign that God hath a purpose to destroy you. Alas! *will you not tremble at the presence of God?* Jer. v. 22. The half of this dreadful news hath made some of God's children to be *distracted with the terrors of God*, Psalm lxxxviii. 15. If your stout conscience doth not tremble now, yet the day of wrath and trembling is a-coming.

4. Hence, on the other hand, see the *happiness of God's friends and lovers*; and what *comfort* this carries to them, that *all things*, the worst as well as the best, *will work together for their good*, whatever be their suffering lot, or afflicted condition; even when you seem to be lost, yet you are in your Father's eye: when in the dark night of affliction, temptation, desertion, you can see nothing, yet, if you look up to heaven, you will see thousands of stars looking on you; so is God's eye ever on you. The child may lose the Father, but the Father will not lose the child: you are in the hand of Christ, and *none can pluck you out of God's hand*: and you are in that very hand that works for you, and makes *all things work for your good*. What though the policy of hell be against you, when the wisdom of heaven is working for you; *The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought; he makes the devices of the people of none effect: but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*, Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11. *Blessed then is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people, whom he hath chosen for his inheritance*. What are multitudes of oppositions from men and devils? Millions of hosts of men are millions of hosts of *vanities and nothings* to this infinite wisdom; *All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted unto him less than nothing and vanity*, Isa. iv. 17. I, even I am
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he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die ? and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass ? chap. li. 12. You have a wonder-working friend who cannot die, and that will never fail you : riches and worldly honours deal not plainly with us ; we know not when we have them, and when we want them ; but, amidst all changes, God is your unchangeable friend, in whom you are to rejoice. A certain prince, when he heard of the death of many friends in war ; yet comforted himself with this, *Vivit imperator, sat habeo* : “ It is enough to me “ that the emperor lives.” O believer ! should it not be enough to you that the Lord lives ? *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted,* Psalm xviii. 44, 46. *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands : they shall perish, but thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment ; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee,* Psal. cii. 25,—28. What though your trials be very long, God’s delays are the seed of greater mercies. The goldsmith holds his mettal in the fire till it be melted and refined : *But the needy shall not always be forgotten ; nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever,* Psal. ix. 18. God’s time is better than ours ; and he knows when you are ripe for deliverance : he will let the fire burn, till the dross come away from the mettal : *The vision is for an appointed time.* O believer, bless God for this pillar of hope and consolation, that *all things shall work together for your good.* And whatever state you are brought into, in providence, be content, be chearful ; all things are working together to bring you to that state, wherein you shall be no more tossed and troubled ; wherein you will be above these regions that make changes of weather, and have no more any thick foggy days. Many times all your felicity here, is to know that your misery shall end ; and sin, the root of all misery, be plucked up.—If he

make all things work together for good to his people, then we may well say, *Truly, God is good to Israel*, whatever befalls them, *YET he is good*; as the word may be read.

OBJECT. "If it was only *trouble* and *affliction* that "I was trysted with, perhaps I might take the comfort of this doctrine, that *all things shall work together for good*: but, alas! *sin* lies at the door; *corruption* prevails over me; and my *spiritual enemies* tread me under foot: and this makes me think *all will work for my RUIN.*"

ANSW. This may be the case, and yet the *dominion* is on the children of God's side; because *victory* is not measured by ONE blow, but by the *issue* of the battle: *A bruised reed shall he not break, a smoking flax will he not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory*, Matt. xii. 20. You may, with Paul, be *led captive by the law of sin*, Rom. vii. 23.; and yet the gospel at length be victorious in the heart. Consider, that the *Spirit* keeps the field, even in that same soul wherein the *flesh* hath a great power; *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary*, Gal. iii. 17. In a carnal man, the Spirit is not on the field at all: and therefore he is a *servant* to sin not a *captive*: but when God's children sin, they are *captives* to it, and not *servants*; and when they sin, it is but with half of the will, and so the flesh hath but half a vote; and there is a protestation made on the contrary, by that supernatural instinct of the Spirit, that is given them.—Again, the *falls* and *foils* of God's children are the seed of *humility*; and *watchfulness*, the seed of *hunger* and *thirst* after a fuller measure of grace, and of a more strict and circumspect walk: and thus sin, by the grace of God, helps to mortify itself. We read of David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 16, 17. that he *longed for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem*, that was in the midst of the Philistines host; and when three valiant men brought it to him at the peril of their lives, he would not drink it, saying, *Is not this the blood of these men, that went in jeopardy of their lives?* Hence we may learn, he that

before shed innocent blood, is now troubled in conscience for hazarding the blood of these men, in this rash enterprize; and he that before defiled another man's wife, does now repent for desiring to drink of the water of another man's well. But, passing other inferences, I go on to an use of *examination*.

Try therefore, O man, woman, whether you be the *subjects* to whom this privilege belongs, of having *all things working for your good*. Try it, for it is no trivial affair, no matter of moon-shine; it is no trifle, that you have no concern with, and need not trouble your head about; no: it is a matter of the highest moment, and most important concern; an affair wherein your everlasting welfare is concerned, whether *all things shall work together for your good*: because, if they do not so, they will all work for your hurt and perdition; for, the *affirmative* of the text strongly imports and includes a *negative*. Well, but say you, "I am persuaded this is one of the most glorious privileges that can be, how shall I know it that all things shall work together for good to me?" You may try it two ways. 1. By the *marks* the text offers you. 2. By the *begun experience* of the thing itself.

1st, Try it by the *marks* the text gives of those to whom all things shall work together for good; namely, that they are such as *love God*, and are the *called according to his purpose*. These are the persons to whom all things shall work for good. And here four things are offered to you for trial. If you would reach to the bottom of this question, whether you be a *true lover*, you are to try it, 1. By the *object* of your love, if it be God himself that you love, the true God. 2. By the *qualities* of the *act*, if it be *true love* to this God. 3. By the immediate *spring* of this love, if it be such as hath issued from *effectual calling*. 4. By the *original root* of it, if it be a love that results from the *everlasting love of God* to you, and his *purpose of grace* concerning you. I would therefore endeavour to help you a little into this search, wherein you and I both need to be sure

what we are saying and doing; for, there is much false pretended love to God in the world.

[1.] Then examine your love by the *object* of it, if it be God, and him indeed that you love. See that it be not a God of your own imagination, and not the true God.

But here, perhaps, it may be enquired, *How shall I know if it is God himself that is the object of my LOVE?* For answering this I would ask you two questions.

1. What *conviction* have you ever got of your *natural atheism*, and of your being *without God*, or ATHEISTS, as all by nature are? Ephes. ii. 12. If you never thought yourself an atheist, nor saw that you were without God, it seems that you are without God to this day, and without love to him: for, since all, by nature, are without God, and have lost God, how can they love him, till they have found him out whom they have lost? And surely, they never found him, who never saw that they lost him. The true God is the God whom we have lost; whose knowledge we have lost, whose image we have lost, whose favour we have lost; and therefore, if the God whom you pretend to love, be a God you think you never lost, and so never saw yourself to be *without* him, it is not the true God that you love; you are but an atheist still, having never seen yourself to be so, and to be without God.

2. What *knowledge* and *apprehension* have you got of God; for, love to God supposes knowledge of him: *Ignoti nulla cupido*. There may be, indeed, a great deal of knowledge, without love; but there can be no love, without knowledge. Now, has God shewed you his being and glorious excellencies, as infinitely above all creatures; and all the creatures to be insignificant nothings, compared with his all-sufficiency? And has he manifested himself to you, in Christ, in whom alone he is always well-pleas'd; in whom, alone he is reconciled; in whom alone his fulness dwells; and in whom alone his excellencies shine most brightly and savingly.

No sinner can love God who hath not seen him in Christ: *He that hath seen me*, says Christ, *hath seen the Father*.

Father. He that hath not seen Christ, hath not seen God; and so hath not seen the true object of love.— For, a sinner to pretend that he loves God, and yet hath not got a view of him in Christ, is the grossest ignorance imaginable; because, out of Christ, he is a *consuming fire* to sinners; a sin-revenging God. If you know the God whom you think you love, you would love him no otherwise, out of Christ, than as you do the fire that would consume you to ashes. But God in Christ is a God of love; for, in him his law is magnified, his justice satisfied, his wrath appeased; and therefore, if you truly *love* God, or love the true God, your mind has been enlightened to apprehend him in his glory in Christ. Has then *the God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ?* 2 Cor. iv. 6. Have you discerned him in the light of the gospel, wherein Christ is held forth? Have you discerned him in the light of the Spirit, accompanying the word powerfully? For, it is a light of God's commanding and creating. Have you discerned him in a light that shined into your heart, and not into your head only? Have you discerned him in a light that gave you the knowledge of his glory; the glory of his wisdom and power, the glory of his holiness, and justice, and truth, as well as, at the same time, the glory of his mercy, love, and pity; the glory of all his excellencies? And have you discerned this glory in the face of Christ, or in the person of Christ, as *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person?* Heb. i. 3. Have you discerned this glory of God shining in him as a *JESUS*, and as a *CHRIST*; that is, as he is a *Saviour*, and *anointed of God* to be so; sent and sealed of God to save by his blood and righteousness, meritoriously; and by his Spirit and grace, efficaciously? In this wonderful work of redemption and salvation thro' Christ, have you seen such marvellous devices, as become the infinite wisdom of God, and answer all the ends of the glory of God's perfections, as well as of the salvation of the sinner?— In this case, your love is a true love, terminating on

the right object; if, at the same time, your view of God this way, has been attended with so much application of faith, and persuasion of the love of God to you in particular, as at least to create in you kindly thoughts of God. Though you see him infinitely just and holy, and yourself a sinful, guilty creature; yet apprehending the atonement and propitiation in the blood of Jesus, all harsh thoughts of God, as an enemy, have been removed, and kindly thoughts of him, as a friend, declaring his good-will through Christ, in the word of grace. The persuasion of faith is here included, whether you have seen it or not.

[2.] Examine your love to God by the *nature* and *qualities* of the ACT, if it be true love to this God. *How shall I know this?* Why, enquire how your love acts upon this glorious *object*. It is the nature of love, to make one desire *fellowship* with the object beloved; so, if you have true love to God, you will have a desire of more *intimate union* and *communion* with him. What then is thy great desire and request? Is it that, Psalm xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his temple?*—It is the nature of love to make one *impatient* at the absence of the beloved object; so, if you have true love to God in Christ, his absence will be *grievous* to thee; and all other comforts will signify nothing to thee without him. *O that I knew where I might find him! O how long, how long!*—It is the nature of love to *delight* in the presence of the object beloved; even so, if you truly love God, his presence will be thy *delight*: welcome, O beloved! well's me! that now I have got thee in my arms; *I will not let thee go. I held him, says the spouse, and would not let him go, till I had brought him into my mother's house, to the chambers of her that conceived me. O! stir him not up. I charge you, by the roes and binds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love till he please.*—It is the nature of love to bear *affection* to every thing that is like unto the beloved object; even so, if you love God, you will love all that bear his image; you will be

a companion of them that fear his name; and delight in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. How can they love God, that care not for those that bear his image?—It is of the nature of love to *hate* whatsoever is disagreeable to the beloved object; so, where there is true love to God, there will be true *hatred of sin*: the love of God, and the love of sin are contradictory things. A believer may be *overcome* by sin; but he has no *love* to the overcomer: and this appears, because his sin costs him many a prayer, and tear, and cry, and sigh, and watching, and application to the throne of grace, and to the blood of Christ for cleansing and healing. The love of God destroys the love of sin, and the love of the world.—It is the nature of love to *think much* of the beloved object; so, where love to God takes place, it carries the *thoughts* towards him, and the *meditation of him is sweet*. Love may be known by our thoughts and meditations: many think they love God, and yet *God is not in all their thoughts*. They think of nothing but the world, and the things thereof: they cannot dwell upon this glorious object, nor are their wandering thoughts any grief to them.—It is the nature of love to *speak much* of the beloved object: we may know by the speech of some that they have no love to God, never a word of God from morning to evening in their mouths, unless it be to profane his name. True love will make you speak *of* him in conversation, and speak *to* him in prayer, and speak *for* him in defence of his truth and cause.—In a word, it is the nature of love to make a man *serve* where he loves. O! what *service* has God from you: Does *the love of Christ constrain you to—judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died, that henceforth they that live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died and rose again?*

[3.] Examine your love by the immediate *spring* of it; or the *means* whereby it is wrought in the soul, namely, *effectual calling*. None are lovers of God, till they be *effectually called*. Here it may be enquired, *How shall I know, if my love to God be such as is the fruit*

of EFFECTUAL CALLING? To this it may be replied, If your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then you will be convinced that it never *grew* in your heart naturally; and that it is not the fruit of your natural power, or free will; and that, by nature, you are *haters of God*, Rom. i. 30. viii 7. If you never saw your *enmity against God*, and never suspected your love to him, nor ever had any love to him, but what you had naturally all your days, I must tell you, your love to him is nothing but enmity against him: for, true love grows in the garden of grace, and not of nature.—Again, if your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then your *affections* have been drawn to Christ sweetly and irresistably, as with a cord of love; for, this drawing power is put forth in effectual calling: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee*, Jerem. xxxi. 3. *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John xiv. 16.—Again, if your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then the *gospel* of free grace will be very precious to you; for, that is the outward means of effectual calling; and that which is the means of the new spiritual birth, 1 Pet. i. 23. is still the mean also of spiritual growth: and therefore, they that are effectually called and regenerate, have still an earnest desire after, and delight in it; *As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. If your love to God be not attended with a love to the doctrine of the gospel, it is but a spurious brood, and not of the right kind—Further, if your love to God be the fruit of effectual calling, then the *Spirit* of God will be very precious to you: because, it is by the power and efficacy of the Spirit that the call is made effectual; for, then the *gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost*, 1 Theff. i. 5. You will desire more and more of that free Spirit, for carrying on *the work of faith with power*, and for exciting any grace that ever wrought; your prayer will be, *Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, and the spices shall send forth the smell thereof*. You will always find the Spirit, when he comes

by his gracious motions, running only in the channel of gospel doctrine, that tends to lead men out to Christ and his righteousness; and not in the channel of legal doctrine, that has a tendency to lead men in to themselves, and their own works; for, thus the Spirit came to you at first in effectual calling: *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. Surely your love is not the fruit of effectual calling, if the Spirit that calls effectually be not precious to you: if you can hear sermons from day to day, and never care whether the Spirit powerfully accompany them or not, your love is to be suspected: but, if he hath begun the good work in you, then you will find a need of the same power to carry on the work that began it; and your cry will be, “O for more of the Spirit! Oh! dead preaching and hearing, without the Spirit! O to see the power and glory of God, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!”

[4.] Examine your love by the original root of it, the *everlasting love of God* and his *purpose of grace*; for, it is a love that issues from a being called *according to his purpose*. Here an exercised person may say, *How shall I know, if my love to God be the fruit of God's everlasting love and purpose, in Christ, from all eternity concerning me? Is it possible to know that my love to him in time, is such, as will evidence his love to me from eternity? O how shall I understand that?* Why, this may not only be known by the marks already delivered, but further in these four particulars.

1. If your love to God be such as flows from, and evidences his *everlasting love* to you, and *purpose of grace* concerning you, then this *loving purpose* towards you, has produced in you a *loving purpose* towards him.—What for a purpose is it? It is a purpose of *marriage* with the Son of God. His purpose of marriage with you from eternity hath produced in you a purpose of marriage with him in time. Can you tell me, if ever such a purpose was wrought in your heart? It is true, there are purposes that come to no effect, but this is an effectual purpose that hath taken effect; infomuch,
that

that you could find no rest till the match was made up, as Naomi said of Boaz when purposing to match with Ruth, chap. iii. 18. *The man will not rest till he hath finished the thing*: even so, Christ Jesus, when betrothing a sinner to himself, as he will not rest till he hath finished this thing, so he works in the soul that purpose also, that he cannot rest till that thing be finished. Now, can you say, there was a time when the Lord wrought such a purpose of marriage with him in your heart, that you could not rest till it was some way finished, by a joining hands with the Son of God? In-
 somuch, that when he offered his heart and hand to you, you were made to offer your heart and hand to him, saying, “ Lord, take thou me to thyself; take
 “ thou me, for such is the deceitfulness of my heart,
 “ that I know not if I dare say, *Even so, I take thee*;
 “ that is, indeed, what I would be at, but seeing it is
 “ thou, even thou only that canst make it sure work,
 “ and a sure bargain; therefore, I put the making of
 “ the marriage in thy own hand. O take me to be
 “ thine for ever: I offer myself, with a thousand good
 “ wills; O take me, take me; take me and my bles-
 “ sing to eternity. I put my heart into thy hand, and
 “ leave it with thee.” Tell me, man, woman, were you brought to such a purpose as this? O poor soul, it is a fruit of his purpose from eternity of marrying you; it is a fruit of your being given to Christ in the council of peace: for, Christ says, John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me.*—Again, if his loving purpose towards you, has produced a loving purpose in you towards him, then it is not only a purpose of marriage with him, but also a purpose of *cleaving* unto him; a purpose never to leave him; a purpose to abide with him: as his purpose is to *abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 19.; so it produces a purpose in them to abide with him for ever; saying, with Ruth, *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for, where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God*, Ruth i. 16. It is a purpose to bed and board with him, if I may be allowed
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the expression; to live and die with him; and to live upon him, for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.—Again, another part of the loving purpose in them that his purpose doth produce, is a purpose, through grace, to *glorify* him: they purpose to glorify him in time, and to glorify him thro' eternity. However little they reach of their purpose while here below, yet this is a peculiar disposition wrought in all that love God, by virtue of their being called *according to his purpose*, that they have a great inclination, a strong purpose to glorify him with their hearts, their lips, and lives. They are a *chosen generation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness, to his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9.—These are they who love him, and whose love to him flows from and evidences his everlasting love and gospel of grace to them.

2. If your love to God be such as is a fruit of his everlasting purpose towards you, then it will produce in you an *everlasting* purpose towards him; thus to cleave to him, and serve him, and glorify him. There are some fleeting purposes which many have, which last but for a moment; but the believer's purpose, to *glorify God, and enjoy him for ever*, is an everlasting purpose; it is a firm, permanent, fixed, habitual constant purpose. Whatever winds may drive him from the thing he purposes; yet, no wind can drive from his purpose, when once it is wrought of God in his heart. Temptation may drive him from seeking and serving his God sometime; but yet the temptation cannot drive him from his purpose of seeking and serving the Lord. He may be drawn to sin; but he can never be drawn to a *purpose* of sinning, or a purpose of living in sin: nay, if some strong corruptions prevail against him, and lead him captive, yet he can confidently appeal to heaven it was never his *stated* purpose; and it was against his purpose, and against his prayers, and against his tears, and against his hope, that such and such an iniquity prevailed against him. It is with him as it is with a mariner that sets out for such a distant haven, with a full purpose to sail straight

to it; but, against his purpose he is carried to this port and that port, which he never designed; and, perhaps, with cross winds, carried hither and thither; yet still his purpose remains: and he never rests till he come to the place he designed.

3. If your love to God be the fruit of his eternal purpose and decree, then your heart will be *reconciled* to these eternal counsels of God, concerning the choosing of some and passing by others. The doctrine of predestination, which the apostle here speaks of in the context, will not be a terrible and harsh doctrine to you; you are brought to such a view of the absolute sovereignty of God, that you dare not quarrel with his decrees; nay, your heart will justify God, and acquiesce in his wise and sovereign disposals, saying, "O! is it not fit and right that the potter make of the clay what he pleases? and that God have mercy on whom he will have mercy?" &c. *Is there, then unrighteousness with God? God forbid,* Rom. ix. 14, 15, 19, 20. Hence, by the bye, we cannot think that any Arminian can have a love to God; for, in principle he pulls God down, in effect, from the throne of his absolute sovereignty and dominion.

4. If your love to God be the fruit of his everlasting love and purpose of grace towards you, then your love to him will be accompanied with the *admiration* and *adoration* of free and sovereign grace: you will not only stoop to sovereignty, without quarrelling his decrees; but you will admire and adore the freedom of his distinguishing love; and ascribe all the glory and praise of every part of your salvation to this free and sovereign mercy of God. You will desire to say, with the apostle, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33. and to acknowledge with the same apostle, *He hath found us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began,* 2 Tim. i. 6. You will desire to admire the beauty and glory of all the links of the golden chain
here;

here ; *Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Moreover, *whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified and ; whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

2dly, Try whether all things shall work for your good, by the *begun experience* of the thing itself, whether you have found already the footsteps of this truth in your hearts, God's making *all things work together for good.* Try if he hath begun to make some things work already for your good ; for, if he has begun to make *some or many things* already work for good to you, hence you may conclude, he will go on to make *all things* work together for good to you. I shall reduce this to four heads.

1. Have ever any of you been brought under *sickness and distress of body* ? Rub up your experience a little, and reflect upon it, whether or not has this done you good ? Did it humble you to the dust that you were dwelling in the house of dust ? And did it bring your sin and guilt before you, and make you fly for refuge to a Saviour ? Did it bear in the apprehensions of mortality upon thy heart, and excite thee to seek after a happy immortality ? Was it a praying time, a wrestling time, a mourning time, and a turning time ? Some are the worse of affliction ; but, are you the better ? Can you say, *It was good for me that I was afflicted* ?

2. Hath ever any here sustained some great *temporal losses*, so as you are brought low, in outward respects ? Well, consider if ever it wrought for any good to you : was you made to search the cause, and see your sin lying at the door ? and what particular sins provoked the Lord ? And dost thou now see that these things are not the best things, and that vanity is written upon them, and upon all things under the sun ? And, by this, thy heart hath been more set a pursuing after the *one thing necessary.* Do you see your loss made up in God, and in communion with him ? and thereupon, art satisfied in the last God you have got ? For, the first gods you set your heart upon, were vain and perishing objects of love ; but now you are where you

should be, and where you would be; only you would still have more and more nearness to this true and everlasting, everliving God? Or, have you learned to live a little more upon the *providence* of God, and upon the *promises* of God in the use of lawful means? Are you brought to prize a little from God, and receive it with thankfulness? whereas before you could nauseate a feast: *The full soul loatheth the honey-comb.* Or, are you brought unto this disposition, to see more evil in thy heart, than thou wouldst believe was in it? That it is a murmuring, covetous, and impatient heart, as well as a hard, wicked, and wandering heart? And art thou humbled before God for the pride of thy heart?— This is some good.

3. Has God left you to yourself to *commit* such and such sins, whereby God is provoked and your peace is disturbed? Now, what good have you got of this dispensation? *Hath it cost you many tears in secret?*— Many a long look to the *fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness?* Or, has the Lord thereby given you a sight of your nature? *I was conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity.* Has it bred in you a holy watchfulness against every sin? Or, hath it occasioned your admiring the free, absolutely free grace of God in Christ, and the long-suffering patience of God? Hath it made you pity others under the same temptation? and to lay out thyself more for honouring God than ever you did? Surely then it has wrought for good to thee.

4. Have you been brought under the *bidings* of God's face? and hath this been for good to you? Is sin embittered, because it is the cause of it? Hath it endeared the presence of God more to you? Hath it awakened you to more frequency and fervency in holy duties? Hath it made you more useful and helpful to poor tempted and deserted ones than before, when they are saying, *Alas! there was never any like me! I am a reprobate! it is in vain for me to wait on the means of grace!* Well, you may tell such, *If it was so with you, it was so with me: and this may give some relief.* See what experience you have of God's beginning to make all things work together for your good.

Hath

Hath he begun to do so? Well, *he is a rock, and his work is perfect.*—He will make all things work for good.

We shall now shut up the subject with an use of *exhortation*, both to saints and sinners. There are a few *duties* I would exhort *believers* unto.

1. Admire the wonderful *goodness* of this God, who makes all things work together for good to you. Well, may you say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee. Who is a God like unto thee? How great is his goodness?*

2. I would charge every soul here, not to make use of this truth to *indulge* the commission of one sin, or to go on in the way of sin: *What! shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. Shall we do evil that good may come of it?* Rom. vi. 1. What God can do, in his infinite power and wisdom, is one thing; and what we, in faith, may *expect*, is another.—Is any soul here engaged in love to any particular lust? Then, if ever you expect good at the hand of God, O bid adieu to your lusts, saying, *What have I to do any more with idols?* For, as all things work together for good to them that love God; so all things work together for hurt to them that love sin: and therefore, away with sin.

3. Entertain *good thoughts* of God in all the ways of his providence: and whenever the dark side casts up, look over to the bright side of it by faith, and you will see all his ways mercy and truth to them who fear his name. Beware of harsh thoughts of God. Be restless till you have the persuasion of two things, *viz.* that God loves you; and that you love God. If you could live in the view of this always, believers, then you would always have this persuasion too, that all things shall work together for your good.

4. Whatsoever providence may expose you to, yet resolve to *live by faith*, and to *live in love*; and then whatever come to pass, you may be satisfied all is well still, and all will be well still. By a life of faith you will feel, all things working together for good.

5. Beware of practically *contradicting* the design of providence in working for your good, or of having any hand in making them work for your hurt, so as to be the worse of them, which people may do many ways; as when, in affliction, they betake themselves unto unlawful means of relief: when they use unlawful means without dependence upon God: when they reckon God's former favours to be snares and entanglements: when they refuse the comforts of the word under their affliction, *Exod. vi. 9.*; and when they weary of their life, with Rachel.

6. Beware of *cenfuring* and *challenging* providence, when yet it is working for your good. Men are guilty of cenfuring the providence of God, not only through atheism, in denying providence; but also through unbelief, in questioning the love of God; through fenfuality, in misconftructing all providences, which do not gratify their lufis and carnal defires. Sometimes through haflinefs, in paffing fentence upon providence, before thefe fignal periods of it come that would manifefi its meaning. Sometimes from ignorance and want of confideration, not knowing that God may fend leffer croffes to prevent a greater, *Jer. xxiv. 5.*

7. Put a remark upon all the *good* that you get by the providence of God. Remember how often the crofs hath berne down your pride, reffrained your predominant, fent you to your prayers, and to a God in Chrift, the *bearer of prayer*. It is neceffary to make this remark upon the good of providence, becaufe, when it is made, and well improven, the croffes that you are ready to make arguments of your unbelief, would rather prove confirmations for your faith.

8. Join *iffue* with providence, in endeavouring to get all the good you can out of every difpenfation, and particularly out of affliction: and that by prayer, *Job xxvii. 10.* *James v. 13.*; and by being fuitably exercifed by them, *not defpifing the chaftening of the Lord, nor fainting when he rebukes*, *Heb. xii. 13.*; nor defpairing of a happy iffue: but expecting, according to the promife, that *all things fhall work together for good.*

On the other hand, I would speak a word to the *wicked* and *ungodly*, who are enemies to, and haters of God. To you I would offer, 1st, A word of *terror* and *conviction* : but I have prevented myself in the third inference as to this, and so I shall conclude,

2^{dly}, With a word of *counsel*. And the *advice* I offer is that which you have, Job xxii. 21. If you would have all things working for your good, then *acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee*. Be restless till you get saving acquaintance with God in Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel, whereby you are called outwardly to acquaintance, and to peace and reconciliation with him ; and wherein God prays you to be *reconciled to him*, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. In this gospel dispensation he is calling and inviting you to come to him : and though the call will not be effectual without the efficacy of his grace ; yet, how doth he make the call effectual but by charming the heart with the outward call : therefore hearken to the voice of the charmer in the outward call ; wait for the Spirit to come and draw out your heart towards him, in faith and love. Put not the gospel call from you, under any temptation drawn from the secret purpose of God : for, though all whom he calls effectually, are called according to his purpose ; yet that purpose is not the rule of their faith, nor the first object of the faith of any man.—As you cannot know a man's thoughts, but by his words ; so, you cannot know God's purpose, but by his promise. Do not first pore upon God's thoughts and designs ; for that is not the first object of your faith : but first hear and give ear to his word ; and if you believe his word, with application to yourself, then you may be sure of his purpose and thoughts toward you, that they are *thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*. It is the faith of his *promise* you are called to, and not the faith of his *purpose* : but, whenever you have the faith of his promise, then you may have the faith of his purpose : whenever you believe in Christ, as given to you in the word ; then you may believe that you are given to him in the decree of God, You are to make first
your

your calling, and then your *election* sure; for, whenever you hear his call, and believe in him, according to his word, then you may conclude, that you are *called according to his purpose*.

QUEST. *What is he saying to me, in the outward call of the word, that may engage me to hear him?*

ANSW. He is saying, Man, woman, will you enlist with me as a *Captain*, to fight all your battles for you? Will you match with me as your *Husband*, to protect and provide for you? Poor sinner! will you have me to be your portion? O diseased sinner, will you have me to be your *Physician*? O ignorant sinner, will you have me to be your *Prophet* to teach you? O guilty sinner, will you have me to be your *Priest*, to pardon you? O enslaved sinner, will you have me to be your *King*, to subdue your iniquity, to conquer your enemies, to break your rebellion and enmity? Poor bankrupt, will you have a *Surety*, to pay all your debt? Poor oppressed sinner, will you have a helper, to bear all your burdens? Will you have one that can supply all your wants, and heal all your wounds? Will you have one that can portion you for eternity? Poor mortal worm, that art to crumble into dust in a little, will you have one that can jointure you for eternity, and make you happy in death, and happy in judgment, and happy through eternity? Will you have eternal life? *He that hath the Son hath life*: and his complaint is, *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*. He himself is the *true God*, and *eternal life*. What say you? either are you content or not. If you be not content, and will not have salvation that is come so near to you, then, *How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?* Is not your ruin of yourself, when you will not have salvation from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin? Must not your hell be the hottest? *Wo to thee Chorazin and Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you: and thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell*. Turks and Pagans, that never heard the gospel, will be, may I say, set upon the surface of hell, while you

must be thrust down to the centre of damnation — Christ says, *I would have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but ye would not.* But, are you satisfied? You are called outwardly by the word; but are you made content to have Christ for yours in all respects, as a Prophet, Priest, and King, to save you from sin, as well as to save you from hell. Can you say it before God, men, and angels, that your heart is made content? Then you are not only called outwardly, according to his word; but inwardly, and effectually called according to his purpose. The decree is open; and the everlasting love of God, that runs under ground from all eternity, is broken up above ground in drawing you with loving-kindness, and making your heart content with Christ, and close with him in all his offices. And now, has his love manifested to you in the gospel drawn out your heart's love towards him? then you may apply all the comforts that the text bears; *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.*

S E R M O N CXXXVI.

The BEST COMPANY in the most LONELY
CASE*.

JOHN xvi. 32.

— *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

CONCERNING our Redeemer, who himself is God, and IMMANUEL, *God with us*, two things very glorious are testified, which deserve the highest attention of men and angels: 1. That God was *in* him, 2. That God was *with* him. How God was *in* him, is declared, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was IN Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.* How God was *with* him, is declared, not only by others, as Acts x. 38. where Peter shews, *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was WITH him:* and by Nicodemus, John iii. 2. saying unto him, *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for none can do these miracles that thou dost, except God was WITH him:* But also we have it here declared, out of his own blessed mouth, how God the Father was with him, even in his most deserted and afflicted circumstances; when, as it is said, Isa. lxiii. 3. *He trode the wine-*

* This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 7. 1748. To which is subjoined, the DISCOURSE before and at the service of the first Table.

press alone, and of the people there was none with him: yet, how it fared with him then, he could best tell himself; I am not alone, because the Father is WITH me.

We are expecting this to be a communion-day, tho' it be a day of darkness, and of men's deserting us, most sinfully and shamefully †: yet, from Christ's blessed experience, we may have hope of its being a day of God's presence with us; and that when communion with man is sinfully infringed, yet communion with God may be happily enjoyed.

The disciples of Christ, having made a fair profession of their faith and proficiency, by his plain doctrine delivered in the verses preceeding; he, knowing their frowardness and presumption, checks it in these words, verse 31. *Do you now believe?* And warns them here, how quickly their faith would be tried; and the want and weakness of it would discover itself.

Whence we may observe, That *presumption*, amongst professors and disciples of Christ, portends a *winnowing* and *sifting* storm at hand: *Behold, the hour cometh; yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.* Christ ushers in his warning with a *behold!* that we may attend; for the doctrine of trials a-coming is but carelessly heard by secure and presumptuous Christians, and it is little pondered: but we are here taught, that the hour of trial is appointed and ordered of God; and that the storm may be very violent, like a scattering wind, such as seems to be blowing in our day: *Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and leave me alone.* This came presently to pass; for, *Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled,* Matth. xxvi. 56.

Hence, Sirs, we may learn, that the scattering and dissipating of the society of God's people, is then not

† Several expressions of a similar nature to these, in this paragraph, are to be met with in this Sermon. The bond of union being broken by this time, in the Associate Body, gave rise thereto; and the extravagant and unprecedented measures of the separating Brethren, in breaking up communion with, at this occasion with-holding their usual assistance, and passing sentences upon their Brethren, laid a foundation for them. See the ground thereof laid open above, pag. 315. and more fully, Vol. VII. pag. 470, 474, 483, 484.

only the *affliction*, but the *sin* of professors; and their great weakness, when the trial and temptation makes them leave their good old Master, to turn aside from him, and betake themselves to some new shift.

Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own; that is, as in the margin, *to his own HOME*; or to his own way, to his own side or party, *and shall leave me alone*. Whence observe, that even *real disciples* may be deserters of Christ for a time; and so may these who are really *suffering* for the name of Christ be deserted of true disciples, as Christ himself was. And now, tho' none could join with him in enduring the sufferings he underwent, whereby he redeemed his people; and though it was his care to have them excused from suffering with him, saying, John xviii. 8. to the soldiers, *If ye seek me, let these go their way*; yet it was a part of his trial to be thus left alone. Christ knew he was thus to be left of men; *Ye shall leave me alone*: and he was resolved to stand alone. Observe, that let never so many desert Christ, and his truth, yet he will own and stand to it: and we ought to stand to the truth, though we should stand alone: nor ought we to be ashamed to be left alone as Christ was.

But now, Christ having prophesied, that his disciples should be scattered, and leave him alone, we have here the *comfort* he had amidst the affliction of solitude and dereliction of men. This he expresses,

1. *Negatively*; *Yet I am not alone*: that is, absolutely. Though left by you; yet I am not quite destitute of company.

2. *Positively*; giving both the reason why he was not alone, and the account of that blessed company he had; *Because the Father is with me*. Our Lord Jesus knew, that, in all his sufferings, he would have the constant presence, and powerful assistance of his heavenly Father. In this matter, our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Head of the body of the church, exemplified, in his own case, the case and condition of his people when they are brought to suffering, solitary, desolate and deserted circumstances: they are not so very desolate and solitary as men are ready to judge; for,
though

though they be left alone, yet they are not alone, while God is present with them.

Such is the mystical and spiritual union betwixt Christ and all believers, that seeing he and they are denominated one, 1 Cor. xii. 12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ:* therefore, I consider Christ here speaking as a public person; even the public head and representative of his people: and consequently what was said by the glorious Head in his sufferings, and lonely circumstances, is applicable to, and may be said by, every member of Christ, in whatever afflicted, lonely, or solitary circumstances they are; *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*

The doctrine, therefore, that I would discourse upon, as the Lord shall enable, for further opening of this text, is as follows;

OBSERV. *That as it was the comfort of Christ personal, in his lonely sufferings; so it is the comfort of Christ mystical, the church, in all their trials, and desolating circumstances, to have it to say, I AM NOT ALONE, FOR THE FATHER IS WITH ME.*

God's presence with Christ was enough to him; and his presence with us, may be enough to us. No man is alone who hath the presence of God with him.

In speaking to this subject the method may be the following.

- I. To speak of God the FATHER's presence with CHRIST, as it is here expressed, *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*
- II. Of God's presence with his PEOPLE, as it redounds from Christ the head, to them as the members; shewing how they are not alone, but have the Father with them.
- III. Point out the special comfort included in the presence of God, as represented or denominated by the first person of the glorious Trinity, *The Father is with me*; how this made for the comfort

of Christ in his sufferings, and how it makes for ours.

IV. Offer some *grounds* and *reasons* of the doctrine, why God was thus present with Christ, and why he is present with his people.

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

I. We are to speak a little of God's *presence* with CHRIST, in his mediatorial undertaking and sufferings, as it is here expressed, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

In order to the explaining of this, we may take up the import thereof in the following views: 1. We may view it as it is *negatively* expressed, *I am not alone.* 2. As it is *positively* expressed, *The Father is with me.* 3. *Relatively*, as it is the Father's presence. 4. *Subjectively*, as it is Christ he is present with; *With me.*

1st, View it as expressed *negatively*; *I am not alone.* Whoever do, or shalt desert me, and whoever now be against me, so as I seem to be quite destitute, being really left of men, yet I am not alone; that is, in point of *company*; I am not alone, having the Father with me. I am at no great loss for want of company in my sufferings and solitude: men have left me alone, yet I am not alone, while I have my best company still with me.—Again, I am not alone in point of *number*; there are more with me than are against me: the Father's presence is more than all the multitude of creatures, should they all leave me.—Again, in point of *friends*: I am not alone: though earthly friends have left me, my heavenly Father, and best friend, is with me.—Again, in point of *fellowship* I am not alone: though fellowship with men be withdrawn, yet fellowship with the Father is not.—Again, in point of *absence* I am not alone; for the Father is present, Psalm xvi. 8. *He is at my right-hand; therefore I shall not be moved.*—Further, in point of *distance* I am not alone; for the Father is near, Isaiah l. 8.—*He is near that justifieth me.*—Likewise in point of *confinement* I am not alone: though
now

now imprisoned, yet the Father is with me, *to take me from prison, and from judgment*, Isa. liii. 8. Nor *will he leave my soul in hell*, Psal. xvi. 10.—Finally, in point of *assistance* I am not alone; for, *The Lord God will help me; therefore I shall not be confounded*, Isaiah l. 7. *Therefore will I set my face like a flint.*—In these respects, though others left him alone, yet he was not alone.

Again, upon this same negative expression, *I am not alone*; that is, I am not left alone in my present *business* and *battles*. He was not left to *work* alone; for, says he, John v. 17. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* And John xvi. 10. his words and works were both the Father's; *Believest thou that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but my Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the work.*—He was not left to *wrestle* and *fight* alone, when he encountered principalities and powers; *Who is mine adversary? let him come near unto me: behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?* Isa. l. 8, 9—He was not left to *suffer reproach* alone: the reproaches that were cast upon him lighted upon his Father: therefore, he says, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached thee hath fallen upon me*, Psal. lxxix. 9.—He was not left to *suffer violence* and *cruelty* alone; for, tho' no creature was with him, the Father was with him, supporting him and helping him to bear all indignities cast upon him: *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to him that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting; for, the Lord God helped him*; Isa. l. 6, 7—He was not alone in *suffering death*; for, though the Father did not die with him, when the human nature of Christ gave up the ghost; yet the Father was with him in death, and upheld him in suffering death and wrath both; *Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold*, Isa. xlii. 1.—He was not left alone in the *grave*; for, even there the Father was with him, setting a watch of another sort than Pilate and the chief priests did; theirs was but a pitiful watch without, but his

was a powerful watch within the tomb, defending his sacred body from the least putrefaction; *Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption*, Psal. xvi. 10. — Thus he was not alone.

2dly, View the *positive* expression, *My Father is with me*. Why, not only as *God* was the Father with him *essentially*; for, he could say, in this respect, *I and my Father are one*, John x. 30: but as *Mediator*, God-man, in his whole mediatorial work of doing and suffering. And he was so in these following respects, which I must but name.

1. The Father was with him *authoritatively*, Exod. xxiii. 21. *My name is in him*, says God. He came about his Mediatory work, in the name and authority of his Father, and so was sealed and authorized to be his great Ambassador; *Him hath God the Father sealed*, and sent him upon his and our errand: and hence he says, John viii. 29. *He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone*.

2. The Father was with him *operatively*; he was no idle spectator of his work, but wrought in and by him; John xiv. 10. *The Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the work*. John x. 25. *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me*. And in the work of witness-bearing, he saith, John viii. 16. *I am not alone; but I and the Father that sent me*. And hence, again,

3. The Father was with him *corroboratively*, strengthening him. Christ is the *man of God's right-hand*, whom he *hath made strong for himself*, Psal. lxxx. 17. lxxxix. 21. And it is to Christ primarily that promise is made, Isa. xli. 10. *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, &c.* It is said of him, Micah v. 4. *He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord*. Again,

4. The Father was with him *repletively*, filling him with all his fulness; Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*. And, chap. ii. 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. O what a well furnished dwelling-place is Christ! What a well-furnished house is he! The Father hath taken

all his plentitude and furniture with him in to Christ. O Sirs, here is good lodging for poor souls! The Father and all his fulness is with him. May we this day *behold his glory, full of grace and truth!* Again,

5. The Father was with him *approbatively*, approving all that he did, and being well pleased with him, and in him; *Lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,* Matth. iii. 17. He was able to say, John viii. 29. *I do always the things that please him.* He had his Father's approbation in every thing he did. Again,

6. The Father was with him *affectionately*: he had not only his approbation, but his love and affection. He was the object of his Father's love and delight, even in his doing and dying; *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again,* John x. 17. *Behold mine Elect,* says the Father, *in whom my soul delighteth,* Isa. xlii. 1.

7. The Father was with him *victoriously*, making him a glorious Conqueror, according to the promise, Psal. lxxxix. 24. *In my name shall his horn and power be exalted. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth,* Isa. lxii. 4. And hence the *prince of this world was judged by him*; and he *spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross.* In a word,

8. The Father was with him *perpetually*, and will be with him for ever: in this respect he was never alone, for the Father was always with him: the promise, *I will never leave thee,* was first to him.

3dly, The next view we may take of Christ's words here concerning the divine presence with him is *relatively*; or of God under the relation of a Father being with him: *The Father is with me.* And here we might expatiate on the import of the words, under this view, in pointing out what the Father was with Christ, when he was left alone, and none with him but the Father. It says, in this view, these and the like things following, namely, That not only the Father's *countenance* was with him, when he wanted the countenance of creatures, and had no man to favour him, the Father's

favour was present ; *With favour did he compass him about as with a shield* : but also, the Father's Spirit was with him ; for he said, *I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*. He had the Spirit above measure given him.—The Father's words were with him, as well as his Spirit ; for, as he gave him *the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary* ; so he said of him, *This is my covenant, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever*, Isa. lix. 21.—The Father's heart was with him : he is the temple of which God hath said, *Mine heart and mine eyes shall be there continually*. His heart-love is with him ; and he hath said, *His loving-kindness will be not take away from him*. His heart's delight is with him ; and therefore he is called his *beloved Son*, that is in his bosom ; his *dear Son*.—Again the Father's hand, as well as his heart was with him ; *His hand was upon the man of his right-hand* ; and he upheld him *with the right-hand of his righteousness*.—The Father's perfections were with him, and all his treasures ; for, *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* : yea, he is *the wisdom of God, and the power of God* : and with him is the mercy and truth of God ; *My mercy and my faithfulness, with him yet still shall be*.—The Father's gifts and graces were with him ; *He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them*, Psal. lxxviii. 18. The Father's secrets were with him ; and his mind, will, and council : *No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*.—His Father's hosts and armaments were with him ; for, he that is the *Lord of hosts* gave his angels charge concerning him : and it is said, *He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor : therefore his own arm brought salvation to him, and his righteousness, it sustained him*. And, *he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head*, Isa. lix. 16, 17.—Likewise his Father's ornaments were with him :
and

and hence he says, *Isaiah lxi. 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*—What shall I say? his Father's glory was with him: this was his great name, *The brightness of the Father's glory*: and this was his great end in coming, doing, and dying, to glorify him on earth, who said of him, and to him, *Thou art my Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified, Isa. xlix. 3.*—The Father's majesty was with him; for it was said, *Micah v. 4. He shall stand and feed, [OR RULE] in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.*—The Father's rest was with him: here he found rest and satisfaction to his awakened sword of justice; even in him who gave himself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice, of a sweet-smelling savour unto God*: and hereupon he hath said, *This is my rest, here will I stay.*—The Father's blessing was with him; therefore it is said, *Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever, Psalm xlv. 2.* He hath blessed him, and he shall be blessed, and *men shall be blessed in him*—Why then, he is not alone, for the Father and all his furniture and fulness, is with him.

4^{thly}, The next view of this expression is to consider it *subjectively* with reference to Christ, the subject or person with whom the Father is; *With me*, says Christ: *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*—The Father was with him in his *sonship*, as he was his *natural* Son. He and Christ could never part: and as he was his *federal* Son, as the new-covenant Head, *Psalm lxxxix. 26.* it is said, *Thou art my Father he shall cry; thou art my God alone.*—The Father was with him in his *manhood*: he that prepared for him a body, a human nature, still sustained that nature; and it subsists only in the Person of the Son of God; and *great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh, 1 Timothy iii. 16.*—The Father was with him both, in his voluntary *undertaking* the work of our redemption, and in

the execution of the whole work : and hence the Father's will and his will were both recorded together among the archives of heaven ; *In the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, Psal. xl. 6, 7.*—The Father was with him in his *prophetical office* ; for, as he gave him to be a *light to the Gentiles* ; so he gave him the *Spirit of wisdom and revelation* to rest upon him ; so that *he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes : Never man spake like this man* ; for he had the tongue of the learned given him of the Father.—The Father was with him in his *priesthood*, Psalm cx. 4. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever.* And in this service, wherein he fulfilled the law ; and in this suffering, wherein he satisfied justice, the Father boasts of his assisting presence which he gave him ; *Behold, my Servant whom I uphold* : and then he raised him up on the third day, and set him on his right-hand, to make continual intercession for us.—The Father also was with him in his *kingly office*, saying, *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion ; with my holy oil have I anointed him.* And how does he assist him in the work peculiar to this office ? By giving him *all power in heaven and in earth*, whereby he was able to conquer subjects to his obedience, and trample his enemies under his feet.—So much for the first head, concerning the Father's presence with Christ, included in these words, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

II. The *second* thing proposed, was, To speak of *God's presence* with his people, as it redounds from Christ the Head to them as members : and how they are not alone, but have the Father with them. And here, without launching forth into this great subject of the divine presence, I shall confine myself to the views of it already mentioned, with relation to the glorious Head ; in and through whom they share, according to their measure, of the Father's presence in all their duties and difficulties, so as it may be said, They are not alone, for the Father is with them.—In so far as this takes place, so far shall we have communion with God in Christ to-day. Though the presence of
God,

God, with Christ the Head, as to the manner and measure of it, is ineffably superior to any presence of his with mere creatures, either in heaven or earth; yet, by virtue of the near union betwixt the Head and the members, even these on earth, they are made partakers of this privilege, in the manner whereof they are capable, through grace, and in the measure wherein he sees fit to communicate himself. And,

1. It may be said *negatively*, They are not alone, tho' all the world should turn their back upon them, and leave them alone; Christ says, in his Father's name, John xiv. 18. *I will not leave you comfortless*: and ver. 23. *If a man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* And therefore, they are not alone in point of company, number, friendship, fellowship, or any other respects before-mentioned. Nor are they left to *work* alone; for, it is *God that worketh all their works in and for them*; and *worketh in them both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*—He does not leave them to stand alone in the *battle*; even when they may say, with Paul, *No man stood with me; Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.*—He leaves them not alone to suffer *reproach* and *ignominy*; for, he is at hand to mark it down: *Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour; mine adversaries are all before thee,* Psalm lxix. 19.—He leaves them not to be alone in suffering *persecution*, by tongue or hand for his sake; nay, he says of that cross, not only half-mine, but wholly so; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*—He leaves them not to be alone in suffering *violence*, even when it is covered with deceit and falsehood: he tears the covering to pieces, and *redeems their soul from deceit and violence.*—He leaves them not to *lie* alone in the dark and cold nights of trials and tribulation; they always have his real presence, and they always affect his sensible presence, with the church, Song i. 13. *A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts.*—Yea, he leaves them not to *die* alone; he says, *Fear not to go down to Egypt, I will go with you; nor down to the grave, I have gone before you,*

you, and will go with you. In the faith whereof they may say, when passing through the valley of the shadow of death, *I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.*—Thus they are not alone.

2. It may be said *positively*, The Father is with them. And here there is some resemblance between the Father's presence, that Christ had, and his presence which they have through Christ. Was the Father with him *authoritatively*, having his name upon him? Though none were ever clothed with such authority as Christ, yet his people share of his Father's name, in as far as they are helped *to walk in the name of the Lord their God, for ever and ever*, Micah iv. 5.; and *in the name of their God to set up their banner*, Psalm xx. 5.—Was the Father with him *operatively*, doing all the work? So they have the Father with them, when they have it to say, Isa. xxvi. 12. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us and for us*: and when they employ God in Christ as their doer and worker, saying, as Psalm cix. 21. *Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake*: and, Psalm lvii. 2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.*—Was the Father with him *corroboratively*, strengthening him in his doing and suffering? Well, they may be said to have the Father thus with them, in and through Christ, when, with Paul, they can say, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening*: and, *through God we shall do valiantly*, &c.—Was the Father with Christ *repletively*, filling him with all his fulness? Believers have a large share of this presence, when they come to understand that of the apostle, Eph. iii. 19. even by knowing *the love of Christ that passeth knowledge; to be filled with all the fulness of God*; that is, with all that grace, knowledge, love, holiness, and joy that God allows gradually here, and more perfectly hereafter. And, indeed, we are but at best very small vessels, that can take in but a little of this ocean of divine fulness: some have got such a fill as to cry out, *Lord, the clay vessel can hold no more.*—But again, Was the Father with Christ *approbatively*? So his people have his approbation, when they wait on him, and keep his way: they have his favourable

able presence; and hence it is said, *His countenance doth behold the upright*, Psalm xi. 7.—Was the Father with him *affectionately*? So the Lord is with them that love him; *I love them that love me. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, and that hope in his mercy*, Psalm cxlvii. 1. And he some times, by inward manifestation, makes them know that he loves them, Jer. xxxi. 3. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.* Yea, some times by his outward dispensations, and certain tokens, makes their enemies know that he loves them, Revel. iii. 9. *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lye; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*—Again, was the Father with Christ *victoriously*? Even so, in and through him that loved them, they are made victors and conquerors; and more than conquerors over sin, and Satan, and the world: and the more they are made to triumph over their enemies, the more evidence have they of God's presence with them victoriously.—And was the Father with Christ *perpetually*? This indeed does insure his perpetual presence with them; for, it is upon Christ's head he hath promised to each of them, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*: and therefore boldly may believers say, *The Lord is my helper; and I will not fear what man can do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

3. It may be said also in the *relative* view of the words, respecting the Father, or what of the Father is with them, as with Christ. Why, his presence with them not only imports, that they have the Father's *favour* and *countenance* in and through Christ; but also the Father's *Spirit* and *word* which was promised to be with Christ, and with his seed, and seed's seed for ever: that they have the Father's *heart* and *hand* with them; that his heart is towards them; and he *upholds them with the right-hand of his righteousness*: that his *attributes* surround them, as the *mountains are about Jerusalem*. His presence lies in his exerting these perfections for their good, while his wisdom is present to direct them; his power, to protect them; his holiness,

to sanctify ; his righteousness, to justify them ; his all-sufficiency to supply them ; his mercy, to pity and pardon ; and his truth and faithfulness, to be a shield and buckler to them ; and to secure the accomplishment of all the promises of the covenant for them.—Again, it imports, that as the Father's *gifts* and *graces*, laid up in Christ, are communicated, in some measure ; while *out of his fulness they receive grace for grace* : so the Father's *secrets* are with them in some degree ; *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and his covenant to make them know it*, as the marginal reading is, Psalm xxv. 14.—Also, that the Father's *hosts* are with them ; for, *the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him*. God's hosts and guard about them make the name of the place where they are MAHANAIM, that is, *two hosts, or camps*, Gen. xxxii. 2.—It imports, likewise, the Father's *ornaments* put upon them, that he put upon Christ ; even that *garment of salvation*, and *robe of righteousness*, wherewith Christ rejoiced so much to be clothed for their sakes.—It imports, together with an impression of the Father's *glory* and *majesty* in Christ upon them, their sharing of the glorious *rest* of God in Christ, the Father's Beloved ; and so they have the Father's blessing with them, in him, whom he hath *blessed for ever*.

4. We may view the words *subjectively*, with respect to them with whom the Father is. As he was with Christ in his person, offices, undertaking, and execution of his offices, particularly, when he was left alone in his sufferings ; so he is with the followers of Christ, his members, especially in their solitary and afflicted circumstances : the Father is with them in their person, their names, their characters, and offices, when these are attacked by the fury and violence of men and devils ; because he was with Christ in these circumstances, supporting and upholding him ; and because the lovers of his name have his word for that chain of blessings and comforts, promised, Psalm xci. 14, 15.

*Because on me he set his love,
I'll save and set him free ;*

*Because my great name he hath known,
I will set him on high.
He'll call on me, I'll answer him ;
I will be with him still,
In trouble to deliver him,
And honour him I will.*

The Father is with them to deliver them when distressed ; to relieve them, when oppressed ; to strengthen them, when weak ; to comfort them, when dejected ; to direct them, when bewildered and in darkness ; to bless them, when men curse them ; to justify them, when men condemn them ; to honour them when the world defame them ; to hide them, when the world pursue them ; to deal kindly with them, when the world deal cruelly and proudly with them ; to be their company, when father and mother forsake them : when friends, and brethren, and familiars leave them alone, yet happy they that can say, with Christ, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

III. The *third* thing proposed, was to observe the special *comfort* included in the presence of God, as represented by the first Person of the glorious Trinity, namely, God the Father : or, how this made for the comfort of Christ in his sufferings ; and how it makes for his people's, in their trials.

1st, How it made for the comfort of CHRIST, in his sufferings, to have the presence of God, as he is God the Father ; *The Father is with me.* In order to understand this, let it be considered, that the word FATHER, out of Christ's mouth, when he was in this world, implies some things relating, 1. To Christ's *frame* towards God : and also, 2. Some things with respect to the Father's *demeanour* toward Christ.

[1.] It implies some things relating to Christ's *frame* towards God ; namely,

1. That Christ was under a humble acknowledgement of God's *superiority* over him. Christ, as touch his *divine nature*, was equal with the Father ; for, *Be-*

ing in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6. : but, as touching his manhood, and mediatorial offices, he was inferior to his Father, as his servant ; and hence he says elsewhere, *My Father is greater than I.* Our Lord here humbly acknowledgeth, that the Father is his superior ; yet under obligation to bear his charges.

2. The word *Father* here implies, Christ's deep sense of God's affection to him. The sense of this strengthened him to act for his Father in his younger years ; when his parents missed him, and sought him forrowing, he said, Luke ii. 49. *Wherefore was it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?* And this sense of God's dear affection to him he maintained to the last ; and expresses it, John xvii. 24. *Father, thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

3. The word *Father* here implies, Christ's owning his obligation unto duty ; the duty of a Son and Servant ; who was also sure that God would not fail to act the part of a Father, by giving him his presence and assistance : *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*

4. It implies, Christ's dependence upon God, and his self-insufficiency as man ; that is, Christ did not think that he could subsist, or persist, and hold out of himself. Though his human nature subsisted in his divine person ; yet, without the Godhead, which was one and the same in each person thereof, he knew he could not go through with his work : and knowing the unity of the Godhead, he could well say, as God the Son, *I am not alone ;* yet, as the Son incarnate, he expresses his dependence upon the Three-one God, here denominated by the Person of the Father ; *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* And here ineffable comfort and support is inclosed and comprehended in this dependence of Christ upon the Father.

[2.] It implies, on the other hand, some things with respect to the Father's *demeanour* towards Christ.

1. How much God the Father was *indeared* unto him, even as his *dear Son ; his Servant, whom he upheld ;*

held; his *Elect*, in whom his soul delighted; and his *beloved Son*, in whom he was well-pleas'd. Here is comfort.

2. *Father* implies a determinate and inviolable purpose, in God, to *promote* and *advance* Christ as his Son and heir; and to confer eminency and dignity upon him. God is here looked upon, by Christ, as the God that must advance him, and exalt him, however he is now abas'd, humbled, and thrown down: hence, John xvii. 1. Christ doth no sooner fill his mouth with the name *Father*, but his heart is full of hope and expectation of God's advancing and glorifying him; *Father, glorify thy Son*; and, ver. 5. *O Father, glorify thou me*. Here then was ground of comfort.

3. *Father* imports *friendship*, and friendly dealing that he expects from God, when earthly friends were leaving him, and cruel enemies surrounding him; many bulls compassing him about; strong bulls of Basban besetting him. When they were tearing to pieces, and bringing him down, the Father was a friend to bear him up. They were potent enemies, but here was an omnipotent friend at hand.

4. The *Father*, by way of eminency, imports, not only the nearest relation to Christ, but the *highest help*, the most honourable and glorious assistance. The Father, who stands obliged to help me, might Christ say, not only as he is *my Father*, but as he is the Father *eminently*; even the *Father of mercies*; the *Father of lights*; the *Father of spirits*; the *Father of eternity*: the Father of mercies cannot be cruel or untender to me; the Father of lights cannot leave me in darkness; the Father of spirits cannot leave my soul in hell; the Father of eternity cannot but make the death of his eternal Son to be the door of eternal life.

2dly, How does it make for the comfort of his PEOPLE, that the Father is with them; or, that they have the presence of God, as represented and denominated by the first Person of the glorious Trinity, *the Father*? I shall shew you, that this view is comfortable in several respects.

1. It is comfortable, as it imports the *kindliest* enjoyment of God's presence, namely, the Father of Christ, and a near relation of ours in him. We cannot conceive of God, as our Father, without conceiving him to be first the Father of Christ, who is his eternal Son, our Lord and Redeemer, and as our Father in him, who calls us *brethren*, and is not ashamed to do so, Heb. ii. 11.; only he must be owned to be the elder brother, and *the first born among many brethren*. O! what joy and comfort results from this view of our having one and the same Father with Christ, and his being our own God and Father in him, who says, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God?*

2. It is comfortable, as it imports the *highest* enjoyment of God's presence: it is the top enjoyment to have the Father with us. Though our enjoyment of God doth not begin with the enjoyment of the Father first; for, we come first to Christ; yet it ends or lands in the Father through Christ, *the way to the Father*, John xiv. 6.; who being the first Person of the glorious Trinity, in the order of subsistence, it speaks out the most high, and honourable, and glorious enjoyment: then does the soul indeed *dwell on high*, as it is said, Isa. xxxiii. 16.

3. It is comfortable, as it imports the *fullest* enjoyment of God's presence. As God cannot be a Father without a Son; so it imports communion with the Father and the Son: *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3.—And as the Spirit naturally proceeds from the Father and the Son; so it imports also communion with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit; and consequently, that *plurality* of the divine presence our Lord speaks of, John xiv. 23. *We will come, and make our abode with him.*

4. It is comfortable, as it imports the *surest* enjoyment of the divine presence. We may enjoy benefits from God, and yet not enjoy himself; we may have common influences and gifts of the Spirit, and yet be cast away. Yea, the disciples of Christ may see and enjoy

enjoy him, and yet not be sure that they enjoy the Father's presence and favour; nor can they reckon the enjoyment of Christ sure work, unless they have the Father manifested to them, as appears from Philip's words to Christ, John xiv. 8. *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us*; intimating, that while their faith looked only to Christ, as man, present with them, they were still uncertain and unsatisfied: therefore, as Christ pointed out their duty of looking so to him, as to see the Father in him; so it is remarkable, I think, in this chapter, where our text lies, that after Christ spoke so much to them of the Father, then they began to say, verse 30. *Now we are sure; now we believe.*—It is a sure enjoyment of God to see the Father in the Son, or to see that God is well-pleas'd in him. Without this, our faith itself does not assure us of freedom from the Father's wrath: but viewing the Father in him, is sure work.

5. It is comfortable, as it imports the *clearest* enjoyment of God; yea, both clear in itself, and clearing to the mind and conscience. Our Lord's doctrine here in the context concerning the Father, made the disciples say, ver. 29. *Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.* Notwithstanding all that Christ had said of himself, and of the Holy Ghost, whom he was to send, yet there minds were, in the mist, as it were, till they heard him speak more directly and distinctly of the Father; and then, though they were too confident of their faith, as appears by the check that Christ here gives them, yet they profess they were further illuminated than before; *Lo, now speakest thou plainly.* Indeed, the mind is clear when it views the Father in Christ; for then we see Christ truly and clearly, when we see God the Father in him. The conscience also is cleared, when it views the Father in Christ, and comes to the Father in the Son; for then it is justified in the court of the last resort: *It is God that justifies, even God the Father; who then shall condemn?* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

6. It is comfortable, as it imports the *steadiest* enjoyment of God; for, having the Father with us, and
our

our fellowship with the Father, we can win no farther in our motion. While we believe in Christ, we are on the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. *I am the way*; but when we come to the Father, and get the Father with us, then we are just at the end of our way, the end of our faith, the end of our journey, as it were, and are fixed in the centre of rest. When you come to ordinances, must you rest there? No: you come to Christ in them, as the church said, Song iii. 4. *I went a little further, and I found him whom my soul loveth.* Well, but when you come to Christ as the way, may you rest there? Nay: you must go yet a little further, and come to God in him, or to the Father by him; *By him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,* 1 Pet. i. 21. A man never stands firm and steady till then.

7. It is comfortable, as it imports the *needfullest* enjoyment of God; or, such a divine presence as answers all the needs of the soul, and all the defects of a lonely case. Why, the heavenly Father being present, they enjoy all the privileges of these who are the children of such a Father. Do they need divine *pity*? The Father is with them for this end; *As a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him.* Do they need divine *sympathy*? The Father is with them for that end; and, *in all their afflictions he was afflicted. He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.* Do they need *provision*? The Father is with them to provide for his children. Do they need *instruction*? This is a father's work; and for this end the Father is with them to teach them to profit, and guide them with his eye. Do they need kindly *chastisement*? This is a father's work: and as a father chastiseth his children whom he loveth, and then backs the chastisements with embracements: see how God the Father doth both; Jer. xxxi. 18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, &c.* There is chastisement. Ver. 20. *Is Ephraim my dear son?*

son? is he a pleasant child? for, since I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. There is the embracement. Whatever they need of divine fatherly care to be taken about them, his being with them as the Father, answers and supplies all their needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

8. It is comfortable, as it imports the *sweetest* enjoyment of God's presence: for, when the Father is with them, they drink at the fountain-head, where the water is sweetest, as it is said, *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ*. God the Father, who is the fountain of the Trinity, in respect of the priority of order in subsistence, he is the fountain of living waters: the fountain-head of our salvation and consolation. And however sweet the streams are, yet it is sweetest drinking at the fountain: by enjoying the fountain, we enjoy all that can issue from it. And hence the enjoyment of God in Christ is never more sweet, than when the heart leaps out at the mouth with an *ABBA, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. Then may the soul well say, *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*—Thus you see the special comfort included in the presence of God, as represented by the first person, *The Father is with me.*

IV. The *fourth* general head was, To offer some grounds and reasons why God was thus present with Christ; and why he is present with his people, especially in their sufferings and lonely circumstances.—And,

1st, Why was God the Father with CHRIST in his work of *doing* and *suffering*?

1. The Father was with him, because he was both his *Son* and his *Sent*. As he was his *Son*, he had a necessary, natural right to his presence; for, *He and his Father are one*. As he was his *Sent*, his sent servant, his sent ambassador, he had a necessary fœderal right to his presence, by virtue of the covenant God the Father made with him, Psal. lxxxix 3. *I have made a co-*
venant:

venant with my chosen. And hence he says, *He that hath sent me is with me.*

2. The Father was with him, because he did always what was *pleasing* to him; *He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always these things that please him,* John viii. 29. He was a Son and Servant, that never did a thing displeasing to God; nay, he never did an action but what was pleasing to him.

3. The Father was with him, because he *loved* him from everlasting, being the Son of his bosom, his dear Son, and his eternal delight, Prov. viii. 30. *I was daily his delight:* and therefore he says of him, *Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth,* Isa. xlii. 1.

4. The Father was with him, because he loved a company, a world of mankind *sinners*, elect according to the foreknowledge of God; for whose sake he sent him on the errand of their redemption. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:* and he sent him, *that the world through him might be saved,* John iii. 16, 17. This saving work was what bred in the Father's bosom, where Christ lay; whence he was sent upon this love errand; and therefore the Father was with him in the work.

5. The Father was with *him*, because he was with the *Father*. From all eternity he was always with the Father; *The Word was with God,* John i. 1. And when the *Word was made flesh*, and assumed our nature, he was always with the Father in his thoughts, and words, and walk. He was always with God; and therefore God was constantly with him; *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right-hand, I shall not be moved,* Psal. xvi. 8.

6. The Father was with him, still upholding him in his doing and suffering work, because his *glory* was concerned in that work, and Christ was to glorify him on earth; therefore he said to him, Isa. xlix. 3. *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* And accordingly Christ could say, John xvii. 4. *Father, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work*
which

which thou gavest me to do. This God-glorifying work, of suffering to the satisfaction of justice, behoved to be the work of God: though Christ only was the sufferer, yet the Three-one God behoved to be the supporter of him; that is, beside the divine nature of the Son, the supereminent presence of God the Father, and the supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost; that the glory of the work might redound to the whole blessed Trinity, which is one God, who could not give the glory of this work to another; *I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, &c. I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another,* Isaiah xlii 6, 7, 8. Thus Christ brought glory to God in the highest; and therefore God was with him, that God might have the glory of the work. *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

2dly, Why will God be present with his PEOPLE, especially in their suffering and lonely circumstances? In general, because he was with CHRIST, therefore he will be with *them*, and allow them his gracious presence. More particularly,

1. The Father is with them, because of his *relation* to them, and theirs to him, in and through Christ. He is their Father, and they are his children: and will such an indulgent, merciful Father, from whom all other fathers derive their paternal affection, will he leave them alone and deny them his presence, and forsake his children? Nay, Zion may say, through unbelief, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me: but, can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord,* Isa. xlix. 15, 16. There may be unnatural mothers; but he cannot be an unnatural Father: *Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*

2. The Father is with them, and will not leave them alone, because this is the *tenor* of the new covenant,

Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never, never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* The five negatives here in the original, import, the strongest assurance given, that he will not leave them alone, but will be with them. He hath promised to abide with them by his Spirit, the Comforter, to abide with them for ever; and will he not perform his promise, who hath *faithfulness for the girdle of his loins*? Yea, *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but his kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall his covenant of peace be removed.*

3. He is present with them, because he *loves* them: He loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness hath he drawn them. And will he leave them alone whom he loves with such an antient, everlasting, transcendant, superlative, and distinguishing love? He loves them as the birth of his eternal decree, the purchase of his Son's blood, and the subjects of his Spirit's saving operation, having *called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

4. The Father is with them, because as he is the *Father of Christ*, their Head and Husband; so both the Father and the Son are intrusted with them. God the Father hath given them to Christ, and Christ hath given them back to the Father; John xvii. 10. *All mine are thine, and thine are mine: Father, keep thro' thy name, these whom thou hast given me: As if he should say, Thou hast given them to me from eternity, to be redeemed by me; and now I give them back to thee, and commit them to thy care.* Christ, like an indulgent Father, being to leave his people, as to his bodily presence, commits his fatherless orphans, as it were, to the care of their Grand-father: and indeed, his Father's care is his, and his care is his Father's; for, he and his Father are one.

5. The Father is with them, because they *seek* him, and *rely* upon him for his presence and assistance; *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee,* Psalm ix. 9. Yea, he is good to them that wait on him, and to the soul that seeketh him; for, *he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.*

therein.—This he declared to the world, that he would be with him to assist him therein; Psalm lxxxix. 16, 20, 21. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty; with my oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him.* Isa. liii. 10, 12. *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.* God the Father promised to bear down all opposition that should be made to him in his undertaking, Psalm ii. where you see the strong combination of the *princes of the earth* against the Redeemer, and yet how he should break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He promised that the enemy should not exact upon him, nor the son of mischief wrong him; that he would beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him, Psal. lxxxix. 22, 23. Hence he is called, the mighty Redeemer; the man of God's right-hand. We find Christ solacing himself with the thoughts of this assisting presence of his Father, Isaiah xlix. 5. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and my glory shall be my strength.*—Yea, not only solacing himself with the thoughts of it, but bidding defiance to all his enemies on this very ground, Isaiah l. 7, 8, 9. *The Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, &c.* Here these promises were accomplished, *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*

2. Hence see, what need there was that *our Redeemer* should have his *Father's presence*. It does not imply any weakness or impotency in the Son; for, considering Christ, as to his divine nature, he is one and the same God with the Father: but it implies, the joint concurrence of both Father and Son, in carrying on this glorious work. And besides, Christ is not here to be considered simply as God, but as Mediator; in which respect he is man, as well as God: and in this respect he stood in need not only of habitual grace, but of actual and renewed influences. To clear this we should consider,

(1.) That

(1.) That as man, he was a *creature*: and being a creature, he could not but depend upon his Father for influences and supplies of grace.

(2.) There were special promises of *influences* made to him; *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord,* Isa. xi. 1, 2.

(3.) We find him *praying* for actual support and renewed influences; it is said, Psalm lxxxix. 26. *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation:* and accordingly, it is said, that, *in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplication, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save him from death; and was heard in that he feared,* Heb. v. 7.

(4.) Unless that his human nature had been supported, by the actual influences of the Spirit, it would have been intirely *overwhelmed*, under the pressure of wrath that lay on him as our Surety; for, he had that weight upon him which would have broken the backs of all the angels in heaven, cracked the axle-tree of the universe, and sunk the whole creation to ruin. But, he was not alone, for the Father was with him.

3. Hence see the *foundation* upon which we may, with assured confidence, expect the *presence of God with us*, especially in all our sufferings and desolate circumstances: why? because he was present with Christ, our Head and Surety, on our account, and when suffering in our nature, room, and stead, that this privilege of the divine nature might redound to the members of his mystical body. Because the Father was with him, we may be sure he will be with us. Hence comes it, that the Father's word and Spirit is with us: and hence we have his *spiritual* presence and spiritual union; for, *He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit:* and his Spirit is in the believer as a *well of water springing up to everlasting life.*—Hence comes his *assimilating* presence; turning these that were haters and slights of God, to

be lovers and seekers of God ; and putting a stamp of God's image upon them, and turning them from darkness to light, from death to life, through Christ, who died, that he might live.—Hence his *accepting* presence ; being brought into favour with God, and *accepted in the Beloved*.—Hence his *assisting, sustaining, and supporting* presence ; by his everlasting arms underneath them, upholding them even when they want his sensible, comforting presence.—Here is matter of joy and trust, even amidst all killing-like providences : and, amidst all changes, they have still the unchangeable God with them ; who says, *Fear not, I am with thee*. Cast them into prison, yet is he with them : Lay them on a bed of languishing, yet he is with them : put them in the fire, or in the water, he is with them, Isa. xliii. 2. And even when we apprehend him to be an absent God in many respects, saying, *Why hast thou forsaken me ?* yet he is still the present object and ground of our faith and trust.

4. Hence see a solid foundation laid for our *communion with God*, both in grace here, and in glory hereafter. It is laid in the Father's presence with the Son, our Redeemer. Why, the work of our redemption cannot but be now finished to the Father's contentment and satisfaction ; for, Christ was not alone therein, the Father was with him. It is not possible it could be a mismanaged work among such hands ; and therefore, here is such ground for our faith and hope of communion with God this day, and of his being present with us, as well as of the hope of glory. This hope may be corroborated and strengthened with this consideration, that as God's presence with Christ, in his suffering state in this world, is the foundation of his presence with believers in all their trials : so, his presence with the Father, in his now exalted state, lays a foundation for our hope of being for ever with the Lord, and with his Father in heaven. Why, the Father was with Christ on earth, and now Christ is with the Father in heaven ; for, *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*. Yea, as the Father was with Christ, so Christ was with the Father, even upon earth,

earth, in such a manner as to lay the foundation of our being with him, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, &c.* He says not, *Where he will be afterwards*; but, *Where I am*: intimating, that he was already with the Father; and importing, not only that his exaltation was as sure to him, as if he had been already exalted, but that he was actually with the Father in such an ineffable manner, as he expresses elsewhere, John xiv. 10. *Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?* And ver. 20. *At that day ye shall know, that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.* Thus Christ was always with the Father: and and always is, and will be with the Father: and therefore, believers in Christ cannot be disappointed of having the Father with them, and of their being with the Father hereafter.

5. Hence see how sweet and comfortable Christ's visits are; for, when he comes, he comes not alone, but the Father with him, John xiv. 23. *We will come, and make our abode with him*; that is, with the believer and lover of Christ. When Christ is present, the Father is present; when he is with us, the Father is with us: he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. Here observe then the reason of the reciprocal enjoyment of the Father and the Son, and why they that enjoy the one, enjoy the other: he that enjoys Christ enjoys the Father, because he is never alone, for the Father is with him. Seeing God the Father is God with Christ, then he must be God with us in Christ. Christ is, *IMMANUEL, God with us*, because he married our nature; but God the Father is God with us in another respect, not so immediately, as Christ is, but mediately, through Christ, because he is God with Christ. *The Father is with me*; q. d. *The Father is God with me, and I am God with you*: therefore, when I come to you, I bring the Father with me; inso-much, that when you see me, you see the Father; when you hear me, you hear the Father; when you meet me, you meet the Father; and when you have communion with me, you have communion with the Father

Father in me: *Truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.*

6. Hence see that God's presence *fills up all wants*; be it the want of friends and familiars, or relatives of all sorts; *Ye shall leave me alone*, says Christ; *but yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.* Indeed fellowship with God is a fatherly fellowship: he is a friend in time of need, when friends and brethren turn their back upon us. God's children that cleave to him, are no losers by being despised, disparaged, and deserted in the world: they are happy in the midst of miseries. They have the best company when left alone; and that in two respects:

(1.) They many times fare best when they are alone in point of *secrecy* and *retirement*; Mark iv. 34. *Without a parable spake he not unto the people; but when they were alone he expounded all things to the disciples.*—Hence his people many a time affect retirement, Song vii. 11. *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the fields; let us lodge in the villages: there will I give thee my loves.*

(2.) Many times it fares best with them when they are left alone in point of *dereliction* and *desertion* of men, and solitude that way, as it was with Christ here: I am not alone, though you have left me; the Father is with me. God's company may be had to best advantage when mens company is lost: when men cast us out of their company, God may take us in, as Christ did the blind man, whose sight he restored, and whom the Jews cast out, John ix. Our God is most kind, when men are most unkind and unnatural.—He is sweetest when they are bitterest. And it is a piece of conformity to Christ, to have most of God's company when we have least of mens.

7. Hence see the mark of a *worthy communicant*, or of one that hath *saving acquaintance with Christ*, namely, he will be acquaint with the Father in the Son, or with God in Christ. None know Christ, but they know the Father; none have seen Christ, but they have seen the glory of God in his face; *The God who commanded light*

light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. If you have got the mind of Christ, you have seen it to be the Father's mind: if you have got the Spirit of the Son, then you have got the Father's Spirit, evidenced to be so, by leading you to cry, *ABBA, Father.* Christ himself is denominated *the everlasting Father*, Isa. ix. 6. And if you be acquaint with Christ as your Father, you will be acquaint with your Father's Father; both which, though essentially one, yet are personally distinct. The most comfortable communion with God is to be let in to the Father's bosom, by his only *begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father*, John i. 18. and who says, Matth. xi. 27. *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.* And what is all this, but just to enjoy the love of the Father, thro' the grace of the Son, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost? O! it is glorious communion to be let into God, who is love through Christ, the Son of his love, by the Spirit, that sheds abroad this upon the heart. Now communion with God in his love may be known by the similitude betwixt his love to us, and our love to him; particularly in two respects,

(1.) His love is a love of *rest*; *He rests in his love*: the believer's love to God is a love of rest in God; *Return to thy rest, O my soul.* And then,

(2.) His love to us is a love *in Christ*; we are loved in him, and accepted in him. Our love to God, when he is present with us, is a love to God in Christ: nor can we have communion with God the Father in his love, but thro' Christ; and then indeed the Father is with us.

8. Hence see the *great duty of this day*, namely, of coming to Christ in the word and sacrament; and the *great motive* that should induce us to come to Christ, even because the Father is with him. O Sirs, here is one of the strongest motives to faith that I know in the world. Let guilty sinners, that never believed on the

Son of God to this day, if they would avoid the Father's wrath, and have the Father's blessing, come to Christ this day; because he is not alone, for the Father is with him. Let guilty saints, whose faith may be far to seek in this day of God's anger, be persuaded to take a new grip of the Son of God, from this consideration, that the Father is with him. If he were alone, or away from the Father, and had not the Father's presence, then you might be filled with fear and dread, that when you come to Christ, for his blessing then you might get the Father's curse, instead of the blessing; but, as Rebekah said to Jacob, in another case, Christ says to you, *Upon me be thy curse, my Son; only obey my voice.* Come, come; for, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* He was with me when I bore the curse for you, and is he not with me now when I have bought the blessing for you? Fear not the Father's wrath if you come to me, for he is with me as a reconciled, pacified, and well pleased God in me.

Christ was always with God, and God was ay with him; John i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:* therefore, by coming to Christ, you come to God the Father; yea, into the Father's bosom where Christ lies. By coming to Christ, you come the Father's favour and fellowship; to the Father's throne and kingdom; to the Father's rest and joy. O how sweet and alluring may the voice of Christ be to us when he is saying, Song iv. 8. *Come with me, from Lebanon, my spouse; with me from Lebanon!* If you knew who was with me, your heart would come leaping to me; for, I am not alone, because the Father is with me to welcome you as well as I. There is a Trinity of persons with me; a plurality to welcome you; even you whose heart hath been a vile run-away from me many a day; yet, *Return, return, O Sbulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee,* Song vi. 13. There is better and greater company with me, than saints and seraphims; and my company wants to see and welcome you to their company and communion, even though men should excommunicate

municate you, and exclude you from their company and fellowship †. When men betake themselves and turn aside to new crooked ways, then you will find they begin to have new crooked natures, full of rancour and rage, and bitterness, putting you out of their company and fellowship, with a *stand by, for I am holier than thou*, Isa. lxx. 5. Well, would you have better company? *Return, return then, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you*, and that you and we may be all one; for, this I have prayed for, John xvii. 21, 22. that *you may be one in us, as we are one*; and then part with you who will, you and we shall never part: *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to part us*, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Remember then, O sinner, who is speaking to you from this text, and inviting you to come, and by what a glorious argument, that might conquer the heart of devils, if the door of hope, were open to them; but, to you, O men, does he call, and his voice is to the sons of men. To you, O man, woman, whether old or young, he is saying, “Come to me, for the Father is with me. Come, however black and vile you are, my Father is with me to beautify you by his Spirit and mine, that proceeds from him and me; therefore, *though you have been lying among the pots, you shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold*; yea, we will make you *borders of gold, with studs of silver*. Come to me, laying stress upon my righteousness, my work of doing and suffering as Mediator, seeing you may be sure the work was wrought to purpose, and wrought to the Father’s pleasure; for, I was not alone therein, because the Father was with me. Come, however guilty you are; for,

† Alluding to the rupture in the Associate Body, occasioned by the altercations about the burget’s oath, and the sentences that the separating Brethren were passing on that account. The censures of the church were never more abused, improperly inflicted, and brought into contempt, than on this occasion. See the affair laid open above, p. 253. And more fully, Vol. VII. p. 470,—474, 483, 484.

my righteous Father is with me to justify you by my blood. Come, however filthy you are ; for, my holy Father is with me to sanctify you by his grace. O hear him speaking to you, and saying, Come to me, however poor and needy you are, for my Father's fulness is with me ! and my God and Father will supply all your wants, according to his riches in glory by me. Come, however woful and wretched your case is ; for, my Father's mercy and faithfulness are with me ; and mercy and truth have met together, and kissed each other in me. Come, however lifeless, graceless, and spiritless you are in yourself, for my Father's Spirit is with me to bestow upon you : from him I have received gifts for men, and graces for men, and for you among the rest. Come, come, for my Father that is with me is saying, that he will not want you ; and hath sent me to *compel you to come in*. O come to me however witless and weak you are in yourself ! for my Father's wisdom is with me to guide you ; and my Father's power is with me to draw you : with me is the *wisdom of God*, and the *power of God*."

" You need not say you cannot, you have not power and ability to come ; for, *once have you heard ; yea, twice, that power belongeth only unto God*. And if, by a day of power, I have made you but willing, this is my errand on which I am sent to-day, even to reveal my Father's flaming love for firing your frozen hearts : and I want no more, but that your hearts open to let me in, in my own name, as the King of glory ; and in my Father's name, the God of glory. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock !* Surely my Spirit, by his motion, is knocking ; and I am not alone waiting for you, but my loving Father is waiting with me, and waiting to be gracious to you.—Open, open then, ye everlasting doors, if not for my sake, and your own, yet for my Father's sake that is with me, that the *Father may be glorified in the Son* ; and glorified for ever in your eternal salvation by me."

O let men and angels wonder at the glorious court of attendants waiting on you this day ! Is there any here but may blush and be ashamed to slight and neglect

glect such a courtship? What say you then? *Will you go with this man, and get his Father's blessing? He hath said, No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and therefore, that you may be drawn effectually, he that is in the Father's bosom is come to declare the Father, and to touch your iron heart with the drawing load-stone of the Father's infinite and eternal love, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee: there is my Father's strong cord let down to draw you to me; for, Whosoever hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son.*

Here then, might he say, further to move you to come to me, "My Father, that is with me, is stretching out his loving hands to draw you, and opening his everlasting arms to embrace you; and now, if your heart be drawn toward me, from the view of my Father's love to me, and presence with me, take this for an everlasting cordial to you, that as I am not alone, because the Father is with me; so, in a way of coming to me, and abiding with me, you shall never be alone, but always have the Father with you: *he will never leave you, nor forsake you.* Though all the world should turn their backs upon you, and leave you alone, yet you shall not be alone, in any duty you go about, nor in any distress you come under: you shall not be alone at a communion-table, my Father will be with you: you shall not be alone in the hour of temptation, or tribulation, and extremity, my Father will be with you; if not by his comforting presence, yet always by his supporting presence, even as he was with me to the last moment of my sufferings; *He and I both will come to you, and make our abode with you:* and, by the blessed Comforter, whom I will send from the Father, I will put my very words into your heart and mouth: for, seeing I and my Father will never part with one another, nor ever part with you; therefore you shall always have ground to say with me, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*"

A

PART OF THE DISCOURSE

BEFORE

SERVING THE FIRST TABLE.

WE now go on to the great work of the day, the commemorating the death and sufferings of our glorious Redeemer: in which work he was not alone, because the Father was with him therein; and therefore, the work we are about concerns not only our salvation, but also the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now, these that have no acquaintance with Christ and his Father, can have no right to that communion-table to which Christ welcomes only his friends and acquaintances. Therefore a rail must be put about the table of the Lord, that enemies and strangers to Christ may not adventure to profane that holy ordinance. We therefore debar, exclude, and excommunicate from it, in the Lord's name, all the impenitent breakers of the *moral law*; and more particularly, &c †.

On the other hand, I do, in the name of the Lord, invite, to the Lord's table, all the friends of Christ, and his spiritual acquaintances. Who are these, say you? Even all true believers, that have the faith of God's presence with Christ in his work; and the experience of God's presence with themselves.

1. All that have the faith of the *Father's being present with Christ* in his doing and dying. Have you got ever such a faith of the Son of God as to see and believe that in his redeeming-work he was not alone, but that the Father was with him.

QUEST. *How shall I know if I have the true faith of this?*

† A list of those who stand debarred from the Lord's table is confounded upon, Vol. I pag. 83,--88.

We answer, If you have got the faith of this, it will make the *work of redemption*, by Christ, to be very *great* and *glorious* in your esteem; and make you see, that every thing that Christ did and suffered, had a stamp of God upon it, and some thing of the glory of God shining in it. The faith of this will be the eye whereby you see the love of God to be the very root of redemption: you will be sometimes admiring the wonderful love of God; that not only sent him on that saving errand, but also came along with him; who therefore says, *He that sent me is with me.* The faith of this will make Christ very precious to you: why? Because the Father was always with him. You will see a dignity unspeakable flowing from this, that God was with him, and God was in him; and God is to be found nowhere, in mercy, but with him. The faith of this will make you see that men may be happy, tho' left alone and deserted of all the world, as long as God is with them; and happy tho' saints and disciples should leave them alone, because happiness lies not in man's company, but in God's. You will reckon them happy that have God with them, whoever be against them, or away from them: and will reckon yourself at no loss, though you wanted the presence of friends and brethren. If you have God's presence; at least, if want of that sort be bitter, here is what you are sure can sweeten it to you.

2. Christ's friends are these that have experience of his *presence with themselves.*

QUEST. *How shall one know that he hath God's presence, seeing many think they have God with them, when yet they are in a delusion?*

I cannot stand, just now, to offer many marks. Only, with reference to the subject I was treating, enquire if ever you could say, for your own part, from experience, *I am not alone, for the Father is with me.* When father and mother, friends and familiars in a world failed you, was you made to run away to God, and take him for your only true friend, and to take rest to your soul in him; and particularly, to solace yourself in him as a Father, by crying, *ABBA, Father*; viewing him

him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; as a heavenly Father in Christ; as a holy Father; as a righteous Father; and as a merciful Father in him? Can you tell, to your experience, that when your *mother's children were angry at you*, and perhaps, *smote you*, and *wounded you*, and *the watchmen that went about the city, took away your wail from you*; or, when with Jacob, you was obliged to leave your kindred, to *forget your father's house*, and *the people that were yours*; when friends and familiars became your enemies, and former comforts became but heavy crosses to you: when these, or trials of that kind beset you, so as you was, in a manner, left alone, and deserted on all hands, then you have been made to run away to God, and you met with him in Bethel, and there he spoke with you, and you with him: you mind the time and place where he visited you, and made you pour out your heart before him, and run into his bosom for relief; and you found you was not alone, because the Father was with you; and found his company infinitely better than all the friends and familiars in the world; you got such a wass of his glorious goodness, as made you forget your affliction, and remember your misery no more: and tho' you have not always the same comfortable presence of God, yet you have this sign of his real presence, that you have ay a kindly remembrance of the Bethel-visit he gave, and a kindly wish, at the bottom of your heart, that he would renew the visit, and see you again, that your heart may rejoice!

O thou child of God! come and share of the childrens bread. Hast thou win to lisp after the language of Jesus, and to call God your Father? Is that language become somewhat familiar to you, *Father, Father*? At least you are helped to it sometimes: as *no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Spirit of God*; so no man can call God, *Father*, but by *the Spirit of adoption*; under the influence whereof, when you speak to God, and say, *Father, Father*; it is not in a rash and precipitant manner, as thousands will say, *Our Father which art in heaven*, who know not what they are saying, but take his name in vain: but you, believer, when you call God,

Father,

Father, it is with reverence you speak it; it is with some holy filial fear you speak it out; it is with some holy boldness, upon the ground of the blood of Christ, you say it; and it is with humble blushing, as unworthy to be put among the children: you can hardly speak this language, but in the manner the returning prodigal did; saying, *Father, I have sinned.* Well, have you wit to call Christ's Father yours, or would you fain be at it? And is this the privilege you value above all things, and esteem above all enjoyments in the world, to have the Father with you; even to have the gracious presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and fellowship with the Father and the Son? Christ then is saying to you, however black and vile in your own eyes, *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away: come to my table, and put honour upon my Father, and me, before the world, and be not ashamed of me before men.* Would you have a meeting with God? Then come, come to me in this ordinance, and you shall not meet with me alone, but with my Father also; for, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*



T H E

D I S C O U R S E

A T T H E

S E R V I C E O F T H E F I R S T T A B L E.

NOW, my friends, you are come to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, and therein his redeeming love to you, together with the love of the Father that sent him, and was with him in that work. When Christ came on this errand, the Father came along with him; and accompanied him with

his presence. In all Christ's sufferings, from first to last, the Father was with him supporting him. The first of Christ's sufferings in the flesh, was in his circumcision according to the law on the eighth day; the last of his sufferings was in his crucifixion.

In the beginning of his sufferings, namely, his *circumcision*, the Father was with him, may I say, giving him the covenant of circumcision. It is said, in another sense, indeed, of Abraham, that *God gave him the covenant of circumcision*, Acts vii. 8.; for, *to him it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and of the covenant of grace*: but to Christ he gave the covenant of circumcision as a seal of the covenant of works, he was to fulfil in our room; for, thereby it was sealed, that he became a debtor to the whole law; *I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is become a debtor to the whole law*, Gal. v. 3. The apostle's meaning in that word, when it is applied to any other than Christ, is, If you be circumcised, or do any duty enjoined by the law, and think to be justified thereby, Christ shall profit you nothing; you are fallen from grace, and plunged yourself into the gulf of a covenant of works; for, when you take hold but of one link of the chain of that covenant of works, or do any thing in hope of justification by your doing, you draw the whole chain after you, which is impossible; you bring yourself under an obligation to fulfil the law, both in its precept and penalty, and so bring the curse of the law upon yourself. But circumcision was indeed, to Christ, a seal of the covenant of works, or a sign that he was become a debtor to do the whole, and to pay the whole debt of obedience to the precept, and satisfaction to the penalty of the law. Here was, indeed, the mystery of Christ's first sufferings, wherein the Father was with him, giving him the covenant of circumcision, sealing him to be the Surety and debt-payer in our room.

In the last of his sufferings, upon the cross, the Father was with him, even when he was crying out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yet then the Father was with him, supporting and enabling him to
pay

pay out the last farthing of the debt, that was owing to the law; and thus he *magnified the law, and made it honourable*. And we are now remembering that love of God in Christ.

The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread, &c. Christ's flesh is meat indeed; it is just the full payment of all our debt, that we owed to law and justice, that is represented by this broken bread; I am the bread of life: my Father gives you that bread, &c.

After supper he took the cup, &c. The Father's presence with Christ, in his death, was very mysterious. *Behold, the blood of the covenant, wherein God promised to be with Christ even in the shedding of that blood.* There was a twofold presence of the Father, or a twofold egress of the divine power; namely, a *power smiting*, and a *power sustaining* him: the power of his wrath, against sin, bruising him; and the power of his mercy, towards sinners, upholding him, and enabling him to suffer that wrath. No mercy, indeed, nor pity was shown to him; *God spared not his own Son: it pleased the Lord to bruise him.*—The power of the Father's wrath bruised him to death, and bruised out the blood, of which justice took a great draught, and drank to satisfaction; yea, to the full and condign satisfaction of justice: and God the Father allows you to pledge him in this cup; and to drink to the satisfaction of your hearts and consciences. But withal, the power of the Father's mercy, towards us, was present with him, sustaining and supporting the Sufferer, who *trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him*; yea, the Father himself was not with him, either as a sufferer or sympathizer, but as a sustainer and supporter: he was so far from being a sufferer or sympathizer with him in his sufferings, that he was *pleased to bruise him*; and taking pleasure in his sufferings, not as they were a cruciating and tormenting of Christ's human nature, but as they were a satisfaction to divine justice: and therefore, in that hour of suffering, the Father was only with him as a supporter, strengthening him with *one hand*, to bear all the wrath that he could lay upon him with *the other*. God, was then, as it

were, holding him with one hand, by his omnipotent power, and with the other hand lashing him with infinite vengeance, or pressing him to death. Two flames met together in Christ upon the cross; the flame of God's infinite love to Christ, and the flame of his infinite wrath against sin, and hatred of it; and both were expressed by Christ, namely, the full assurance of his infinite love, when he cried out, *My God, my God*; and yet the sharp sense and feeling of his infinite wrath, when he cried, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* a question not of complaint, but condolment; for, at the same time, his heart justified his righteous Father, saying, Psalm xxii. 3. *But thou art holy*; and commended his Spirit into his Father's hand, as it is expressed, Psalm xxxi. 5. *Into thy hand I do commit my Spirit, for thou art he, O thou Jehovah God of truth, that hast redeemed me.* Christ, as the public head of all the redeemed, spoke here in the name of them all, when, after the finishing stroke of justice was laid on, and he had cried, *It is finished*, and when he put his Spirit in his Father's hand. Though he alone was the sufferer, yet he gives his Father the honour of this redemption work, as his supporter; *O thou Jehovah God of truth, thou hast redeemed me*: and in me all the company of elect sinners that thou hast given me. Thus the Father was with him.

Now, as the Father was with Christ, and is still with him, so we may hope he is with *you*, communicants. If you would know this, enquire how you stand affected to the Father's presence with Christ, and his presence with you.

1. How stand you affected towards his presence with *Christ*? Doth it gladden your heart to think that Christ was not alone, because the Father was with him? The more your heart is gladdened with a view of this, the more have you of the Father's presence with you; for, what should make you glad on this account, if it be not that you are anointed with the oil of joy and gladness; I mean with the Spirit of the Father, that rested upon the Son? O bless God for this mark of his presence! I hardly know a better token of God's presence; and glad

glad may your heart be on this ground, for the Father gladly anointed with that Spirit; and glad was Christ when this oil was poured out upon him; for thereby, he was assured, that the Father was with him. And if you be glad at the heart, to think that the Father was with him, you so far share of the joy and gladness of the Father and the Son, even by that Spirit that proceeds from them both. Again,

2. How stand you affected to the Father's presence with you? How like you his presence in three respects? Do you love to be with him? that is, to be *in* with him, to be *one* with him, and to be *up* with him. I shall explain what I mean. Do you love to be *in* with him, in point of agreement and reconciliation? *Two cannot walk together except they be agreed.* Do you love to be *in* with him, in favour with him, and would rather be out with all the world than not to be *in* with God?—Again, Do you love to be *one* with him in point of union, according to Christ's prayer to the Father, John xvii. 21. *That they may be one in us?* How do you affect and relish this oneness?—And again, Do you love to be *up* with him; I mean, in the mount of communion? If you cannot say with full assurance, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son;* yet, can you say, Truly this is a privilege I would prefer to thousands of gold and silver? And is it the desire of your souls, not only to dwell in the higher house, and so to be *ever with the Lord*; but even to dwell with him here below, saying, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple?* Is it your heart's desire to bed and board with him? To *bed* with him, by lying in his bosom; and to *board* with him, by living on his bounty, and feasting upon his love?

O how many sweet ways of being with him are expressed in scripture! You may observe which of them suits best with your experience, formerly or presently. His children are said sometimes to *meet* with him, and

he with them ; *The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us.* They are said to *abide* with him, and he with them : our Lord, speaking of his Father and himself, says, *We will come and make our abode with him* : hence their language, even after desertion, *Nevertheless I am continually with thee.* They are said to *stand* with him upon mount Zion. They are said to *sit* with him at his table ; and *when the King sits at his table their spike-nard sends forth the smell thereof.* They are said to *sup* with him ; *I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.* They are said to *walk* with him ; *Walk humbly with thy God.* And sometimes they are said to *wrestle* with him ; yea, and to win the day, while they hold him, and will not let him go out of their arms of faith, love, and prayer ; and, *the King is held in the galleries.* — Hath he been with you, or is he with you any of these ways, and by his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, sanctifying, or comforting presence ? Then, O bless him ! that as Christ was not alone, but had the Father with him ; so you are not alone, but have the Father with you, though friends or brethren have left you alone. O bless him ! if, on this occasion, he hath given you an experimental confutation of the amazing extravagances of these that are presuming to tear our commissions, and warrant for this work ; and saying, upon the matter, *Where is your God ?* You have left him, and he hath left you, and you shall be left alone for us ; yea, excommunicate and cast out from us : nay, but let them know we are not alone, because the Father is with us. And as an evidence of the Father's Spirit with us, as he was with Christ, let us even cry, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* : Father, recover them from the error of their minds and way, their darkness and delusion : Father, return to them, and *turn back their captivity as streams in the south, &c.*

Well, if God hath been with you on this occasion, then take it as a token for good, that all your *blessings* are blessed ; and that you are *blessed in your basket and store* : as a token that all your *crosses* are sanctified, as being the fruits and effects of covenanted love ; *Whom*
 he

he loveth he chasteneth : as a token that all your *wants* are made up, though all worldly comforts should be removed ; *He is God alt-sufficient* : as a token that all your *sins* are pardoned ; for, he is present as a sin-pardoning God ; *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee* : as a token also that all your *prayers* are accepted, as well as your persons ; for, *you are accepted in the Beloved* : and as a token that all your *fears* are groundless : for, he says, *Fear not, for I am with you*. All things therefore shall work together for your good, be they never so frightful like ; he will make the wrath of men and devils to praise him, and to profit you, because he is with you. You need fear no evil, though you were passing through the valley of the shadow of death, because he is with you. What ground of fear can you have, when he says, *Fear not, for I am with thee ; I will not leave thee* ? Yea, though you were left of all men, as Christ was, yet what he said, you have right to say, *Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me*.

SERMON

S E R M O N CXXXVII.

The HAPPY VICTOR; or, SAINTS more
than CONQUERORS*.

ROMANS viii. 37.

*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors,
through him that loved us.*

GLORIOUS things are spoken in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from verse 28. concerning the love and goodness of God to his chosen people, in the co-operation of all things for their good; and that by virtue of a golden chain, reaching from eternity, in their predestination; to eternity, in their glorification: in contemplation whereof the apostle breaks out in proposing two questions, full of comfort, ver. 31. The first is, *What shall we say to these things?* How glorious are they! And the next is, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* We may bid a defiance to all our opposers. This text I have read, relates not only to these, but especially to other two questions, that are both high notes of triumph and encouragement; and the first is a question of triumph and encouragement against all *sin and guilt*, ver. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* It is God that justifieth: *who is he that condemneth?* It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, &c. The second is a question of triumph and encouragement against all *sorrows and afflictions*, ver. 35, 36. *Who shall*

* This sermon was preached on a thanksgiving-day, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Kinross, Aug. 14th, 1749. It hath undergone six impressions.

separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.)

All these questions import a strong negation; who can be *against* us? Who can *charge* us? Who can *condemn* us? Who can *separate* us? Can men or devils do it? No; none can do it. But the apostle rests not in the negative, but proceeds to the positive determination of the point: *Nay*, says he, *in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.*

In these words we have, 1. A *victory* proclaimed; *Nay*, in all these we are more than conquerors. 2. The *ground* of it, it is *through him that loved us.*

1st, A *victory* proclaimed: where it is, 1. Asserted; *We are conquerors.* 2. It is amplified; *We are more than conquerors.*

1. It is asserted; *We are conquerors*: that is, we are victors and overcomers, as believers are frequently called, Revelation, second and third chapters; *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, &c.* Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things.*

2. It is amplified; *Nay, we are more than conquerors.* There is none so humble as a true believer, and yet none so confident even in the most desperate cases; though yet upon the most safe and solid grounds. It is with holy boasting the apostle speaks; as if he had said, Let not our enemies think, when they have done their utmost, that they have won the day, and got us ruined; *Nay, we are conquerors, and more than conquerors*; even conquerors to the greatest advantage, and double gainers by the battle.

2dly, The *ground* of the victory, is, *through Christ that loved us.*—The ground of the conquest is astonishing! How come we who are believers, united to Christ, justified and sanctified in him, to be more than conquerors? Why, it is *through grace* we are what we are; it is not through our own strength, but through *Christ's strengthening us we can do all things.* But the attribute through which, in a special manner, the glorious victory is obtained, is that attribute of *love*: this

title of Christ was very familiar to the apostle; *He loved me, and gave himself for me*; and here the apostle chooses to speak of Christ's love, more than any thing else, because all that ever Christ did for us, issued in so many grains and branches from this great root of love; and all our victories are owing to the banner of love he places over our head, Song ii. 4. *He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love*; intimating, that as we are not to think strange to hear of a banquet and a battle at the same time; for, a feast of love, and the fight of faith are very sib: so the victory is only to be obtained under the banner of love, or owing to him that loved us. This shews,

1. The *deficiency* of our own strength; it is no where said in the whole scriptures, that we fight in our own strength, far less that we *overcome*; and least of all that we are *more* than conquerors; but only through Christ that loved us, and that must do all for us.

2. It denotes the *efficiency* of his strength in our behalf, and the power and efficacy of his love: it is strong as death, and conquered death itself for us; *Thro' him, then, we are more than conquerors.*

OBSERV. *Christ is a lover, through whom every true believer, in all cases, be they never so hard, is more than a conqueror.* NAY, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS, &c.

The method we propose for handling this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following.

- I. To speak of the *Christian conqueror*.
- II. Of his being *more* than a conqueror.
- III. The *grounds* of the conquest, *viz.* the *love of Christ*.
- IV. Deduce *inferences* for the *application*.

I. We are to speak of the *Christian conqueror*. Two things seem necessary here to be considered, *viz.* (1.) The *enemies* he conquers. (2.) The *nature* and *import* of the conquest.

1st, As to the *enemies* that the believer overcomes and conquers.

1. The first enemy is *sin*: sin is the grave of all our mercies, and the mother of all our miseries; and it hath a twofold power that must be overcome, a *condemning* power, that binds the sinner over to eternal death and wrath; and a *polluting* power, that makes the soul ugly and abominable in the sight of a holy God: but the believer overcomes both these; the one, *viz.* the *guilt* of sin, he overcomes *completely* by justification; and the other, *viz.* the *pollution* of sin, he overcomes *gradually* by sanctification: this conquest is asserted in the foregoing part of the chapter, particularly, ver. 30.

2. The *world* must be conquered, and all the friendly blandishments thereof: for, the *friendship of this world is enmity against God.* It is hard to stand against such an adversary, because here we have temptations suited to all our natural inclinations, 1 John ii. 19. If we are for carnal pleasures, here are *the lusts of the flesh* to wallow in; if we value ourselves for riches and full coffers, here are *the lusts of the eye*; if we be for honour, here is *the pride of life* presenting itself.—But these are what believers must overcome.

3. The *devil* is an enemy most powerful, spiritual, and subtle, we have to conquer: his great design is to tempt us to the practice of sin, and to hinder the exercise of grace, and to destroy immortal souls: for, *he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*: but he that establisheth Zion, on a lasting foundation, hath promised that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; he hath promised to *bruise Satan under our feet*; and his promise is like a mountain of brass that cannot be removed.

4. *Raging persecutors* are enemies to be conquered; or *personal enemies*, that are Satan's instruments; being either wicked men, that are confederates with Satan; or wickedly disposed men, though otherwise gracious, as Job's friends, Aaron and Miriam, &c. Acts xiii. 50. The believer overcomes, either by well-doing, or well-suffering: Sometimes by well doing, which is a notable

conquest, 1 Peter ii. 15. *For, so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Thus says the apostle, Rom. xii. 20, 21. *If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head; if not coals of conversion to melt him, yet they will be stones of confusion to astonish him, and consume him, and burn him up.* Sometimes we overcome *personal* enemies also by well-suffering; a Christian conquers by patience, constancy, and resolution, and perseverance, in the faith; the saints have conquered, even by *suffering unto death*, Rev. xii. 11.

5. They have *personal afflictions* to conquer; such as these mentioned in the two preceding verses; *viz.* tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. The godly are liable to these evils; but they are helped to conquer, by looking beyond the hatred of men, that have a sinful hand therein, to the love of God, who hath a sovereign hand; and so looking on them as loving chastisements, and signatures of adoption: by faith they can see God venting his love, even in these things wherein men may be venting their rage, revenge, and resentment.— There are three ways further whereby personal afflictions are conquered, either by prevention of them, or by cheerfulness under them, or by profiting by them:

(1.) Sometimes by *prevention* of them, as when the Lord either prevents and diverts the *dint* of the stroke, that it shall not fall, or the *damage* of it, that it shall not harm, as it is said, Prov. xxvi. 2. *The curse causeless shall not come.*

(2.) Sometimes they conquer these afflictions by *cheerfulness* under them: men are conquered so far as they are dejected and cast down, and when their hearts, like Nabal's, die within them; but they are conquerors, so far as they are hearty and courageous in a spiritual sense, having the *Spirit of God and glory resting on them*; and are enabled to rejoice in tribulation; and are delivered from fainting in the day of adversity — This cheerfulness is not only a natural affection, but a spi-

spiritual grace : Paul and Silas did sing praises in the prison ; and the *apostles rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake*, Acts v. 41. A believer is a conqueror over his afflictions by contentment ; when *troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. And again,

(3.) They conquer by their *profiting* by affliction : then have we the better of affliction, when we are the better by them, and *get meat out of the eater*. The believer looks upward to the providence of God, and he looks inward to his own heart, that he may improve, and get all sanctified, sweetened, and blessed to him. Thus a man may have benefit even by his adversaries, whether they will or not, which is the greatest victory over them.

6. The last enemy they have to be conquered, is *death*, 1 Cor. xv. 26. ; and over this enemy also the believer shall be victorious. Death shall not be able to separate Christ and him, as you see in the verses following the text ; nay, death makes the union the more close. This union begins to be more perfect at death, as to the soul of the believer ; for it wins nearer to him when it enters into glory ; and the body being still united to Christ, rests in the grave till the resurrection, when both soul and body shall be blessed with the full enjoyment of him. Hence the song of triumph over death and the grave, *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?—But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

2dly, As to the *nature* and *import* of the conquest : believers being conquerors, supposes and imports these following things,

1. That they have got some *saving acquaintance* with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned the old general, the devil, under whose standard all the children of men are still fighting, before they enlist with Christ ; but the believer is one that hath deserted the devil's camp, and listed himself a soldier of Christ, in whom

he sees all the magazine of military provision, and all the furniture for the spiritual war; having no expectation of reaching this victory by himself, or any creature, but only by the Spirit of Christ, he expects to *mortify the deeds of the body*, and to *bruise the head of the serpent*, knowing that *not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit* must the victory be obtained.

2. The conqueror is one that resolves upon, and hath some acquaintance with the *warfaring life* of the Christian; that this life is a fighting life: the conquest supposes a battle, and weapons of war, and a putting on the whole armour of God; *I have fought the good fight*, says Paul: I have had hell and devils to fight against; but now I have overcome, and arrived at the crown. The conqueror knows, that the Christian life is one of the sweetest of lives, and yet one of the sharpest of lives, in several respects; for, they that would follow Christ must not expect to be always in the *mount* to behold him transfigured before them; they must come sometimes down to the *valley* and fight; and, perhaps, as Paul said, *Fight with beasts at Ephesus*: they must not expect still to sail with a fair wind, but oftentimes to sail in the dark, and in a storm, when Christ seems to be absent. This resolution of a warfaring life, would arm the Christian against many stumbling-blocks, and prevent fainting when the trial comes to a height, and saying, *Why am I thus?*

3. The conqueror is one that is acquaint with the *nature* of the war; that it is spiritual, and that the weapons are *not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*, &c.; that it is managed through grace, and that sometimes by flying, sometimes by fighting, and sometimes by watching.

(1.) Sometimes by *flying*; a Christian soldier may conquer by flying; *Fly fornication*, says the apostle: fly from sin and you fight against it; fly from both inward and outward abominations, drunkenness, whoredom, lying, cheating, Sabbath-breaking, ill-company; *shunning all appearance of evil*: it is dangerous to parly with temptation, or to reason with the devil, whether

you

you should venture on such a sin, or not; for, though you should mustor up arguments, yet you may find the devil a better politician than you. But there are some evils you cannot fly from; and therefore,

(2.) *Fighting* must take place: when you cannot get fled, the next best is to stand your ground; *Put on the whole armour of God, that you may stand against the wiles of the devil*, Eph. vi. 12. *Stand fast in the faith*, with an intire dependence upon Christ for new recruits of grace and strength from him; for, *We are not sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God: I live, yet not I*, says the apostle, *but Christ liveth in me*; even so, may a believer say, *I overcome, yet not I, but Christ overcome for me.*

(3.) By *watching*; *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* The work of a centinel is not to fight but to watch the enemy's approach; and when he sees them, he tells the captain, and prays him to draw out his forces to oppose them, and so conquers: even so, the Christian soldier may conquer by watching; and upon the approach of temptation, praying the Captain of salvation to come with help against the enemy. The conqueror is acquaint with the war by flying, fighting, and watching.

4. The conqueror is one that is acquaint with, and his conquest imports acquaintance with, the *power* and *policy* of his spiritual enemies, and with the *means* of the victory, and the *way* of using the spiritual weapons. Such acquaintance hath he with the power and policy of the enemy, that he hath had the sad experience of many foils and falls in the battle; yea, the saints may lose many battles, though they win the war at last: the liveliest of the saints may have some deadness; the holiest, have some sin; most humble have some pride, the most spiritual and heavenly, have some earthliness and carnality; and the most denied, have some self: hence they may be frequently overcome, and lose their liveliness, though not their life altogether. It is true, the doctrine of the foils and falls of believers may be dangerous to the secure, and a rock of offence to them over which they may stumble. "Why, say they, I
" and

“ am daily overcome by sin, and my heart dead like a
 “ stone in prayer; but my blessing on the minister,
 “ that tells me, Believers may be just like me; and
 “ so I conclude myself to be among the number of be-
 “ lievers, and hope to be saved, as well as the best.”
 O beware, man, lest this kind of reasoning prove your
 spot, to be none of the spots of God’s children; a faint
 may be foiled and fall, but he will not ly among the
 dirt, nor wallow in the puddle, like a swine in the mire;
 but struggles, like a sheep in the mire, and be restless
 till he get out.

The believer also is one that knows the *way* and
means of the victory, viz. the *spiritual armour*; and
 the *way* and *manner* of using these weapons, particularly
 these four,

(1.) The weapon of the *blood* of Christ; *They over-
 come by the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. xii. 11. they know
 that this *blood cleanseth from all sin*, and so washeth a-
 way the enemy as a flood: they make use of this blood,
 as sin-expiating, wrath-appeasing, promise-sealing, and
 victory-purchasing blood.

(2.) The weapon of *faith*; 1 Pet. v. 9. *Whom resist
 stedfast in the faith*. It is by this *shield of faith* they
quench the darts of Satan; yea, *This is the victory
 whereby they overcome the world, even their faith*: and
 by this they overcome the god of this world.

(3.) The next weapon is the *word*, which is the
sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. By this, Christ the
 Captain, defeateth the devil, saying, *It is is written*;
 it is written so and so. When people observe only what
 is said by such and such a man, they are in danger to
 be tempted, and conquered by temptation; but when
 they resist temptation, by minding what is written in
 the word, they overcome.

(4.) The fourth weapon is *prayer*; Matth. xxvi. 41.
Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. This
 weapon Paul used when he *besought the Lord thrice*.
 The prayerless man, is the vanquished man: but as
 long as one can pray in faith, and pray in the Holy
 Ghost, he is armed against the devil, the world, and the
 the

the flesh. The wrestler with God in prayer is the conqueror.

II. The *second* head of the method, was, To shew in what respects believers are *more than conquerors*. The word *ὑπερνικῶμεν* is very emphatic, and such as we cannot easily reach in our language; it is as if we should say, *We over-over-come*. Now, I shall shew, in eight or ten respects, how true believers may be said to be more than conquerors. And,

1. They are more than conquerors, in so far as their *Captain*, who fights for them, is more than *man*, more than a *complete match* for all his enemies. Christ, the Captain of their salvation, is their almighty General: this is the ground of their conquest; it is *through him that loved them*, as we may shew afterward. Only here we may observe, that having him on their side, it may well be said, as in ver. 31. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* And as Elisha said to his servants, 2 Kings ii. 16. *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them:* and when his eyes were opened at the prayer of Elisha, behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

2. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can *glory in their crosses*; and not only bear it with patience, but triumph in it with pleasure, as the cross of Christ; for a man to glory in his own crown is no great matter, but to glory in his cross is more than a victory over it: thus did Paul, Gal. vi. 14. when he is opposing himself to the false teachers of his time, who sought to glory in these as their converts, whom they could persuade to be circumcised, and to submit to the legal yokes they wreathed about their necks; but, says Paul, *God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* Thus were the apostles more than conquerors, when they could *glory in tribulation*, Rom. v. 3. and *rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake*, Acts vi. 41.

3. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer the *greatest enemies* in a little time; and with the least ado, or with little strength; and by very weak and feeble means. Amongst men it is usual for that party that hath the greatest forces to carry the day: but take a view of grace when first cast into the soul, particularly faith, it is but *like a grain of mustard seed*: it is like nothing, were it not for the strength of Christ that helps and makes it victorious. If a great army conquer a small handful, it is but a victory; but if a small handful, conquer a great army, this is more than a victory: as when that small grain of mustard-seed overtops, and overcomes the whole world; for, *This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* The children of God sometimes conquer with a little strength, and by very weak and feeble means: it is all one to God to conquer by many or few.

4. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can conquer without any *loss* to themselves, but rather gain. When one army defeats another, but with loss of thousands, or of the greatest part of the army, it may be called a victory; but when the one roots the other, without any loss, and with great gain, then it is more than a victory. What does the believer lose, when he conquers the world and its lusts, when he conquers the devil his confederates? Nay, he gains unspeakably by the conquest; for, he *divides the spoil*: he reaps profit and advantage by his tribulations; for, *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad upon his heart, by the Holy Ghost.* They conquer with the least loss, and yet the greatest advantage to themselves.

5. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer to the *greatest loss* and *disadvantage* to the enemy. Their greatest enemies are at first disabled, and at last destroyed. A man may conquer his enemy for the present: but he may recruit and recover again, and fall upon him with a second encounter, and be stronger than ever he was before: but a child of God, in conquering his enemies, not only foils them, but

disables

disables them; for the heaviest stroke the devil and his instruments can give, brings in most profit to them, and does most disable the enemy; as the last stroke the devil gave to our ever-glorious Head, did most of all disable the devil: for, when he bruised the heel of Christ's human nature to death, our Lord gave the serpent's head a kick, as it were, and thereby brake his legal power; for, *By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* Thus the most bloody stroke the enemies give, tends most of all to disable and weaken their power; while the believer renews his strength the more, and *waxes valiant in fighting.* Our Lord Jesus, the Captain, is also to sit at the Father's right-hand, till all his enemies be his foot-stool; and therefore all the believers enemies shall be at last perfectly subdued unto them, sin, and misery, and tribulation, and sickness, and death itself, they shall be all *swallowed up in victory,* 1 Corinth. xv. 54.

6. They are more than conquerors, in regard they can be *sure of the victory* before the war be at an end. What assurance have they of this? Why,

(1.) *Christ*, their Head, hath overcome, and gained the prize already; and there cannot be a victorious head, and a conquered body: if the head be raised, from the dead, the body shall rise. Their final victory is as sure, as *Christ* their Head, is already victorious.

(2.) Their *weapons* are invincible; the *shield of faith*, and the *sword of the Spirit*, cannot fail to be victorious.

(3.) They are assured by the *promise* of God; for it is promised, that *the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet.*

(4.) They are assured by the *earnest* of the full victory; the Spirit enabling them sometimes to *mortify the deeds of the body*: and as this Spirit is the *earnest of the inheritance*, so the earnest of the full and complete victory. *God is a rock, and his work is perfect*: he hath begun the good work, and will perfect it. If then he

That is assured of the victory before the war was ended, is more than a conqueror, every believer in Christ may be so.

7. They are more than conquerors, in regard that they *conquer*, even when they do *not fight* ; for, even the *rest of God's people is glorious and victorious*, Isaiah xi. 10. They are sometimes called just to stand still, and see the salvation of God ; *Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace*, Exod. xvi. 13, 14. *The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong* : but when his children only go to the field of battle, he just takes their work and warfare off their hand, as the church, Song ii. 3. *I sat down under his shadow* ; thereafter it follows, *He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love*. He took me off my own hand ; *His own arm got him the victory*.

8. They are more than conquerors, in regard they *conquer* when they are *conquered*, and overcome the enemy, even in that wherein the enemy thought to have overcome. Any man can overcome in his victories ; but the child of God overcomes in his foils and defeats, that he meets with ; his very losses themselves are victorious : what enemies design for their greatest overthrow and debasement, issues in their greatest honour and advancement ; *But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*, Genesis i. 20. He overcomes even there where he is beaten and overthrown. And hence these things that seem to be the means of *ruining*, are the means of *raising* him ; yea, matter of gloriation : *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak, then am I strong : his strength is made perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Hence also here the apostle says, *In all these things we are more than conquerors*. What things are these ? You see them in the preceding verse, *Tribulation, distress,*
per-

persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. These things which seem to be so distant and remote from conquering, so opposite and contrary to conquest, even in all these things we are more than conquerors. The devil's aim, in all the sufferings of God's children, is to draw them off from Christ, to make them murmur and despair, and desert their colours; but in this he is defeated and disappointed: for, God inspires his children with such a generous and noble spirit, that sufferings abate not their zeal and patience, but rather increase it; as one of Julian's nobles said to him, "We Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the more bold and resolute." Thus they beat their enemies with their own weapons.

9. They are more than conquerors, in regard that they conquer and overcome themselves: *Fortior est, qui se quam qui fortissima vincit, mania:* "He that can, thro' grace, conquer himself, is more than he that can conquer a castle." *He that ruleth over his own spirit, is more than he that taketh a city,* Prov. xvi. 31. Here is a notable conquest, for a man to have a command and victory over himself, and his own heart; for, it enables him easily to defeat all other oppositions: this we could never do, if we do not conquer ourselves; for, he that is a slave to his lusts, will be a slave to his enemies: he that never conquers his carnal affections, will never conquer his crosses and afflictions. The carnal natural man is a captive to every temptation that he meets with; he is like a city without walls, that is easily taken. Where the strong holds of sin in the heart are pulled down, other enemies would be the sooner subdued; *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries,* Psal. lxxxix. 13, 14. This is the way to get adversaries subdued; *He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,* Rev. ii. 26, 27.

10. In a word, *lastly,* They are more than conquerors, in regard they conquer HIM that is unconquerable,

able, and overcome him that is invincible. The children of God, to speak with holy reverence, do in some respects conquer GOD himself; and that two ways, namely, by the *beauty* of their graces, and the *efficacy* of their prayers.

(1.) By the *beauty* and *loveliness* of their graces, which he himself hath adorned them with; *Turn away thine eyes from me; for they have overcome me*, Song vi. 5. These are the words of Christ to his spouse, the church of true believers: *Thine eyes*; that is, the beauty and lustre of thy graces: Christ is in a manner charmed and ravished with the graces of his own Spirit in his people; *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart, with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck*, Song iv. 9.

(2.) By the *efficacy* of their prayers; the prayer of faith holds his hands, as it were, and will not let him go; as one says, *Ligat omnipotentem, vincit invincibilem*: “It binds him that is omnipotent, and overcomes him that is invincible.” He suffers a holy humble wrestler to command him; *Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons; and concerning the works of my hands command ye me*, Isa. xlv. 11. It is said of Jacob, *He held him, and would not let him go*, till he blessed him; and hence is said, as a *prince*, to have *prevailed with God*, and to have had *power over the angel*: and so much was signified in the change of his name from JACOB to ISRAEL.—How prevalent was Moses’ prayer, when God said, *Let me alone!* How powerful was the prayer of Elijah and Elisha! God gives himself up to be bound and held by their prayers; and thus *the King is held in the galleries*.

This victory, in prevailing with God, is the great foundation of all other victories. They that can conquer God, and bring him to their will, may soon conquer every thing else: having him for their friend, they need not care who be their enemies. They that can prevail with God, and have power with the Most High, may grapple with all encounters; and are vastly more than conquerors over all other things. But now,

III. The *third* general head, was, To speak to the *ground* of this conquest; it is *through Christ* we are more than conquerors. How? *Through him that loved us*; even through this glorious and mighty Lover.— This name of Christ, as our Lover, through whom we are more than conquerors, imports these following things.

1. The *humble frame* of the believing conqueror. To boast of being *more than conquerors*, looks very big; and seems to smell of self-confidence and presumption; therefore it is here corrected and qualified, namely, *through him that loved us*; and through his strength and power. The conquest we have over sin and suffering is not from ourselves, or our own strength; no: we may say, *Thanks be to God which gives us the victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 57. And as Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 17. *No man stood with me, nevertheless, the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me*; and it is through him strengthening that we can do all things: *I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me*. When we are in a cheerful frame, we are ready, with Peter, to be too confident of our own strength; and this is dangerous: for then we grieve his Spirit by presumption; and he is thereby provoked to grieve our spirit by desertion, and withdrawing of his Spirit from us: to prevent this in Paul, *a thorn in his flesh, and messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him*; because it is better to be under the power of an affliction, than under the power of a lust.

2. The expression imports a *suitable name and title* given to the Captain of salvation, through whom we are more than conquerors: he is described from his *love*; and, indeed, by this name, as our Lover and Friend, he is best known to us. This name we frequently meet with in the sacred records: *He loved his church, and gave himself for it*, Eph. v. 25. *Who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. *Who loved us, and washed us in his blood*, Rev i. 5. The apostle mentions *troubles and afflictions*, things seemingly opposite to *love*; therefore it was pertinent, for the preventing of mistakes, to set forth Christ in his love.

3. It imports, that love was the *spring* that moved him to make us *conquerors*, and *more than conquerors*. Love made him take on our nature, 2 Corinth. viii. 9. *Though he was rich, yet, you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich* ; that is, though he was God, yet he became man, in rich grace and love towards us ; *Though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation*, Phil. ii. 6, 7. And, indeed, that he should marry our nature to his own, and take it into the union and subsistence of his own divine person, it was the lowest abasement on his part, and the highest advancement on ours ; *In this was manifested the love of Christ towards us*. His being born, living, dying, rising, and redeeming us, were all the effects and results of his love, whereby we become conquerors.

4. *Through him that loved us*, it imports, the *power* and *efficacy* of his love, and the conquering *nature* thereof : his *love was strong as death*, and conquered death, and came off victorious ; and through him this last enemy shall be destroyed : for, his love conquered all the curses of the law ; he *being made a curse for us* ; it conquered the *wrath of God*, and underwent this for us. This love of his conquers all our *guilt*, and takes us, with all the guilt we have. His love conquers our *unwillingness* to take him, and conquers our *willingness* to depart from him. Here was the greatest difficulty and obstacle imaginable ; yet love came skipping over all these mountains. His love hath fought the battle and gained it, so as we have nothing ado, but chase and pursue the conquered foe.

5. *Through him that loved us*, it imports, that love is the *principle* of his assistance that he gives us in the war. —Not only did love buy the weapons, for he bought grace at the rate of his precious blood ; but love confers and puts on the weapons. His love rubs off the rust off the weapons : when they are out of use, he blows on our graces with a fresh gale, a rousing north-wind,

wind, or a refreshing south-wind: he gives strength to exercise grace, and to *go from strength to strength*; and carries on the victory to perfection, making *the feeble as David*, and *David as the angel of the Lord*, Zech. xii. 8. Our strength is God alone. There are three things that in love he gives us for our assistance in the conquest over sin and affliction both, namely, his example, his word, his Spirit

(1.) His *example*; 1 Peter ii. 21. *Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.* He hath conquered before us, having *spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross*, Col. ii. 15. He tells us, *In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*: and therefore we are required to keep our eye upon him; *Looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, &c.* Consider him that *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds*, Heb. xii. 2, 3. His victory makes for ours.

(2.) His *word* is what in love he gives us; and in this he goes forth *conquering and to conquer*: it is his chariot of triumph; *Now, thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, making known the favour of his knowledge by us in every place*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. Hence it is said, 1 John ii. 14. *Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you*; and that in all the kinds of it, threatenings, precepts, and promises. This was the weapon whereby Christ foiled Satan, so and so it is written; and so must we overcome, even by *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

(3.) The *Spirit* is what in love he gives for our assistance in the war.—He enables us to conquer by his Spirit, that dwelleth in us. The apostle John, speaking of Antichrist and seducing spirits, says, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*, 1 John iv. 4. It is by this victorious Spirit of Christ, that first we ourselves are conquered, and then are conquerors,

and enabled to conquer all other things: we are first conquered and overcome in the powerful work of conversion; and then, by the same Spirit, he works in us all conquering and commanding graces, whereby we may be able to overcome.—He works the grace of *faith*, which is a conquering grace; for, *this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. This faith doth, by apprehending and laying hold on Christ, and drawing strength and virtue from him: whatever power there is in Christ himself, that power is interpretatively in faith, which is nothing but an improving, and making use of that power of Christ.—He works *love*, which is another conquering grace; for, *love is strong as death*; and constrains the soul to fight under the banner of love, and overcome.—He works *humility*: and as there is nothing nearer ruin than pride; so nothing is nearer victory than humility: God himself *resists the proud*, and gives battle against it; but he *gives grace to the humble*, and succeeds with it.—He works also the grace of *patience*; and this earnestly encounters with the greatest evils: he conquers that suffers.

6. *Through him that loved us we are more than conquerors*, it imports, that *the faith of his love* influences the conquest: whenever we look to the *banner of love*, that he causes to be carried over our head, then we conquer, and are more than conquerors, *in all these things*; even in all tribulations and distresses: I think there is an emphasis here, intimating, the believer's safety in the midst of trouble, under the broad banner of love: here is not only a conquest *over* all these things; but a conquest, and more than a conquest, *in* all these things, even while we are in the midst of them. Why? because our heavenly Lover spreads his banner of love over us; and it is a banner so extensive that it stretches itself over all these things, while we are in the midst of them, so as we are not only safe *from them*, when they are over; but safe *in them*, while they are burning like fire about us, and we like the burning bush amidst the fire. Why, the banner of love that is over us, is over all

all these things that would annoy us; over all the flames of the fiery furnace that would consume us. His love is extensive love, that spreads itself over all these things, that in them all we may be conquerors, and more than conquerors. Let these tribulations, be never so extensive, never so high, never so deep, never so broad, never so long, the love of Christ is more extensive, being a love that hath a height, a depth, a breadth, and a length unutterable; even as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as time, as long as eternity.

Therefore, what shall I tell you, Sirs? Something more honourable can be said of the believer's conquest on earth, than can be said of the glorious conquerors about the throne in heaven: the church *triumphant* above may be said, through him that loved them, to be more than conquerors *above* all these things, and *above* all tribulations, *above* all distresses, *above* all persecutions, *above* all perils and swords, *above* all the killing swords of human fury and violence; but something more honourable yet can be said of the *militant* church below, and of the poor believer, that hath the faith of the love of Christ, that he is more than a conqueror, even *in* all these things, in *all* these tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and swords of violence, when *troubled on every side, yet not distressed*, nor defeated, but defeating, and conquering, and gaining more than a victory.

How this? Even because they can see what the redeemed above can see no more; that is, when they see *the banner of love over them*, they see it extended so far as to see love *in* these tribulations, love *in* these distresses, love *in* these persecutions; fatherly love, even in, and over-topping all these rods of his anger that may be filled with the fury of men, yet fraughted with the love of God, who says, *Fury is not in me.*—Thus through him that loved us, and through him as our Lover, and in the faith of his love, we are more than conquerors; the glorious victory is wholly owing to the Lord our Lover: love leads the van; love fights the battle; love carries the day; and under this banner we are more than conquerors.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, was, To make some *application*. If it be so, as we have said, hence see,

1. That the *Christian life* in this world, is not only a wayfaring, but a *warfaring* life. The conquest supposes a battle ; *If any man will live godly in Christ, he must suffer persecution ;* he must resolve to fight, and not to ly in a whole skin, or to live an idle life. The apples of paradise will not drop into our mouth without any toil, or trouble, or pains : *Strait is the gate that leadeth unto life ;* and there must be a *striving* to enter, and striving in earnest, in sad earnest ; for, *many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able,* Luke xiii. 24. ; *i. e.* they who only *seek*, but do not *strive* ; for violence must be used : *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

2. Hence see the *dignity* and *excellency* of all true believers. The world looks upon them as contemptible, and easily conquered, and overcome ; and therefore every person is ready to tread upon them, and trample them under foot : nay, but they are conquerors, and more than conquerors, and can triumph over all opposition. A true believer is one like a *king, against whom there is no rising up,* Prov. xxx. 31. unconquerable : he is a prince that prevaieth with God ; and who can prevail against him when he is in good terms with God ? He may be conquered in his *person*, but cannot be conquered in his *cause* ; that will always hold out : the apostle Paul was neither conquered in his *cause*, nor conquered in his *spirit*, Acts xx. 24. *Bonds and afflictions, says he, abide me ; but yet none of these things move me.* So may all the true and faithful servants of Christ, thro' grace, preserve themselves in a courageous frame of spirit.

3. Hence see what ground of comfort and encouragement it is to the *faithful servants* and *followers* of Christ, that they stand not by their own strength and power, but by the power of Christ ; their conquering is not from themselves, but only from him : *We are conquerors through him that loved us ;* mark it, Sirs : he says not, *Through him whom we love,* which might be

be truly said ; but then it would have seemed to attribute somewhat of our victory to ourselves, and our love to him, which would have taken very much off from the sweetness and efficacy of the comfort and consolation, as if our victory depended upon us ; but *through him that loved us* ; this gives the glory of it all to Christ : *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory,* Psalm cxv. 1.

4. Hence see this victory proceeds from the *love* of Christ, which draws out his power. *By his own strength shall no man prevail*, but by the strength of Christ, under his banner of love. Our conquest springs from his unspeakable love. *Nothing*, says the text, *shall separate us from the love of Christ* ; Why ? Because his love is so prevalent for us, as to unite us, and keep us close to himself ; this being the nature of love, especially of divine love, to join itself to us, to join us to it, and so to preserve what is joined to it. It is from his love that he afflicts us ; and it is from his love that he strengthens us, and enables us to endure affliction.—Many are ready to judge of God's love by other things, as by corn, wine, and oil they enjoy from him ; but it is best to try and discover his love by this fruit of it, namely, in the matter of victory, especially over our spiritual enemies : What strength have we to resist temptations ? What ability to subdue corruptions ? What power to submit to afflictions ? What fortitude to bear up under, and glory in tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and to make a sanctified and holy use and improvement of them ?—Here is a discovery of Christ's love to us.

5. Hence see what matter of comfort it is to *fighting believers*, who, though their life be a fighting under the cross, both without and within ; it is much for him, even to overcome himself, and his own unbelief, impenitency, and selfishness ; and though he has his own difficulties in this *fight of faith*, yet he is so much more than a conqueror, that his victory is not dubious, but certain and manifest : the devil is legally disarmed, and evidently disappointed : the victory that the be-
liever

believer hath in Christ is won, and cannot be lost again; it is a sure and continuing victory; for, whatever hurt or damage the church and people of God may receive, by a particular assault from a present cross, a fiery dart, or a frightful temptation, yet it is sure they shall have the full and absolute victory in the close. The light of nature, the Pagan philosophy, could never carry men beyond a doubt about their future happiness: the famous Aristotle is said, in view of death, to have expressed himself thus, *Anxius vixi, dubius morio, nescio quo vado*: “I have lived in anxiety, I am dying in doubtfulness, and know not where I am going.”—But you, believer, in Christ, may be sure upon the word and oath of God, Heb. vi. 17,—20. where you are going: you need neither live nor die in doubt, if you live and die in the faith. The victory is not dubious: the *crown of life* is sure to him that is *faithful unto death*.

6. Hence see, that *proud and wicked persecutors* take a *hard task*, and an *ill trade* in hand, to fight against the faithful servants and people of God. The sons of pride and violence will come off with shame and disgrace; but the people of God, the children of light, will come off with honour and victory: *Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at the word, your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: they killed you, under pretence of doing God service, saying, with a solemnity, Let God be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed*, Isaiah lxvi. 5. Happy the followers of the Lamb, who are lifted under his banner, they may be oppressed, troubled, persecuted, they may be separated from the society of men, and ranked amongst devils; but can tribulation and distress, can persecution or sword, separate them from the love of Christ? Nay, by no means: *Nay, in all these things they are more than conquerors.*—Men may wickedly curse, and commit them to the devil: but the devil will not take the prey; but be obliged to cry out, saying, *Surely there is no incantment against Jacob, nor divination*

tion against Israel: according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, *What hath God wrought?* Numb. xxiii. 23.

7. Hence see what an *useful name* our Lord Jesus Christ bears in relation to us, even when we are in the field of battle; why, the name of the Captain is a *Lover* of ours; for, the conquest is *through him that loved us*, whose love is the *victorious banner*, under which we are *more than conquerors*; and that even in all these things that bear the image of hatred. When men are haters, he is a lover; their hatred is a killing hatred, but his love is a conquering love, over all their tyranny and treachery.—This name of his tells us how he *conquers*, and by what engine, namely, that of *love*; and how we may conquer, namely, by believing his love, and imitating his love.—This name of his tells us how we may get *amends* of our persecutors, and how to be more than conquerors over them, even by following the example of Christ, who conquered them that murdered him, by praying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. We conquer our persecutors, and have the better of them, when we do them *good for evil*, and *blest them that curse us*, and do *good to them that persecute us*, and *despitefully use us*; then we have the day of them, and *heap coals of fire on their head*, which will either melt them down, or burn them up; either convert, or consume them.—This name tells us, that they *mistake much*, who think that tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and a drawn sword against us, are signs of God's hatred; nay, it is the direct contrary: for, his love mixing with all these things, is the ground of our victory, and the cause why in all these things we are more than conquerors. When the viper fastened upon Paul's hand, the ignorant people thought it was a sign of God's hatred, and that he was a murderer, whom vengeance would not suffer to live; tribulations, distresses, persecutions, perils, and swords, are vipers that may fasten upon God's children; but think not the worse, but rather the better of them; because they may be rather signs of love than of ha-

ted: they shall shake off the viper into the fire, and catch no harm.

8. Hence then let us see the *duty* both of *saints* and *sinners*.

(1.) The duty of *saints*, that are Christian foldiers, and would desire not only to be so, but also triumphant conquerors. In order to this, it is your duty to keep your eye upon your general, *Christ*, and serve yourselves heirs to his victories, believing his love, and fighting under his banner, remembering that it is the fight of faith you are called to; therefore, you are to fight in the faith of his love; your valiant Captain is a vehement lover of yours; therefore, aim at believing in him, by *sitting down under his shadow*, Song ii. 3.; and then, though you have no strength in your own hand, he will take you off your own hand, and that both for provision and protection, as he did the spouse in the following verse: as to provision, you shall have it to say, *He brought me to the banquetting-house*; and as to protection, that *his banner over me was love*: and in both he will take you off your own hand; for when you essay *stretching out the withered hand*, or endeavour to *sit down under his shadow*, or in the use of appointed means to be *active*, then he will make you sweetly *passive*, by taking you up in his arms; *He brought me to his banquetting-house*; and by lifting up his banner over your head, *his banner over me was love*. In this way you cannot fail not only to be more than conquerors in the issue, but even in the midst of all your adversaries, and adversities; *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us*. Live under this conquering banner.

(2.) See the duty of *sinners* that are strangers to this glorious and victorious Captain of salvation, through whom all believers and lovers of him are more than conquerors through his love: you are yet slaves to sin and Satan, captives to the world, and the flesh, and the lusts thereof, warring against God; but, *who can harden himself against God and prosper?* Your duty is, if you would not live and die in captivity to sin and Satan, and remain in perpetual slavery and misery

fery, O come and inlist with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, that through him you may become conquerors over sin, and Satan, and death, and misery.

I have a ministerial commission, which neither men nor devils can take from me, and it is to take on soldiers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to call them to come under his banner of love: his name is the Lord that loved us, he is a lover of ours, even of mankind sinners; and he courts you with his love, with a word of love, and a word of reconciliation. What! Is he willing to receive such a rebel as I am! Yea, he not only *says* he is willing, *Whosoever will let him come, and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out*: but he *swears* that he is willing; *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners*: as sure as death will be in earnest with you ere long, so sure is he in earnest, praying you to be reconciled to him.

O enemy, will you henceforth lift up arms of rebellion against that God who hath thrown down his arms of war and wrath against you, saying, in Christ, *I am pacified toward you, for all that you have done*? What! pacified in Christ toward you! And, for shame! will you not be pacified, or at peace with him? If you will not be drawn to him with these cords of love, nor conquered to him with the power of his love, to your eternal salvation, you shall be conquered by the power of his wrath, to your eternal perdition: If you would not be crushed with his anger in the day of wrath, O refuse not to be conquered with his love in the day of grace. O Sirs, slighted mercy will bring you to the hottest hell! If this offer of mercy be slighted, it will gall you to the heart for ever, as the murderer that, when he was to be execute for many murders, confessed, that nothing stared him in the face, nor galled him so much, as his murdering a pleasant child, when it was smiling in his face. Well, will you fight against mercy, when it is smiling in your face, and spurn against the bowels of love that are moving and yearning towards you? If you do so, nothing will torment you in hell so much as this. Therefore remem-

ber his name that is calling you to come to him : to whom is the gospel calling you to come ? It is to him that *loved us* ; it is to a lover. Oh ! will you render him hatred for love ? Is there any here saying, Is there love and mercy for me, for the like of me ? Yea, for the like of you ; though you have been like a devil for enmity against God hitherto. He speaks to you like a God of love ; and if this fire of divine love melt your heart, and conquer your enmity, and draw your heart to him, then you may go away with a glad heart, triumphing in this valiant lover, that was able to win such a heart as yours, and saying, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, thro' him that loved us.*

The END of VOLUME EIGHT.





