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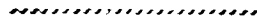
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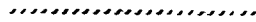
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EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

THOMAS GOODWIN, D.D.

THE
RETURN OF PRAYERS:

A TREATISE,

WHEREIN THIS CASE,

HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS,
IS BRIEFLY RESOLVED.



PSAL. LXXXV. 8.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak. For he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints; but let them not turn again to folly.



THE COHERENCE OF THE WORDS.

THIS psalm was penned in the name and for the comfort of the whole church of the Jews, both as a prophecy of, and a prayer for, their return out of the Babylonish captivity, and the flowing in again of that ancient glory, peace, administration of justice, liberty of God's ordinances, plenty and increase, which formerly they enjoyed, but had now suffered an ebb of seventy years continuance. And first, the psalmist beginneth with prayer, from the first verse to this we have in hand, putting the Lord in mind of, and urging him with his gracious dealings in former times: this is not the first time. saith he,

that the church hath been in captivity, and that thou hast returned it, (as out of Egypt,) and therefore we hope that thou wilt do so again; "Thou hast been favourable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you use to do when you expect an echo, what answer would be returned from heaven, whither his prayer had already come; "I will hear what the Lord will speak:" Or, as some read it, "I hear what the Lord doth speak." For sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished, as unto Daniel, ch. ix. 20, 21. And in brief it is this, "The Lord will speak peace unto his people." This answer he finds written at the bottom of the petition; but with this clause of admonition for time to come; "But let them not turn again to folly."

CHAP. I.

That God's People are diligently to observe the Answers to their Prayers.

THESE words being especially spoken by the psalmist in relation to the answer of God returned to his prayer, in that relation I mean principally to handle them. And here I shall observe, when a man hath put up prayers to God, he is to rest *assured* that God will answer his prayers, and to listen diligently, and observe how his prayers are answered: "I will hear what God will speak;" that is, how he will accomplish them; and withal he expresseth an assurance that God "will speak peace." So Habakkuk, having made a prayer against the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar, in the first chapter, begins the second thus: "I will stand upon my watch-tower, and see what he will answer me:" And an answer comes verse 2.

And as he thus waited, (for some time their prophecies

were in answer to their prayers,) so should we for an answer unto ours: otherwise you use an ordinance of God in vain; which is to take God's name (with whom in that ordinance you deal,) in vain. For it is a sign you think your prayer not an effectual means to attain that end it is ordained for; and say secretly in your hearts, "What profit have we, if we pray to him?" For if we use any means, and expect not the end, it is a sign we think the means vain to accomplish that end. Whereas every faithful prayer is ordained of God to be a means to obtain what we pray for, and is not put up in vain, but shall have an answer: 1 John v. 14, 15, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." It is true, God heareth an enemy; but to hear with *favour*, is the hearing there meant; and so it follows, that "if he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

As soon as we have prayed, we are said to have our petitions; that is, they are then granted; although, in regard of outward dispensation, the command for accomplishment is not yet come forth. Even as a petitioner is said to have his suit, when the word of the king is gone forth, that it shall be done. As when a wicked man sinneth, as soon as the act is committed, so soon doth sentence from God go forth against the sinner; (though the execution overtakes him not, it may be, for a good while after;) so when a good man prays, as soon as the prayer arrives in heaven, which is in an instant, so soon is the petition granted. So that no prayer, in respect to an answer to it, is in vain; but where God hath given a heart to speak, he hath an ear to hear, and love to return an answer; which not to regard, is to take an ordinance in vain, which is God's name.

And it is not simply to take God's name in vain, as in an ordinance made known, but also his name, that is, his attributes, are taken in vain. For it is a sign you think of that God you pray to, that either "his ear is heavy,

that he cannot hear; or his hand shortened, that he cannot save; or his heart straitened, and his bowels restrained, that he will not." And thus you rob him of one of his most royal titles, whereby he styles himself "a God that heareth prayers;" who is so regardful of them, that, 1 Kings viii. 59, they are said to be "nigh the Lord day and night;" they are all before him, and he sets them in his view as we do letters of friends, which we lay not out of our bosoms, that we might be sure not to forget them: so the petitions of his people pass not out of his sight till he sends an answer, which is called *speaking* here; God speaking as well in his works as in his word.

But you, by your neglect herein, make an idol god of him; such were the *vanities of the heathen*; as if he had "ears and heard not, eyes and saw not" your need: such a god as Elijah mocked; "You must speak aloud," saith he, "he may be in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Even such a god do you make the God of heaven and earth to be, whilst you put no more confidence in him; or make no more reckoning of your prayers to him, than the heathens did of their sacrifices to their gods. Petitioners do not only put up their requests, but use to wait at great men's doors, and inquire what answer is given unto them; and it is part of an honour to great men that we do so; and for the same end we are also to wait on God as an acknowledgment of his *greatness*, and our *distance* from him, and *dependance* upon him. "As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, so do we (saith David,) to thee, till thou hast mercy on us."

Again, if God doth give you an answer, if you mind it not, you let God speak to you in vain. If two men walk together, and the one, when himself hath spoke what he would, listens not, but is regardless of what the other answers, he exceedingly slights the man. As not to answer again is contempt, so also is not to attend to what one says. Now, our speaking to God by prayers, and his

speaking to us by answers, and our comparing our prayers and his answers together, which are as dialogues between us and him, is one great part of our walking with God. It is said of Samuel's prophecy, that "not a word of it fell to the ground:" and so it may be said of our prayers; and so it ought to be of God's answers; "not a word of them should fall to the ground;" as there doth if you observe them not. By the same reason that you are to observe the fulfilling of God's promises, you are of your prayers also. Now, 1 Kings viii. 56, it is said, "Not one word failed of all he promised." Solomon had observed this by a particular survey and register made of all that God had spoken and done for them, and found not a promise unperformed: And there is the like reason both of answers to prayers, (for prayers are but putting promises into suit,) and for our observing of them; and therefore Solomon brings those words in there to this very purpose, to confirm their faith in this, that no prayers made would fail, being grounded on a promise, thereby to encourage others and his own heart to diligence herein.

Yea, if you hearken not to the Lord, you will provoke him not to answer at all; he will forbear to answer, because he sees it will be in vain. When a man is talking to one that listens not to him, he will leave off speaking, and so will God. That which the apostle saith of faith, that it is not enough to believe, but "when you have done the will of God, you have need of patience, that you may inherit the promises," may be also said of praying: It is not enough to pray, but after you have prayed you have need to listen for an answer, that you may receive your prayers; God will not fulfil them else. As he said, "The sermon was not done" when the preacher had done, because it is not done till practised; so our prayers are not done when made, but we must further wait for, and attend the accomplishment.

Farther, if you observe not his answers, how shall you bless God? You are "to watch unto prayer with thanks-

giving:" and therefore, as you are to watch, to observe and recollect your own wants, that you may have matter of requests to put up, so are you also to observe God's answers for matter of thanksgiving. If any study will furnish you this way, it is the studying God's answers to your prayers. The reason you pray so much, and give thanks so little, is, that you mind not God's answers; you do not study them. When we have put up a faithful prayer, God is made our debtor by promise, and we are to take notice of his payment, and give him an acknowledgment of the receipt of it, otherwise he loseth of his glory.

As God loseth, so yourselves also lose the experience which you might get hereby. 1. The experience of God's faithfulness, which will cause in you hope and confidence in God another time, when you have found him again and again answering your prayers. It was a speech of one eminent in holiness, upon occasion of the accomplishment of a great request made to God by him, "I have tried God often; now, (says he,) henceforth I will trust him." So David, Psal. cxvi. 1, 2, "The Lord hath heard me, and I will call upon him as long as I live." 2. By observing God's answers to your prayers, you will gain much insight into your own hearts, and ways, and prayers, and may thereby learn how to judge of them. So, Psal. lxi. 18, 19, David's assurance that he did not regard iniquity in his heart, was strengthened by God's having heard his prayers; for thus he reasons, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me: but God hath heard me." For if God doth not grant your petitions, it will put you to study a reason of that his dealing; and so you will come to search into your prayers and the carriage of your hearts, to see whether you did not pray amiss; according to that, "Ye have not, because ye ask amiss," Jam. iv. 3. As if you send to a friend, who is punctual in returning answers, and you receive no answer from him, you will begin to think there is something in it; so here, when a petition is denied, you will be jealous

of yourselves, and inquisitive what should be the matter, and so by that search come to see *that* in your prayers which you will learn to mend the next time. Or if they be answered, yet because therein usually God deals in a proportion with you to your prayers, (as you might perceive, if you observe his dealings with you,) you would by this means come to have much insight into God's acceptance of your ways. For you would see his dealings with you, and yours with him, to be in proportion each with the other. So, Psal. xviii. 6, "In my distress, I called upon the Lord;" and in the 7th and following verses, he goes on to describe his deliverance, which was the fruit of those prayers; and then, ver. 20, 21, he adds his observation upon both, "According to the cleanness of my hands hath he dealt with me: for with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure."

Lastly, by not listening to God, you will lose much of your comfort. There is no greater joy than to see prayers answered, or to see souls converted by us, John xvi. 24, "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." The receiving answers makes joy to overflow. Yea, even when we pray for others, if our prayers be answered for them, our joys are exceeding great; much more when in our own behalf. And therein, even in the smallest things which a Christian doth enjoy, doth his comforts exceed another's, that he hath them by virtue of prayers and promises: he knows how he came by them. "If stolen water be sweet, and bread eaten in secret," (as Solomon says,) is pleasant" to wicked men, begg'd meat is much more sweet to good men. Yea, in the very praying for outward mercies, there is more sweetness than they have in enjoying them. As it is joy to a good heart to see any one converted, but more to him that is the means of it; ("I have no greater joy, says St. John, than that my children walk in truth;") so to see God do good to the church, and hear others' prayers, is a comfort; but much more to see him do it in answer to a man's own prayers. Therefore when God restores comfort to a drooping soul, he is said,

Isai. lvii. "to restore comfort also to his mourners;" that is, to those that prayed and mourned for him, as well as unto that soul itself, it being a comfort to them to see their prayers answered. Comfort it is many ways: 1. To hear from God as to hear from a friend, though it be but two or three words, and that about a small matter, satisfies abundantly. So also, 2. To know that God is mindful of us, accepts our works, fulfils his promises. 3. How doth it rejoice one to find another of his mind in a controversy? But that God and we should be of one mind, and concur in the desire of the same things, this rejoiceth the heart exceedingly. And thus it is when a man perceives his prayer answered. Therefore you lose your comfort in blessings, when you do not observe answers to your prayers.

CHAP. II.

Three Cases propounded: the first concerning Prayers for the Accomplishment of such Promises as may fall out in Ages to come.

Now as for helps to know when God doth any thing in answer to your prayers, this is the next thing to be handled; wherein, first, I will consider some cases which may fall out in several sorts of prayers. 1. Concerning prayers put up for the church, for such things as fall out in ages to come. 2. Concerning prayers made for others of your friends, kindred, or acquaintance. 3. Concerning those prayers wherein others join with you.

For the first: There may be some prayers which you must be content never yourselves to see answered in this world, the accomplishment of them not falling out in your time. Such as are those you make for the calling of the Jews, the utter downfall of God's enemies, the particular flourishing of the society you live in. All you whose hearts are right, treasure up many such prayers,

and sow much of such precious seed ; which you must be content to have the church, it may be, in after ages to reap. All which prayers are not yet lost, but will have answers : For as God is an eternal God, and Christ's righteousness an everlasting righteousness, and therefore of *eternal* efficacy, Dan. ix. 24, " being offered up by the Eternal Spirit," Heb. ix. 14 ; so are prayers also, which are the work of the eternal Spirit of Christ, and in him are eternally accepted ; and therefore may take place in after ages. So the prayer that St. Stephen made for his persecutors, took place in Saul when Stephen was dead. So the prayers of the church, for three hundred years in the primitive times, that kings might " come to the knowledge of the truth," and Christ's disciples lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty," (which St. Paul in Nero's time exhorted unto, 1 Tim. ii. 2,) were not answered till Constantine's time. So Isa. lviii. after the prophet had exhorted to, and given directions for fasting and prayer in a right manner, he adjoineth this promise : Thou shalt " raise up the foundation of many generations ; thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach ;" namely, for this, because his fasting and prayers might have influence into many ages yet to come. And that may be one reason why God will do such great things towards the end of the world, even because there hath been so great a stock of prayers, for so many ages, which is now to be returned. And herein it falls out to us in our prayers as in their prophecies to the prophets of old, " The Spirit in them did signify the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things that are now revealed." Thus is it in the Spirit of prayer, which is instead of the Spirit of prophecy : for we pray through the guidance of the Spirit, who teacheth us what to ask for many things that shall come to pass in after ages.

Only at present, it may be, in prayer thou hast revealed unto thee, by a secret impression made on thy spirit, that these things shall come to pass, and so hast thy faith con-

firmed in them, and withal an evidence, that even for prayers, among others, God will perform them. And upon such prayers God usually for the present also testifies the acceptance of a man's person; as he did to Moses: he never revealed his love to Moses more, than when he prayed most for God's people.

And when they are accomplished, and thou in heaven, thy joy will surely be the more full for these thy prayers: for if there be "joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, (as at the birth of a new prince and heir of heaven,) then in proportion he shall rejoice most, whose prayers had most hand therein. And so, as thy other works, so thy prayers follow thee, and the fruit of them, as Jeremiah speaks. Thou shalt rejoice, as well as they that enjoyed the fruit of thy prayers in their times, thou having sown the seed of their happiness; "both he that sows, and he that reaps, shall then rejoice together."

CHAP. III.

How Prayers for our Friends are answered.

THE second case is, concerning answers to our prayers for others, and likewise for temporal blessings. Pray for others, you know, we must. So the elders of the church for those that are sick, "Pray for one another," says St. James, chap. v. 15, 16. So also, I John v. 16, "If a man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask life for him, and God shall give him life that sins not unto death."

1. Such prayers God often heareth; why else are any such promises made? As "that they shall be healed in their bodies," Jam. v. 15; "healed of their lusts," ver. 16; "converted to life," I John v. 16. God hath made these promises to encourage us to pray, and to testify his abundant love to us; that it so overflows, that he will hear us, not only for ourselves, but for others also. So God intimates concerning Abraham, to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 7, "He

is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live:" and as he was a prophet, so we are priests; as for ourselves so for others also, to God our Father. And it is a prerogative we have through the fellowship we have of Christ's priestly office, "who hath made us kings and priests," to prevail for others; and a special token of extraordinary love. For if God hears a man's prayers for others, much more for himself. So when Christ healed the man sick of the palsy, it was, as it is said, "For the faith of the standers-by," Matt. ix. 2; "he seeing their faith said, thy sins are forgiven thee:" not as if for their faith he forgave that man his sins, for, "the just doth live by his (own) faith:" but to encourage them, who out of faith brought that sick man to him; and us all in like manner, he took occasion to pronounce forgiveness to that poor man.

2. Yet secondly, prayers for others may often not obtain the particular thing prayed for them. So Samuel's prayer for Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 35. So David for his enemies, Psal. xxxv. 13. For it is in this, as it is in the use of other means for the good of others, God making such promises to our prayers herein as he hath made to our endeavours to convert when we preach. As we preach to many, and yet but few believe, so we pray for many, not knowing who will receive the blessing: which whilst we know not, we are yet to pray for them, 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. Only as where God hath set his ordinance of preaching, it is a probable sign he hath some to convert; so when he hath stirred up our hearts to pray for others, it is a sign God will hear us for some of those we pray for.

God's promise to hear the prayer is universal; yet the promise to hear it, by granting the very thing prayed for, is but an indefinite promise; such as he makes to other means of doing good; as to our admonitions, reproofs, and preaching. For instance, that promise, Jam. v. 15, of healing the sick, cannot be universal: for then sick men might never die; seeing the elders may, at all times of danger, pray with them: but the meaning is, that it is an ordinance, which God hath made a gracious promise

unto, because he often doth restore the sick at their prayers. Of the like nature are all other promises of things temporal ; as when God promiseth to “ give long life to them that honour their parents ; riches and honours to them that fear him.” Whenever God doth dispense any such mercies to any of his, he would do it by promise ; all his ways to his being truth ; that is, the fulfilling of some truth promised. And also God having purposed to bestow riches and honours upon some that fear him, he hath therefore indefinitely expressed his gracious dispensation herein.

God requires not of me in the application of a temporal promise an absolute persuasion that he will perform it to me in such a particular manner ; but only an act of dependance and adherence, referring it to his wise and righteous good pleasure. And yet if God should at any time give a man a special faith concerning any such particular temporal blessing, than he is to believe it in particular. As when he gave power to any to work miracles : and therefore in this case Christ rebukes his disciples, for not believing thus upon such particular occasions, Matt. xvii. 20. ‘And it is also true, that if God give such a faith, he will infallibly perform it ; and thus his words are to be understood, Matt. xvii. 22, “ Whatsoever ye ask in faith believing, ye shall receive.” But unto such faith in temporal promises for ourselves or others, God doth not always call us.

3. When prayers are thus made out of conscience of our duty for such, whom yet God doth not intend that mercy unto, then they are returned again into our own bosoms. Even as St. Paul saith, “ That his rejoicing that others preached, though they lost their labour, should “ turn to his salvation,” Phil. i. 20. So prayers for others, though to the parties themselves they are in vain, yet they turn to our good. As in preaching the gospel, Christ told his disciples, that if in any house there were not a “ son of peace,” on whom the message might take place, their peace should “ return unto them again.” So is it if your prayers take not place.

4. If we have prayed long for those whom God intends not mercy unto, he will in the end cast them out of our prayers, and take our hearts off from praying for them. That which he did by a revelation from heaven to some prophets of old, as to Samuel and Jeremiah, the same he doth by a more undiscerned work; that is, by withdrawing assistance to pray for such; by withdrawing the spirit of supplication from a man, for some men, and in some business. Thus he did with Samuel; "Why dost thou mourn for Saul?" 1 Sam. xvi. 1. So with Jeremiah, Jer. vii. 16, "Pray not for this people:" and this he doth, because he would not that such precious breath as that of prayer is, should be without its full success. Therefore when he means not to hear, he lays the key of prayer out of the way.

5. God will hear those prayers, and answers them in some others in whom we shall have as much comfort as in those we prayed for: and so it often falls out. God, to shew "he looks not as a man looks, lets us pray for the conversion of some, and then answers them in some others. When God had cast off Saul, still Samuel mourned for him; but God at the same time, when he bids him cease mourning for Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. to shew that yet he accepted that his mourning, "Go," says he, "and anoint one of the sons of Jesse," 1 Sam. xvi. 1. Samuel desired to see a good successor in that government; it was his special care; and he having anointed Saul, it exceedingly grieved him, that he should prove so wicked. God saw and answered the ground of his desires; and therefore, immediately upon his prayers, sent him to anoint a better king. So Abraham had prayed for Ishmael, "O let Ishmael live in thy sight!" Gen. xvii. But God gave him Isaac instead of him. So perhaps thou prayest for one child more than for another, out of thy natural affection, looking on his countenance and stature, as Samuel did on Eliab's: but yet thy prayers being sincere, in that thou desirest a child of promise, God answers thee, though in another; who proves as great a comfort as if that other had been wrought upon.

CHAP. IV.

About such Prayers wherein others join with us: how therein to discern the Influence of our own Prayers.

THE third case to be considered is, when a man prays for something with others ; or which others likewise pray for ; how then should he know that his prayers have a hand in obtaining it, as well as theirs ? For satan is apt to object ; though the thing is granted, yet not for thy prayers.

First, if thy heart did sympathize in the same holy affections with others, then it is certain thy voice hath helped to carry it. “ If two agree on earth,” saith Christ, Matt. xviii. 19, the word is *συμφωνησωσιν* ; that is, if they harmonially agree to play the same tune : for prayers are music in God’s ears, and so called “ melody to God,” Eph. v. 19. It is not simply their agreeing in the thing praycd for, but in the affections : for it is the affections that make the melody. Now if the same holy affections were touched by God’s Spirit in thy heart, then thou dost help to make up the comfort ; yea, without thee the thing might not have been done ; for God stands sometimes upon such a number of voices, and one voice casts it ; as when he named ten righteous persons to save Sodom. When therefore the same holy affections acted thee in thy prayer which did them in theirs, it was the work of the same Spirit, both in them and thee, and God hath heard thee. Especially, if God did stir up the same instinct in thee, to sympathize with another in praying for such a thing unknown one to another, as sometimes it falls out ; then surely thy prayers are in it as well as his. You shall observe sometimes a general instinct of the Spirit put into God’s people’s hearts, to pray for or against a thing, without their stirring up one another ; even as Ezekiel, by the river Chebar, prophesied the same things Jeremiah did at home at Jerusalem.

Secondly, God doth usually evidence to a man, that his

prayers contributed towards the obtaining of it. 1. By some circumstance: as sometimes by ordering it so, that the man that prays most for a thing, shall have the first news of it when it comes to be accomplished. Which God doth, as knowing it will be most welcome to him. God doth herein as we do with a friend, who we know is cordial in a business; we send him the first word of it who was most hearty in it, and prayed most about it. Good old Simeon had surely been earnest in seeking the Lord, as well as the rest in Jerusalem, to send the Messiah; (for God did reveal to him, that he should see him before he died :) and therefore, to evidence his respect to his prayers, God carried the good old man into the temple, just when the child was brought. By some such circumstance doth God often use, to witness to a man's heart, that he hath heard him in things prayed for in common with others.

2. By filling the heart with much joy in the accomplishment of what a man prayed for; which is an evident argument that his prayers moved the Lord to effect it, as well as the prayers of others. As when a ship comes home, not only the chief owners, but every one that ventured, shall have a share out of the return; so here, though some one, whom it mainly concerns, hath a special interest in the mercy obtained, yet thou shalt have thy prayers out in joy from God, that the thing is granted. St. Paul had planted a church at Thessalonica, but he could not stay to water it with his own preaching; yet when absent, he waters those plants which he had set with prayers night and day, 1 Thess. iii. 10: "Night and day praying exceedingly for you," says he; and as his prayers were exceeding abundant for them, so was his joy as abundant in them. "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord," ver. 8. "And what thanks can we render to God for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before the Lord?" ver. 9.

3. If God give you a heart thankful for a blessing vouchsafed to another, prayed for by you with others, it

is another sign your prayers have some hand in it. St. Paul knew not what thanks to give for the answering of his prayers. Old Eli had put up but one short petition that we read of, for Hannah; and for the return of that one prayer, when Hannah related how God answered her, 1 Sam. i. 16, 27, he returned solemn thanks, “and he worshipped the Lord there,” ver. 28.

And lastly, in case the thing concerned thyself, which was prayed for by others helping thee therein, what cause hast thou but to think that it was granted for thy own prayers, and not for theirs only? Seeing God stirred up their hearts to pray for thee, and gave thee a heart to pray for thyself, and besides gave thee the thing which thou desiredst. “I know this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer,” saith St. Paul, Phil. i. 19. Though their prayers went to the business, yet had not St. Paul been accepted himself, the prayers of all the men in the world would have done him little good. God may hear the prayers of the good for wicked men, when they do not pray themselves, in temporal things; so he heard Moses for Pharoah, Abraham for Abimelech; and he may hear good men the sooner for others’ prayers; so he heard Aaron and Miriam the sooner, for Moses’s sake, Numb. xii. 13. But if God stir up thy heart to pray for thyself, as well as others for thee, then God, that gave thee a heart to pray, hath heard thy prayers also; and hath had a respect to them more in it than to theirs, because it was a more special mercy unto thee.

CHAP. V.

Common Directions helpful in all Cases and Prayers.

First, from such Observations as may be taken from, before, and in praying.

I COME now to more general directions to help you in discerning God’s answers to your prayers. All which

directions are such, as may be helpful in all the fore-mentioned cases, and in all sorts of prayers whatever. And they are taken from observations, to be made upon your prayers, both before, in, and after praying.

Observe, first, Before praying: when God bespeaks a prayer, (as I may so speak) that is, when God secretly speaks to the heart to pray much about a thing, he then speaks to the heart to pray, when he not only puts upon the duty, by saying to the conscience, this thou oughtest to do; but when (as he said, "Let there be light, and there was light,") he says, Let there be a prayer, and there is a prayer; that is, when he pours upon a man a spirit of grace and supplication, a praying disposition; he puts in motives, suggests arguments and pleas to God; all which you shall find come in readily, and of themselves; and that likewise with a quickening heat, and enlargement of affections, and with a lingering, and longing, and restlessness of spirit to be alone, to pour out the soul in private to God, and to vent and form those motions and suggestions into a prayer. This is speaking to the heart. Observe such times when God doth thus, and neglect them not. Thou hast then his ear; it is a special opportunity for that business, such an one as thou mayest never have the like. Suitors at court observe when they have kings in a good mood, which they will be sure to take the advantage of; but especially if they should find that the king himself should begin to speak of the business which they would have of him. And thus that phrase of Psa. x. 17, is understood by some, that "God prepares the heart;" that is, he fashions it, and composeth it into a praying frame. And sure it is a great sign that God means to hear us, when himself thus indites the petition.

And, by the way, let me give this note of difference, between these speakings to the heart, and those whereby satan puts us upon such duties at unseasonable times; as when we are otherwise necessarily to be employed in our callings, to eat or to sleep; then to put upon praying is

a device of his, to tire out new converts with. The difference will appear in this; the devil comes in a violent, imperious manner upon the conscience, but enlargeth not the heart a whit unto the duty. But whensoever God at such extraordinary times doth call upon us, he prepares the heart, and fills the soul with holy suggestions, as materials for the duty; for whatsoever he calls to, he gives abilities for. And thus usually, when he will have any great matter done, he sets men's hearts to pray by a kind of gracious instinct; he stirs them up, and toucheth the strings of their hearts, by his Spirit sent down upon them. Thus, against the return of the captivity, he stirred up Daniel's heart, Dan. ix. 1. He knowing by books the time to be near expiring, was stirred up to seek God. Therefore observe what things God thus, by an instinct, doth enlarge thy heart to pray for, when haply thou didst not think to pray about any such thing; yet he then stirred thee up most, it may be, as thou wast walking, riding, or the like; and having spare time, he draws thee into his presence.

Secondly, as God thus speaks to the heart to pray, so also in praying; and his speaking to the heart in prayer, may be discerned by these particulars; 1. When God quiets, calms, and contents the heart in prayer, which is done by speaking to the heart, though what is spoken be not always discerned. If you should see one, who was exceeding anxious when he went in to a great man, after coming out from him, contented and cheerful, you would conceive that certainly something had been said to him which gave him encouragement and contentment in his suit. Thus when thou goest to God, and hast been importunate in a business, and raisest up thy mind calmed and satisfied, and feelest the anxiousness, the solicitude of thy heart about things taken off; this is a good sign that God hath heard thy prayer, and hath spoken to thy heart. When Hannah out of much bitterness, and with strong desire, "had poured out her soul before the Lord," (Eli joining in prayer) after that prayer she found her

heart so quieted and calmed. And it was that prayer that did both fill Eli's mouth, with that word of prophecy, and her heart with quietness, and a secret word from God accompanying it, that did still those waves; and accordingly God gave her a son, a son of her desires. And the like God doth now; by speaking, (as I said,) something to the heart; as by dropping in some promise, or some like consideration; saying, as it were, to the heart, even as Eli from God did to her, "The Lord grant thy petition." In like manner thou hast, it may be, been long praying against poverty, or the like distress, and God lets fall this promise into thy heart, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," which quiets and contents thy mind. This is an answer; and observe such answers, for they are precious.

2. If, whilst thou art praying, God draws nigh to thy soul, and reveals himself to it, in and upon such a particular petition; as in case thou didst intend when thou didst begin to pray, to beg some temporal mercy, some great matter for the prosperity of the church, as Daniel, chap. ix. did set himself to seek God for the return of the captivity; and even before thou comest to ask it, or in asking it, God smiles upon thee, welcomes thee, falleth about thy neck, and kisses thee;—this thou art to observe, as a sign he hears thy prayer, and accepts both thee and it. When there is such a strong sense of God's favour and presence, whilst thou art upon such a suit, more than at other times, or than in other passages of the same prayer, this is a token God hears thee in that particular; and thou art to observe this his speaking to thy heart. When thou shalt no sooner come into his presence to inquire of him, but he says, "Here I am." It is men, "false upon the balance," as David speaks, when they come to be tried and weighed, who will out of cunning use suitors most kindly then, when they mean to put them off, and deny their requests. But God, who is truth and faithfulness itself, doth not use so to deal; but when he means to answer the prayer, he withal

sometimes reveals his free grace most, to the end they may see the fountain of all, to be his everlasting love, and so take the thing granted as a fruit of it, and thereby be the more abundantly thankful. Only let me add this caution, which may be of great use to you. 1. It is not always infallibly true, that when God draws nigh to you in a particular request, that request shall be granted in the manner you desire; but it is a certain evidence that your prayer is heard, and that the thing you ask is agreeable to his will, and that he approves of you, and your request, and will give it you, or something that is better.

But you will say, "Why doth God draw so nigh if he means not to grant it?" God may accept the person and the prayer when he doth not grant the thing prayed for; and by that drawing nigh, witness his acceptation of your person and the prayer. Yea, 2. That revealing of himself is often the answer he intended to such a prayer; and it is answer enough too, to enjoy, instead of a particular mercy, the assurance of God's love. 3. When God stirs up in the heart a particular faith in a business, as sometimes he doth, and upholds the heart to wait for it, maugre all discouragements. As there is a witness of the Holy Ghost immediate to the heart testifying adoption to a man's person; so, in some cases, there is the like testimony for the obtaining of some eminent thing we have asked. Which special faith doth answer to the faith of miracles of old; whereby a man had a particular confidence that God would do such a miracle by him. In some things, there may be a particular assuring the heart, that God will do such a thing for a man. Concerning this also I will add a caution. These very persuasions are often but conditional, though thus immediately made to a man's spirit, and are so to be understood. They cannot be more peremptory than were many of those revelations made by God to the prophets, wherein he manifested his purpose towards a certain man or people, to vouchsafe them some particular mercy, or bring upon them some particular judgment. But those fore-warnings,

though they were particular and express, yet were intended with a condition, according to the performance or non-performance of which, either the judgment was diverted, or the good thing was not bestowed. It was thus in the case of Jonah threatening the destruction of Nineveh; and so in the promise concerning Eli's house, 1 Sam. ii. 30, "I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever, but now the Lord says, it shall not be so:" for they had broken the condition which was implied in it; they had despised the Lord; "and them that despise me," says God, "I will despise." In like manner is God, in such persuasions wrought in us by prayer, to be understood; that such mercies will surely come to pass, but still under a condition of obedience, and performing of those vows which a man joined with those petitions, to move the Lord to grant the things. If a man fail in these, it may and doth often come to pass, that things fall out contrary to that persuasion, and then we are apt to question whether it was from God or not; which it might be, and yet not absolutely meant, (that was your mistake) but conditionally only. For in such great requests of the soul unto God, there use to pass mutual covenants between God and us; and indentures are drawn and sealed unto by us; that is, we in prayer, offer and promise to do thus and thus, if God will vouchsafe us such a mercy, and plead it to God to move him to bestow it; and God thereupon, it may be, seals a covenant on his part to grant the thing, and works such an undoubted persuasion; but if we in that interim of waiting for that mercy, do deal falsely in that covenant; and this even whilst we are yet in dependence upon God for it, whereby it appears that we would have done so much more after we should have received it; in this case God denies the thing, and yet notwithstanding, that persuasion was from God. He said indeed he would do thus and thus for thee, because thou saidst to him, thou wouldst walk

thus and thus. Thou failest in thy word, upon which God altered his; and thereupon says God, as to Eli, "Now it shall not be so," and yet God hath spoken it before, and not sathan, nor thine own heart only.

4. When God doth put restless importunity into the heart, maugre all discouragements, when God maintains this in the heart, it is a sign he will answer. For you know the parable, that the unjust judge heard the widow for her importunity; therefore when God puts importunity into the heart, he means to hear. Only this likewise is to be added, there is a double importunity; one out of such an inordinate desire for a thing, as the heart knows not how to be without it, and so continues to ask, but asketh amiss, and so receives not, James v. The other joined with a subjection to God's will; this God hath stirred up, and then look for something to come,

CHAP. VI.

Farther Observations to be made, on the Dispositions and Carriage of our Hearts, after Prayer.

NEXT: after thou hast prayed, observe what God doth towards thee. First, how he doth guide thy feet and heart after praying. There is much in that: that which was the spirit of supplication in a man when he prayed, rests upon him as the spirit of obedience in his course; so that the dependence he hath upon God for the mercy he seeks, is a special motive, and means to keep him fearful of offending, and diligent in duty; to look to his paths, to walk as becomes a suitor, as well as to come and pray as a suitor. Thus David, Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me." That consideration still came in as a curb unto sin. Without this a man casts himself behind-hand again, and by sinning loseth what ground he had got by praying. Therefore

David, Psalm cxliii. 8, 9, 10, when he was to pray, even for his life, specially prays God to keep him, that he might not sin against him ; for he knew by sinning he should spoil all his prayers : not only “ hear me speedily,” says he, but also “ cause me to know the way wherein I should walk : teach me to do thy will.” This he especially prays for, and more than for deliverance ; for else he knew God would not hear him. Therefore, when thou art in treaty with God for any mercy, observe, doth God after praying keep thee in a more obedient frame of spirit ? It is a sign he intends to answer thee ; as in like manner, when he keeps thee from using ill means to obtain thy desire. When he meant to give David the kingdom, he kept him innocent, and his heart tender, that it smote him but for cutting off the lap of Saul’s garment.

2. When God after prayer strengtheneth the heart to wait for the mercy. So Psalm xxvii. 14, David having prayed, says to his soul, “ Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart.” Honest men, when they nourish hopes in one that is in dependence on them, use not to deny him. It were dishonest to keep a man under hand, and then frustrate his expectations. Therefore when God keepeth thy soul after praying in such a dependent frame, look for some good answer. And indeed when a man hath prayed long, in the end he begins to wait, as I may so say, rather than pray, though he pray still, because now he looks that God should perform. Before, and at first he told the Lord he desired it, but now he can, with some boldness tell him, that he waits for it and expects it. The hope of a good man would make him ashamed if it were not answered, therefore in this case answers use to come.

CHAP. VII.

Observations to be made after Prayer, upon the Issue of what was prayed for: and first, if accomplished, whether as the Fruit of Prayers, or of common Providence.

WHEN a man hath thus waited, then let him observe the issue and conclusion of what he sought for. Now either the thing desired is accomplished, or not accomplished; and in either of these he may see answers to his prayers; for prayer may be answered, though the thing be not done. I mean to insist severally on these.

1. If the thing thou prayest for doth come to pass, then what needest thou doubt of an answer, and whether God heard thee or not? For thou beholdest it with thine eyes. And so often it falls out that God doth grant according to the desires of a man's heart; and not only so, but also fulfils his counsel therein, that is, fulfils not only his desire, but in that very way, by that very means, which he pitched upon in his own thoughts. The desire of the heart may be satisfied, when God gives some other thing, but the counsel of the heart is then fulfilled when a man is answered in that particular which his own judgment pitched upon as best for him. As Christ said, "Be it according to thy faith," so God says sometimes, "Be it according to thy prayers." Thus if a man will hear God and obey him, God will hear him: for if a man be subject to Christ's kingly office, his prophetic office shall guide him, and cause him not to err in his petitions; but by an unerring providence and pre-instinct infused by his Spirit, God will so guide him, as to ask that very thing which God intends to give; whereas of himself he knows not what, nor how to ask. So David asked long life, and God gave it him. God not only gave him his heart's desire, but the request of his lips. So, 1 Chron. iv. 10,

Jabez called on God, “and God granted him the thing he requested.” And thus God often deals with his children. And to this end hath God given us his Spirit; and made Christ wisdom unto us, who knows what is good for us, though we do not: and hath therefore commanded us to spy out mercies for ourselves, and then to come to him for them. And to this end hath made such particular promises of particular mercies, which he would have us have an eye unto in our prayers: all which is because often he means to bestow the very things we ask.

And yet, although we have the very things we did ask, such is the infidelity of our hearts, that we often discern not, nor acknowledge it was our prayers that obtained them from God; but are apt, when once we have them, either to look to the second causes of them, though before we did earnestly seek them of God; or to question whether it was at our prayers that he granted them, or out of common providence. Our distrustful hearts are apt to be unsatisfied with the clearest pledges of God’s favour; and although God doth answer us upon our calling upon him, yet we will not believe that he hearkened unto our prayers in it. Therefore, that you may be further enabled to discern, when things prayed for come by prayer, I give you these further directions:

1. When God doth a thing in answer to prayers, he often doth it in such a manner, that his hand may be in a more than ordinary manner seen in it. There are few prayers, wherein a man hath sought God much, but in the answers of them God discovers himself much, and turns many great wheels in the accomplishment of them, and manifests his marvellous loving-kindness: and indeed, when God hears prayers, that have been long a making, he shews usually half a miracle one way or other.

Now God discovers his immediate hand in the answers of our prayers: First, when he carries a thing through many difficulties; when there were a great many cross wards in a business prayed for, the least whereof would

have kept the key from turning. When God shall make a key, as it were, a key on purpose to unlock it; when God contrives all the passages in a business thou didst pray for, and so accomplisheth it: this is a sign, it is a fruit of prayer, and that prayer had been making that key all that while. So in bringing David to the kingdom, Mordecai to honour. When St. Peter was delivered out of prison, it was done at the prayers of the church, Acts xii. He was sleeping between two soldiers: if they had awaked, he had been discovered. And he was in chains, but they fall off, ver. 6, 7. And the keepers stood before the door, but they mind him not, ver. 6. And when one watch is past, he passeth quietly through another, ver. 10. And when both these were past, an iron gate flies open of its own accord, ver. 10. Now there are many difficulties in many businesses, which yet in the end are accomplished by prayer. Iron chains fall off, iron gates, enemies' hearts fly open of their own accord; and though not in that miraculous manner, by the means of an angel, yet no less wonderfully.

Or, secondly, When God facilitates all things to accomplish the thing which was prayed for, so that they conspire and combine in it, that thou hast wind and tide, and a fair day, and all the way paved; or, as David says, "hast thy way made plain before thee;" and there falls out a great conjunction of many circumstances to effect it, which had influence unto it; whereof if any one had been wanting, the thing had not been done. When the thing prayed for is thus granted, prayer then hath done it.

Again, when he doth it suddenly, and accomplisheth the thing thou hast long prayed for, ere thou art aware of it: as the return of the captivity of Babylon, which was the conclusion of many prayers, was done in a trice, they were as men in a dream, Psal. cxxvi. 1. They could scarce believe it was so, when it was done. So Peter, he was fast asleep, and did not so much as dream of deliverance.

And fourthly, When God grants the thing with an

overplus above what we asked, and casteth many other mercies in together with that which we so long prayed for ; this also may be a sign God did hear our prayers in it. For when he doth hear indeed, he useth “ to do above what we ask or think.” When prayers are answered, usually mercies come thick ; the thing we prayed for comes not alone ; as when sins are punished, then miseries come also like armies upon us. As temptations likewise come together ; thus do mercies also.

In the fifth place, when the thing is granted by prayers, there is often some particular circumstances of Providence, which sealeth to us that it is from God ; such often as a man himself takes notice of, and which others take notice of also. “ Shew me a token for good,” says David, Psalm lxxxvi. 17. And such tokens doth God often make small circumstances to be. Things small in themselves may be great signs and tokens. For example, Moses and Aaron, and the Israelites, had long cried to God for the deliverance of his people, and laid up many prayers ; their cry came up. And when God delivered them, what tokens were there of good ; and of God’s answer to their prayers ? The text notes, “ that a dog did not bark at their going out,” Exod. xi. 7, which was a small circumstance, but it was a great token ; so intended by God ; for the text adds, “ That ye may know that God puts a difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians.” This was a token of God’s hand, to over-rule the tongues of brute creatures, that used to stir at unusual noises, and at travellers, especially in the night. So when Isaac and Abraham, and his servant also, had prayed for a wife for Isaac, see by what a token God shewed he had heard their prayers, Rebekah was the first that came out to the servant. And if she be the woman appointed for Isaac, (says the servant) “ Let her offer me drink, and my camels also.” This was a small thing in appearance, but a great token of God’s hand in it, and therefore the servant bowed at it, and worshipped. And the sign in itself was such as argued a good nature in her, and a

kind, courteous disposition, which therefore, (it may be) he singled out, as a thing especially to be looked at in the marriage choice.

Again, the consideration of the time, wherein the things we have asked are granted, may much help us to discern, whether it be in answer to our prayers. For God, who doth all things in weight and measure, shews his wisdom and love as much in the season, as in giving the thing itself. God considereth all times, and still chooseth the fittest to answer prayers in. "In an acceptable time have I heard thee." So God answers in the most acceptable time to us; for "he waits to be gracious, for he is a God of judgment," Isa. xxx. 18; that is, he is a wise God, that knows the fittest times and seasons wherein to deal forth his favours.

At first, it may be, that at the very time thou hast been most earnest, yea, even whilst thou art praying, or presently after, the thing is done. To this purpose is that of Isa. lxxv. 24, that as sometimes "he hears before they-call," so also, "whilst they are speaking, I will hear:" and he singles out that time on purpose, that they might rest assured it was in answer to their prayer. Thus to assure Hezekiah his prayer was heard, God sent the prophet unto him whilst he was praying and weeping. As the ruler in the Gospel, enquiring diligently, "found that the same hour that Christ had said to him, thy son liveth, his son recovered." So also here, sometimes the thing is done, or the news of it comes the same hour wherein a man was praying about it.

Or, secondly, when it is every way the fittest time to have the thing granted. At that time, 1, when thou hadst most need; and, 2, when thy heart was most fit for it. For in answering of prayers, God aims especially at two things: First, to shew his mercy, that a man might magnify that: and, secondly, to have the heart satisfied, and filled with joy in his answer, and the thing made sweet, and a mercy indeed: in brief, that his goodness might be delighted in, and his mercy exalted. And for

these two purposes he singles out such times, when we have most need ; and also when our hearts are most subdued.

For the first of these : suppose thou didst pray long for assurance of salvation, when thou hadst most need of it ; either when thy spirit would have failed without it, or against some great affliction approaching, then God filled thy heart with it ; that was the fittest time : now hath God heard thy prayer. If 2, when thy heart was most fit for the mercy, it was granted, then art thou also heard in an acceptable time. For God doth not withhold mercies out of want of love ; neither so much for what is past, as for the present evil disposition of men's hearts, whereby they are unfit to receive them. And in this sense likewise may that be understood, that God prepareth the heart, and heareth the prayer, Psalm x. 17. As first, when thy heart is most weaned from the temporal mercy granted thee upon seeking of it. So David had the kingdom given him when he was as a weaned child. Thus, when thy heart had betaken itself alone to God for thy portion, then the thing prayed for came to pass.

A third thing you are to observe concerning the accomplishment of the thing prayed for, whereby you may discern whether it be granted in answer to prayer, is, when you see God in his answering you to deal in a kind of proportion with your manner of praying and seeking of him, and of walking with him whilst you were dependent on him for such a mercy. As you may see a proportion between sins and punishments, which are the rewards of them ; so that you can say, such a sin brought forth this affliction, it is so like the father : so you might see the like proportion between your prayers, and walking with God, and God's answers to you. The more by-ends or carnal desires you had in praying, and the more you mingled of these with your holy desires, and the more want of zeal and fervency were found in your prayers, the more you shall find of bitterness mingled with the mercy, when it is granted ; and so much

imperfection, and want of comfort in it: so David, “With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure.” Pure prayers have pure blessings. And again, as you in praying sometimes grew cold, so you might see the business in like manner to cool: as when Moses’ hands were down, Amalek prevailed; but when they were lifted up, Israel had the better, Exod. xvii. 12. God let him see a proportion, which argued his prayers were the means of prevailing. A man finds in praying, that his suit sometimes sticks, and goes not as he expected; this is because he doth not ply God, and solicit him. On the contrary, when he is stirred up to pray, then things go well; by this a man may clearly see, that it is the prayer which God hears and regards. Thus likewise, when a man sees hills and dales in a business, fair hopes often, and then all dashed again, and the thing in the end brought to pass, let him look back upon his prayers: didst thou not just thus deal with God? When thou hadst prayed earnestly, and thought thou hadst even carried it, didst thou not then dash all again by interposing some sin, and thus again and again? Herein God would have you observe a proportion. God deals thus with you in proportion to your prayers.

CHAP. VIII.

Seven Observations more, from the Effects which the Accomplishment of the Mercy hath upon the Heart.

FOURTHLY, thou mayest discern whether they are in answer to thy prayers, by the effects upon thy heart.

1. If the thing that is granted upon thy prayers, draw thy heart more near to God, it is then certain that it was granted as an answer to thy prayers. Things granted out of ordinary providence only, are snares to us. But things obtained by prayer are sanctified to us, for every thing is sanctified by prayer, so that it shall not ensnare nor entangle our hearts. A thing obtained by prayer, as it

came from God, so a man will return it to God, and use it for his glory; if therefore thou findest this his answering thee, to cause thee to mourn for thy sin, and to be a restraint against sin, it is a sign it was the fruit of prayer. Thus it wrought with David, Psalm vi. 8, "Away from me, ye that work iniquity: God hath heard the voice of my weeping." Also if thou rejoicest in God, more than in the thing obtained. So Hannah begins her song when she blesseth God for her child; "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord," 1 Sam. ii. 1. She rejoiceth not so much in the gift, as in the giver and his favour: more in this, that her prayer was answered, than in the thing obtained. This is a sign of having obtained the mercy through prayers, when it is thus sanctified unto a man's spirit.

2. Prayers answered will enlarge thy heart with thankfulness. Self-love makes us more forward to pray, than to give thanks; but where grace is, there will be no eminent mercy gotten with much struggling, but there will be a continued particular thankful remembrance of it a long while after. Thankfulness, of all duties, proceeds from pure grace; therefore if the spirit stirs thee unto it, it is a sign he made the prayer. Prayer and thanks are like the double motion of the lungs, the air that is sucked in by prayer, is breathed forth again by thanks. Is thy heart afresh enlarged as to mourn for past sins long since committed, so in like manner, to give thanks for mercies won with long prayers, and this for a long while after? It is a sign that they were obtained by prayer.

3. If the mercy obtained doth encourage thee to go to God another time, to pray again the more confidently and fervently, it is a sign thou hast got the former that way. For the Holy Ghost having once shewed thee this way of procuring mercy, hence it is, thou art thus ready to take the same course another time, Psalm cxvi. 2, "The Lord hath heard me, and I will call on him as long as I live."

4. When God having heard thy prayers upon solemn vows, thy heart is careful to pay those vows, this may be an argument to thee, the thing being granted, that thy prayer was heard. It was an evidence that the thing was obtained by prayer, in that God calls for those vows, by his Spirit in thy heart, and stirs thee up to perform them ; it argues that in relation to thy prayers answered, he takes them as dues from thee ; that having despatched thy suit, he now calls for what was agreed to be given him, when it should be performed.

5. When thou art enabled by faith, to see clearly God's hand in effecting that mercy, over and above the power of second causes, and to acknowledge it to his glory. One main reason whereby we are usually hindered from apprehending our prayers to be answered, is, that our eyes, are terminated by second causes, and not raised to see God's hand ; therefore, on the contrary, when God enableth thee to see that he hath done this, it is a fruit of his hearing thy prayers. And this you will usually find, that so much dependence as you had upon God in prayer for the obtaining of a mercy, so much acknowledgment you will have in the accomplishment of it. Parallel with this rule is that other, in another case, that in performance of duties, so much as the soul did go out of itself to God, for strength to perform them, so much, when they are performed, will the heart acknowledge God's assistance and be humbled. And this is a sign of prayer being heard upon this ground, because God's end in hearing prayers is, that we might glorify him. So Psalm l. 15, " Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Therefore, when the heart hath prayed much for a mercy, with dependence before the obtaining it, and then is enabled to exalt God when it is obtained, it is a sign that God did it in relation to those prayers.

6. When with the mercy there cometh the assurance of God's love, and evidence of his favour ; when God sends not a bare token only, but a letter also with it, to bear

witness of his love ; I need not make that a sign, for when this comes with a mercy, it carries its own evidence.

7. Lastly, it will be evident by the event. Things obtained by prayer have few thorns in them, the curse is taken out ; but what comes by ordinary providence, like the earth untilled, is full of thorns, briars, and vexations. The reason is, what comes by prayer comes as a blessing, and so no sorrow is added to it ; and prayer killeth those inordinate lusts, which cause that vanity and vexation. Things long deferred, at last obtained by prayer, prove most comfortable, and in a settled manner such ; they prove stable blessings ; and what trouble the heart was put to in the deferring, it is recompensed by the more settled sweetness in the enjoying : prayer having long perfumed it, and the thing being steeped herein, it proves exceeding pleasant. So Prov. xiii. 12, “ Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life,” and heals that sickness, and abundantly comforts the heart. Such a comfort was Isaac to Abraham : whereas Jacob getting the blessing, but without prayer, how embittered was it to him by twenty years banishment from his mother’s house !

CHAP. IX.

Helps to discern an Answer to Prayer, when the thing is not accomplished.

THE next and more difficult question is, when the thing is not granted, how shall we then discern that God doth, notwithstanding, hear the prayer ? Ere I come to resolve this case, an objection is to be removed, which is, that if the Spirit of God doth make every faithful prayer in us, and he “ searcheth the deep things of God,” and therefore knoweth that God will not grant such a thing, you may think that he should not stir up the heart to pray for that

which God means to deny. To this in brief by way of answer.

1. The Spirit makes not prayers in us always according to what he means to do, but according to what it is our duty to pray for. Secondly, that phrase helps to answer this, when he is said to help our infirmities; and therefore not according to his own vast knowledge doth he frame our prayers, but he applies his assistance to our weak and narrow apprehensions; and stirs up desires in us for such things as according to our knowledge we are in duty to conceive, and which, by all that we can see, we think to be most for our good, and his glory; and God accepts such desires as from us, but yet doth for us according to the largeness of his own love.

Now to come to the case, and direct the heart about those prayers which are not granted. 1. And first, how didst thou frame thy prayer for that thing which is denied thee? Didst thou pray for it absolutely? Thou must not then think much, if such a prayer be denied, for therein thou wentest beyond thy commission. But if thou didst pray for it conditionally, as Christ did, with "if it be possible," and, "not my will, but thy will be done," so that thou didst refer it unto, and trust God's judgment in the thing, and not thine own, only didst put him in mind, as thy duty was, of what was represented to thee as best for thee, and so left it to him to choose: then thy prayer may be fully answered, and yet the thing denied; and thou art to interpret, and take God's meaning, revealed in the event, in the best sense, which way soever it falls

2. Observe, if there were not a reservation in that denial, for some greater mercy, whereof that denial was the foundation. Thus, 1, often some great cross is prevented by the denial of a thing, which we were urgent for. If we had had many of our desires, we had been undone. So it was a mercy to David, that Absalom was taken away, (whose life surely he prayed much for, for

he loved him much,) who, if he had lived, might have been the ruin of him and his house. Again, 2, often the very denial breaks a man's heart, and brings him nearer to God, puts him upon searching into his ways, and state, and prayers, to see what is amiss therein, which alone is a great mercy, and better than the thing prayed for, seeing by the loss of that one thing he learns how to pray better, and so to obtain a hundred better things.

3. Observe, if there be not a turning of the thing desired into some other great blessing of the same kind. For God (all whose ways are mercy and truth,) doth improve, and lay out men's prayers to the best advantage. As old Jacob laid not his hands of blessing, as Joseph would have guided them, but laid the right hand upon the younger son, whom Joseph set at his left; so often doth God take off his hand of blessing from the thing we prayed for, and discovers it in another more for our good.

4. Observe, if in the end God doth not answer thee still according to the ground of thy prayer. See if that holy end, which thou hadst in prayer, be not in the end fully satisfied, though not in the thing thou didst desire. For God answers according to the hinge which the prayer turns upon. To open this: the main ends of our hearts in our requests are God's glory, the church's good, and our own happiness. A man looketh out, and spieth out such a particular mercy, which he thinks would tend much to God's glory, and his happiness, and yet that thing is denied; yet God will answer him according to the meaning of his prayers; his glory shall certainly be advanced, even for that prayer of his, some other way; and God will take order that the comfort thy soul desired thou shalt have come in one way or other, which when it doth, thou canst not but say thy prayers are heard.

5. In the thing which thou hast prayed much about, though it be denied thee, observe, if God doth not endeavour to give thee, (as I may so speak,) all satisfaction that may be, even as if he were tender of denying thee:

and therefore doth much in it for thy prayers' sake, though the conclusion proves otherwise, as being against some other purpose of his, for some other ends. As when he denied Moses to go into the land of Canaan, he yielded as far as might be, for he let him lead the Israelites to the very borders; and he let him see that good land, carrying him to an hill, and (as it is thought,) by a miracle enabled his sight to view the whole land; and the man he chose to perform this work was his servant, which was a great honour to Moses, that one brought up by him should succeed him. So likewise, when in that thing thou didst seek at his hands he shews an extraordinary hand in turning it; it is a sign he had a respect to thee, that he would vouchsafe to discover his hand so much in it. Let the thing fall out which way it will, if God's hand appear much in it, thou mayst comfortably conclude, that there is some great thing in it, and that prayer wrought that miracle in it to dispose it so; and that there is some great reason why he denies thee, and a great respect had to thy prayers, in that he is pleased to discover so extraordinary a providence about it.

Lastly, Look into the effect of that denial upon thine own heart; as, 1. If thy heart be enlarged to acknowledge God to be holy and righteous in his dealings with thee, and thine own unworthiness. 2. If God fill thy heart with an holy contentment in the denial; if he speak to thy heart, as he did to Moses, when he denied him, Deut. iii. 26. "Let it suffice thee;" if as to St. Paul, when he was earnest in removing that buffeting, "My grace is sufficient;" or that some such like consideration is dropped in, that stays thee. 3. If thou canst be thankful to God, out of faith, that God hath ordered all for the best, though he hath denied thee; and although thou seest no reason but that the thing prayed for would have been for the best, yet art thankful upon the denial, resting in God's judgment of it. As David before he did eat, after his seven days' fasting for the child, arose, "and went first into the temple and worshipped," 2 Sam.

xii. 20, and of what kind of worship it was, appears by his anointing himself and changing his raiment, which was in token of rejoicing and thanksgiving. 4. If thou canst pray still; if when thou hast mercies granted, thou fearest most, and when denied lovest most, and art not discouraged, thy prayers are heard.

CHAP. X.

A Reproof of those that pray, but look not after their Prayers.

THE use of all is, to reprove those who put up prayers, but look not after them when they have done; who cast not up their comings in, and gainings by prayers; and when they have prayed sit down discouraged, as not making account in earnest, that ever they shall hear of their prayers again, even as if they had been but as words cast away. But herein you err, not knowing the power of prayer; and you contemn the Lord. If you had wrote letters to a friend about important business, and had earnestly solicited him for an answer, if you should make account to hear of him no more, should you not wrong him in your thoughts? Or if he did write, if you should not vouchsafe to read over his answer, were it not a contempt of him? So is it here, when you have been earnest with God for blessings, and regard not the answer. And because verily this is a fault among us, I will therefore endeavour to discover to you the causes, which, though they keep you not from praying, yet from this earnest expectation of answers to your prayers; only my scope is, not to shew you so much the reasons why God denies you many requests, as why you are discouraged after you have prayed, as if they would not be answered, although God doth answer them. These discouragements are partly temptations, partly sinful impediments.

1. Because your assurance that your persons are accepted is weak, therefore your confidence that your prayers are heard is weak also. For, as God doth first accept our persons, and then our prayers; so the belief, that God doth accept our persons, is that which upholds our hearts in confidence that our prayers shall be granted; this you may find 1 John v. 13, 14, 15. In ver. 13, he says, "These things have I written to you, that ye may know you have eternal life:" and upon that assurance this will follow, "and this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know he heareth us, we know we have the petitions we desired of him." Mark how he links these three together. 1. These things I write unto you, that you may be assured that life and heaven is yours: and upon that, 2. This confidence will follow in your hearts, that God hears you; that is, that you have his ears open to you, and his heart enlarged towards you: and, 3. If you be assured that God hears you, then from this will follow an assurance, that you shall have any thing granted that you desire; yea, and he makes this one of the main and immediate effects of assurance of justification; therefore he says, this is the confidence that we have in him; that is, this effect there is of this confidence. For whereas they might say, What benefit will accrue to us by this assurance? Why this, says he, which is one of the main privileges of a Christian, even assurance that God will hear him, and grant all his prayers. For when a man is assured God hath given him his Son, he will then easily believe, "How shall he not with him give me all things?" Rom. viii. 32. If once he looks upon God as a father, he will then easily conceive that which Christ says; "If fathers that are evil can give good things to their children, how much more shall not your heavenly Father give his Spirit, and all good things, to them that ask him?" If he gave his Son, when we did not pray to him, how much more shall he with him give us all things we pray for? If a man comes to sue

to any man, and knows not whether he love him or not, he hath small hope of having his suit granted ; but if he be assured he is in favour with him, according to that degree of favour he supposed himself to stand in, he is confident of obtaining his request.

A second discouragement is the weakness of men's prayers. Though a man thinks his person is accepted, yet alas ! says he, my prayers are so poor and weak, that surely God will never regard them. To remove which, let me first ask thee, dost thou pray with all thy might ? *Then though thy *might* be weak, yet because it is all thou hast, it shall be accepted. For "God accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12.

2. Thou art to consider that God doth not hear thee for thy prayers' sake, (though not without them,) but for his name's sake, and his Son's sake, and because thou art his child. As the mother, when her child cries, helps it, not because it doth cry aloud, but because it cries ; and pities it the more the weaker it is.

3. Again, though the performance in itself be weak, yet considered as prayer it may be strong, because a weak prayer may set the strong God at work. Prayer prevails, not because of the performance itself, but because of the name, which it is put up in, even Christ's name ; and therefore as a weak faith justifies, so a weak prayer prevails, and both for the like reason ; for faith attributes all to God, and so doth prayer : for, as faith is merely a receiving grace, so prayer is a begging grace.

4. Prayers move God, not as an orator moves his hearers, but as a child moves his father. Two words of a child humbled, and crying at his father's feet, will prevail more than penned orations. It is the meaning of the spirit that God looks unto, more than the expressions, Rom. viii. 26, 27 : for the groans there are said to be unutterable. Hezekiah's expressions were so rude and broken, that he did but chatter, even as a crane, yet God heard them.

A third discouragement is failing of answers. Thus some say, "I have prayed often and long, and I have been seldom or never answered." To remove this, consider, 1. That thou hast the more reason to wait, for thou hast the more answers to come. For as wicked men treasure up wrath, so do good men mercy, and especially by their prayers; and therefore mercies and answers often come thick together, even as afflictions do.

2. Again; suppose thou shouldst have few answers concerning the things thou seekest for; yet thy reward is with the Lord. It is in praying as in preaching, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour," 1 Cor. iii. 8, and not according to the success of his labour only. So in praying, though thou missest again and again, and nothing succeeds thou prayest for, yet be not discouraged, for thy reward is with the Lord, which will come in one day.

3. God doth it, not that he hears thee not, but to try thee. For a man to say as David, "God hath heard my prayer, therefore I will call upon him as long as I live;" that is nothing so much as to be able to say, Well, I have prayed thus long, and never sped, and yet I will call upon him whilst I live.

Other discouragements there are, which are our sins, more than our temptations, and which weaken the expectation of having our prayers answered: as, 1. Slothfulness in prayer, when we do not put forth all our might; and then no wonder we do not only not obtain, but that we look for little success of such prayers. He that shews himself cold in a suit, teaches him he sues to, to deny him. If we see one seeking to us slightly, we think he will be easily put off; accordingly, when we observe so much by ourselves, and see ourselves slothful in praying, and praying as if we prayed not, no wonder if we look not after the success of such prayers. We know the Scripture says, that the fervent spirit only prevails; that prayer which is, *Ἐνεργουμένη*, that sets all the faculties on work, Jam. v. 16. How should we then

expect that God should grant any good thing to us? For though God sells nothing to us for our prayers, but gives freely, yet he would have his gifts accepted. And what is fervent prayer but the expression of fervent desire? Jacob wrestled when he obtained. Many seek to enter, says Christ, but you must strive. Now when we know these things, and yet are slothful, how can we expect any answer at all? Will not the consciousness of it quell our expectations? Those prayers that awaken God must awaken us. Those prayers that stir God, must first stir us to lay hold on God, as Isaiah speaks. As obedience strengthens faith and assurance, so fervency in prayer begets confidence of being heard. In all other things slothfulness weakens expectation. Doth any man expect that riches should come, when he doth his business negligently? "It is the diligent hand that maketh rich." Doth any man expect an harvest, if he takes not pains to plough and sow? No more if you do not take pains in prayer can you expect an answer, or indeed will you.

A second cause, or sinful discouragement herein, is looking at prayer only as a duty to be performed, and so performing it as a task, and not so much out of desires stirred up after the things to be obtained, nor out of faith that we shall obtain them. Thus do most in the world pray to God; they come to God as to a master only, not a father; and thus doing, no wonder if they look for little effect of prayers. To help you in this, you are to look to two things in prayer. First, to a command from God. Secondly, to the promises of God: and so to consider it in a double relation: First, as a duty in respect to the command: Secondly, as a means to obtain blessings at God's hand in relation to his promises. Therefore in prayer, first, an act of obedience, secondly, an act of faith is to be exercised. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering," Jam. i. Now most perform it as an act of obedience only, and so rest in the present performance of it; but if a man pray in faith, he will pray with an

eye to the promises; and look on prayer as a means to obtain such or such a mercy at God's hands; and if so, then he is not satisfied till he hath an answer of his prayers.

A third sinful discouragement is returning to sins after prayers, when a man hath prayed for some mercy, and riseth full of confidence that his prayers are heard; and so awhile he walks, yet falling into sin, that sin doth dash all his hopes; meets as it were with the answer, which is God's messenger, and causeth it to return to heaven again. How often, when God had granted a petition, and the decree coming forth, hath an act of treason come between, which stopped and blotted all, both prayer and grant when newly written, and left a guilt in the mind which quelled our hopes, and then we looked no more after our prayers? And this especially if, when we were sinning, such a thought came in, (as often it doth) to restrain us. Are you not in dependence upon God for such a mercy, and have prayed for it? How then dare you do this, and sin against him? When in this case the heart goes on, it blots all the prayer. And thus far it is true that sinning thus between, interrupts and hinders the obtaining our petitions; and that answerably as we do thus betray and undo our prayers; so we find in the way rubs and difficulties do arise; for as we lay blocks in God's way, coming towards us to do us good, so he does in ours. But yet this you are to consider, that as in the end praying useth to overcome sin in God's children, so also God in the end overcomes difficulties, and brings the matter to pass. And know it is not sins past so much that hinder the prayers of God's people, as the present unfitness and indisposition of their hearts for mercy.

THE
TRIAL
OF
A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH.

—◆—
IN TWO PARTS.

TO

THE READER.

I DARE not say, I write this to you, Fathers, I never presumed it in my thoughts; I myself wrote and preached it when I was but young in years, and for the time far younger in grace and experience. And I dare not (if the apostle would not) stretch myself beyond that measure which God hath distributed to me. A measure which yet may reach you that are young men, though more grown Christians are gone far beyond the line of it.

The God of grace grant us and all his children to speak the truth in love, (in these dividing times,) that we may grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ.

THOMAS GOODWIN.

April 26, 1643.

THE TRIAL

OF

A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH.

PART I.

OF GROWTH IN VIVIFICATION, AND BRINGING FORTH
MORE FRUIT.

JOHN XV. 2.

He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

CHAP. I.

That all true Branches in Christ grow.

GROWTH in grace is the main thing held forth unto us in these words; and therefore I make it the chief subject of this discourse. Now as in the work of sanctification, there are two parts, mortification and vivification; so our progress in that work hath two parts also apart to be considered: 1. A growth in mortification, or purging out of sin, "he purgeth it." 2. A positive growth in holiness, and all the fruits of it, "that it may bring forth more fruit." My purpose is to treat of these two distinctly. And although purging out of sin is here first

mentioned, yet our growth in fruitfulness shall have the first place in handling them; because growth in positive holiness is the end of the other, and so chiefly intended; and is accordingly made mention of here by Christ: "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

In handling this head, I shall first, in general, shew, that all true branches grow in grace and fruitfulness. Secondly, propound such considerations, by way of explication, as may conduce to satisfy the temptations of such Christians as discern not their growth therein. Thirdly, explain more largely, by way of trial, what it is to bring forth more fruit, thereby further to help believers to discern and judge aright of it. My scope being not so much to give means or motives unto growth, as helps to judge of, and try our growth, and prevent such mistakes herein, as Christians are apt to fall into.

I am, first, in general, to demonstrate, that all true believers grow more or less in fruitfulness. I shall give both proofs and reasons of it. For proofs out of Scripture, observe these two places, Hosea xiv. 5, compared with Psalm xcii. where the Holy Ghost singleteth out the choicest trees and flowers in the world, on purpose to express the saint's fruitfulness, and their growth therein. To shew the sudden stirring up of faith in Christians, he compares them to the lily, Hosea xiv. 5, whose stalk, though long hid in the earth, when once it begins to feel the dew, grows up often in a night. But yet a lily is but a flower, and soon decays. Therefore, 2. To shew their stability, together with their growth, the prophet compares them to the cedar, whose wood rots not; and which is most durable of all trees. But yet, 3. Suppose faith be oppressed with temptations and oppositions, yet to shew that still it will grow and flourish again, he further compareth them to a palm-tree, which useth to grow the more the more weight is hung upon it, and sprouts again, even when it is cut down to the roots. And, 4. To shew that they grow with all kinds of

growth, the prophet expresseth their growth both by the spreading of their root, and also of the branches, and so in a growth both upward and downward, "He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon;" that is, grow inwardly in habitual grace, and then outwardly "spread forth his branches," and so grow in external holiness. Neither, 5. is it a growth merely in bulk, but also in fruitfulness, and therefore he compares them to the olive and the vine, (as in that place of Hosea,) which are of all trees the fruitfulest, and most useful to God and man, Judg. ix. 13. But yet more particularly, 6. Trees flourish but for some while, during which, although they be green and fruitful, yet in their age they wither, their leaves fall off, and their fruit decays. The Holy Ghost, therefore, as preventing this exception, adds, Psalm xcii. "They bring forth fruit still in their old age." When nature begins to decay, yet grace renews its strength; which if it be wondered at, and how grace should grow and multiply, the soil of our hearts being a step-mother to it, "From me, (saith Christ,) is thy fruit found," ver. 8. of that of Hosea xiv. "It is God that gives this increase, and I will be as the dew to Israel," ver. 5.

The reasons why Christians thus grow are drawn, First, from Christ's being our head, and we his members. Now although clothes grow not, yet members do. This similitude the apostle useth in two places, Eph. iv. 15, 16, and Col. ii. 19, where he saith, Christ is a head, from whom the whole body grows up to him in all things. Of this reason the consequence will appear many ways. First, if no more but that there might be a conformity of the head and members, it was meet we, the members, should grow; "for we are predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. Now Christ did grow in wisdom, Luke i. 80, and ii. 40, 42, and therefore so must we. But, Secondly, as he is our head, he hath received all fulness to that very end, that we might grow even to fill all in all, Eph. i. 23. We are

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growth, the prophet expresseth their growth both by the spreading of their root, and also of the branches, and so in a growth both upward and downward, "He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon;" that is, grow inwardly in habitual grace, and then outwardly "spread forth his branches," and so grow in external holiness. Neither, 5. is it a growth merely in bulk, but also in fruitfulness, and therefore he compares them to the olive and the vine, (as in that place of Hosea,) which are of all trees the fruitfulest, and most useful to God and man, Judg. ix. 13. But yet more particularly, 6. Trees flourish but for some while, during which, although they be green and fruitful, yet in their age they wither, their leaves fall off, and their fruit decays. The Holy Ghost, therefore, as preventing this exception, adds, Psalm xcii. "They bring forth fruit still in their old age." When nature begins to decay, yet grace renews its strength; which if it be wondered at, and how grace should grow and multiply, the soil of our hearts being a step-mother to it, "From me, (saith Christ,) is thy fruit found," ver. 8. of that of Hosea xiv. "It is God that gives this increase, and I will be as the dew to Israel," ver. 5.

The reasons why Christians thus grow are drawn, First, from Christ's being our head, and we his members. Now although clothes grow not, yet members do. This similitude the apostle useth in two places, Eph. iv. 15, 16, and Col. ii. 19, where he saith, Christ is a head, from whom the whole body grows up to him in all things. Of this reason the consequence will appear many ways. First, if no more but that there might be a conformity of the head and members, it was meet we, the members, should grow; "for we are predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. Now Christ did grow in wisdom, Luke i. 80, and ii. 40, 42, and therefore so must we. But, Secondly, as he is our head, he hath received all fulness to that very end, that we might grow even to fill all in all, Eph. i. 23. We are

empty creatures, at his first taking of us, John x. 10, "I came," says Christ, "that they might have life," and not only so much as will keep body and soul together, as we say, but) "that they might have it more abundantly." Why is grace called life, and of lives the most excellent, but because it containeth all the essential properties of life in it? Now the main properties of life are to move and grow. The stars have a moving life, but they grow not. The sun increaseth not for all its motion. Plants have a growing life, but they move not out of their place. But in grace there is both. It is an active thing, and it is a growing thing also; and because the more it is acted the more it grows, therefore its growth is expressed by its motion.

The second reason is taken from God the Father, who hath promised that they shall grow: therefore it is said, Psalm xcii. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age, to shew the Lord is faithful," who respecteth his promise. And God the Father hath appointed means to that end, principally that they might grow. He hath "given gifts unto men," not that they may be converted only, but also to "build them up for the edifying of the body of Christ." Therefore the word is not only compared to seed, that begets men, but to milk also, that so babes may grow, and to strong meat, that men may grow, and thus all sorts of Christians may grow. Again, he gives his Spirit, which works growth in the hearts of his people: by him they have a nutritive power conveyed from Christ. For it might be said, though there be never so much nourishment, if they have no power to digest, still they cannot grow; therefore the apostle says, that there is an "effectual working in the measure of every part, Eph. iv. 16, the same power working in us, which raised up Jesus Christ from death, Eph. i. 19. There is therefore as great a necessity to grow as to be born again, or else we cannot enter into heaven.

CHAP. II.

How Believers grow : Considerations to satisfy those that discern not their Growth.

HAVING given you the reasons, I will now explain the point : and that chiefly for the satisfaction of those, whose main doubts are occasioned by their want of discerning themselves to grow. They say, when they were young they had more spiritual enlivenings and quickness of affections ; that formerly they had more zeal in what they did for the good of others, and more fruit of their labours ; that heretofore they spent more time in duties, in conference, hearing, prayer, and the like ; that others start up, who have more grace the first day, than they have been getting many years. Yea, they are so far from discerning that they grow, that they rather think they fall back. Now concerning this sort of trouble, let me premise what sort of converts this temptation is aptest to seize on.

You all know that there are two sorts of conversions of people usual in the church. The conversion of some is like the bringing of Joseph out of a dungeon into a glorious light. It is accompanied with a mighty, violent inundation of humiliation for sin, and joy and love. Which afterwards abating, and the stream settling and growing less, and coming to an ordinary channel, such as the natural spring of grace, as I may call it, will serve to feed, they then begin to call all into question. Others, on the contrary, with a more still and quiet stream ; and their change from darkness to light hath been but as the breaking forth of the morning. Now observe the different conditions of these two sorts. The former have a more apparant work at first, but are apt through desersions, or neglects, to call in question their progress afterwards. The others see a constant stream increasing, but cannot shew the well-head, or when or where the spring began. So that an apparant work of grace begun, becomes matter of assurance to the one, but is checked for want

of discerning growth answerable to such beginnings. But an apparent growth, and fast going up of the building, comforts the others, yet so as they still are apt to question whether the foundation of such a building be well and surely laid. Thus hath our wise God, as in the work of his providence, so of his grace, "set the one against the other," that unto both these there might be occasion of exercise left, that neither might confide in any works wrought upon them, but fly alone to Christ; and that neither should rejoice against the other, or be discontented with that way, wherein God hath dealt with them.

I come now to some considerations concerning a Christian's discerning his spiritual growth. And first, the eager desire that many Christians have to have more grace, together with their going on to discern more and more their wants, (which in some respects is a growth) keep them from thinking that indeed they do grow. "There is," (as Solomon says) "that maketh himself poor, and hath great riches," Prov. xiii. 7. Because he enlargeth his desires still, therefore still he thinks himself poor. So hungry Christians, looking still to what they want, and not to what they have, are still complaining and unthankful. If thou wouldst discern thy growth, do not compare the copy with thy writing, but rather thy writing now with thy writing at the first: for this is a sure rule, that the better thou learnest to write, the better copy doth God daily set thee; that is, gives thee to see more strictness in the rule; and so still mayest thou think that thou wantest as much, and art as far short as at first, if thus thou comparest thyself with nothing but thy sight of the rule itself.

Again consider, that if growth at any time be made sensible, yet after a while it is not so discernible as that great change was, which was made upon a man's first conversion. For at our first conversion, the change was specificall wholly from want of grace, unto beginnings of grace: but the change in our growth afterwards is but gradual; that is, but an addition of more degrees of the

same kind. And therefore it doth not so eminently affect the heart, as the change at our first conversion doth. To be translated out of a prison to a kingdom, as Joseph was, would affect more than to have new kingdoms added to one that is a king already, as Alexander had.

Thirdly, to discern thy growth, there must be time allowed. Christians do not grow discernibly till after some space. The sun goes higher and higher, but we discern not its progress, till after an hour's motion. Things most excellent, have the slowest growth. Bul-rushes grow fast, oaks more slowly, yet more solidly, and in the end attain to a greater bulk.

Lastly, consider the growth itself. There may be a great difference thereof in several men. Some have the advantage of others, at first setting out ; God gives them a great stock of grace at first ; and that for these causes : 1. When there is a present use of them. Paul was the last of the apostles, born out of time, as himself complains, as one that was set to school long after the rest of the apostles, and yet came not behind any of them in grace, because God was to use him presently. To some God gives five talents, to others but two ; so that he that hath five, hath as much given him at first, as he that had but two had with all his gains, all his life time. 2. When a man is converted late, as he that came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, was furnished with abilities to do as much as the rest.

Likewise, in the manner of their growth, some have the advantage of others. 1. Some grow without intermission, as that great apostle, and the Colossians, who from the first day they heard the Gospel, brought forth fruit, Col. i. 15. Others for some time stand at a stay : thus some do, presently after their conversion, as the church of Ephesus, who fell from her first love : others in old age, as the Hebrews, who when from the time they might have taught others, were so far cast behind, that they had need be taught again the first principles of religion. Measure not therefore your growth by a piece

of your lives, but by comparing the parts of your whole life together. 2. Some die sooner, and therefore God fits them for heaven sooner. It is with several Christians, as with several planets: the moon goes her course in a month, the earth in a year, the rest in many years; so often they that live shortest grow fastest.

CHAP. III.

What it is to bring forth more Fruit, explained negatively.

LET us now see what it is wherein Christians grow, that so you may discern what it is to bring forth more fruit. And this I will explain two ways. First, negatively, what it is not to bring forth more fruit really, though in appearance it be a growth in fruit, which occasions many mistakes. Secondly, positively, what it is truly to bring forth more fruit.

For the first. To grow is not to grow in gifts, or abilities; as to preach, and pray, but to increase in graces. The Corinthians grew fast in respect of gifts, they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and yet he tells them, that they were babes and carnal, chap. iii. 2, 3. And therefore in the 12th chapter, after the apostle had spoken of gifts, and of endeavouring to excel therein, he exhorts them "to covet the best gifts;" but, yet, says he, "I shew unto you a more excellent way." And what was that? "Love to God and love of our brethren." Gifts are given for the good of others, to edify them; but graces, as love, faith, and humility, are given to save a man's own soul: and therefore therein is the true growth.

Yet let me add, that often by increasing in grace, a man increaseth in gifts, and for want of increasing in grace, gifts also decay. The talents being used faithfully, were doubled; and unfaithfully, were lessened. This consideration may answer the doubts which some Christians

have about their growth, because they cannot pray so well as others. Thou mayest bring forth more fruit for all that, if thou walkest humbly in thy calling, and prayest more fervently, though less eloquently. By how much the more we prize ourselves less by them, and use them in Christ, and for Christ; the more we are contented to want them, and do not envy others that have them; so much the more fruit we bring forth, even in the want of such gifts. Again, decay in gifts, as in old age, doth not always hinder men from bringing forth more fruit. Although they cannot remember a sermon so well as they were wont, nor preach with that vigour and vivacity, nor be so active, stirring, and forward, it follows not that they bring not forth more fruit. A musician when he is young, is able to sing sweeter than when he is old; when his vigour decays, his joints grow lame, he cannot play as he had wont; yet still he may grow a better musician and have more skill, and make better compositions.

Secondly, our bringing forth more fruit, is not to be measured simply by our success towards others in the exercise of those gifts. We are not to reckon our growth by this. For in success and exercise of gifts, a man may decrease when he grows older, and so see less fruit of his labours than formerly; or haply he may be laid aside: so says the Baptist of himself, I must decrease. And in this respect, old Christians and ancient ministers may decrease, and young ones increase, and yet they decay not in grace. There are God's works in us, and God's works with us. Now God's works with us in doing good to others, may be less, when yet his works in us may be more. The Holy Ghost may use one of less grace to do more good than one of more; though he delights usually to honour those of most sincerity, with most success: and God "will reward men according to their own labours;" not simply according to his works by them. As if God doth not go forth with a minister, whose heart is much set to convert souls, to do so much good by him as with another, who is in his own spirit less zealous;

yet if his heart was large in desires, and his endeavours great to do good, God will reckon more fruits to him than to another that used fewer endeavours, though he had more success.

Thirdly, this growth in grace, and bringing forth more fruit, is not simply to be reckoned by the largeness or smallness of those opportunities which men have of doing more or less good ; and so, by the bringing forth of more fruit, in respect of more opportunities vouchsafed. Some that have more grace, and better gifts, have their shop windows shut, night overtakes them, and then " they cannot work." Others have lesser shops to work in, and yet have more grace ! yea, the same man may have larger opportunities when young, and lesser when he is old, and yet grow, and bring forth more fruit before God. Indeed when a man shall prize opportunities of doing good, and for them voluntarily let go all opportunities of advancing himself, and his credit, or ease, or advantages, then the more fruit he brings forth in those opportunities, the more is reckoned on his score.

Fourthly, it is not always to be measured by accessory graces ; as joy and spiritual ravishment ; but rather by those substantial graces, faith, humility, and love. The other may decrease, when these that are substantial increase. These sweet blooms may fall off, when fruit comes on.

Fifthly, it is not increasing in outward profession, but in inward and substantial godliness. The other is but as an increasing in leaves ; but in growth, there must be a bringing forth more fruit. When the root strikes not deeper into the earth, but spreads much upward in the branches, this is not a true growth ; though where there is more rooting, there will be more spreading also above ground. Many at first grow into so great a profession, as they cannot grow up to all their days ; make bigger clothes than they can grow to fill. As they say of elephants, that the skin is as big at first as ever after, and all their life time their flesh grows but to fill their skin up.

True growth begins at the vitals, the heart, the blood gets soundness and vigour, and so the whole man outwardly. This heart-godliness is the thing you must judge by.

And yet, sixthly, even in inward affections many are deceived: even there the party for Christ may be greater in appearance than in truth. So often in a young Christian, there is a greater army of affections mustered, but most of them but mercenaries. His affections are then larger, his joys greater, his sorrows more violent than afterwards. More of his heart joins in duties at first; but afterwards, though less, yet more spiritually and truly. Hence it is, that young Christians, (if they know their hearts) complain more of hypocrisy, and old Christians of deadness. So in times of peace, presumption ekes out faith, and makes it seem a great deal, which in times of desertion and trial, falls off. When the fire is first kindled, there is more smoke, even as much as fills the house; but after the flame comes, that contracts all into a narrow compass, and hath more heat in it. So it is in young Christians, their affections, (which Christ compares to the smoking flax) their joy in duties, their sorrow for sin, their love of God is more, but partly carnal: the flame after, though less, grows purer, and less mixed with vapours of corrupt self-love.

Seventhly, we must not measure our bringing forth more fruit by one kind of duties, but by our growth in godliness; in the universal latitude of it, as it takes in all the duties of a Christian. It may be, when grown up we are less in some sort of duties, than we were when we were young Christians. Haply we were more in praying, in fasting, reading, and meditating, yea, spent the most (if not the whole) of our time in these; but because we now spend less time in these, we must not say that we are fallen, or decayed. For there are many other duties to be done besides these, which perhaps then we neglected, but now make conscience of. So that taking all sorts of duties, we may be grown more, and bring forth more

fruit. Perhaps we bring forth less fruit of some one kind, but if we be filled with all variety of fruits of our general and particular callings, this is to bring forth more fruit. Men at their first conversion are necessitated often to spend their whole time in such duties whercin they immediately draw nigh to God. Paul then spent three whole days in fasting and prayer. And then we allow them to do it, because their states require it; they want assurance, and establishment; they see grace to be that one thing necessary, and therefore we give them leave to neglect all things for it; they are new married to Christ, and therefore they are not pressed to war the first year. Parents and masters are to give allowance to such, then in the travail of their new birth, and not to be cruel to them, in denying them more time than ordinary. So also when they are in desertion, (which is a time of sickness, and in sickness you allow your servants time from their work) as the church, when she wanted her beloved, Cant. iii. 2, no wonder if she leaves all to seek him: as yourselves, when you want a child or a servant, you leave all to find him. Then they come new out of prison, out of the fresh apprehension of the wrath of God; and therefore no wonder if they run so fast, and salute none by the way, stay to do no business; but when once they are gotten to the city of refuge, then they fall about their business and callings again. Hence young Christians are apt to be more negligent in their particular callings, and are all for the duties of religion, for their present distress and state require it. More ancient Christians are apt to abound more in the duties of their particular calling; but he that hath learnt to be conversant in both aright, to be occupied in his calling, so as to keep his heart in communion with God, and so to attend upon God without distraction, and to be conversant so in duties, as to go about his calling checrfully, "and to do with all his might what his hand therein finds to do," he is the best Christian. And therefore St. Paul, when he had exhorted the Thessalonians to increase more and more in grace,

he goes on to exhort them "to do their own business, and to work with their hands," that they might "walk honestly towards them without," 1 Thess. iv. 10, 11; for to neglect our callings, gives offence to them without; and therefore masters stumble at young Christians. To be conversant all day in holy duties, is indeed more sweet to a man's self; but to be engaged in our callings is more profitable to others, and so may glorify God more. Therefore it is to be accounted a bringing forth more fruit, when both are joined, and wisely subordinated, so as the one is not an hinderance to the other.

CHAP. IV.

What it is to bring forth more Fruit, explained positively.

THUS I have shewn you what this growth is not to be measured by: I will secondly shew wherein it consists.

First, we grow, when we are led on to exereise new graees, and so to add one grace to another; as when in our knowledge we are led into new truths, and have answerable affections running along with those discoveries. There are many *forms* Christians go through, as scholars at school do, wherein their thoughts are in a more espeeial manner taken up about divine objects of an higher or inferior nature. The first form is to teach them to know their sinfulness of heart and life more; and so they go to school to the law, and are set to study it, and that often even a good while after faith is begun. After they have learned that lesson thoroughly, they are led up higher, to have their faith exercised about free grace more, and towards Christ's person, union with him, and the art of drawing virtue from him, and doing all in him. And herein it falls out with particular Christians as with the church in general; that as, although the church from Adam's time in the old world, had the knowledge of all *fundamentals* necessary to salvation, yet

God went over them *piecemeal*, age after age, to instruct his church in a larger knowledge of those fundamentals: So is it in God's dealing with particular Christians. Though a believer in his conversion hath the substance of all these taught him, yet he goes over them by piecemeal again, throughout his whole life; and hath often such a distinct apprehension renewed of them as if he had not known or minded them before. And sometimes his thoughts dwell more about the emptiness of his own righteousness; sometimes about that fulness that is in Christ; sometimes more about the spiritual strictness he ought to walk in.

Secondly, when a man finds new degrees of the same grace added, and the fruits of them grow more plentiful; as when a man's love grows more fervent; when any thing that was lacking in faith is added; when a man grows up to more strength of faith in temptations, and is less moved and shaken in them, then he grows in grace. Thus in godly sorrow, when from mourning for sin, as contrary to God's holiness, we go on to mourn for it as contrary to him who loves us; so when our motives to hate sin grow more raised, more spiritual, these are additions of the same degree. So in prayer, when we find our prayers to grow more spiritual, as in that part of prayer, *confession*, when more spiritual corruptions are put into our confessions; and stronger grounds of faith put into deprecation, and petitions for pardon; more enlargedness to thankfulness; more zeal to pray for the churches; then we grow in grace.

Thirdly, when the fruits and duties we perform grow more spiritual; and though they grow not in largeness nor in number; that is, we pray not more, nor longer, yet they grow more savoury, more compact and solid. It is not simply the multitude of performances that argue growth, (when one is sick, and his body is decayed, he may be less in duties,) but it is the holiness of them. One short prayer put up in faith with a broken heart, is in God's eye more fruit than a long one, or a whole day spent in

fasting; even in the same sense that the widow's mite is said to be "more than they all" cast in, Luke xxi. 3. As in noting sermons, so in performing duties, some will note more words, but not more matter, because with less understanding. Young Christians perform more duties; but the more spiritual your performances grow, the more fruit there is in them; namely, when your ends are raised more to aim at God, and to sanctify him more, and to debase yourselves in a sense of your own vileness and emptiness; and when your obedience proceeds more out of thankfulness, and less out of the constraint of conscience. As the greatest growth of wicked men is in spiritual wickedness, (in which the Pharisees grew, when yet it may be they leave more gross evils,) so the greatest growth of grace is in spiritual holiness, in sanctifying God much in the heart, and "worshipping him in spirit and in truth."

Fourthly, when a man grows more rooted in Christ, that is the true growth; and that which makes the fruit to be more in God's esteem: therefore we are said "to grow up in him;" that is, to live the life we lead more out of ourselves, and in Christ. As when, for the acceptance of our persons, we are emptied of our own righteousness; so, for strength to perform duties, we are emptied of our abilities, "seeing without him we can do nothing;" when, for acceptance of our performances, our hearts have learnt habitually to say more and more with the apostle, "Not I, but Christ in me;" when we interest Christ more and more in all we do, as the efficient and also the final cause. And therefore I observe, when growth of grace is mentioned, it is still expressed by *growing in the knowledge of Christ*: as if to grow in grace without him were nothing; as indeed it is not. To do one duty, sanctifying Christ, and free grace in the heart, is more than a thousand done otherwise. Young Christians, it may be, do more works, but not as works of grace. And the more men think by duties to get Christ, and God's favour, the more they trust therein:

but the more dead a man grows to the law, and the more free grace is acknowledged in all, trusted in above all, the more evangelical our works are, the more we grow.

Fifthly, when we grow more constant in performances, and more even in a godly course, and settled in spiritual affections without intermission, it is a sign we grow. It argues that "our inward man is more renewed day by day," when we can walk closely with God a long while together. A righteous man is compared to the palm-tree, whose leaf never fades, Psal. i. whereas other trees bring forth by fits: and to be much in duties by fits is not a sign of growth, but weakness.

Sixthly, a man may be said to grow and bring forth more fruit, when, although the difficulties of doing duties become greater, and his means less, yet he continues to do them; and this though he doth no more than he did before. For a tree to bring forth much fruit in cold weather, or in the shade, is more than when it brings it forth in summer, or when it stands in the sun. "I know thy work, thy labour, and thy patience," Rev. ii. 13. When a man, though he doth fewer works, yet does them with much labour, having, it may be, now a body grown weak; or holds out in the profession of the ways of God with more hazard, in a place "where Satan's throne is;" this makes a little done for Christ a great deal. So when a man thrives with small means of grace, and yet exceedeth those that have more; to pray, and to continue so to do, though the stream is against us and gales cease; to pray, and to continue to pray, when we hear no answers, but the contrary.

Seventhly, when a man, though he doth less for the outward bulk, yet grows more wise and faithful to lay out all his opportunities and abilities to the best advantage, this is to bring forth more fruit. Thus Moses, who at first began to hear himself all causes, both small and great, in the end gave over the lesser causes to others, and reserved the hearing of the greater to himself, Exod. xviii. 17, yet still he continued to do more, and laid himself

out to greater advantage. His former course would have killed him: "Thou wilt wear away like a leaf," says Jethro to him. So the apostle, who strove to preach the gospel where Christ had not been known, Rom. xv. 20. When a man forbears lesser things to lay out all for the churches advantage; less ventures himself in a smaller course, (unless particularly called to it,) not out of fearfulness, but faithfulness, and will lay all the stock of it in a greater; "when a man watcheth in all things;" and "serves the season," as some read it, Rom. xii. 11; that is, waits for the best advantages of doing good (both which may stand with fervency of spirit, and enduring afflictions,) as he grows. A man is no less liberal that studies how to lay out his money to most charitable uses, though he gives less to some particulars. We live in a wicked world, and godly men cannot do what they would, as wicked men also cannot. When therefore a man looks about him, and studies to improve himself to the utmost advantage for God in his place, to lay out his credit, his parts, and all for God, as a faithful factor in the best wares; though he deals in fewer particulars, he may, notwithstanding, bring forth more fruit.

THE TRIAL

OF

A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH.

PART II.

OF GROWTH IN MORTIFICATION, OR GOD'S PURGING OUT
CORRUPTION.

The Way God uses to purge out our Corruptions.

I COME now to the trial of our growth in the other part of sanctification, namely, the mortification of lusts, and purging out of corruptions. Now the ways God useth to effect this are many and divers: he blesseth all sorts of means and dealings to accomplish it. As by casting us into afflictions. Mercies prevail against some sins, and afflictions against others. Moses neglected to circumcise his child, (as we do our hearts, it is such a bloody work,) till God met him, and would have killed him. In like manner, God sometimes puts us in the fear or danger of losing our lives, casts us into sicknesses, and the like, and all to bring us to this work of purging our heart. And as he uses these *occasional*, so also *instrumental* helps; as his word: so, Eph. v. 26, Christ is said "to cleanse his church with the washing of water by the

word;" by the word spoken, either in preaching or in conference. The word at once discovers the sin, and sets the heart against it. Or else by the word meditated upon, by keeping some truth fresh in the mind, God fastens the mind upon some new promise, or new-discovered sign of a man's state, and these cleanse him. God useth also the examples of others as means to provoke a man to purge himself. The example of those that have fallen away provoke a man to set afresh upon this work, lest the like sins should prevail against him also, and cause him to fall. And to hear holy men speak what victory over lusts may be attained here, their example doth much provoke another to purge himself. And in the last place, there are many inward workings upon the heart, whereby God goes on to purge us.

First, by a further discovering of corruptions unto us; either a greater filthiness in the evils we saw before, or to see more of them, and by what one sees to suspect more. God never discovers lusts to us but to carry them away.

Secondly, he sets the heart on work to get our lusts mortified more and more, and not to rest in the measure attained. When a man's heart is set upon the work, as that he came into the world for; when he so looks at it as his business, being as much convinced of this, that he should be more holy, as he was at first that he was to be new born; when growth of grace is as much in a man's eye as getting grace at first was, and as great a necessity made of the one as of the other. This conviction many want, and so take no care to grow more holy. "If any be otherwise minded," says the apostle, that there is no such absolute necessity of going on still to perfection, "God shall reveal it to him." God doth reveal and set this upon every good man's heart at one time or another, and so goes on to purge them. And this is also expressed to us, 1 Pet. iv. 1, "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves with the same mind;" namely, to mortify our lusts: For it follows, "He that hath suffered in the flesh," that is, hath mor-

tified his lusts, "hath ceased from sin." The *arming* there is God's putting into the mind a strong and invincible resolution to go through with this work; when he arms and steels it against all difficulties, all encounters. This is meant by "arming us with the same mind;" that Christ looked upon it as his business when he came into the world, to suffer for us, so we look upon it as our business to crucify our lusts. When therefore we bend all our endeavours upon this work, and hear and perform all other duties with an eye to this; when God hath put such a resolution into a man, and preserves it, then he goes on to purge him.

Thirdly, God doth it by drawing the affections more and more into holy duties and into obedience; when that intention of mind, which we formerly spent upon vanities, is now drawn into prayer and holy meditations, and when our care is how to please God more, and our hearts are more in the duties of obedience; then lusts do wither. As the sun doth draw up the sap out of the root, so doth Christ draw out the heart at some times more than others to holy duties. This killeth sin, and causeth it to wither; namely, by taking away the sap; that is, that *intention* of mind which doth usually nourish it: Thus, 1 Pet. i. 22, "We purify our hearts by obeying the truth."

Fourthly, by bringing the heart more and more acquainted with Christ. Before this, men may have washed, and washed, but they have washed without soap, until Christ, and the virtue of his death and rising again, which is compared, Mal. iii. unto *fullers' soap*, hath been revealed to them. Zech. xiii. 1, it is said, that God "opens a fountain to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness;" that is, for the guilt of sin, and the power of sin. Now by that *opening* is not meant the promise of sending his Son into the world to be crucified, but the discovery of him to believers after his being crucified. That opening is the discovery of him to his people, as the great ordinance of cleansing them. Now the more dis-

tinety a man understands Christ, and how to make use of him, the more easily he gets his lusts purged. This comes to pass, as God doth go on to open our faith to see him, and know him, and to be acquainted with him: for so the apostle expresseth it, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." The more we look upon all means else in the use of them as ineffectual without him, the more power we shall find from him.

Fifthly, by assuring the soul of his love, shedding it abroad in the heart, and by spiritual joy, doth God also purge his people. Although a believer is said to mortify sin upon this consideration, that it is "the transgression of the law," yet much more upon this other, because "Christ was manifested to take sins away." And the more joy a man hath in Christ, the more dead he must needs be to the world; for the ground of all sin is the love of pleasure. Now, if I find pleasure in God and Christ, it makes me more dead to the seeking it in the world. When the sweetness of sin is spoiled by the taste of a greater, it must needs die; and though that sweetness from God doth not always remain in the present relish of it, yet it leaves such an impression behind, that whatever a man tastes after, it hath no relish with him.

CHAP. II.

The Trial of Mortification; and that first by negative signs, or such as argue much corruption yet remaining.

I now come to the helps whereby you may discern what progress hath been made in this work. And first, I will give you such symptoms as argue much corruption, and little proficiency therein. I. When a man sets a high price upon worldly excellencies and pleasures; is much taken with outward things, and carried away with them; or when, though we restrain ourselves from the pursuit of them, yet they seem glorious and goodly

things, and we think the enjoying such a pleasure, the obtaining such a condition of life, would be a great addition of happiness to us; this argues a green heart, and much want of mortification. This magnifying of outward things is indeed but "knowing things after the flesh;" because the flesh doth corrupt the judgment, in judging ourselves by such things. To think ourselves, as it were, debarred of so much of our happiness, whilst we cannot enjoy them, this argues an unmortified heart: For herein lies the power of mortification, even to "count all things as dross and dung;" to look upon them as *crucified things*, as mere withered flowers.

Secondly, when our minds are so glued to any thing, that we cannot tell how to part with it; how to lose such a friend, or such a conveniency; we would think ourselves half undone, if such or such a thing should fall out; then we need purging. It is good often to try our hearts, by supposing the worst that can befall us. What if a change should come? Such a thing I should be put to? To see how the heart can bear it. When some men have a loss in their estates or riches, a piece of their very heart goes with them.

Thirdly, the more confidence we have in the creatures, and have our spirits strengthened and upolden by them, the more want there is of mortification. "We are the circumcision," says the apostle, "who have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3. The more the heart is truly circumcised, the less it trusteth in outward things, privileges, and endowments; as, riches, blood, credit, learning, or righteousness; these, when the heart is not circumcised, puff it up: "But we, (says he,) have no confidence in the flesh," either for comfort, or for justification, or any thing else; "but we rejoice in Christ Jesus."

Fourthly, the less able we are to bear reproof, the more unmortified it argues our hearts to be. It is a sign we love those much, whom we cannot endure to hear spoken against: therefore, says the apostle, "Be swift

to hear, but slow to wrath ;" take heed of raging when you are touched. It follows : " Casting away all superfluity, receive the word with meekness ;" for it is your lusts unpurged, that cause that wrath and heart-boiling against reproof.

Fifthly, the more quick the temptation is in taking, the more unmortified the heart. When an object passeth through at the very first presenting of it, and soaks into the heart, as oil into the bones ; when a man is gunpowder to temptations, and it is but touch and take, so as there needs not much blowing, but the heart is presently on fire ; it argues an unmortified heart. When a man's heart is actually in a good temper, a temptation doth not so easily take. His heart is then, though tinder, yet as wet tinder, that is more slow in taking. As there is a preparedness to good works, so there is a preparedness to evil. When the heart is bird-limed, then it cleaves to every thing it meets with. It is a sign that the heart is not " awake to righteousness," as the apostle speaks, but to sin rather, when a little occasion awakens sin : as, when on the contrary, a great deal of jogging will not awaken a man's grace.

Sixthly, when the recalling former acts committed by a man, prove still a snare to him ; and being suggested by satan, quicken his lust afresh, it is a sign of an unmortified frame. It is a sign a man is deeply in love, when he falls in love with the picture ; so it is, that the flesh hath the upper hand when the remembrance whence he is fallen, which should make him repent, on the contrary causes him to commit the same sin again. To have the mind stirred with new objects and new temptations, may stand with far less corruption, and more grace, than to have it stirred afresh with the remembrance of the old.

CHAP. III.

Positive Signs of a Growth in Mortification.

I COME now to the second sort of signs, namely, positive signs of growth in mortification. First, the more insight a man hath into spiritual corruptions, together with a conflict against them, the more growth he hath attained unto in purging out corruptions. When the chief of his conflict is come to be with spiritual lusts, not gross evils, it is an evidence of his progress in this work. These ordinarily are sure rules, that whilst a man's conflict is with more outward gross evils, as, uncleanness or worldly-mindedness, so long he is kept from the sight of those close corruptions which sit nighest to the heart. On the contrary, the more a man is freed from such outward evils, the more his thoughts are bent to the discovery of spiritual wickednesses. Indeed, those who are grown in grace, have attained ordinarily some freedom from such sins; therefore says John, 1 Epist. ii. 14, "You young men are strong, and have overcome that evil one." They have attained so much strength as to overcome the grosser evils. So that, to allude to what the apostle says in another case, they then come to conflict not so much with flesh and blood, as with spiritual wickednesses, that is, with affections and dispositions contrary to the work of grace; and therein lies their chief exercise, which is not till they have some victory over the other.

Secondly, we may discern our victory over our lusts, by our ability more or less to deny ourselves. The more we grow up to a readiness and cheerfulness of heart to deny ourselves when we are put upon it, the more are lusts purged out. For the reason that we have so much ado to prevail on ourselves to part with such and such things, as God and our own consciences call us unto, is through want of purging. For all aversion to self-denial is from an adherence to outward things. Were we free and unmar-

ried men to the world, were our hearts loosened from all ; it would be nothing to us to part with them. The more loosened a man is from the world, and the things of it, the more prepared he is for all works of self-denial. So when a man parts with all readily, as Abraham is said to believe without staggering, it is a sign he hath attained to a good degree. When a man hath an open and a large heart to God, (as a liberal man hath an open hand to men,) as Abraham had when he was willing to let God have his only son. When God can command any thing a man has at an hour's warning, as we say ; it is a sign he is much weaned. Abraham stood not long deliberating, but went early in the morning, even the next morning, God having called for his son that very night, (as it is likely by that Gen. xxii. 3 ; for the night was the time when God used to reveal himself by visions :) and the next morning he went forth early.

Thirdly, the more a man comes to a taste of the spiritual Word, and that which is most spiritual therein, the more corruption is purged out ; as when a man comes to his stomach, it is a sign he is growing out of a sickness. So 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2, " Laying aside all malice, as babes desire the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Therefore the more corruption is laid aside, the more we taste the Word, and God in it ; the more we taste, the more we desire it ; the more we desire it, the more we grow.

Fourthly, when in ordinary times of temptation a man finds a lust not so violent as it was, but more impotent and weak, it is a sign of growth in mortification. Then a man's strength or weakness is discerned most, (as the bodily strength is) when a man is assaulted and set upon. Many that are sick, while they lie still in their beds, think they have a great deal of strength, but when they attempt to rise and walk, they sink down again. As a man's weakness to good is discerned when he comes to act ; so a man's weakness to sin, or strength against it, is then also best discerned. God sometimes suffers " the

law in the members to war," and to muster up all its force, that (as it is said of Hczekiah) a man "might know what is in his heart;" if then a man find the motions of sin in his heart do every temptation after other meet with an hotter encounter than they had wont; that the resistance against sin grows quicker and stronger; that sin cannot advance, and carry on his army so far as formerly, but is still encountered and met with at the frontiers, and there overthrown even at the first setting out; and although assaults and temptations continue, yet there is ground kept and won, insomuch that at least the outward forts are kept by grace, that is, outward acts are abstained from; so far as the lust is not fulfilled as it had wont to be, and not only so, but the inroads of it are confined to a narrower compass, and have a lesser space in regard of inward acts; so far it is purged out. When armies depart with lesser spoil, the overflowings of a man's lusts abate, the tides lessen, overflow less ground, overspread less every day than another, this is another probable sign of a growth in mortification.

Fifthly, when our hearts do not linger after such objects as may satisfy our lusts, but when out of sight they are out of mind, this is a good degree of mortification. When objects are not presented, yet there is in our hearts oftentimes a lingering after them, and this from themselves, without any outward provocation. Many a man when he sees meat, finds he hath a stomach to it, which he thought not till it was set before him: but when a man longs after meat he sees not, it is a sign he is very hungry. Objects present have a far greater force to draw, when absent less; therefore this is a farther degree of mortification attainable. It was in Joseph; when his mistress tempted him from day to day, opportunity was ready, the object present, but he denied her.

CHAP. IV.

Some Cautions to prevent misjudging by false Rules.

I WILL add some cautional considerations, to prevent misjudging of our growth in mortification by false rules, whereby men are apt to be deceived, in judging worse or better of themselves by, than the truth is.

First, men may deceive themselves when they estimate their progress by having overcome such lusts as their natures are not prone unto. The surest way is to take a judgment of it from the decay of a man's bosom sin. The estimate of the progress of a conqueror in an enemy's kingdom, is not taken from burning a few villages, but by taking the forts and strong holds, and by what ground he hath won upon the chief strength and main army. Do the like in the decrease of, and victory over your lusts.

Secondly, you must not judge of your mortification, by extraordinary assistances or temptations: as you do not judge of the strength of a kingdom by auxiliary forces, that are at extraordinary times called in. A young Christian shall, for his encouragement, even in the heat of the battle, when he is ready to be carried away captive, find the Holy Ghost breaking in, and rescuing him; (as Jehoshaphat was, when he cried unto the Lord) when a Christian of much standing is left to fight it out hand to hand. Now it doth not follow that the other, because thus freed, hath the more strength. On the other side, a man is not to judge of himself by his weakness in some extraordinary temptation. A man that is very sick, may through much heat, have the strength of five men in him, and much greater than when he was in health: and so a good man, whose corruptions are weak, yet in a fit may have all the corruption that is within him blown up by satan, and so it may for the present appear to have more strength than in all his life, and yet he may be much

mortified. As one of small grace may have that little grace drawn out, and wound up to a higher strain, for one exercise: all the strings wound up to a higher note for some one lesson, than one of more grace ever felt; yet take the constant strains of one's spirit that hath more grace, and the strings will ordinarily endure to stand higher, and continue so: so, on the contrary, one of much mortification may have his lusts spurred on faster, and boiled up higher by satan's fires, than one of less. The estimate of our growth must not therefore be taken by a step or two, but by a constant course; for as a man's sincerity is to be measured, so is his growth. Even as a man's health is to be measured by the constant tenor of it.

Only, I will add three things to give further direction concerning such extraordinary cases of temptation.

1. It is certain, so much corruption, as at such a time a man felt stirring in him, so much indeed there is in his heart, for the devil can put none in but only acts, and improves what is there already. The wind adds no water to the sea, only can make the waves to rise; the fire adds nothing to the water, but attenuates it only, and causeth it to boil.

2. I add, that yet hence it cannot be infallibly inferred, that a man hath either more corruption in him than he had twenty years before, because more is stirred up; or that he hath more corruption than others, because more is now for a fit drawn forth: so it follows not from hence that others who are kept free from such a temptation, have less corruption, because they were never cast into so hot a fit. One whose body is less full of humours, and naturally of a more moderate temper, may yet through some accident, suppose the plague, be cast into hotter fits of a burning fever, than one whose temper is more fiery, and humours more abounding in him.

3. The third thing I would add is, that such an one as is indeed much mortified, if he fall into such a fit, yet the greater measure of his mortification will appear after-

wards, so that the lust will be weaker after his recovery. It is in this as with a man that is in a hot fit of a fever, though he have at that instant the strength of two men in him, yet afterward, when the spirits are settled, his body is the weaker for it.

But then the question may be concerning the more ordinary passages of a man's life, whether a man may measure the inward root of corruption left in him, by the ordinary risings and stirrings of it? I answer, ordinarily men may conclude, that the more or less busy they find corruption to be in them, the more or less there is of corruption in them; and so thereby measure their growth. For grace and corruption are as two roots, (and therefore the actions of them both are called their fruits, Gal. v. 17, 22.) Now Christ elsewhere gives us this rule of nature, to "judge of the tree by the fruits," to proceed by, in matters of grace also; and as by the fruit we may know of what kind the tree is, so likewise what plenty of sap there is at the root, by the plenty or bigness of the fruit it doth bring forth. The more inward corruption there is at the root, ordinarily the more fruit thereof appears in the life: and proportionably also of the tender fruits of the Spirit. And therefore Christ here says, that the vine is "to be purged, that it may bring forth more fruit;" because the more corruption is emptied, the more holiness will appear in our inward and outward fruitfulness, yea, and thus God judgeth of the principles of grace in us, according as they act in us. He will judge of our mortification by the fruits of it in our lives and hearts. The more the fruits of sin grow in us, the less mortified he will account us. As he will judge of faith by the works, so of mortification by the fruits. And therefore it is observable, that he bids us "mortify the deeds of the body," as well as the body of sin, "Rom. viii. 13, for God will judge of the one by the other.

Yet it is true, that one of less growth in mortification may sometimes, by watchfulness, keep under his lusts more, and act that little grace he hath, more than he doth who hath more grace: therefore, says the apostle

to Timothy, "Stir up the gift that is in thee." And he exhorts, Gal. v. even young Christians "to walk in the Spirit;" that is, to have the Spirit so kept above the flesh, that a man may conquer his corruptions, that they break not forth. I say, this exhortation concerns the youngest Christians. For he speaks to all that have spiritual life begun in them, ver. 25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit," and then "we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. A man that has a weak body, if he use care, may keep himself from distempers, as much as one man who is strong, but grows careless, and neglects his health.

But though one of less grace be thus more watchful, yet he may discern the want of growth by this: First, that still his lusts rise oftener, and are apter to catch fire, though they be smothered as fast as they catch; his case is, as if there were an heap of straw in a room where fire is, where sparks fly about still taking fire upon every occasion, but he that keeps the straw is careful still to put it out. And secondly, in this case they shall find the strength of their corruptions in workings against grace, and distracting and disturbing them, deadening their hearts in duties.

Thirdly, if a man will not be mistaken in judging his growth in mortification, he must consider his occasions and opportunities. A man when he had more corruption, yet less occasions to sin, might have corruptious less stirring in him, and be more in grace than when he is grown up, if his temptations were then greater. As to aggravate the sin of not growing more, the proportion of means every one hath had is to be considered: so in the stirring or declining of sin, opportunities and occasions are also to be considered. As if a man be transplanted out of a full condition into an empty, if then many of his lusts do not stir so much as before, no wonder. Even as if a man be cast into a sweat by a multitude of clothes, it is no marvel, if when clothes are taken off, he sweat less.

A fourth thing to be considered, to keep us from mis-

takes herein, is, that he whose spirit is naturally active, his lusts, though weaker than another man's whose spirit is slower, may be yet more quick and apt to break forth. Peter was of a bold spirit, and so spake often rashly, and vented corruption more than the other disciples; not that he had less grace, but a more active spirit.

Fifthly, if we would judge aright, what measure of true mortification is in us, we must not take into the reckoning what restraining grace doth in us, but observe that apart, and cast that up in a sum by itself. For know, that even in the regenerate, all their abstinence from sins is not from mere mortification, but restraining grace continues even after regeneration to contribute to it. It was not merely mortification of anger that made Moses so meek. It was his disposition of nature, that helped to make him so eminent in ruling that passion above any other. Grace set in a good nature, seems a great deal more, and goes farther than in a bad. Therefore let every one consider, what natural ingenuity, modesty, and education did in him before conversion; and let him know that now he hath true grace, these help him still, and stand him in stead as much as ever, although he hath a new principle in him, beyond these.

Sixthly, another false rule is, when men judge of their mortification, by their present disinclination to sin. Though it be true, that where true mortification is, there is a disinclination, and a deadness; and so much mortification, so much deadness; yet, there are many things which in a good man may add to his deadness to sin, besides true mortification, and so make it seem greater than it is in truth. And therefore it may be a false rule to judge by, if it be not warily considered and distinguished. Sickness breeds a disinclination; when we are sick, our lusts are sick together with us. Old age brings it: "When the evil days come, wherein a man says, he hath no pleasure in them." So when our expectations or desires are crossed, we are apt to have a disinclination to all other pleasures. When some one thing that was a sauce to

all the rest is gone, we have no stomach to all the rest. Some great cross, may, like thunder, sour all our joys, and make them stale to us. Terror of conscience may, like an eclipse, overspread our spirits, and then all things lose their beauty and lustre. Such occasions as these take the mind up about God's wrath, or the afflictions we are in, so that it cannot run out to sin. And this will help you to find out the true reason, why young Christians are often more dead to all mirth and other contentments, and yet they are not more mortified than afterwards. For then legal humiliation adds to their deadness. And besides that first deadly blow, which Christ gave their lusts, the law also, and the bitterness of sin lay their lusts in a swoon, that one would think all were dead. Again, young Christians sometimes, and others afterwards for some space, are entertained with raptures and joy unspeakable; and then they seem wholly dead to sin; which nevertheless is not truly killed.

Now therefore, to give an help or two to difference real mortification from this disinclination and deadness to sin: observe, 1, True mortification makes a man not only disinclined to sin, but to have a quick hatred against it; whereas the former takes but the heart off it, doth not set it against it. There is the same difference between mortification and disinclination, as there is between patience and senselessness. Senselessness is a dull, sullen, stupid bearing pains, but patience is joined with a quick sense of them, which ariseth from strength of spirits, which being quick and vigorous, are the more sensible of pain or pleasure; so true mortification is joined with an active hatred against sin; which comes from liveliness of affection to the contrary. 2, True mortification is joined with activeness and life in the contrary duties, Rom. vi. 11, "Reckon yourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God." Disinclination is but a dead palsy that doth take these members of sin, but true mortification is with a new life, strengthening a man to walk so much the more nimbly in the ways of God. True mortification doth not dull

the spirits, but sets them at liberty; whereas the other causeth a deadness, a dulness to every thing else, and contracts the mind, as a bladder that is dried and hung up in the smoke; but mortification empties it of the sin, and fills it with grace, so that the mind is as full and wide as before, only filled with grace instead of sin.

Seventhly, a man is not to judge of his growth in mortification, simply by the keenness of his affection against sin, though that is good and blessed, but by his strength against it. As there is a fond love, which is not so strong and solid, which will not do so much for one, or hold, if it come to the trial; so there is a keenness of hatred, that hath not so much strength. A man that is angry, seems to have more keenness of affection against him he falls out with; whereas a malicious man hates more strongly. So young Christians hate their sins, having lately felt the bitterness of them; and then many other inconveniences, besides the contrariety of them to God, provoke their spirits against them; but as of a sharp knife that is weak, the edge is soon turned; so in a temptation, they are, for all their edge, soon overcome. Hence the apostle prays, that "they might have strength in the inward man," Eph. iii. and "ability to stand in the evil day." Although this let me add, that every man should keep up his heart in this continual keenness and edge of spirit against sin, and whet his heart against it; for that will cause a man to use his strength the more against it.

CHAP. V.

Questions resolved concerning his Growth.

I WILL now conclude this discourse about growth in grace, with answering some questions which may be made concerning this our growth, both in mortification, and in positive graces.

The first question concerning the purging out of sin, is, whether every new degree of mortification be universal? Does God go on to purge forth one sin, then another, or to purge out, by every new degree of mortification, every sin together; so that when any one sin is more weakened, all the rest in proportion grow weak also? To this I answer affirmatively, that every new degree of mortification is universal. For when the Scripture speaks of our growth therein, it speaks of it as extending itself to every sin. So St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians, to "put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." It is not one lust that is the object of mortification, and the growth of it, (although he mentions particular lusts afterwards,) but the whole man that is corrupt, and all its lusts: and he there speaks of daily growth therein: for of that he had spoken in the former verses, and goes on to exhort to it. Thus, in like manner, Gal. v. 24, it is called "crucifying the flesh with the lusts:" not one lust, but the flesh, the whole cluster of them. And in that it is called crucifying, it implies it also; for of all deaths, crucifixion did work upon every part; it stretched every nerve, sinew, and vein, and put all the parts to pain. And this going on to mortify sin, is called, Rom. vi. "The destroying of the body of sin;" of the whole body. It is not the consumption of one member, but it is a consumption of the whole body of sin, so that every new degree of mortification is the consuming of the whole. And therefore also, Colos. iii. St. Paul exhorts not only to growth in grace, but to "mortify earthly members," every member. And the reasons hereof are, because,

1. True mortification strikes at the root, and so causeth every branch to wither. For all sinful dispositions are rooted in one; namely, in "love of pleasure more than of God." And all true mortification deadens a man to the pleasure of sin, by bringing the heart more into communion with God; and therefore the deadening to any sin, must needs be universal to every sin. It is as the

dying of the heart, which causeth all the members to die with it. Restraining grace cuts off only the branches, and so lops the tree ; but true mortification strikes every blow at the root. 2. Every new degree of mortification purgeth out a sin, as it is a sin, and works against it under that consideration. And if against it as sin, then the same power that works out any sin, works against every sin also. Now, that every new degree works against a sin, as it is a sin, is plain by this, because if it be purged out upon any other respect, it is not mortification. 3. The spirit and the virtue that come from Christ, which are the efficient causes of this purging out sin, work against every sin, when they work against one ; they have a contrariety to every lust ; they search into every vein, and draw from all parts. Physicians may give elective purges, as they call them, which will purge out one humour, and not another ; but Christ's physic works generally ; it takes away all sorts of distempers. And whereas the objection against this may be, that then all lusts will come to be equally mortified. I answer, No : for all lusts were never equally alive in a man. Some are stronger, some weaker by custom, or through disposition of body and spirit. And therefore though mortification extends itself to all, yet there being an inequality in the life and growth of these sins in us, some remain still more, some less mortified ; as, when a flood of water is left to flow into a field, where many hills are of differing height, though the water overflows all equally, yet some are more above the water than others, because they were higher before. And hence it is that some sins, when the power of grace comes, may be wholly subdued ; namely, those which proceed out of the abundance of naughtiness in the heart ; as swearing, malice against the truth ; and these the children of God are wholly freed from ; the power of grace takes them away, though others yet continue.

The second question is, When I apply Christ, and the promise, for the mortification of some one particular lust,

and use right means, as prayer or fasting, whether that lust doth not become more mortified than other lusts are? I answer, yes, yet so as in proportion this work of mortification runs through all the rest. Therefore, the apostle in all his exhortations to mortification, though he exhorts to the putting off the old man, the whole body of sin, yet instances in particular sins, because a man is particularly to endeavour the mortification of particulars, as it were apart; and yet because in getting them mortified the whole body of sin is destroyed, therefore he mentions the whole body and particular members. And to that end also doth God exercise his children, first by letting loose one lust, then another, that they may make trial of the virtue of Christ's death upon every one. And therefore Christ bids us to pull out 'an eye, and cut off a hand, if they offend us. For mortification is to be directed against particular members; yet so as in proportion all the rest receive a farther degree of destruction. For as a particular act of sin, when committed, doth increase a disposition to every sin; (yet so as it leaves a present greater disposition to that particular sin than any other;) so in every act of mortification, though the common stock be lessened, yet the particular lust we aimed at hath a greater share in mortification; as in ministering physic to cure the head, the whole body is often purged; yet so as the head, the part affected, is chiefly purged, and more than the rest.

“ But doth every new degree of grace run through all the faculties ?” I answer, Yes : for as every new degree of light in the air runs through the whole hemisphere, when the sun shines clearer and clearer to the perfect day ; so every new degree of grace runs through, and is diffused through the whole man. And therefore when the apostle prays for increase of grace, he prays they may be sanctified wholly in body, soul, and spirit. And every new degree, though it begins at the spirit ; (for so Eph. iv. 23, 24, “ be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man :”) it runs therefore through

the whole man, having renewed the mind. As the work of grace at first, so after, it continually leaveneth the whole lump.

“ But may not one grace grow more than another ?”
 I answer, first, that it is certain, when a man grows up in one grace, he doth also grow in all ; they grow and thrive together. Therefore we are said to grow up into him in all things. Growth from Christ is general ; as growth in the body is in every part, so this in every grace. Therefore, 2 Cor. iii. 18, we are said to “ be changed into the same image from glory to glory.” Every increase stamps a farther degree of the whole image of Christ upon the heart. Yet, secondly, one grace may grow more than some other. 1, Because some are more radical graces, as faith and love : therefore of the Thessalonians’ faith the apostle says, 2 Thess. i. 3, that it did grow exceedingly ; and then it follows, their love did overflow. Some graces are more exercised ; and if so, they abound more ; as though both arms do grow, yet that which a man useth most is the stronger, so is it in graces. As the exercise of one member maketh the whole body more healthful, yet that member which is exercised, will be freest from humours ; so it is here : “ tribulation worketh patience, patience experience,” Rom. v. Many sufferings make patience the less difficult, and many experiments make hope greater. Some graces are more in some than others. What is it that makes the differing gifts that are in Christians, but a several constitution of graces, though all have every grace in them ? As in the body every member hath flesh, bones, sinews, veins, blood, and spirits in it, but some have more of flesh, less of sinews, and other parts. Whence ariseth a several office in every member.

The third question is, Whether this increase be only by rooting the same grace more, or by a new addition ? I answer, by adding a new degree of grace ; as a cloth dipped in the dye, comes out upon every new dipping with a deeper dye. And this is done by a new act of

creation. Therefore, Eph. iv. 24, when the apostle exhorts to further putting on the new man, and speaketh of growth, he adds, which is created; for every new degree is created as well as the first infusion. And therefore it is said, that God gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 7; and it is called the increase of God, Colos. ii. 19; although this is to be added by way of caution, that therein God doth proportion his influence to our endeavours. Therefore we are said to be fellow-workers with him, although it be he that gives the increase. The same you have also, Rom. viii. "We by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh;" we, as co-workers with the Spirit,

EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

WILLIAM DELL,

Some time Master of Gonvil and Caius College, in Cambridge.

CHRIST'S SPIRIT,

A

CHRISTIAN'S STRENGTH:

SHEWN IN TWO SERMONS, PREACHED IN 1645.

ACTS I. 8.

But ye shall receive Power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be Witnesses unto me ; or, You shall receive the Power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

THESE words are the more remarkable, because they are the very last words in the conference between the Son of God and his beloved apostles, immediately before his ascension into heaven. In the third verse of this chapter, St. Luke saith, he discoursed with them, touching the kingdom of God: that is, not only touching his spiritual kingdom, which he sets up in each particular Christian, and which begins at our regeneration, and is consummated in glorification; but also touching his mediatory and monarchial kingdom, which, in the time appointed of his Father, he should set up in the world; "When he should have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession;

and all people, and nations, and languages should serve him, and he should reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the world's end."

This was the sum of Christ's discourse with them, and the apostles were fully satisfied touching the thing, only they were unsatisfied touching the time. For besides, that the setting up of this kingdom of the Messiah in the power, beauty, and glory of it, was at that time the common discourse and expectation of all Israel; the apostles themselves remembered many prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, for the restoring the kingdom of David; and this they thought Christ would have done in the days of his flesh; but presently, all their hopes were blasted by his death. But when they saw him risen again from the dead, then their hearts were revived into their former hopes; and yet seeing nothing done all the time he conversed with them after the resurrection, when now he was ready to ascend into heaven, they desired him, first, to resolve them this question, Whether or not he would at that time, restore the kingdom to Israel? Now Christ doth not deny the restoring of the kingdom to Israel, but denies to acquaint them with the time when it should be done. He tells them, "It was not for them to know the times and seasons, which the Father had put in his own power," ver. 7.

But though the Son did not reveal to them what the Father had kept in his own power, yet he tells them what the Father had promised unto them, and what he had also put into his power, and what he would certainly perform ere long; and that was, the gift of the Spirit; saying, "But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me:" as if he should have said, Do not you trouble yourselves about secret things, which shall not be accomplished in the world, till many years after you are fallen asleep; but do you mind your present business, wherein you are to serve God in your generation. Your present task is to be witnesses unto me, in Jerusalem, and all Judea,

and in Samaria, and to the utmost parts of the earth ; to declare and make known what you have heard, and seen with your eyes, and looked upon, and your hands have handled of the Word of Life. You are to testify to the world my incarnation, doctrine, miracles, life, death, resurrection, and my kingdom and glory, that is to come. You are to make known to the world, the high and deep, the great and glorious mystery of Christ and the Gospel ; and that you may be fit for this great and weighty work, “ you shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”

From these words, we shall note in general, two things ; and then something more particularly. 1. The first general doctrine is this : that as Christ will not suffer his disciples to be tempted above their power, so neither to be employed above their power ; but he furnishes them with power sufficient, both for their temptations and for their employments ; for their sufferings, and for their doings. And as soldiers, that are under a wise and careful commander, when they are near an engagement, are not suffered to run rashly upon the enemy, nor permitted to go forth to battle till they are armed, and mounted ; so Christ would not suffer his disciples to go forth in his warfare, to encounter so many evils, oppositions, and persecutions, and the whole power of the world and of the devil, till first he had armed them with the power of the Holy Spirit : “ Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” Christ always gives unto all those whom he sends forth, of his own power, for his own works ; heavenly power for heavenly works, spiritual power for spiritual works, the power of God to do the works of God. Indeed Christ gives unto some a greater measure of power, and to some a lesser, according as he intends to use some in greater works and difficulties, and some in lesser ; but still they have of Christ's power, whether more or less, who are employed by Christ ; and a little of that power that is communicated

by Christ, will enable a man to do great things, far greater than the world suspects or imagines.

2. Note, that St. Luke being to speak in this book of the acts of the apostles, of the propagating, enlarging, and governing the Christian church, doth first make mention of the pouring forth of the Spirit, and that both upon the apostles, and afterwards upon the disciples; signifying hereby, that there is nothing so necessary, for the increase and well-ordering of the true church of Christ, as the pouring forth of the Spirit. And therefore they are altogether deceived, who think the increase, preservation, establishment, and order of the church of God, depend especially upon the councils, decrees, and constitutions of men; and that without these, the Church of God would soon come to disorder, yea, to utter confusion; as if Christ and his Spirit sat idle in heaven, and had left the whole business of his church to men, and the sacred power confirmed with the secular, were abundantly sufficient for the increase and well-ordering of the church; in the mean time, not regarding the promise of the Father, or the pouring out of the Spirit by the Son. And this is the very mystery of iniquity among us, and the very head of anti-christ.

And now from these general things we proceed to the words more particularly. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And here we may note two things. 1. What he promises them, and that is power; you shall receive power. 2. How they should be made partakers of that power, and that was, by the Holy Spirit's coming upon them.

The point we will insist on from both, is this: that the receiving of the Spirit, is the receiving of power. Till we receive the Spirit, we are altogether without power; and when we receive the Spirit, then first of all, do we receive power; power from on high. By nature we are all without strength, weak, impotent creatures, utterly unable to do any thing that is truly and spiritually

good. For by nature we are nothing but flesh, "for that which is born of flesh is flesh, and all flesh is grass," a fading, withering, and decaying thing, together with all the flowers of it ; that is, the perfections and excellencies of it. But when we receive the Spirit, we receive power ; for the Spirit itself which is given us is power, and that both in itself and in us. 1. The Spirit is power in itself ; for it is one God with the Father and the Son, co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal ; and so as Christ is the power of God, so also is the Spirit the power of God ; yea, the Spirit is the God of power, as well as the power of God. So that the Spirit is power in himself essentially, and he that partakes of the power of the Spirit, partakes of that power, which is God.

The Spirit is power in us, by being in us. 1. A Spirit of knowledge ; for the Holy Spirit teaches us to know "the things that are freely given to us of God ;" yea, he teacheth us to know what sin is, and what righteousness ; what death is, and what life ; what heaven is, and what hell ; what ourselves are, and what God is ; and these things he teaches us to know otherwise than other men know them. In a word, the Spirit teaches a Christian to know all things ; that is, to know God, and the kingdom of God, and all the things of both ; all other things being nothing in comparison of these. Thus the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of knowledge in us, and so of power ; for knowledge is the strength of a man. Whereas an ignorant man is a weak man, you may carry him whither you will ; but knowledge renders a man strong and immoveable. And in all things wherein the Holy Spirit is a spirit of knowledgs in us, he is also a Spirit of strength.

2. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of truth. And so the Spirit is, because it doth not only lead us unto the truth, that is, unto the Word, which is the only truth, but also the Spirit leads us into the truth, and the truth into us, till we and it become one by an inseparable union. The Holy Spirit takes a believer, and leads him into one truth after another, till

at last it leads him into all truth. Now wherein the Spirit is a Spirit of truth to us, it is a Spirit of power; for through the truth we learn from the Spirit of truth, we are steadfast and immoveable, among different and contrary winds of doctrine. Whereas, on the contrary, the true ground why so many are seduced and overcome by errors and heresies, is, because they have taken up their religion only from man's teaching, and have received their opinions from men; and so what one man hath taught, another man can unteach; yea, if we be led to the truth itself only by man, man can again lead us from it. But he that hath been led into the truth by the Spirit of truth, is immoveable among all doctrines. And thus also the Holy Spirit by being a Spirit of truth, is a Spirit of power in us.

3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of wisdom; and so it is, because it makes us wise with the wisdom of God, wise upon earth, after the rate of heaven, wise to salvation. There is no man wise without the Spirit of God; for the wisdom of carnal men is but foolishness before God, but the wisdom of the Spirit is heavenly wisdom. And this wisdom of the Spirit is the strength of a Christian; the more he hath of it, the more mighty he is, both in all his doings and endureings. It is said, Eccles. ix. 15, "That there was a poor wise man delivered a small city from the power of a mighty king," and therefore Solomon concludes that "wisdom is better than strength," for it can do greater things than strength can. Solomon asked wisdom of God above all things, for the strength of his government; all government without this, being but weak and brittle. Thus wisdom contributes strength to us, whereas we say of a man that wants wisdom, he is a weak man; and so the Holy Spirit being a Spirit of wisdom in us, is also a Spirit of power.

4. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of faith. For faith is a work of the Spirit of power; and no less power would work faith in us,

than that which raised up Christ from the dead. So that whoever truly believes by this faith, of the operation of God, is sensible in his own soul of the self-same power that raised Christ from the dead. And thus the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of faith in us, and so of power. For faith carries a man out of himself to Christ; and so, through the power of faith, he is able both to do and endure the self-same things which Christ himself did and endured. Hence Christ saith, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" so that a believer hath a kind of omnipotency, because by faith he lays hold upon the power of God; and all things are possible to the power of God, and so all things are possible to a believer. And hence Paul saith, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;" this Christ that strengthened him, was the power of God; and this power of God is not a finite power, but an infinite, not a particular power, but an universal; and so can do, not some things only, but all things; and so also can all they who are truly partakers of it by faith.

Again, a Christian, through the power of faith, is able not only to do, but also to suffer the same things that Christ himself suffered. Now the sufferings of Christ were the most grievous and intolerable to nature, that ever were. For how did Christ for the present, as it were, lay aside his divine nature, that he might suffer in his human! and how did he suffer in this, the whole weight and condemnation of sin to the very utmost, and the whole wrath of God to the utmost, and all the sorrows of death, and the pains of hell, to the very utmost! and among all the sufferings, had not the least drop of comfort either from heaven or earth; and yet through the power of the Spirit, he endured and overcame all. And so each Christian is able to endure and overcome the same evils, by the same power; and therefore Paul desired to know Christ truly, and not only the power of his resurrection, which any one would desire to know, but also the fellowship of his sufferings, which flesh and blood trembles at, yea, and to be made conformable to his very death. And

thus a believer through faith, is enabled both to do and endure the self-same things which Christ himself did and endured; and the Holy Spirit, by being a Spirit of faith, is a Spirit of power in us.

5. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of righteousness; and so he is two ways: First, in regard of mortifying sin. For the Spirit of God dwelling in us, is not idle in us, but continually active; and so from day to day mortifies sin. And this is the proper work of the Spirit in our flesh, to destroy out of us whatsoever is contrary to itself; and that is, every sin, lust, and corruption. Now our sins are our weakness, a man's pride and passion, and envy, and covetousness, and lust, and intemperance, and every sin is his weakness. And the Holy Spirit, by being in us a Spirit of righteousness, mortifies and destroys all our sins, and so takes away our weakness. And, Secondly, as the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of righteousness in us, in regard of mortifying sin, so also in regard of imparting grace to us; for all grace is the fruit of the Spirit in our flesh; and as all light is from the sun, so is all grace from the Spirit. Now every grace is so much strength in the soul; faith so much strength, hope so much strength, love so much strength; and so humility, and patience, and temperance, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and all other graces, are so much strength; and according to each man's measure of grace, so is his measure of strength; and according to each man's measure of the Spirit, so is his measure of grace. And thus the Holy Spirit, by being a Spirit of righteousness, is also in us a Spirit of power.

6. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of the fear of the Lord; and so he is, by representing God to us in his glory and majesty, according as he hath revealed himself to us in his Word; from which knowledge of God springs his fear. For what is the reason that the men of the world fear not God, but sin securely against the great and glorious God every day? The reason is, because they know not the Lord. Now

the Spirit comes and reveals the Father in the Son, and presents God to the soul, through his Word, in his infinite and eternal power, and justice, and wisdom, and truth, and faithfulness, and love and mercy, and shines to the soul in each attribute of God ; and when a man sees God by his own light, and knows him by his own teaching, then doth he begin truly to fear God, and the fear of God is his strength. For he that fears God, is free from all other fear ; he fears not men of high degree, nor men of low degree, nor the united power of all the creatures ; he fears not with the fear of other men in their evils, but in the midst of all fearful things, he is without fear, because " he sanctifies the Lord of Hosts in himself, in his heart, and makes him his fear and his dread." And by this means, amidst all evils, he hath admirable confidence, because he knows that no evil can befall him from any man, or from any creature, till first it be the will of God ; and also, that whatever evil befalls him, according to the will of God, it shall work for good unto him in the end. Thus the fear of the Lord is a Christian's confidence, and a believer's strength ; whereas he that fears not God, fears every thing ; yea, not only real, but imaginary evils ; and as evils multiply his fears, so his fears again multiply his evils, till at last he be swallowed up of both. But the Holy Spirit being in us a Spirit of the fear of the Lord, is also in us a Spirit of strength.

7. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power in us, by being in us a Spirit of love and unity. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love and unity in the Godhead ; the bond of love and unity between the Father and the Son. Now what the Spirit is in the Godhead, he is the same in the church of God, and that is a Spirit of love and unity : for why is there such constant love and unity between the members of the same body, but because one Spirit runs through them all ? And so there is such constant love and unity between all believers, because one Holy Spirit runs through them all. And hence we may take notice of a remarkable difference between nature and

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grace ; for nature of one makes many ; for we all, who are many among ourselves, even a whole world of men, were but one in Adam ; but grace of many makes one ; for the Holy Spirit, which is as fire, melts all the faithful into one mass, and makes of many one body ; yea, it makes them one, in the unity of God, according to that of Christ, John xvii. 27, “ that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : ” mark the words, for they are wonderful ; “ that they all may be one ; ” that is, that all believers, who are many among themselves, may be all made one. One ! How one ? “ As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ; ” that is, as thou and I, being two persons, are yet but one God ; after this highest example of unity, let them be made one in us. You may see in the Acts, how the multitude of believers, after they had received the Spirit, “ were of one heart and one soul. ” And this unity of believers is their strength ; and when God shall take away all prejudices, suspicions, jealousies, particular ends and interests, divisions, separations, and schisms, that are among his own people, and the people of God shall be reduced into this blessed unity among themselves, and the Lord be one, and his name one, among them all, then shall the church also be of invincible power. “ So that all they that strive with it shall perish ; and all they that war against it shall be as nothing ; yea, then shall the Lord make the church as a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, and it shall thresh the mountains, ” (that is, the kingdoms of the world,) “ and shall beat them small, and shall make the hills, ” (that is, the lesser common-wealths,) “ as chaff. ” But till the church of God attain to this unity, it shall not do any excellent thing, it shall not work any notable deliverance in the earth, neither shall the inhabitants of the world fall. When the Spirit of God shall be a Spirit of unity in the faithful, and shall heal all the sad dissensions that are now between them, then also shall it be a Spirit of admirable power in them. And thus much for the explication of the point.

The use is two-fold. The first is, to exhort all men, every where, to endeavour to partake of this supernatural, spiritual, and Divine power of the Holy Spirit, which is certainly communicated to all the faithful. And let no man think it is a thing indifferent, whether he have this power or not; but know, that the having of this power of the Spirit is of absolute necessity, and that both for ministers and for all other Christians.

8. There is a necessity of this power of the Holy Spirit for ministers; and to them this place doth chiefly relate. For, first, if ministers have not this power of the Holy Spirit, they have no power at all. For Christ sent them only as his Father sent him; and so Christ never gave unto them any earthly or secular power, no power of swords or prisons, no power of outward constraint and violence. Christ gave them no such outward and worldly power for the enlargement of his kingdom, as not being at all suitable to it. For his kingdom is spiritual, and what can carnal power do in a spiritual kingdom? His kingdom is heavenly, and what can earthly power do in a heavenly kingdom? His kingdom is not of this world, and what can worldly power do in a kingdom that is not of the world? And though antichrist and his ministers have usurped such a carnal, earthly, and worldly power to themselves, in their pretended managing the kingdom of Christ, yet the faithful ministers of Christ cannot. And therefore seeing the ministers of the Gospel have no power from beneath, they must needs have power from on high; seeing they have no fleshly power, they must needs have spiritual power; seeing they have no power from earth and from men, they must needs have power from heaven, and from God; that is, the power of the Holy Spirit coming on them, or else they have no power at all.

Secondly, the ministers of the Gospel must needs have this power of the Holy Spirit, because otherwise they are not sufficient for the ministry. For no man is sufficient for the work of the ministry, by any natural parts and

abilities of his own, nor yet by any acquired parts of learning and knowledge, but only by this power of the Holy Spirit; and till he be endowed with this, notwithstanding all his other accomplishments, he is altogether insufficient. And therefore the very apostles were to keep silence, till they were endued with this power: they were to wait at Jerusalem till they had received the promise of the Spirit. Yea, Christ himself did not betake himself to the work of the ministry, till first the Spirit of God came upon him. Now if Christ himself and his apostles were not sufficient for the ministry till they had received this power from on high, no more are any other ministers whatsoever. For, as I said, it is not natural parts, and abilities, and gifts, and learning, and eloquence, that make any man sufficient for the ministry, but only the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon him. So that whoever is destitute of the Spirit of power, is insufficient for the work of the ministry.

For, 1. Without this power of the Spirit ministers are utterly unable to preach the word; that is, the true, spiritual, and living word of God. For to preach this word of God requires the power of God. One may speak the word of man, by the power of man, but he cannot speak the word of God, but by the power of God. And Christ himself, in all his ministry, spake nothing of himself, in the strength of his human nature, but he spake all he spake by the power of God; and without this power of God he could not have spoken one word of God. And so, in like manner, no man is able to preach Christ but by the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God. For Christ is the power of God, and can never be represented but by the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God. So that it is not an easy thing to preach Christ, the power of God; yea, none can do it aright, but by the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon him.

And, 2. Without this power of the Spirit, ministers are unable to preach the word powerfully. They may happen upon the outward word, yet there is no power

in their ministry; their ministry is cold, and there is no heat in it; it is weak, and there is no strength in it. Without men have received the power of the Spirit, there is no fire in their preaching. Their ministry is unlike the ministry of Elias, whose ministry was as fire; and unlike Christ's, whose ministry made the disciples' hearts burn within them; and unlike the apostles, who, having received this Spirit, were as men made all of fire, running through the world and burning it up. Without this Spirit a man's ministry is cold, it warms the hearts of none, it inflames the spirits of none, but leaves men still frozen in their sins. Again, it is weak, and hath no might in it. There is no strength in a ministry where there is no Spirit. Whereas when men have received the Spirit, then their ministry is a powerful ministry; as Paul, 1 Thess. i. 5, "The gospel came to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost;" and therefore in power, because in the Holy Spirit. And again, 1 Cor. i. 4, "My speech and preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power." Where you see the Spirit and power in the work of the ministry are always conjoined, as the sun and light are; and that ministry that is in the Spirit is always in power. And being in power it is always effectual, either to convert men, or to enrage them; and the enraging of men, is as evident a sign of the Spirit of power in a man's ministry, as the conversion of men. Whereas a cold and dead ministry, that is destitute of this power, doth, as we use to say, neither good nor harm, neither converts nor enrages, neither brings in righteousness, nor destroys sin, neither kills nor quickens any, but leaves men in their old temper for many years together, and never stirs them. But the ministration of the Spirit and power is operative and mighty, and carries all before it. And though evil men will ever be murmuring and wrangling, opposing and contending against such a ministry, yet they are never able to resist the

wisdom and spirit of it. And therefore let them that will needs be striving against such a ministry know, that they strive against more than a mere man, they strive against power from on high, against the greatest power that ever God put forth; against the power of Christ himself and his eternal Spirit, and so they shall never be able to prevail against this power, but shall surely sink under it. But to return :

3. Without this power of the Spirit, as ministers are not able to preach the word, nor to preach it powerfully, so neither are they able to hold out in their ministry, and to carry it on strongly against all opposition. Peter and John preached the gospel, but presently the rulers, and elders, and scribes straitly threatened them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus. Now if the apostles had wanted this power of the Spirit, they would presently have been awed, have quitted the field, and you should have heard no more of them. But having received this power, all the threatenings of the magistrates could not deter them from the discharge of their office: but they said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." I would to God that the unjust commands of all secular powers whatsoever might be no otherwise obeyed, than this unjust command of the rulers was by Peter and John; and that no man would dare to yield more obedience to the creature than to the Lord of all. For no magistrates in the world have any power to forbid the preaching of the everlasting gospel, which God hath commanded to be published to all nations for the obedience of faith. And if they should forbid it, yet herein ought we to know no more obedience than Peter and John did here. We ought to obey God, and to make known the whole mind of God, after the example of Peter and John, who, having received this power of the Holy Spirit, held on against all threatenings and punishments. Whereas, without this power, they

would soon have fainted and failed, and never been able to have gone through with their work.

4. Without this power of the Holy Spirit ministers are not able to reprove the world. For no man, by his good will, would provoke the enmity of it against himself. And therefore flesh and blood will never reprove the world of sin, but allows it, and countenances it in sin. But "the Spirit, when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin." When a man hath this power, presently he bids defiance to the whole world, and provokes the whole world against himself. And this no man either can do, or dares do, except he be first endued with this power of the Spirit. And therefore saith Micah, chap. iii. 8, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." The world, and all other things, cannot endure the declaration of its evil ways. And therefore it is exceedingly offended, yea, and extremely rages against the faithful teachers of the word; as the examples of all the faithful teachers of the word of God in all ages declare. Yea, and Christ himself testifies touching himself, "therefore the world hates me, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." And all teachers are not of that strength and resolution, to contemn the hatred and fury of the world. Nay, the most are quite overcome with the prosperity of this present life, and with the desire of friends, and riches, and preferment, and so are ministers in whose mouths are no reproofs, though "the whole world lie in wickedness." Thus they escape the rage and violence, and obtain the favour of the men of this world. And thus weak and unworthy are all those men, who are only endued with their own spirits.

5. Without this power of the Spirit, they are unable to wrestle with, and overcome the devil, whose subtilty and wrath, malice and power, they must needs encounter with, in the work of the ministry. Christ, as soon as he was anointed by the Spirit to preach, "was immediately

led into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil," who would fain have taken him off from the work of the ministry. But Christ, endued with this power, overcame the devil. And Christ, before he sent his apostles to preach the kingdom of God, called them together, "and gave them power and authority over all devils;" and when they returned, they told him, that the devils themselves were subject to them. They that were invested with this power of the Holy Spirit, were able to wrestle with "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world," and to tread satan himself under their feet.

Thus you see what necessity all the ministers of the gospel have of the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them. For, without this power, they are unable to preach the word, to preach it powerfully, and to persevere in the course of the ministry; they are unable to reprove the world, to wrestle with and overcome the devil, and to suffer that persecution which necessarily attends that calling. And so without this power, they may minister to themselves, but they cannot minister to others; the manifold grace of God; they may do their own work, but they cannot do God's work; they may feed themselves, but not the flock of Christ.

And, as the Holy Spirit, and the power of it, is necessary for ministers, so also for other Christians.

1. First, To distinguish them from reprobates; for, without the gift of the Spirit, there is no difference between us and them. Moscs differs not from Pharaoh, nor Abel from Cain, nor Peter from Judas, in regard of their substance, but the Spirit, which the one received, and the other was counted unworthy of.

2. To unite them unto Christ. The Spirit is the bond of union between the Father and the Son in the Godhead; and the same Spirit is our bond of union with Christ, and makes us one with Christ, as Christ is one with God, and unites us unto Christ in the unity of God; for as Christ is one with the Father in the Spirit, so are

we one with Christ in the Spirit. For he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit; and he that is not one Spirit with the Lord is not joined to him.

3. All faithful Christians stand in need of the power of the Spirit, as well as of the Spirit of power. (1.) To change their nature, which is impossible to all power, but the power of the Spirit. It would be a great power to change clay into gold, but it is a greater change that is wrought in a Christian. For the power of the Spirit, when it comes into our flesh, changes the nature of it. For it finds a man carnal, it makes him spiritual; it finds him earthly, it makes him heavenly; it finds him darkness, it makes him light in the Lord; in a word, it finds him nothing but a lump of sin, and makes him the righteousness of God in Christ. Thus the power of the Spirit changes our whole corrupt nature, and makes it conformable to the Divine nature; as fire makes the iron in which it prevails, like unto itself, communicating its own nature to it. After this sort the power of the Spirit changes our nature, and our nature cannot be changed without it. But, without this power of the Spirit, we shall always remain the same we were born; yea, our corruption will increase, till at last it quite eats out that common good which God hath given to every one for the common benefit of mankind. (2.) All Christians stand in need of the power of the Spirit, to enable them to mortify and destroy sin. There is no power in our flesh against sin, but all the power of our flesh is for it; and therefore it must be another power that must destroy sin, and that can be no other than the power of God's Spirit. And the power of the Spirit destroys the whole body of sin, and each particular strong corruption. Each several influence and operation of the Spirit being a several destruction of some sin or other. For as the Spirit that is in us lusts after envy, or pride, or vain-glory, or covetousness, or uncleanness; so the Spirit we have of God, according to its mighty power, destroys all these sinful works of our corrupt spirit, and mortifies all

the deeds of our flesh. And this will mortify them, according to the whole latitude of them. And as the power of the Spirit subdues the whole body of sin, so also it over-powers each particular strong corruption, and keeps a Christian straight and upright in the ways of God. Every man hath some one corruption, to which by nature he is more inclined than to another, and this is the bias of a man; but the strength of the Spirit will over-power this. A bowl, if it be thrown with strength, knows not its bias, but is carried on straight, as if it had no bias at all. So even good men have some flesh in them which is their bias, and carries them from God to themselves and the world; but the strength of the Spirit takes away this bias, and makes us take straight steps to God.

(3.) All Christians stand in need of the power of the Spirit, to enable them to perform duties spiritually. If spiritual duties be performed carnally, in such duties there is no strength but weakness. For there is no power in any duty, except there be something of the Spirit in the duty. There is no more power in praying, nor in preaching, nor in hearing, nor in meditation, nor in reading, nor in resisting evil, nor in doing good, nor in any duty of sanctification, or of mortification, than there is of the Spirit in them. And according to the measure of the Spirit in each duty, is the measure of power in the duty. If there be none of the Spirit in a man's duties, there is no power at all in them, but only weakness and deadness, coldness and unprofitableness. If a little of the Spirit, there is a little power; if abundance of the Spirit, there is great power; and that duty that is most spiritual, is the most powerful.

(4.) All Christians stand in need of this power of the Spirit, to enable them to confess the word before kings, and rulers, and magistrates, when they are called thereunto. Whereas, without this power they would tremble, and suppress the truth. For surely it is a very hard thing for a man not to be daunted then, but to be immoveable,

before all worldly power and glory, and all the terrible frowns and threats of mighty men. Now, saith Christ, at such a time, be not troubled beforehand, how, or what to say. For if you have Christ and his Spirit in your hearts you cannot want words in your mouths. And the truth which you profess is most glorious, when it is most naked; and therefore be not fearful beforehand, no, nor careful, touching what you shall say, for it shall be "given to you in that same hour." How so? "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that dwells in you." The Spirit of truth shall enable you to speak the words of truth, when you are called to it. And though you, it may be, are quite plain and mean men, and your lips would be quite closed before such an assembly, yet God's Spirit shall give you a mouth to speak even then. And he will give you not only a mouth but wisdom too; such as all your adversaries shall not be able to resist.

Lastly, All Christians stand in need of the power of the Spirit to overcome afflictions and persecutions, from which it is impossible they should be free, they being contrary to the world, and the world to them. A man, who hath no strength in himself, but his own strength, faints under affliction and persecution; but the faithful have in them strength above the strength of men, even the strength of the Spirit, and so they endure and overcome. Our spirits are weak spirits, and are conquered by every evil; but when they are strengthened by the power of God's Spirit, they are, over all evils, "more than conquerors." And how much power we have in persecution, to endure and overcome, so much of the Spirit we have, and no more.

And thus also have I declared unto you, what necessity all Christians have of the power of the Spirit coming on them, as well as ministers. And this was to strengthen the use of exhortation.

The second use is for information and instruction. If

receiving of the Spirit be the receiving of power, then this clearly informs us, that the way to partake of this power, is to obtain this Spirit ; and the way to increase this power, is to increase this Spirit's influences.

1. The way to obtain this power is to obtain the Spirit. And that we may obtain the Spirit, we must prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit. Now this preparation doth not stand (as Papists teach, and many ignorant persons among ourselves think,) in sweeping the soul from sin, and then strewing it with graces, that so we may be fit to receive the Spirit. For first, the sweeping of the soul from sin is not a work of our own, before the coming of the Spirit, but a work of the Spirit itself after it is come. For no flesh can clear the soul of one sin, it is the Spirit must do that. And, secondly, for the strewing of the soul with grace ; neither is this a work of our own, but a work of the Spirit itself, after it is come. For the Spirit itself brings all grace with it, and, before the coming of the Spirit, there is no grace at all. So that we cannot, by any acts of our own, prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit ; but only by the Spirit we prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit. For it is not any work of our own, upon ourselves, but the immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon us, that can make us fit to receive him. Now the ordinary means, through which the Spirit doth this, are these three.

First, the hearing of the word preached. The preaching of the gospel is called the *ministration of the Spirit*, because it proceeds from the Spirit, and conveys the Spirit to the soul. The Lord still joins with the ministry of the word, that he may keep in our hearts the due respect of this ordinance, and may preserve us from the ways of those men, who seek for the Spirit without the word.

The second means is faith in the word heard. For it is not every one that hears the word that receives the Spirit, but only they that hear with the hearing of faith.

For if thou hear the word a thousand times, and wantest faith, thou shalt never receive the Spirit; for unbelief shuts up the heart against the Spirit, and ever opposes and resists it. But faith opens the heart to receive the Spirit. Now through these two things, the word and faith, the Spirit communicates to us a new birth; it begets us unto God; and so we, partaking of the nature of God, partake also of the Spirit of God. They that are born of men have nothing in them but the spirit of men; but they that are born of God, have the Spirit of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and hath no spirit in it; but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and hath spirit in it. So that there is no means to partake of the Spirit of God, but by being born of God; and the ordinary means by which we are born of God, are the word and faith.

The third means is prayer: for Christ hath said, "the Spirit is given to them that ask." And the disciples, when they were to receive the promise of the Spirit, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," Acts i. 14. And God, who hath promised to give us his Spirit, hath commanded us to ask it. Now in asking the Spirit, there is no difference whether we ask it of the Father or of the Son, seeing the Spirit proceeds from both, and is the Spirit of both: and therefore Christ promiseth the sending of the Spirit from both. From the Father, John xiv. "The Spirit which the Father will send in my name." From himself, John xvi. "Except I go, the Comforter will not come; but if I go, I will send him to you." And thus you see the way to obtain this power is to obtain the Spirit, and also by what means this is done.

2. The way to increase this power is to increase the Spirit. And therefore it is as needful for us to know the means to increase the Spirit as to receive it. And they, among others, are these:

1. To continue in the use of the word. As the Spirit is first given by the word, so by the same word it is

increased; and the more any Christian is in the use of the word, the more mighty is the Spirit in him; but the neglect of the word is the quenching of the Spirit. Let a Christian that is strong in the Spirit neglect the word awhile, and he will soon become weak, and as a man without strength. For the Spirit is not bestowed on us, but through the word, neither doth it dwell in us, but by the word; and the more the word dwells in our hearts by faith, the more the Spirit dwells in our hearts by the word. And according to the measure of the word in us is the measure of the Spirit.


2. To increase faith. For the more we believe, the more we receive of Christ; and the more we receive of Christ, the more we receive of the Spirit in Christ. Always according to the measure of Christ in us is the measure of the Spirit; and according to the measure of faith, is the measure of Christ in us.

3. To be much in prayer. For the prayer of the Spirit increases the Spirit. The more we pray, the more we receive the Spirit; and have daily a greater and greater increase of it, till we are filled with the Spirit.

4. To turn ourselves daily from the creatures to God. For the more we enlarge our hearts towards the creature, the less capable are we of the Spirit of God. Therefore we must live abstractedly from the creatures, and so use them as if we did not use them; and abandon the satisfactions of flesh and blood, and wean ourselves from all things but the necessities of nature. And the more free and loose we are from the creatures, the more capable are we of God's Spirit, and the operations of it. He that lives at the greatest distance from the world, and hath least communion with the things of it, hath always the greatest proportion of God's Spirit.

5. To increase the Spirit in us, we must give up ourselves to the Spirit, that he only may work in us, without the least opposition and resistance from us. That as the soul acts all in the body, and the body doth nothing of itself, but is subject to the soul in all things; so the

THE
BUILDING, BEAUTY, TEACHING, AND
ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE
TRULY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.



ISAIAH LIV. 11.

*Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;
behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay
thy foundations with sapphires.*

THE prophet Isaiah did not so much prophesy to his own age as to ours, nor to the Jewish church as to the Christian. (“Not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you.”) He prophesied in the Spirit, touching the kingdom of Christ, and delivers many excellent promises, to be fulfilled in the Son incarnate, head, and members. The first promise in this chapter is touching the great increase of the church in the days of the New Testament; that whereas before, the church was to be found but in one kindred, now it should be gathered out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. So that there shall

certainly be a most wonderful increase of the faithful in the Christian church, till they become as the stars of heaven, and as the drops of the morning dew, all of them assembled in the beauties of holiness. And therefore let us not be over-much troubled, though at present we see, in a numerous nation, but few true children of the spiritual church: for God shall bless these few, and bid them "increase, and multiply, and replenish the earth." And it shall be said to the church, "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold, all these gather themselves together and come to thee: As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth."

In the words I read to you, the Lord comes to another promise; so that, because of the church's weakness, he adds one promise to another; and these promises are nothing but the manifestations of his love through Christ. But to look more nearly upon the words.

Ver. 11, *Oh! thou afflicted.*

Affliction in the world doth so inseparably attend the church, that the church even takes its denomination from it. "Oh! thou afflicted." The condition of the church is an afflicted condition. For the church being born of God, and born of the Spirit, is put into a direct contrariety to the world, which is born of the flesh, and is also of its father the devil. And so the whole world is against the faithful and spiritual church; and all the people and nations in the world are against that people and nation, which the apostle calls "a holy nation, and a peculiar people." And they oppose not the faithful for any thing of flesh and blood in them, but because that flesh and blood of their's is the habitation of God, and the very presence of God himself is there; as he saith, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Agreeable to this is that of Christ, "All this shall they do to you, for my name's sake;" that is, when the name

of Christ is called upon us, and we are taken into his name, into his righteousness, and life, and wisdom, and holiness; then, when the world perceives the name of God in the sons of men, and the nature of God in the natures of men, presently they fall a persecuting the children of God for his name and nature's sake.

Now this affliction which the church meets with in the world is profitable for the church; it is good for it that it should be afflicted; for the more it is afflicted in the flesh, the more it thrives in the Spirit. This affliction stirs us up to the exercise of faith and prayer; yea, then is our faith most active and vigorous, and our prayers most fervent, till they fill the whole heavens; then are we most in the use of the word; then are we set off farthest from the world; then do we keep closest to God; then have we nearest intercourse and communion with him; so that we could better want fire, and water, and the sun, than want affliction, which God out of his mere love, through his over-ruling power and wisdom, causes to work unto us for good. But we proceed.

Tossed with tempest.

We see that the church is not only afflicted, but violently afflicted; one wave comes against it after another, as in a tempest; and the more spiritual the church is, the more doth the world become as a raging sea against it; because the more spiritual the church is made, it is set in the more contrariety to the world, and the world to it. The Psalmist describes this temper in the world against the church; "They came upon me like a ramping and a roaring lion:" and again, "They came upon me to cat up my flesh, as they would eat bread." Yea, men naturally meek and moderate, how fierce have they become against those in whom there have appeared any glorious discoveries of Christ? For the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the Seed of the woman, will be still breaking forth: and though it may

for a time be covered under many moral virtues, and a form of godliness; yet, when God leaves them to themselves, and lets them act outwardly, according to their inward principles, how cruelly and fiercely do they act against the sons of God? Yea, there is not such enmity between a Turk and a Jew, as there is between carnal gospellers and spiritual Christians; the former hating the latter, and being angry against them to the very death. And whenever the Lord shall suffer these to exercise their enmity against the church, then shall the church's condition become such as is here described, "afflicted, and tossed with tempest."

And not comforted.

The church of God, in all the evil it meets in the world, hath not one drop of comfort from the world. It hath affliction, tribulation, persecution from the world, but no comfort. This we see in Christ, the Head. You know what he suffered in the world in the days of his flesh. "He was despised and rejected of men," and so full of sorrows, that he took his name from them, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." At last, they apprehended him, bound him, buffeted him, spit on him, crucified him; and all this would have been but a small matter to have suffered from the heathen, but he suffered all this from the only visible church of God in the world. And in all this he had no one to have compassion on him: they laughed at him, derided him, and mocked him; but no one comforted him. And as it was with the Head, so it is with the members; in all the sorrows, and oppositions, and persecutions, they have no one to comfort them, or take compassion on them. "Refuge failed me," saith David, "no man cared for my soul."

Brethren, ye that are partakers of the heavenly calling, and of the Divine nature, if ever the Lord suffer the world to prevail against you, to afflict you, and toss you from one

evil to another, as in a tempest, to reproach you, throw you out of your comforts, banish you, or imprison you ; you shall find no one to comfort you ; no one will regard or own you, pity you, or be so sensible of your condition, as to say, "Alas ! my brother !" You must look for affliction in the world, but you must look for no comfort there. When God shall cast us into sorrows and sufferings, let us not look for one worldly man to stand by us, no, not of those that now smile upon us, and pretend friendship to us ; no, nor yet of our near relations ; but then that shall be fulfilled, "I was a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother's children." Nay, yet farther, they that are weak or worldly Christians, will stand aloof from thee, and will be shy to own, and countenance, and encourage, and comfort thee. The disciples of Christ, when he was led to the cross, all forsook him and fled : and so if you suffer for the truth of God, you shall find little comfort from men.

Now this the Lord doth in much mercy to his children. He leaves them destitute of earthly comfort, that they may look for heavenly ; he leaves them destitute of all comfort from men, that they may look for comfort from God alone. And therefore when thou art afflicted and not comforted, lift up thy heart to God, and expect all from him. When thy soul is in affliction, never look after any earthly, sensual, or creature comforts ; they would prove poison to thy soul ; but only look for heavenly comforts, such as flow immediately from God ; for these are pure and unmixed, refreshing and supporting, satisfying and enduring comforts ; comforts that are able to make thee rejoice, not only in fulness, but in want ; not only among friends, but in the midst of enemies ; not only in prosperity, but in tribulation ; not only in life, but in death ; they will make thee go singing to prison, to the cross, to the grave ; they are infinitely stronger than all the sorrows of the flesh : and hence it is that many martyrs have gone cheerfully to the stake, and sung in the very flames ; the comforts of God in their souls have strengthened

them to this. Thou art a believer, never doubt of this comfort in thy greatest sorrows. When Christ had none to comfort him, God sent an angel from heaven to do it : and so when we are left alone, rather than we shall want comfort, God will send an angel from heaven to comfort us ; yea, the Spirit itself, which is greater than all the angels in heaven ; and we shall certainly be comforted by God, when we are “ afflicted and tossed with tempest, and not comforted ” by men.

Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

The Lord seeth the church in its affliction, without all comfort in the world, and then the Lord comes and comforts it himself, and this he doth by a promise. They are the sweetest comforts that are brought to us in the promises. But to come more particularly to these words, and these that follow. Ver. 12, “ And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.” Here you see the Lord promiseth to build up the church of the New Testament, with stones of fair colours, with precious stones. I will not stand to inquire particularly into the natures of the several stones here named ; it shall be sufficient for us to attain the meaning of the Spirit in this place, and that is this : that the spiritual church of the New Testament is not to be built with common, but with precious stones. The full sense of these words I shall give in several particulars. And, first, you see here the matter of which the church of the New Testament is made ; and that is not of common, but of precious stones ; elect and precious stones ; and such are the faithful : for, 1. They have a more excellent nature than other men have ; for they are born of God, and so partake of the nature of God ; and the Lord Jesus did not more truly partake of the nature of man, than these partake of the nature of God. Others have only the nature

of men, or, which is worse, the nature of the devil; but the faithful have in them the nature of God, communicated to them through a new birth. 2. They have a more excellent spirit than others have; as it was said of Daniel, that there was a more excellent spirit found with him than with all the other wise men. Now the very Spirit of God is found in the faithful, and therefore they are more glorious than the rest of the world. 3. They have more excellent operations; for the faithful are not such precious stones as are only for shew, but they have also virtue in them, even the very virtues of Jesus Christ; for having the same nature and Spirit of God, they are able, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, to do the same works that he did; and so they are excellent in the operations of faith, hope, love, humility, meekness, patience, temperance, heavenly-mindedness, and every other grace: and in this regard also are more precious than the rest of the world. And therefore the Lord calls them his jewels; “in the day whercin I make up my jewels.”

And thus much for the first thing, the matter of which the church of the New Testament is made, that is, of precious stones. The second thing observable is the variety of these precious stones. For the spiritual church is not built up of precious stones of one sort only; not all of sapphires, or all of agates, or all of carbuncles; but of all these; both sapphires, agates, carbuncles, and many other precious stones of fair colours. This notes the diversity of gifts in the children of God. For though all of them are precious stones, yet they are of diversity of colours, lustre, and operations. And this also makes for the greater glory of the church. In the body of a man there is not one member, but many; and the variety of members, with their several gifts and operations, are the glory of the body: and so it is in the church, the body of Jesus Christ, wherein are divers members, with diversity of gifts and operations; but all proceed from one and the same Spirit; and whatsoever gift proceeds

from the Spirit, there is an excellent beauty, a heavenly lustre in it. Therefore, labour to distinguish between those gifts that are natural to thee, and flow from thy own spirit, and those gifts that are supernatural, and flow from God's Spirit. In all the operations of thine own spirit, in all thy natural abilities, wisdom, learning, there is nothing but deformity, darkness, death, how specious soever they may appear to the world; but in the gifts and operations that flow from God's Spirit, there is a heavenly lustre and glory. Yea, even in weak Christians, you shall see an excellent beauty in some gift or other, which they have received from the Spirit, which shines not forth so clearly in some stronger Christians. And therefore let us not expect all gifts in all men, and that every man should excel in every gift; for then one would be saying to another, "I have no need of thee." But God hath given diversity of gifts to divers persons, that each may acknowledge something in others which he hath not himself, and may reckon his perfection to lie in his communion with them; that so the communion of saints may be kept up in the world. One Christian hath the gift of prayer, another the gift of utterance in preaching, another the gift of courage, another the gift of meekness; and no man hath all things in himself, that every man in the sight of his own wants may be kept humble.

And this is a glorious thing in this building, that the lustre of each stone adds to the lustre of all; and the lustre of all is communicated to each stone; and so in the spiritual building, what one hath from the Spirit, it is for all; and what all have is for each one. If thou hast the gift of utterance, it is to build up me; if I have the spirit of prayer, it commends thee as carefully to God as myself; one watches over another as over his own soul; and if any be weak, the strong support them; if any be doubtful, they that have the gift of knowledge direct them; if one be troubled, the rest mourn with him; if one be comforted, the rest rejoice with him; and they

are all so linked together in the body of Christ, that the good and evil of one extends to all. Where thou canst find such communion, there join thyself. Who would not willingly join himself to that people, where no man calls his grace his own, but all gifts are in common among all; every one having a share in the faith, hope, love, prayer, peace, joy, wisdom, strength of all; and all having a share in these gifts and graces that are in any one? And thus much for the diversity of the stones, as well as the preciousness of them.

The third thing to be observed is, that this spiritual building is made up all of precious stones, without any mixture of common stones; it is made up of sapphires, agates, carbuncles; and it is added farther, "And I will make all thy borders of pleasant stones." Here then must be no mingling of the precious and the vile, the holy and the profane, the faithful and unbeliever, the spiritual and the carnal: but all must be precious.

There be some that talk much against new doctrine, which is the old reproach of the Gospel; but surely there was never newer doctrine than this, that the spiritual church of the New Testament should be made up of all the people that live in a kingdom; and that all that are born in such a nation should necessarily be stones for the building up the new Jerusalem. This is a new doctrine indeed, which neither the Old nor the New Testament owns: for God doth not now make any people, or kindred, or nation his church; but gathers his church out of every people, and kindred, and nation; and none can be stones of this building but those that are elect, and precious, through a new birth, and the gift of the Spirit. Indeed such a mistake there may be in Christ's kingdom here, that a few counterfeit stones may be taken up among precious ones; but that is the mistake of a false church, where a thousand counterfeit ones are taken in for one truly precious; wherein, for one faithful Christian, there are many formalists, and many more profane.

We are to take notice, in the fourth place, who is the Builder of such a structure as this, all made up of precious stones ; and are informed in the Word, that “ the Builder and Maker of it, is God.” “ I will do it,” saith the Lord ; behold, “ I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and I will lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agates.” It is all God’s work, from the beginning to the end ; for who can build unto God a living temple to dwell in, but himself ? This the prophet speaks plainly, where he saith, “ The man whose name is the Branch, he shall build the temple of the Lord ; even he shall build it.” It lies in the power of no man to make such a building as this is. What wild work do men make, when they will undertake to be building the church by their own wisdom, prudence, and counsel ? When they think, we will have the church of God thus and thus ; and we will make it up of such and such men, and we will govern it by such and such laws, and we will get the power of the magistrate to back ours ? Poor men ! that think these new heavens, wherein the Lord will dwell, must be the work of their own fingers ; or that they can build the house of God all of precious stones ; whereas this must be God’s own work. When the building of the church is left to men, how woefully it is managed ! Why, saith one, we must needs admit such an one, he is the chief man in the parish, or he is a man of good esteem in the world, or he is a nobleman, or he is my near kinsman, or he is a good, civil, fair-dealing man ; and thus will flesh and blood be ever making a carnal temple for God to dwell in ; but God’s true habitation can never be framed but by the Spirit.

Ver. 13. And thy children shall be taught of the Lord. and great shall be the peace of thy children.

See here, how the prophet by the Spirit, carries up the saints above all visible and sensible things, even as high

as God himself; God (saith he to the church) shall build thee, and God shall teach thee; "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." All the true and genuine children of the church have God's own teaching, in all the things of God; they have the Father and the Son to teach them by the Spirit. This truth Christ himself confirms, where he saith, "It is written, that they shall all be taught of God; he therefore that hath heard and learned of my Father, cometh to me." And again, "The Spirit, when he is come, shall lead you into all truth:" which doctrine John after preached thus, 1 John ii. 27, "The anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man should teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you all things." Hereby we perceive, how few true children of the church there are among those who are commonly called Christians; for among all these, how few are there who have the teaching of God? Most have their teaching only from men, and no higher.

Consider, therefore, I pray, whether the knowledge you have, be from the teaching of God, or the teaching of man. You all pretend to know, that Christ is the Son of the living God, and that redemption and salvation is by him alone; but how came you by this knowledge? Did you read it? Or did somebody tell you so? Or hath God himself taught you this? "For no man knows the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father will reveal him:" and therefore when Peter said, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ answered, "Flesh and blood hath not taught thee this, but my Father which is in heaven." And so, though all of you profess yourselves Christians, yet none of you know Christ truly, but only such as are taught of the Father. And this holds in all other points, as touching faith, justification, sanctification, and the gift and sealing of the Spirit, touching the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and the government of it; Oh! consider, whether you have the teaching of God in these things or not: for if you have

not the teaching of God, you are none of the children of the church. Whatever truth thou knowest, if thou hast not the teaching of the Spirit, it will do thee no good. Thou knowest not any thing spiritually and savingly, wherein thou hast not the teaching of God. And therefore, what a sad thing is it, when men look for their teaching no farther than men? When they only look to the minister, or to some able, learned, orthodox man; and what they shall teach them, they are resolved to stand by it; in the mean time, never regarding the teaching of God. But you will say, What! can so many grave, learned, godly men err? They that do thus, are none of the children of the spiritual church; for they neither have God's teaching, nor care for it; but the spiritual church is all taught of God.

But you will say, Doth God teach without means? I answer, no: God teacheth, but it is by the Word, and that chiefly in the ministry of it; and he that pretends to be taught of God without the Word, is not taught of God. And therefore no man is to despise the ministry of the Word, which is God's own ordinance, and to depend upon to know not what revelations, without the Word; seeing God teacheth all his children by the Word, and none without it. And therefore it is not the prophet's meaning, when he saith, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," that they should neglect or despise the Word, and the ministry of it; but that we ought so to use the Word and the means, as not to look for our teaching from them, but from God himself, in and through them; and when you come to hear, not to think, I will hear what Mr. Such-an-one, or Mr. Such-one will say, "But I will hear what the Lord God will say." And truly, I would not care to hear what any man in the world should say, in whom Christ himself did not speak.

It follows:

And great shall be the peace of thy children.

That is, when men are taught of God, then there is

nothing but peace among them. When God comes and teacheth thee, and me, and another, and many, then we all agree, and see all things by the same light, and apprehend all things by the same knowledge, and perceive all things by the same Spirit, because all have the same teaching. And so, they that are taught of God, though one come out of the East, and another out of the West, and another out of the South, and never had any former communion together, yet they all agree in the same truth, and think and speak the same things ; and so there is love and amity, peace and unity among them, because they are all taught of God, and have learned the truth, not as it is in this or that man, but as it is in Jesus. When men know that no man is any thing in himself, but every one is all that he is, in Christ ; and when men love Christ, merely for himself ; and where they see most of Christ, there love most ; then there is nothing but peace.

Ver. 14. *In righteousness shalt thou be established, &c.*

This spiritual church hath need of establishment ; for when God hath done all this for it, when he hath built it, and taught it himself, it shall not want trouble and opposition, contradiction and persecution in the world, and therefore it stands in great need of establishment. But how shall this be done ? Not by any outward power or force, armies or fortifications, factions or confederacies ; all these are but a staff of a reed ; but in righteousness : and that is, both in the righteousness of Christ received by us, and working in us : the first is, the righteousness of justification ; the second is, the righteousness of sanctification, and our establishment lies in both.

1. In the righteousness of justification, which is called the righteousness of faith, or Christ's own righteousness, received in us : and in this sense it is said, " Except ye believe, ye shall not be established." For by faith we partake of the righteousness of God through Christ ; and this is an infinite, and everlasting righteousness, that hath

neither spot nor blemish in it; this is able to establish us for ever and ever. So that the church hath no more establishment, than it hath of the righteousness of Christ by faith; and as the church goes from faith to faith, so it goes from establishment to establishment.

2. Our establishment lies in the righteousness of sanctification; which is nothing but Christ working in us, as the former was Christ received by us. For the same Christ that is the righteousness of our justification, is the righteousness of our sanctification. Now the establishment of the church is, when we let the righteousness of Christ work all in us, and we work all in the righteousness of Christ; then are we established mightily and invincibly indeed; and how much the Christians swerve from this rule, so much they become weak and unsettled. Sometimes Christians will be acting and working according to human wisdom, and the counsels of flesh and blood, but in all this they have no establishment at all. And therefore ye that are faithful, see to it that ye turn not aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left, through any worldly hopes or fears, but do ye live and act in the righteousness of Christ; and as the Lord lives, though you have kingdoms and nations for your enemies, you shall be established more firmly than the earth.

Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee.

The fear and terror he speaks of here, is inward fear and terror, from which the church shall be free, in the midst of all outward evils. For though the church be full of danger and persecution without, yet it is free from fear and terror within. Nay; the church hath trouble without, but peace within; affliction without, joy within; weakness without; strength within; imprisonment without, liberty within; persecution without, content within. Against all the sorrows and sufferings of the flesh, they have refreshings, comforts, triumphs in the Spirit; and so they rejoice in tribulations, and in the midst of evil, are satisfied with good.

Ver. 15. *Behold they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake.*

A very strange thing it is, that the spiritual church, being thus builded, and taught, and established, any should yet be so blind and mad, as to engage against it; and yet the world doth this; yea, the more pure and spiritual the church is, the more enmity the world and formalists have against it. "Behold they shall surely gather together." When they shall see the churches gathering together into the true communion of saints, then will they gather themselves together against the churches. And why do these men blame the churches for gathering together unto Christ, when they themselves gather together against the church, as we daily see? Indeed the gathering together of the saints, the world doth most hate of all other things. Oh, this is a terrible thing to them; it makes their hearts ache within them, and looseth the joints of their loins; they think, their exaltation will be their own abasement, their own scattering; and their glory, their own shame; and their strength, their own undoing; and out of these conceits they act so strongly and furiously, to scatter abroad again Christ's own gatherings together. They think this is surely a plot of ours, and that we have a great design in hand; and so we have indeed, but the design is not our design, but God's, contrived in eternity, and discovered to Daniel, chap. ii. And this is "the setting up a kingdom of saints in the world." The world thinks we are subtil and mighty, whereas they are clearly mistaken in us; for the wisdom and strength whereby this is done, is God's and not ours. It is the Lord must build this spiritual church, and set it up in the world, and preserve it against the world, and cause it to increase, till it fill the world; so that the design and the accomplishment of it belong to God, and not to us; and they that are displeased at it, let them go and quarrel against God. Yea, this

place is not only to be understood of those that are open enemies without the church, but of a generation in it, that are not of it; and so the gathering together against the church shall be in the church. The "children that are born after the flesh" will "be persecuting them that are born after the Spirit:" They shall gather together, "but not by me." The saints gather together by God, having the Spirit of God to bring them into union and communion; but the carnal church gathers together against the spiritual, not by God, but without him, for worldly ends, profits, and advantages. But mark the end of such gathering together. "Whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake."

The Lord loves the church, the body of Christ, even as he loves Jesus Christ himself; he loves head and members with the same love. "The Lord's people are his portion" on earth, as he is their's in heaven; and so he will give "nations and kingdoms for them;" and hath said, "The nations and kingdoms that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Oh! that this kingdom would avoid this evil, as they would escape this end!

Ver. 16. Behold I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, I have created the waster to destroy.

That is, I have formed him (saith God,) that makes the sword, and gun, and pike, and that prepares the ammunition; and both he that makes the weapon, and he that useth it, are in my hands, and they only shall do what I would have them to do, and no more: So that though thou art a small, weak, despised, persecuted people, thy safety, protection, blessing, lies in me, and in my power, and wisdom, and love. Therefore thine enemies may form cruel designs, and intend much mischief;

Ver. 17. But no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.

God blunts the edge of the weapon, and weakens the hand, and puts fear in the heart of him that useth it; and so no weapons that have been used have prospered hitherto; and if any more weapons shall be used hereafter, they shall be as unprosperous as these.

And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn.

Two ways, you see, the enemies of the church assault the church, by their hands and by their tongues; and this latter way is the more dangerous of the two: by the former, they scourge the church with rods, by this latter with scorpions. This weapon of the tongue is the most dangerous weapon that ever was used against the church, in any age, and the last refuge of the devil and his instruments to annoy the church. And thus, when the enemy fails at the strength of his weapons, he undertakes again with the malice of his tongue. Them that profess the truth, he clothes with odious names, and loads with base aspersions. "Their tongues rise up in judgment against them:" it intimates they shall have specious pretences against the church. "Oh! (say they,) these are the men that would turn the world upside down; that make the nation full of tumults and uproars, that work all the disturbance in church and state; it is fit such men should be suppressed: it will never be a quiet world, till some course be taken with them, that we may have truth and peace again." And thus they have fair pretences against the Christians, and use the glorious names of truth, peace, and government, to the destruction of them all. And this is the sense of these words, for their "tongues to rise up in judgment against them."

And as the enemy strikes with their tongue against them that profess the truth, so also against the truth professed by them; and this they call, by way of reproach, *new light*; as their predecessors, at the breaking forth of the gospel in this kingdom, called it *new learning*; yea,

they call the truth error ; and the very mind of Christ in the word, heresy ; and the power of godliness, enthusiasm ; and this grieves the saints a thousand times more than any personal reproaches, to hear the truth, and the spirit of the gospel, despised, spoken against, and blasphemed ; this is that which fetches not only tears from their eyes, but even drops of blood from their hearts ; the truth of God being much dearer to them than their estates, or names, or lives.

But see how God conquers this weapon of the enemy's tongue to the faithful, as well as the former weapons of their hands : " Every tongue that riseth up in judgment against thee, thou shalt condemn." All that speak and rage, rail and reproach, slander, vilify, and abuse the saints, either by their tongues or pens, thou by thy uprightness, integrity, innocency, truth, faithfulness, shalt condemn them. Thy ways and thy works shall be the condemnation of all thine enemies ; and their slanders shall be done away as a mist before the sun, and thy righteousness shall break forth in that clearness, brightness and strength, that they shall sit down astonished ; and they shall be condemned, not only by the word and by the faithful, but by all the common morality of the world, yea, and by their own conscience ; so that they shall carry their guilt with them night and day, and shall not be able to look them in the face, whom they have so reproached : yea, the whole world shall see the faithfulness and integrity of the saints of God, and shall justify them, and condemn their enemies. And this shall certainly be done, as sure as the Word of God is true, and as sure as the Lord lives to make good his word. For,

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. ..

That is, you shall have this by as sure right as any man hath an inheritance that is entailed upon him. This is your heritage, O ye servants of the Lord, to make void the force of every weapon that is used against you, and

THE
STUMBLING-STONE:

OR,
A DISCOURSE,

TOUCHING THAT OFFENCE WHICH THE WORLD TAKES
AGAINST CHRIST.

Preached at Cambridge, about the year 1647.

MATT. XI. 6.

And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THESE words are the conclusion of Christ's answer to that question which John the Baptist propounded to him by two of his disciples, himself being in prison: The question was this, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Writers conclude, that John propounded this question to Christ, not that he himself did doubt whether Christ was the true Messiah, or not, seeing he had before given so clear a testimony to Christ, that he was "the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world," and had also baptized him with water, and had seen at that time "the heavens opening, and the Spirit of God as a dove descending and resting on Christ," and had heard the Father's own voice, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Wherefore, they say, that John himself could not possibly, after all this, doubt of

Christ; and therefore that he did not propound this question by his disciples for his own sake, but for theirs, that they who before had envied Christ for their master's sake, and would rather have had John to have been the Messiah, might now be assured and fully instructed touching Christ by himself.

It is not impossible, however, but John might propound this question for his own sake. For though, when he lived in peace and freedom, he had a clear revelation from the Father, touching the Son by the Spirit, and had accordingly clearly spoken of Christ to others, yet now, being in prison, and near death, he might be brought by great tribulation and temptation, to doubt of all that truth which before he had been taught of God. For we know not what place the Gospel of God our Saviour hath in us till tribulation comes; and so much of the true knowledge of Christ, and of true faith in Christ we have indeed, as we have strength in such hours. That truth which we confess freely in prosperity, we are fain to begin to learn again in tribulation; and tribulation makes us learn the truth over again the second time; it makes us to learn that in experience, which before we had learned only in doctrine.

But to leave this matter, whether John proposed this question for his own or for his disciple's sake, Christ returns him this answer by his disciples: "Go, and shew John again those things you see and hear. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them:" And now let John himself resolve his own question, "Whether I am the true Christ, or not. "Go shew John the things you see and hear." Christ doth not say in plain terms, he was the Christ; he would have his works and word declare what he was, that our faith might have a sure foundation.

1. Christ would be known by his works. "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have

the gospel preached to them." And so every where in the gospel, Christ would be known to be what he was by works; particularly in John x. 24, when the Jews came about him, and said, "How long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly:" Jesus answered them, ver. 25, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."

Thus you see that Christ will be known by his works. For he cannot lie hid where he is present and dwells; but when this "Word was made flesh," that is, "came into the flesh," it did manifest itself to be in that flesh, by doing the works of God; and without the works of God, the presence of the Eternal Word in the flesh of Christ had not been known. Wherefore Christ is called "God manifested in the flesh," and not hidden; and he was manifested to be God in the flesh, by doing the works of God.

And as Christ is known by his works in himself, the head, so also in the church, his body; for wherever Christ's presence is, there also are his works; and where his works are not, there neither is his presence. If Christ be present in our hearts by faith, his works will be manifest in our lives. "But it is not necessary for every Christian to do the works of Christ here mentioned; to wit, to cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the like." I answer, There are other works of Christ besides these, which are inseparable from his presence; as, the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope; together with the self-denial of Christ; the meekness, lowliness, goodness, long-suffering, heavenly-mindedness of Christ; as also his readiness and diligence to do the will of God, and his cheerfulness to suffer it; these works every one ought to perform that is a Christian, that so Christ may be still known by his works; as the apostle saith, "Shew me thy faith by thy works;" that is, Let me know the presence of Christ in thee by the works of Christ. And thus is Christ known by his works, both in himself and his members.

Thus much touching the works of Christ in general. Now for the kind of works which Christ did; as, to give "eyes to the blind, and strength to the lame." They are all such works as the prophets had foretold the Messiah should perform; as Isai. xxxv. 5: "Behold God will come and save you: then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing:" And he that did those things, thus foretold by the Spirit, must needs be the true Christ. And thus Christ doth here describe himself by his own works, as one whose business lies with the poor, lame, blind, and all sorts of diseased, afflicted, sorrowful, and distressed persons; these he comprehends in the greatest love, and pities with the tenderest bowels, and minds with the greatest care and diligence, and relieves, helps, and saves them perfectly. Whence we learn, that Christ's kingdom brings good to all, but it receives nothing from any body; for it carries in it all the unsearchable riches of God, and stands in need of nothing that man can do. Wherefore it entertains not the rich, and full, and noble, and honourable of the world, and such as abound already, and have enough in themselves and the creatures; but only the poor, and needy, and afflicted, and desolate; and it supplies these freely and richly.

Again: As Christ is known by his works, so also by his word; and therefore he saith, "Go, shew John the things you hear, as well as the things you see;" and that is, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." For Christ's works and Christ's word do always go together. Christ's life is always accompanied with Christ's doctrine. Christ's works and Christ's word go always together, both in himself, the head, and in the true church, his body. Wherefore Christ saith, "Go, shew to John the things you see and hear:" the things you see; "the blind receive their sight:" the things you hear; "the poor have the gospel preached to them."

The Gospel is the free promise of God, in which nothing but mere love, mercy, and grace is offered in Jesus

Christ to them that believe, though they be never so great and grievous sinners. Particularly, this gospel is preached to the poor; to the *poor in spirit*; such as do not love, nor desire, nor delight in present things, but are so afflicted with the sense of sin and wrath, that they regard not the world, nor the riches, pleasures, and honours of it; but all they mind, or care for, is Jesus Christ, the love of God, the remission of sins, and the gift of the Spirit. These are the poor to whom Christ preaches the gospel, and they only regard the gospel; whilst the lovers of this world, and the lovers of themselves and this present life, care not for it.

And as Christ is known by his word, in himself the head, so also in the church; his body. For wherever Christ is present, there is his word, as well as his works; and where Christ's true word is not, neither is his presence there. Wherefore all the faithful, as they have received the Gospel themselves, so they hold it forth to others upon all opportunities. And thus you have seen how Christ gives forth himself to be known by his works and by his word.

Now, Christ having returned this full and satisfactory answer to John, he adds this in the conclusion, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." For, notwithstanding that the works and words of Christ are the works and words of God in the flesh, yet the wisdom and prudence, the religion and righteousness of the world find much matter of offence in Jesus Christ; wherefore Christ saith, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

In discoursing touching the offence which is taken against Christ by men; I shall shew,

- I. Who are they that are offended at Christ.
 - II. What those things are whereat they are offended, and why they are offended at them.
 - III. What a great evil it is to be so offended.
 - IV. What a great blessedness it is not to be so offended.
- And,
- V. Make some use of all.

I. Who they are that are offended at Christ. And here I affirm first, that the whole world in general is offended at Christ; for they living without the Spirit of faith, must needs be offended at Christ, by all those scandals which are raised up against Christ by the devil and men; and they suck in as readily as a spring doth water whatever aspersions and reproaches are raised against him: and therefore saith Christ, Matt. xviii. 17, "Wo be to the world, because of offences;" for offences must needs come, and the world will needs receive them, and therefore wo be to the world. So that the whole world, that is, whosoever are not true believers, are all offended at Christ and his Gospel; all the children of the first Adam are offended at the second Adam, who is wholly unlike them, yea, and in all things contrary to them.

Yea, secondly, not only the common people of the world, vulgar and contemptible men, but all the chief and choice men of the world, kings of the earth, and rulers, and judges, and magistrates, (as in Psalm ii.) and all the best, and most learned, wise, and great, and most honourable men, are offended at Christ, 1 Cor. ii. 8, whom none of the princes of this world knew; he means it of philosophers as well as of secular powers; and not knowing him, they crucified him.

And not only the world but also the worldly and carnal church, is very much offended at Christ. This we see in Christ's time, that the only visible church in the world, the church of the Jews, which had the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, and observed all the outward ordinances of God, were all offended at Christ, and made an order, that whosoever acknowledged him should be excommunicated, cast out of the synagogue.

And yet this is not all: for not only the carnal Christians, but the carnal clergy are offended at Christ; and not only the common people of the national church, but many of the chief rulers, of the most eminent, and in appearance most holy and orthodox of the clergy, are above all others grievously offended at Christ. This also we see was the

case in Christ's time, when the Scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers of the people, men of great reputation and renown for religion, were above the rest of the church offended at Christ. And this was foretold, Psalm cxviii. 22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner;" this rejected stone is Christ himself, and these builders were the chief rulers and governors of the church; and accordingly both Christ and the apostles applied this Scripture to them. So that many of the builders that teach, and instruct, and govern the church, and are reputed the best, and most profitable and necessary men in it, yea, the very pillars of the church, so that it is thought all would come to ruin without them, these are the men that are most offended at Christ.

Now when the people see the rulers and governors of the church, who are thought to have more knowledge, learning, light, and religion than others, offended at Christ, this exceedingly increases their offence; when they see the builders rejecting this stone, this causes them to reject him with the greater indignation. And thus you see, that this offence at Christ is spread over all the world and worldly church, and very few there are who escape it. And this for the first thing.

II. I am to shew, what are the things in Christ at which they are offended, and why they are offended at them. The world and the worldly church are offended, 1. At Christ himself; 2. At his true word; 3. At his true worship; 4. At his true church; 5. At his true government. Of these things I shall speak in order, and shall desire to be so faithful to Christ, as not to depart one hair's breadth from his truth, though it may be that all, or the greatest part of you, should be grievously offended at it.

I begin with the first, and will shew that the world and worldly church are offended:—1. At Christ himself. And at him they are offended in many regards: of which I shall mention the following.

1. They are offended at the meanness of his outward

condition in the world. For indeed he was in a very low and contemptible condition in the days of his flesh, an ordinary tradesman in his town, and lived with Joseph in his trade of a carpenter. They thought the Christ, of whom such excellent things were spoken, should be some great prince, or learned priest; and that that mean condition in which he was could in no measure be suitable to the true Christ; and for this cause they were greatly offended at him, and thought him not worthy to be in any place of reckoning.

2. They were offended that he being in so mean a condition, John the Baptist should yet speak such high things of him, and he of himself. John the Baptist testified of him, that he was the "only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father; the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world; and that he who did believe in him, had everlasting life; and that he who did not should not see life, but the wrath of God should abide on him." And these all were wonderful things, to be spoken of one whose condition in the world was so plain and contemptible. And as John had spoken these things of Christ, so Christ every where gave forth himself as the Son of God, and said, he and his Father were one. And this exceedingly offended the Jews, who "sought to kill him, not only because he had broken the sabbath, but also because he had said God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

3. They were offended at Christ, because in him was no human or worldly thing which any natural man could possibly like or delight in. He exercised no worldly wit, wisdom, learning, nor any thing that might commend him to the world. There was nothing in him but the presence of God, the righteousness of God, the nature of God, the Spirit of God: and God was all in all in Christ; and God is wholly contrary to the world, and the world to God: and so the world and worldly church were wholly offended at Christ.

4. They were offended at the reports that went com-

monly abroad touching Christ, raised for the most part by the scribes, and pharisees, and rulers of the church, who gave out that he was a sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, a glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and that he had a devil, and was mad. These were the common reports that were divulged touching Christ, and that by the teachers of the best repute in the church; and the common people believed them, and thereupon were horribly offended both at Christ's doctrine and works.

5. They were offended at him because of his shameful cross and sufferings. And herein lay the height and depth of that offence; for the ecclesiastical power condemned him as a deceiver and blasphemer, and they also prevailed with the secular power to condemn him as a seditious person; and so after all the works of God which he had done, and words of God which he had taught, they at last crucified him between two thieves, by the common consent of all the people. And in all this suffering nobody offered him the least pity, but the common people mocked him, and said, He saved others, but cannot save himself. And thus much for their offence at Christ himself.

2. *The world is offended at Christ's true Word.*

1. Because it is the word of faith; the word of faith, and not of sense; the word of faith, and not of works. For this word of faith is wholly a Spiritual word, and hath nothing in it that is suitable to flesh and blood; nothing in it that pleaseth the fancy, or understanding of man; nothing wherein a natural or carnal heart can take pleasure.

2. They are offended at the Word, because it exalts Christ alone, and in him the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the righteousness of God, and the things of God; and eries down all the things of the world in which men trust and delight, and all the common religion and righteousness of the world, and makes Christ all in all.

3. They are offended at this Word, because it cannot

be learned as human arts and sciences can, by the teaching of man, together with their own pains and endeavours, but only by the teaching of God and his Spirit; as it is written, they (that is the true children of the spiritual church) shall be taught of God. All my divinity, (said Luther), consists in this, that I believe that Christ only is the Lord, and neither my grammar nor Hebrew tongue taught me this, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Now when God teacheth us his Word himself, we have another understanding of it than other men who hear and read the same outward words, and yet want this inward teaching. And this offends the carnal Christians grievously, that the spiritual Christians have another knowledge of the Word than they. Whereupon they thus break out, "What! are you the only men who have the Word of God, and is all wisdom and knowledge comprehended in your breasts? And do you know more of the mystery of Christ than the grave and learned men who have studied the Scriptures all their life?" And thus they are greatly offended.

4. They are offended at this Word, because it discovers the wickedness of the world. The world doth not seem the thousandth part so wicked any where as it doth where the Gospel comes. For where this clear light of God shines, and the Word comes in truth and power, there not only the wickedness of the world appears out of measure wicked, but also the religion and righteousness, works and duties of the carnal Christians, are manifested to be the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and wholly contrary to Christ, the righteousness of God, and so nothing else but a more plausible way to death and hell. Where the Word of Christ comes in power, there many who before seemed very religious people, and very quiet and peaceable men, become full of wrath, and rage, and enmity against it, and call it error, heresy, and blasphemy, and so spit in the very face of the truth and Gospel of Christ. And no man could ever have imagined they had been such children of the devil before the Word came.

Thus by the coming of Christ, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, and that unbelief and enmity against Christ, which before lay hid, is discovered and brought forth by the preaching of the Word, as we have seen heretofore, and still see by daily experience ; and for this cause also many are offended.

5. They are offended at the true Word, because every where so few entertain and embrace it : as when Christ himself preached, there were very few in all Judea and Jerusalem that entertained his doctrine. Now this makes many offended at it, that when it comes to any town or people the far greater part should reject it, and speak evil of it ; and they for the most part the greatest, wisest, and most learned men, and that only a few poor and contemptible people should receive it.

6. Lastly, they are offended because the true Word of Christ, where it comes with the demonstration of the Spirit, brings troubles, tumults, stirs, and uproars in the world, according to that of Christ, Matt. x. 34, " I came not to send peace but a sword ; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." For the true Word of Christ is such a sword as cuts in sunder all natural and civil relations, and takes away the peace of any place where it comes in power. The Lord saith by the prophet, Is not my Word as fire ? And this Word comes to burn up all the corrupt manners, fashions, customs, yea all the lusts and sins of the world, and all antichristian doctrine. And when this fire begins to burn any where, presently all the people are in an uproar, and lay all their heads, and use all their hands together to quench it. So that wherever the true Word comes, the " Heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against it, and say, Let us break these bonds in sunder, and cast away these cords from us," which no flesh and blood, especially the rich, wise, learned, honourable, would endure to be

bound in. Now this exceedingly offends ; for, say they, before this kind of Word came in, all things were quiet and in good order : but since this new doctrine came in, all things are full of trouble and mischief ; and therefore they reckon this the cause of all these evils.

But yet the cause of all these tumults is not truly in the Word, but in the world, and in the devil. Christ will have his Christians to publish his Word, and thereby to gather together his elect unto him. Now the world, and the devil, the prince of it, will not suffer this to be done quietly ; and hence arise all tumults. The devil, who hath the first possession of the world, would have all things quiet, that he might keep his possession : Christ will not suffer it so to be, but will have all those whom his Father hath given him out of the devil's possession, by the might and efficacy of his Word ; but the devil will not endure that this should be done quietly, but stirs up all the world against the Word. And so wherever the Word comes in truth, there are always troubles and uproars ; but where the Word is preached, and the world is quiet, that for certain is not the true Word of God. And thus much for their offence at the true Word of Christ.

3. *They are offended at his true Worship.*

For Christ under the New Testament hath instituted a new worship, and this the world are also greatly offended at. Because this worship is spiritual, and hath nothing carnal in it ; according to that of Christ, John iv. 23, "The hour cometh, and now is, that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth ;" and there is no worship in truth, but that which is in spirit.

Now spiritual worship stands in faith, hope, and love, whereby our old nature is mortified, and we bring forth spiritual fruit unto God and to our brother. And this worship at all times, and in all places, may be performed

by true believers. And so accordingly all true believers, at all times, and in all places, believe in God, and trust in him, and fear him, and love him, and delight in him, and speak good of his name, and also do good to their brother, in instructing, teaching, exhorting, comforting him, and helping him as freely as Christ hath helped them.

Now the world is greatly offended at this spiritual worship ; and that first, because it makes no great shew, nor presents any glorious outside to it, and so they despise it as a notional or melancholy thing. And secondly, because this is wholly out of the power of the natural man, and no man by his natural abilities can attain thereunto. Wherefore they are offended at this kind of worship, and would have none but that which stands in outward works and duties, ceremonies and observation of days, times, places, and persons.

4. They are offended at the true church of Christ.

1. Because Christ under the New Testament hath set up a new church, which is not outward and visible, as the church of the Old Testament was ; neither carries in it any worldly pomp, power, and glory, as the church of antichrist doth, but is spiritual and invisible, and as utterly unknown to the world as Christ himself. The true church under the new law is the congregation of spiritual men, gathered together in one faith, hope, and love, in one Spirit, in one Christ, in one God. It is the company of the faithful and elect which have Christ for their head. This church is conceived and formed, brought forth, and brought up, fed and clothed, strengthened and adorned, protected and perfected by the word of faith alone : yea, the whole nature, life, and being of this church is in the word of faith.

2. They are offended at this church, because it is the habitation of God, wherein he himself is present, is manifested, speaks, works, reigns, is glorified, and is all in all in it ; and so it will not receive unto itself any thing of the power, wisdom, and righteousness of man. They are much offended to hear that this church is the temple

of the living God, and that the members of it are filled with all the fulness of God. This doth so exceedingly offend them that it causeth them to blaspheme, in crying out against this doctrine of the Spirit of God as blasphemy.

3. They are offended at this church, because usually God calls into it not the great and honourable, and wise, and learned, but mean, plain, and simple people, according to that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 26, " You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called ; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are." So that this true church consists of a small company of poor, mean, simple, base, and despised men in the eyes of the world ; yea, of such, who in their judgment, deserve to have no being in the world. And who, say they, would join themselves to such a congregation ?

4. The great and worldly-wise are much offended at this church because of its outward afflicted condition, it having fellowship with Christ in all his sufferings ; and so is always reproached, despised, slandered, torn, spit on, buffeted, crucified, and mocked ; for all, most, or some of these sufferings, the spiritual church is never privileged in the world. And by reason of these things the visage of the true church seems foul, deformed, and offensive in the eyes of men. And thus much for their offence at the true church.

5. *They are offended at the true government of this church.*

1. In that Christ will have none brought to his church by outward violence and compulsion, but in the day of his power, (that is, of the Gospel) : he only entertains the willing people, and compels nobody against their wills.

2. They are offended at his government, in that Christ

doth nothing in his church by the secular arm, but by his Word and Spirit ; and these alone are infinitely sufficient to do all that Christ would have done in his kingdom.

3. In that he will have us “ to love our enemies, and to do good to them that do evil to us, and to pray for them that persecute us and despitefully use us ;” he will not have us to be enemies to any, or to do evil to any, or to persecute and use despite to any. He will have us to beware of false prophets, but not to destroy them ; and to avoid heretics, but not to kill them ; and will have neither of them burnt with any fire but the fire of love.

4. In that he will have all things in his kingdom ordered and done only by the law of love, and nothing by violence or compulsion. Now this kind of government of the true church doth grievously offend the world, because they know no government of the church at all but that of the ecclesiastical and civil power intermingled. For they want faith to commit the government of Christ’s own church to his own care, by his Word and Spirit. And thus they are offended at this true government also.

Thus have I declared how the world and worldly church are offended at Christ and his Word, and worship, and church, and government ; and so consequently at all his things. And now I proceed to the third general I propounded ; to wit, to shew,

III. How great an evil it is to be thus offended at Christ. And this appears in many particulars.

1. One evil is, that to be offended at Christ is a certain evidence that men are wholly ignorant of Christ and of God, though they be called Christians, and have the name of God in their mouths. For if men knew Christ aright, and God in Christ, it were impossible they should be offended at him. And inasmuch as they are offended, it is certain they do not know him by any revelation from the Father. Wherefore Christ tells his disciples, John xvi. 3, that the chief ground of that offence, which the world should take against them who are his true members, is, because they have not known the Father, nor him.

2. They that are offended at Christ lose all that spiritual and eternal advantage that comes by Christ to true believers ; namely, the love of God, reconciliation with God, the righteousness, wisdom, and power, and all the fulness of God in Christ ; and Jesus Christ is wholly in vain to them.

3. They that are offended at Christ are utterly ruined through such offence : wherefore Christ is called “ a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, to them that are disobedient and stumble at the Word :” and he is said to be set for the fall and ruin of many in Israel ; and Matt. xxi. 44, Christ saith, “ Whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder.” For whoever stumbles, or dashes against this stone, dashes against God himself in the nature of man. He dashes against the counsel of God, against the wisdom of God, against the love, merey, righteousness, truth, and power of God ; against the eternal Word and Spirit of God ; and no man perishes like that man. For he incurs all that wrath, vengeance, destruction, damnation, which the Lord God himself in all his infinite wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, justice, and power, can inflict on him to all eternity, and so he is indeed ground to powder.

Yea, farther, that man that stumbles against Christ is not only ruined by such offence, but ruined without all hope of recovery. They that are broken against him are broken “ in pieces like a potter’s vessel,” which can never be made up again ; they that fall against him never rise again ; they that are ruined by him are never repaired again. If a man were dashed in pieces by Moses, he might be repaired again by Christ ; but he that is destroyed by the Saviour, by whom shall he be saved ? He that was condemned by the justice of God for sin, might recover again by the love and merey of God in Christ ; but he that is destroyed by the love and mercy of God, is past all hope and remedy.

This now have I spoken in faithfulness to Jesus Christ,

and in faithfulness to all that hear, that they may avoid that ruin which will otherwise inevitably befall them for their offence at Christ and his Gospel. And now let them that can receive it, receive it; and let them that cannot, deride and reject it. But whether you receive it, or whether you reject it, sure I am I have spoken the truth, which God himself in his due time will witness to.

IV. The fourth point is, the blessedness of them that are not offended at Christ, according to Christ's Word here, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Now those very few that are not offended at Christ when the whole world are offended, their blessedness appears in many particulars.

1. As first, in that it is evident they all are taught of God, and have heard and learned from the Father himself touching the Son. They see Christ by the revelation of the Father. Wherefore when the world had many opinions of Christ, and Peter notwithstanding acknowledged him to be the Son of the living God, Christ replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And this is thy blessedness, that thou knowest me by the revelation of the Father, and so knowest me aright, and art not offended. He then that is not offended at Christ when all other men are, hath for certain the Father's teaching, and sees Christ far otherwise than the world do. He sees Christ in all his mystery, and in all his glory. And when we see him thus, we value him never the worse for the form of a servant, nor for all his reproaches and sufferings from the world, but we rather behold these things with the greater wonder and comfort; seeing for our sakes he humbled himself from the form of God to the form of a servant, and in that form to the death of the cross.

2. They are blessed, because through this revelation of the Father they have true faith in Christ wrought in them. For true faith in Christ doth necessarily follow the Father's revelation; and when God teaches us Christ, we

must needs believe in him ; and through this faith we know him by experience. And he that knows Christ through the experience of faith, finds and feels Christ to be all that to him which the Scripture speaks of him. He through this faith feels Christ to be made unto him of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; and Christ being through faith made all that to him which he is in himself, it is not possible he should be offended at him. Farther, through this experience of faith Christ becomes precious to him, as Peter saith, 1 Pet. ii. 7, " To you who believe he is precious : " that very Christ, which to others is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, is precious to them that have faith ; so precious, that they esteem all the greatest and most excellent things in the world but dross and dung in comparison of him. And such believers have chosen to part with their liberty, their estates, their relations, and their own lives, (all which are precious things in themselves) rather than they would part with this infinitely more precious Christ.

V. I now proceed to make some use of all.

1. The first use is, to warn all men of all sorts that they take special care that they be not offended at Christ, and the things of Christ. You have heard that the world, and the wisest and greatest of the world are offended at Christ ; and you have heard also how great an evil it is to be offended, and how great a blessedness it is not to be offended ; wherefore I advise you to take care that you be not found amongst them who are offended at Christ. But you will be ready to say, " We are not offended at Christ ; we love, honour, and embrace both Christ and the things of Christ. " To this I answer, Many say they are not offended at Christ, and think so too, who yet indeed are grievously offended at him. For,

First, he that is offended at the true Word of Christ, is offended at Christ himself, who is present in that Word ; wherefore saith Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 8, " He is a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence to them that stumble at the Word. " Most people adore the outward name of

Christ, but yet cannot endure the true Word of Christ. Now all that are offended at the true spiritual Word and right doctrine of the Gospel, are offended at Christ himself, and stumble at that stumbling-stone. And thus multitudes are offended at Christ, who think themselves very free from this sin.

Secondly, they that are offended at true believers are offended at Christ himself. For they are in the world as he was, and walk as he walked; and they are one flesh and Spirit with him; they are his members, they are himself: for Christ is the self-same both in himself the head, and in believers his members. And these are the children of God, together with him the First-born; these partake of the same divine nature, and have the same Spirit dwelling in them, in the same righteousness, wisdom, grace, and truth, and there is no difference between Christ and them but what is between the head and the members, the First-born and his brethren. And so they that are offended at these, would as certainly be offended at Christ himself if he had lived in their time, or if they had lived in his. Yea, they who are offended at Christ in believers, would much more have been offended at Christ in himself, because what is in a Christian only in part, was fully in Christ; what is in a Christian in a small measure, was in Christ without measure; and there was in Christ a far more glorious presenee and manifestation of God than in any Christian; and proportionably would they have been offended at him in himself, who are truly offended at him in his members.

Thirdly, they who are offended at the sufferings which come on Christians, are offended at Christ himself, because they suffer not on their own account, but on Christ's; and the cross they take up and bear is his, and not their own. If they would live as other men in the common religion of the nation, and make use of the form of godliness without the power, then might they live as quietly and prosperously as other men; but because they cleave only to Christ, and take him for their only Master

in the things of God, and do receive his Word in faith, therefore the world hates them; as Christ said, "I have given them thy Word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world."

2. Let all men take heed, as not to be offended themselves at Christ, so also not to be offended with the offences of others. But when we see the whole world offended at Christ, let us take care that we be not therefore offended also; but let us consider,

(1.) That it is no new thing that Christ and his Gospel should be stumbled at; for thus it hath been ever since Christ was manifested in the flesh. In the days of his ministry many of his disciples said, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" Yea, "many of his disciples murmured at his doctrine, and went back and walked no more with him." And all along during Christ's ministry, many were snared and stumbled, and fell, and were broken thereby; and he that is offended at this, must get him another Christ, and another Gospel; for the true Christ is set for a sign to be spoken against, and the true Gospel is set for a word of contradiction to the carnal Christians, and to the whole world. Wherefore when we see the world offended at Christ and his Gospel, let us know that thus it hath been from the beginning; and let us know that as Christ and his Gospel are the same now as they were then, so the world, and antichrist, and the devil are the same also; and therefore it cannot be but Christ and his Gospel must suffer the same contradiction in our time as they have done in all former times.

(2.) That we may not be offended with the general offence of others, let us consider that Christ and his Gospel are never the worse for the offence which the world takes at them, but Christ is still the Son of the living God, and the Gospel is still the power of God to salvation to every one that believes; and Christ and his Word do still remain a sure foundation for the true church of God; that "Christ crucified, who is to the

Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," is notwithstanding to them who "believe the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

(3.) Let us consider that notwithstanding all the offence of men, Christ and his Gospel cannot be prevailed against. Men may be offended at Christ and his Word, but they cannot destroy them, they do and will still prevail against all things that oppose them. Wherefore, to deliver us from the scandal of all men's being offended against Christ, we are to consider that as all the world have been, are, and will be against Christ, so Christ and his kingdom shall rise up and increase against all the world, at all their thoughts and endeavours; and all their counsels, contrivances, and actings shall not be able to hinder the kingdom of Christ; but it shall arise and stand up in all its glory, out of the midst of all the offences and contradictions in the world. Wherefore Christ and his kingdom are called a tried stone; for he hath long ago endured whatever the world could do against him, and whatever the might and malice of men and devils could do, and yet hath overcome all. All that have opposed him have been dashed in pieces by him in the several ages of the world; and he and his kingdom still remain, and shall remain for ever.

3. In the third place I shall shew you how believers ought to carry themselves in the midst of those offences that are taken against Christ, and against themselves for Christ's sake; that is, for his life and doctrine's sake.

First then we ought to be careful to abide in Christ, and to walk in Christ; to speak all our words, and to do all our works, and to live our whole life in Christ and in his Spirit, that so the world may not be offended at us, who are nothing and do nothing of ourselves, but at Christ in us, who is and doth all in us. Secondly, To carry ourselves aright in the midst of offences, let us be sure that the Word we believe and hold forth is Christ's Word, and then we may be very confident that this truth and cause shall and must remain, how many adversaries soever it may have; and though the world and devil

may rage against it, yet they shall never be able to overthrow it.

A true Christian must be able to say, I know the Word which I believe and profess is the only Word of the Lord God, and his everlasting and unchangeable truth, and the last manifestation of his will by his own Son; and whatever Word agreeth not herewith is false, and of the devil; and therefore by this Word will I stay though all the world be against me. And when we are thus certain of the Word of God through faith and the Spirit, it comforts the heart and makes it glad, and settles it in inward peace and rest, in the midst of all outward oppositions and troubles.

4. Lastly, I shall speak a few words to those in this university and town who are offended at Christ and his Gospel; and also a few words to those who (through the grace of God) have escaped this offence.

(I.) And first, for you who are offended at Christ and his Word, which is come among you in truth and in plainness, and are angry at it, storm at it, reproach it, and contrive how to resist it, and to hinder the free course of it in this place, because it is not only contrary to the philosophical divinity of the schools, and the common carnal religion of the nation, but also doth reprove and condemn them, and will have the haughtiness of men bowed down, and the pride of men laid low, and the Lord Jesus Christ only exalted; I say, you that are thus offended, for this cause, are offended at Christ himself, and at God in Christ, and you do stumble at the stumbling-stone, and shall so fall thereby as to be broken in pieces. Yea, this stone itself shall fall upon you, and shall grind you to powder, and you shall be punished "with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" and this destruction shall be poured on you with the greatest severity and wrath that God himself can inflict in all his infiniteness and eternity. Assuredly it had been much better for you that you had lived among the Pagans, where the Gospel of God our Saviour had never been heard, than to hear this joyful

EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

THOMAS MANTON, D. D.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THE
L I F E
OF
DR. THOMAS MANTON.

DR. THOMAS MANTON was born in 1620, at Lawrence-Lydiard, in the county of Somerset. Both his father and grandfather were ministers. He went to Oxon at 15 years of age. He was first minister of Culliton, in Devon; and afterwards of Stoke-Newington, in Middlesex, before he came to Covent-Garden, where he succeeded Mr. Sedgwick. He was in great reputation at the time of King Charles's return, one of the Savoy commissioners, and very earnest in his endeavours to get the declaration for ecclesiastical affairs passed into a law. And had it been compassed, would have accepted the deanery that was offered him. He was a man of great learning, judgment, and integrity, and an excellent unwearied preacher; one of great temper and moderation, and respected by all that knew him, whose spirits were not incurably cankered. Dr. Bates, in his sermon at his funeral, gives this account of him: "A clear judgment, rich fancy, strong memory, and happy elocution met in him, and were excellently improved by his diligent study." In preaching he was of that conspicuous eminence, that none could detract

from him but from ignorance or envy. He abounded in the work of the Lord; and though a very frequent preacher, yet was always superior to others, and equal to himself. Archbishop Usher was wont to say of him, "That he was a voluminous preacher;" not as if he was tedious for length, but because he had the art of reducing the substance of volumes of divinity into a narrow compass. And Mr. Charnock often represented him as the best collector of sense of the age. He was no fomenter of faction, but studious of the public tranquillity. His generous constancy of mind in resisting the current of popular humour, declared his loyalty to his Divine Master. He was imprisoned for his nonconformity, and many ways a sufferer; and yet kept up a considerable interest at court, and with men of note and figure. The noble Earl (afterwards Duke) of Bedford, who had for some time been his parishioner at Covent-Garden, was his cordial friend unto his death; and so also was my Lord Wharton, and many other persons of considerable quality. He generally had the chair in the meetings of the Dissenting Ministers of the city, who found the want of his prudence, activity, and interest joined together, when he was taken from them. He died October the 18th, 1677, leaving behind him the general reputation of as excellent a preacher as this city or nation hath produced.

SERMONS
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

Preached about the Year 1650.

BY
THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

THE
P R E F A C E.

IT may seem a just discouragement from publishing more Sermons at this time, when there are such numbers abroad. For the abundance of things useful is fatal to their value, and the rareness enhances their price. If men were truly wise, spiritual treasures should be excepted from this common law, yet plenty even of them causeth satiety. But the following Sermons have that peculiar excellence, that will make them valuable to all that have discerning minds, and such a tincture of religion as makes them capable of tasting the goodness of Divine things.

I shall say nothing here of the intellectual endowments of the author, in which he appeared eminent among the first, nor of his graces to adorn his memory. For a saint that is crowned with eternal glory by the righteous Judge, needs not the weak fading testimony of men. Besides that universal esteem he had from those who knew his ability, diligence, and fidelity in the work of God, makes it unnecessary for them who are his admirers and friends. And for those who are unacquainted with

his worth, if they take a view of his works, they will have the same opinion. I will give some account of the Sermons themselves.

The main design of them is to represent the inseparable connexion between Christian duties and privileges, wherein the essence of our religion consists. The gospel is not a naked unconditional offer of pardon and eternal life in favour of sinners, but upon most convenient terms, for the glory of God and the good of men, and enforced by the strongest obligations upon them. The promises are attended with commands to repent, believe, and persevere in the uniform practice of obedience. The Son of God came into the world, not to make God less holy, but to make us holy, that we might please and enjoy him: not to vacate our duty, and free us from the law as the rule of obedience; (for that is both impossible, and would be most infamous and reproachful to our Saviour. To challenge such an exemption in point of right, is to make ourselves gods; to usurp it in point of fact, is to make ourselves devils.) But his end was to enable and to induce us to return to God, as our rightful Lord and proper felicity, from whom we rebelliously and miserably fell by our disobedience, in seeking happiness out of him. Accordingly, the gospel is called the law of faith, as it commands those duties upon the motives of eternal hopes and fears, and as it will justify or condemn men with respect to their obedience or disobedience, which is the proper character of a law. These things are managed in the following Sermons, in that convincing persuasive manner, as makes them very necessary for these times, when some that esteemed themselves the favourites of heaven, yet woefully neglected the duties of the lower hemisphere, as righteousness, truth, and

honesty ; and when carnal Christians are so numerous, that despise serious godliness as solemn hypocrisy, and live in an open violation of Christ's precepts, and yet presume to be saved by him. Though no age has been more enlightened with the knowledge of holy truths, yet none was ever more averse from obeying them.

I shall only add further, that they commend to our ardent affections and endeavours, true holiness, as distinguished from the most refined, unregenerate morality. The Doctor saw the absolute necessity of this, and speaks with great jealousy of those, who seem in their discourses to make it their highest aim to cultivate moral virtues, as justice, temperance, benignity, and the like, by philosophic helps ; representing them as becoming the dignity of the human nature, as agreeable to reason, as beneficial to societies ; and but transiently speak of the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, which is as requisite to free the soul from the chains of sin, as to release the body at the last day from the bands of death ; that seldom preach of evangelical graces, faith in the Redeemer, love to God for his admirable mercy in our salvation, zeal for his glory, humility in ascribing all that we can return in grateful obedience, to the most free and powerful grace of God in Christ, which are the vital principles of good works, and derive the noblest forms to all virtues.

Indeed men may be composed and considerate in their words and actions, may abstain from gross enormities, and do many praise-worthy actions by the rules of moral prudence, yet without the infusion of Divine grace to cleanse their stained natures, to renew them according to the image of God shining in the gospel, to influence them from motives superior to all that moral wisdom propounds, all their virtues of what elevation soever, cannot

make them real saints. As the plant-animal has a faint resemblance of the sensitive life, but remains in the lower rank of vegetables; so these have a shadow, an appearance of the life of God,* but continue in the corrupt state of nature. And the difference is greater between sanctifying graces wrought by the special power of the Spirit, and the virtuous habits and actions that are the effects of moral counsel and constancy, than between true pearls produced by the beams of the sun, and counterfeit ones formed by the smoky heat of the fire.

In short, the Lord Jesus, our Saviour and Judge, who purchased the heavenly glory, and has sole power to give the actual possession of it, assures us, that unless a man be born of the Spirit, he can never enter into the kingdom of God. The supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance. Without this, how fair and specious soever the conversation of men appears, they must expect no other privilege, at last but a cooler place in hell; and the coolest there is intolerable.

SERMON I.



PSALM XXXII. 1, 2.

Blessed is he whose Transgression is forgiven, whose Sin is covered. Blessed is the Man unto whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity, and in whose Spirit there is no Guile.

THE title of this psalm is, *A Psalm of Instruction* ; so called, because David was willing to shew the way to happiness from his own experience. And surely no lesson is so needful to be learned as this. We all would be happy. The good and bad, that so seldom agree in any thing, yet agree in this, a desire to be happy. Now happy we cannot be but in God, who is the only, immutable, eternal, and all-sufficient good, which satisfies and fills up all the capacities and desires of our souls. And we are debarred from access to him by sin, which hath made a breach and separation between him and us ; and till that be taken away, there can be no converse ; and sin can only be taken away by God's pardon upon Christ's satisfaction. God's pardon is clearly asserted in my text, but Christ's satisfaction must be supplied out of other Scriptures ; as that, 2 Cor. v. 19, " God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." Where the apostle clearly shews, that not imputing transgressions is the effect of God's grace in Christ. And we do no wrong to this text to take it in here ; for the apostle, citing this Scripture,

Rom. iv. 6, 7, tells us, that David describeth the “blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works,” when he saith, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

In the words you have, 1. An emphatical setting forth of a great and blessed privilege, that is, the pardon of sin. 2. A description of the persons who shall enjoy it, namely, such, “in whose spirit there is no guile.” I shall confine my thoughts now to the privilege. It is set forth in three expressions; forgiving transgression, covering of sin, and not imputing iniquity. The manner of speech is warm and vehement; it is repeated over again, “blessed is the man.” I shall shew what these three expressions import, and why the prophet doth use such vehemency in setting forth this privilege.

1. Whose transgression is forgiven; or, who is eased of his transgression. Where sin is compared to a burden too heavy for us to bear; as also it is in other Scriptures, Matt. xi. 28, “Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden.” 2. Whose sin is covered; alluding to the covering of filth, or the removing of that which is offensive out of sight. 3. The third expression is, to whom the Lord imputeth no sin; that is, doth not put sin to their account. Where sin is compared to a debt; as it is also in the Lord’s Prayer, Matt. vi. 12, “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.” Thus is the act set forth. The object of pardon is set forth under divers expressions, iniquity, transgression, and sin. When God proclaims his name, the same words are used, Exod. xxxiv. 7, “Taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin.”

We have seen the meaning of the expression. But why doth the man of God use such vehemency of inculcation, “Blessed is the man!” and again, “blessed is the man?” Partly with respect to his own case. David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned; he had felt

the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood; and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms. And partly with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege. Blessed, happy, thrice happy they, who have obtained the pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine then which I shall insist upon is this: That it is a great step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain the pardon of our sins by Christ Jesus. In order to this,

I. I shall shew what necessity lies upon us to seek after this pardon.

II. Our misery without it.

III. I shall speak of the annexed benefits, and our happiness, if once we attain it.

I. The necessity that lies upon us, being all guilty before God, to seek after the pardon of our sins by Christ. That it may sink the deeper into your minds, I shall do it in this method: First, a reasonable nature implies a conscience; a conscience implies a law; a law implies a sanction; a sanction implies a judge, and a judgment-day, (when all shall be called to account for breaking the law,) and this judgment-day infers a condemnation upon all mankind, unless the Lord find out some way wherein we may be relieved. This way God hath found out in Christ, and being brought about by such a mysterious contrivance, we ought to be deeply and thankfully apprehensive of it, and humbly and brokenheartedly to quit the one covenant, and accept of the grace provided for us in the other.

I. A reasonable nature implies a conscience: for man can reflect upon his own actions, and hath that in him to acquit or condemn him, accordingly as he doth good or evil, 1 John iii. 20, 21. Conscience is nothing but a judgment a man makes upon his actions morally considered,

the good or the evil that is in them, with respect to rewards or punishment. As a man acts, he is a party; but as he reviews and censures his actions, he is a judge. Let us take notice only of the condemning part, for that is proper to our case. After the fact, the force of conscience is usually felt, more than before, or in the fact; because before, through the treachery of the senses, and the revolt of the passions, the judgment of reason is not so clear. Our passions raise mists, which darken the mind, and incline the will by a pleasing violence; but after the evil action is done, then guilt flasheth in the face of conscience. Judas's heart lay asleep while he was going on in his villany, but afterwards it fell upon him, "Thou hast sinned in betraying innocent blood." Conscience of sin may be smothered for awhile, but the flame will break forth; and our hidden fears are easily revived and awakened, except we get our pardon and discharge. A reasonable nature implies a conscience.

2. A conscience implies a law, by which good and evil are distinguished. For if we make conscience of any thing, it must be by virtue of some law or obligation from God, who is our Maker and Governor, and unto whom we are accountable, and whose authority giveth a force and warrant to the checks of conscience, without which they would be weak and ineffectual. The heathens had a law, because they had a conscience, Rom. ii. 15, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." They have a conscience which doth accuse or excuse, doth require according to the tenor of the law. So when the apostle speaks of those stings of conscience that are revived in us by the approach of death, he saith, 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Those stings which men feel in a death-threatening sickness, are not the fruits of their disease, but justified by the highest reason, they come from a sense of sin, and this sense is strengthened in us by

the law of God, from whence conscience receives all its force.

3. A law implies a sanction, or a confirmation by penalties and rewards: for otherwise it is but an arbitrary rule or direction, which we might disregard without any great loss or danger. No; the law is armed with a dreadful curse against all those that disobey it. There is no dallying with God; he hath set life and death before us; life and good, death and evil, Deut. xxx. 15. The precept is the rule of our duty; and the sanction is the rule of God's process, what God will do, or might do, and what we have deserved should be done to us. The one shews what is due from us to God, and the other what may justly be expected at God's hands; therefore before the penalty be executed, it concerns us to get a pardon. The Scripture represents God as "angry with the wicked every day," standing continually with his bow ready, with his arrow upon the string, with his sword not only drawn, but whetted, just about to strike, if we turn not, Psalm vii. 11, 12, 13.

4. A sanction implies a judge, who will take cognizance of the keeping or breaking of this law. For the sanction or penalty were but a vain scare-crow, if there were no person to look after it. God, that is our Maker and Governor, is our Judge. Would he appoint penalties for the breach of his law, and never reckon with us for our offences? This is a thought against the sense of conscience, against God's daily providence, against Scripture, which every where represents God as a judge. Conscience is afraid of an invisible judge, who will call us to account for what we have done. The apostle tells us, Rom. i. 32, the heathen "knew the judgment of God, and that they that have done such things as they have done are worthy of death." And Providence shews us there is such a Judge, that looks after the keeping and breaking of his law, and hath owned every part of it from heaven by the judgments he executes. Rom. i. 18, "The wrath

of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” he hath owned each table, by punishing sometimes the ungodliness, and sometimes the unrighteousness of the world; nay, every notable branch, by way of omission or commission; every transgression, and every disobedience, hath been punished, and God hath owned his law, which is a firm authentic rule. And surely we that are to appear before the bar of an impartial Judge, being so obnoxious to him for the breach of his holy law, what have we to do but to make supplication to our Judge, and prevent execution by a submissive asking of a pardon, and accepting the grace God hath provided.

5. A Judge implies a judgment-day, or some time when his justice must have a solemn trial. He reckons sometimes with nations now, for ungodliness and unrighteousness, by wars, and pestilence, and famine. But there is a more general and final judgment, which nature hath some kind of sense of in itself; and men are urged to repent, “because God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness,” Acts xvii. 31. God judgeth the world in patience now, but then in righteousness, when all things shall be reviewed, and every thing restored; virtue to its publick honour, and vice to its due shame.

6. If there be a solemn judgment day, when every one must receive his final doom, this judgment infers a condemnation to a fallen creature, unless God set up another court for his relief; for man is utterly disabled by sin to fulfil the law, and can by no means avoid the punishment due to his transgression. I shall prove this by three reasons; the law to fallen man is impossible, the penalty is intolerable, and the punishment, (for ought that yet appears, if God do not take another course,) is unavoidable.

1. The duty of the law is impossible. It cannot justify us before God, it cannot furnish us with any answer to his demands, when he shall call us to an account. Man is mightily addicted to the legal covenant, therefore it is

one part of a gospel minister's work to represent the impossibility of ever obtaining grace or life by that covenant. Man would patch up a sorry righteousness of his own, some few superficial things. He makes a short exposition of the law, that he may cherish a large opinion of his own righteousness; and brings it down to a poor contemptible thing, requiring a few external superficial duties. But this is not the loving the Lord our God with all our heart, the loving our neighbour as ourselves, or the doing all things to the glory of God; all which to fallen man is impossible.

2. The penalty is intolerable: for who can stand when God is angry? Ezek. xxii. 14, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?" We that cannot endure the pain of the gout or stone, how shall we endure the eternal wrath of God? It is surely a very dreadful thing to fall into the hands of that living God, that lives for ever to punish the transgressors of his law.

3. The punishment is unavoidable, unless sin be pardoned, and you submit to God's way. For what hope can you have in God, whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice obligeth him to punish it?

(1.) Whose nature engageth him to hate sin and sinners. Hab. i. 13, "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." I urge this for a double reason; partly because I have observed that all the security of sinners, and their neglect of seeking after pardon by Jesus Christ, comes from their lessening thoughts of God's holiness; if their hearts were sufficiently possessed with an awe of God's unspotted purity, they would more look after the terms of grace God hath provided. Why do men live securely in their sins? They think God is not so severe and harsh, and so all their confidence is grounded on a mistake of God's nature, and such a dreadful mistake as amounts to a blasphemy; "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." The other reason is this, the bottom of the fear that is in the hearts of men

is God's holiness, 1 Sam. vi. 20, "Who is able to stand before this holy God?" And, "Who would not fear thee? for thou art holy," Rev. xv. 4. We fear his power: Why? Because it is set on work by his wrath. We fear his wrath: Why? Because it is kindled by his justice and righteousness. We fear his righteousness, because it is grounded upon his holiness, upon the purity of his nature.

(2.) His justice obligeth him to punish sin, that the law might not be in vain. It concerns the universal Judge to maintain his justice in reference to men. Gen. xviii. 25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And Rom. iii. 5, 6, "Is God unrighteous to take vengeance? How then shall he judge the world?" These Scriptures imply, that if there were the least blemish in point of righteousness, God could not be the Judge of the world. Therefore God's justice, which gives to every one his due, must shine in its proper place; he will give vengeance to whom vengeance is due, and blessing to whom blessing belongs. In our case, punishment belongs to us, and what can we expect from God but eternal destruction? But if all this be so, if a conscience suppose a law, a law a sanction, a sanction a judge, a judge some time when his justice must have a solemn trial, and this will necessarily infer condemnation to a fallen creature; what then shall we do?

7. From this condemnation there is no escape, unless God set up another court, where condemned sinners may be taken to mercy, upon terms that may save God's honour and government over mankind. There is a great deal of difference between the forgiving private wrongs, and the pardoning public offences. When equals fall out among themselves, they may end their differences in such ways as best please themselves. But the case is different here. God is not reconciled to us merely as the party offended, but as the Governor of the world; the case lies between the Judge of the world, and sinning mankind, therefore it must not be ended by mere com-

promise and agreement, but by satisfaction, that his law may be satisfied, and the honour of his justice secured. Therefore, in order to pardon man, without any impeachment of justice, the Lord finds out this great mystery, "God manifested in our flesh." Jesus Christ is "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," Gal. iv. 5. And is become a propitiation to satisfy God's justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26. And so God shews mercy to his creatures, and yet the awe of his government is kept up, and a full demonstration of his righteousness is given to the world.

8. This being done conveniently to God's honour, we must sue out our pardon with respect to both the covenants; both that which we have broken, the law of nature; and that which is made in Christ, and is to be accepted by us as our sure refuge.

(1.) We must have a broken-hearted sense of sin, and of the curse due to the first covenant; for it is the disease brings us to the physician; the curse drives us to the promise; and the tribunal of justice to the throne of grace; it is the avenger of blood at our heels, that causeth us to flee to our proper city of refuge. So that if you extenuate sin, you hold to the first covenant, and had rather plead innocent than guilty. No; if you would have favour, you must confess your sins, 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You must confess your sins, and with that remorse that will become offences done to so great a God. And there must not only be a sense of sin, but of the curse and demerit of sin also: for we must not only accuse, but judge ourselves, that God may not judge and condemn us, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Self-accusing respects sin, and is acted in confession; self-judging respects the curse or punishment, that is due to us for sin, and it is a person's pronouncing upon himself according to the tenor of the law, acknowledging his guilt, and this with brokenness of heart before God, when he hath involved himself in God's

eternal displeasure. The law is God's prison; and no offenders can get out of it till they have God's leave; and from him they have none, till they are sensible of the justice of that first dispensation, confess their sins with brokenness of heart, and that it may be just with God to condemn them for ever.

(2.) We must thankfully accept the Lord's grace, that offers pardon to us. For since God is pleased to try us a second time, and set us up with a new stock of grace, and that brought about in such a wonderful way, that he may recover the lost creation to himself; surely, if we shall despise our remedy, after we have rendered ourselves incapable of our duty, no condemnation is bad enough for us, John iii. 18, 19. Therefore we should admire the mercy of God in Christ, and have such a deep sense of it, that it may check our sinful self-love, which hath been our bane and ruin. And since God shewed himself willing to be reconciled, we must depend upon the merit, sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, and be encouraged by his gracious promise and covenant, "to come with boldness, that we may find grace and mercy to help in a time of need," Heb. iv. 16. Thus you see the need we have to look after this pardon of sin.

II. I must shew our misery without this. And this will be best done by considering the notions in the text. Here is filth to be covered; a burden of which we must be eased; and a debt that must be cancelled; and unless this be done, what a miserable condition are we in?

1. What a heavy burden is sin, where it is not pardoned? Carnal men feel it not for the present; but how soon may they feel it! Two sorts of consciences feel the burden of sin, a tender conscience, and a wounded conscience. It is grievous to a tender heart, that values the love of God, to lie under the guilt of sin, Psalm xxxviii. 4, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me." Broken bones are sensible of the least weight; and certainly a broken heart cannot make light of sin. What kind of hearts are those that

sin securely without remorse, and are never troubled! Go to wounded consciences, and ask of them what sin is, Prov. xviii. 14, "A wounded spirit who can bear?" As long as the evil lies without us, it is tolerable; the natural courage of a man may bear up under it; but when the Spirit itself is wounded with the sense of sin, who can bear it? If a spark of God's wrath light upon the conscience, how soon do men become a burden to themselves? Some in such a case have chosen strangling rather than life. Ask Cain, ask Judas, what it is to feel the burden of sin. Sinners are all their life-time subject to this bondage. It is not always felt, but soon awakened. It may be done by a pressing exhortation in a sermon; it may be done by some notable misery that befalls us; it may be done by a scandalous sin; it may be done by a grievous sickness, or worldly disappointment. All these things and many more may easily revive it in us. Therefore do but consider what it is to be eased of this burden; oh! the blessedness of it!

2. It is filth to be covered, which renders us odious in the sight of God. It is said, Prov. xiii. 5, that a sinner is loathsome: to whom? to God: certainly "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." To good men: the wicked is an abomination to the righteous; the new nature hath an aversion to sin. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the conversation of the wicked. Nay, the sinner is loathsome to himself. They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be re-proved. And we are shy of God's presence; we are sensible we have something makes us offensive to him, and we hang off from him when we have sinned against him. Oh! what a mercy is it then to have this filth covered, that we may not be ashamed to look God in the face, and may come with a holy boldness into the presence of the blessed God! Oh! the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered!

3. It is a debt that binds the soul to everlasting punishment. If it be not pardoned, the Judge will give us over

to the jailor, and the jailor cast us into prison, till we have paid the uttermost farthing, Luke xii. 59. Certainly it is a strange security that possesseth the hearts of men, when we are obliged to suffer the vengeance of the eternal God, and yet can sleep quietly. Body and soul will be taken away in execution. The day of payment is set, and may come much sooner than you think of: you must get a discharge, or else you are undone for ever. Now put all together: certainly, if you have ever been in bondage, if you have felt the sting of death, and curse of the law, or been scorched by the wrath of God, or knew the horror of those upon whom God hath exacted this debt in hell; you would be more affected with this wonderful grace. Oh! the blessedness of the man, to whom the Lord imputeth not his transgressions!

III. I am to shew the consequent benefits. I will name three.

I. It restores the creature to God, and puts us again in a capacity to serve and please and glorify God, Psalm cxxx. 4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Forgiveness invites us to return to God, obliges us to return to God, and encourages us to live in a state of holy friendship with God; pleasing and serving him in righteousness and holiness all our days. Certainly it invites us to return to God. Man stands aloof from a condemning God, but may be induced to submit to a pardoning God. And it obligeth us to return to God, to serve, and love, and please him, who will forgive so great a debt, and discharge us from all our sins; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven. And it encourages us to serve and please God: Heb. ix. 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your consciences from dead works, that ye may serve the living God?" and that in a suitable manner; that ye may serve God in a lively cheerful manner. A poor creature bound to his law, and conscious of his own disobedience, and obnoxious to wrath and punishment, is mightily clogged, and drives on heavily. But whea

the conscience is purged from dead works, we serve the living God in a lively manner; this begets a holy cheerfulness in the soul, and we are freed from that bondage, that otherwise would clog us in our duty.

2. It lays the foundation for solid comfort and peace. Till sin be pardoned, we have no true comfort; because the justice of the supreme Governor of the world will still be dreadful to us, whose laws we have broken, whose wrath we have deserved, and whom we still apprehend as offended with us. We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will soon be spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret; a poor peace, that dares not come to the light, that is soon disturbed by a few serious thoughts of God, and the world to come. But when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy. Then misery is plucked up by the roots. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people:" why? "Her iniquity is forgiven," Isaiah xl. 1, 2. "And we joy in God, (Rom. v. 11,) as those that have received the atonement." The Lord Jesus hath made the atonement; and when we have received it, then we joy in God; then there is matter for abundant delight, when "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

3. When we are pardoned, then we are capable of eternal happiness. Pardon of sin removes the impediment, takes the make-bate out of the way, removes that which hinders our entrance into heaven. Till we are pardoned, there can be no entrance into heaven. Now this removes the incapacity. I observe, remission of sins is put for all the privilege-part, as repentance for the duties: Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." "These are the two initial benefits: repentance, as the foundation of the new life; and remission of sins, as the foundation of all our future mercies. The two chief blessings offered in the new covenant are pardon and life; reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory; and the one

makes way for the other. Acts xxvi. 18, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the saints." And thus you see the blessedness of the man, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose filth is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin."

To apply this. 1. Let us bless God for the Christian religion; where this privilege is discovered to us in all its glory, and that upon very commodious terms, fit to gain the heart of man. Micah vii. 18, "Who is a God like unto thee among all the gods, pardoning the transgressions of thine heritage?" The business of religion is to provide sufficiently for two things, which have much troubled the considering part of the world; a suitable happiness for mankind, and suitable means for the expiation of sin. Happiness is our great desire, and sin is our great burden: now these are fully discovered to us by the Christian faith. The last is that we are upon, the way how the grand scruple of the world may be satisfied, and their guilty fears appeased. And that we may see the excellency of the Christian religion above all religions in the world, it offers pardon upon such terms as are most commodious to the honour of God, and most satisfactory to our souls; that is, upon the account of Christ's satisfaction, and our repentance, without which our case is not compassionable. The first I here insist on.

The heathens were mightily perplexed about the way how God could dispense with the honour of his justice in the pardon of sin. That man is God's creature, and therefore his subject, that he hath exceedingly failed in his subjection to him, and is therefore obnoxious to God's vengeance, are truths evident by the light of nature. The heathens had some convictions of this, and saw it necessary that God should be propitiated by some sacrifices of expiation; and the nearer they lived to the original of this institution, the more pressing were their apprehensions thereof. But in all their cruel superstitions there was no

rest of soul; they knew not the true God, nor the proper ransom, nor had any sure way to convey pardon to them; but were still left to the distraction of their own thoughts, and could not make God merciful without some diminution of his justice, nor make him just without some diminution of his mercy. Somewhat they conceived of the goodness of God by his continuing benefits; but yet they could not reconcile it to his justice, or will to punish sinners. And all their apprehensions of the pardon of sin were but probabilities, and what was wrought to procure merit was ridiculous, or else barbarous and unnatural, as "giving their first-born for the sin of their soul," Mic. vi. 7. And all those notions they had about this apprehended expiation were too weak to change the heart or life of man.

Come we now to the Jews. They had many sacrifices of God's own institution, but such "as did not make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," Heb. ix. 9. And the ransom that was to be given to provoked justice was known but to a few. They saw much of the patience and forbearance of God, but little of the righteousness of God, and the great propitiation, "Till God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that were past." Their ordinances and sacrifices were rather a bond acknowledging the debt, or pre-signifying the ransom that was to be paid; and their sacrifices did rather breed bondage; and their ordinances were called, "An hand-writing of ordinances, that were against them." The redemption of souls was then spoken of as a great mystery, but sparingly revealed. Eternal redemption by Christ was a hard saying in those days, only they knew no mere man could do it. And in more early times, in Job's time, he was an interpreter, one of a thousand, that could bring this message to a distressed sinner, that God had found out a ransom. This atonement then, that lies at the bottom of pardon of sin, was a rare thing in

those days. Let us bless God for the clear and open discovery of this truth, and free offer of grace by Jesus Christ.

The second use is, to quicken us to put in for a share in this blessed privilege. Christians, a man that flows in wealth and honour, till he be pardoned, is not a happy man. A man that lives afflicted and contemned, if he be a pardoned sinner, oh! the blessedness of that man! They are not happy that have a benumbed conscience, but they that have a conscience settled in the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and bottomed upon his holy covenant, and that peace and grace he offers to us; this is the happy man.

Let me intreat you, if this be such a blessed thing, to make it your daily, your earnest, your hearty prayer to God, that your sins may be pardoned, Matt. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray every day "Forgive us our trespasses." To-day, in one of the petitions, is common to all that follow; as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace against temptations. Under the law they had a lamb every morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4, 5, 6. We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Surely we have as much need as they, more cause than they, because now all is openly made known unto us. God came to Adam in the cool of the day, he would not let him sleep in his sins; before night came, he comes and rouseth his conscience, and then gives the promise of the "Seed of the woman," that should "bruise the serpent's head." In reconciliation with God, let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26. A man should not sleep in his anger, nor out of charity with man. Surely we should make our peace with God every day. If a man under the law had contracted any uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness. We should daily come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sin.

But what! must those that are already adopted into God's family, and taken into his grace and favour, daily pray for pardon of sin? Though upon our first faith we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life, yet he that is clean needs to wash his feet. We contract a great deal of pollution by walking up and down here, and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit. The Lord may, for our unthankfulness, our negligence, our stupid security, revive the memory of old sins, and make us look into the debt-book, (that hath been cancelled,) with horror, and possess the sins of our youth. When we prove unthankful and careless, and do not keep our watch, the Lord may suffer these things to return upon our consciences with great amazement. Guilt raked out of its grave is more frightful than one risen from the dead. But the worm of conscience is killed still by the application of the blood of Christ.

SERMON II.



PSALM XXII. 1, 2.

Blessed is he whose Transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

IN this text I observed, that it is a great step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain pardon of our sins. I now proceed to exhort you to put in for a share in this blessedness. To persuade you to it, let me use a few motives.

1. Till you are pardoned, you are never blessed; there is an obstacle in the way. What though you flow in wealth, ease, and plenty; yet as long as this black storm hangs over your head, and you know not how soon it will drop upon you, you cannot be happy men. Do you account him an happy man who is condemned to die, because he hath a plentiful allowance till his execution? Then those that remain under the guilt of their sins may be happy. But a pardoned sinner is blessed, whatever befalls him. If he be afflicted, the sting of his affliction is gone; that is sin. If he be prosperous, the curse of his blessings is taken away, the wrath of God is appeased, and so every condition is made tolerable or comfortable to him.

2. Nothing less than a pardon will serve the turn. Not forbearance on God's side, nor forgetfulness on ours.

1. It is not forbearance of the punishment on God's part, but a dissolving the obligation to the punishment. God may be angry with us when he doth not actually strike us: as the Psalmist says, Psalm vii. 11, 12, 13, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death, he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." In the day of his patience he doth for a while spare, but God is ready to deal with them hand to hand, for he is sharpening his sword; he is bending his bow. Therefore we are never safe till we turn to God. Wherever there is sin, there is guilt; and wherever there is guilt, there will be punishment. If we dance about the brink of hell, and go merrily to execution, it argues not our safety, but our folly. 2. Our senseless forgetfulness will do us no good. Carnal men mind not the happiness of an immortal soul, and they are not troubled because they consider not their condition. But a benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness; they only put off that which they cannot put away. God is the wronged party, and supreme Judge, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. If he justifies, then who will condemn? But "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

3. A pardon is surely a great blessing, if we consider, first, the evils we are freed from; and, secondly, the good depending upon it.

(1.) The evils we are freed from. Guilt is the obligation to punishment, and pardon is the dissolving that obligation. Now the punishment is exceeding great; no less than hell and damnation. Eternity makes every thing truly great. Look at the loss; an eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God. When God turned Adam out of paradise, his case was very sad; but God took care of him, gave him a day of patience, promised the Seed of the woman, who should recover the lapsed state of mankind. That exile therefore is nothing

comparable to this. For now man is stripped of all his comfort, sent into an endless state of misery, where there shall be no hope of ever changing his condition. Now to be delivered from this that is so great an evil, what a blessedness is it? For the pain, as well as the loss, our Lord sets it forth by two notions, Mark ix. 44, "The worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched." The Scripture speaks of the soul with allusion to the state of the body after death. In the body, worms breed usually, and many times they were burnt with fire. Accordingly our state in the world to come is set forth by a worm, and a fire. The worm implies the stings of conscience, a reflection upon our past folly and disobedience to God, and the remembrance of all the affronts we have put upon Christ. Here men may run from the rebukes of conscience by many shifts, sports, or business; but then there is not a thought free, but the damned are always thinking of slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, the offences done to a merciful God, and the curse wherein they have involved themselves by their own folly. The "fire that shall never be quenched," denotes the wrath of God, or those unknown pains that shall be inflicted upon the body and soul; which must needs be great, because God himself will take the sinful creature into his own hands, and will shew forth the glory of his wrath and power upon him. When God punisheth us by a creature, the creature is not a vessel capacious enough to convey the power of his wrath; as when a giant strikes with a straw, that cannot convey his strength. But when God falls upon us himself, to fall into the hands of the living God, how dreadful is that? Is it not a blessedness to be freed from so great an evil? Then a little mitigation, a drop to cool your tongue, would be accounted a great mercy.

(2.) If we consider the good depending on it. You are not capable of enjoying God, and being happy for ever, till his wrath be appeased; but when that is once done, then you may have sure hope of being admitted

into his presence. Rom. v. 10, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death; much more being now reconciled shall we be saved by his life;" that is, it is far more credible that a reconciled man should be glorified, than that a sinner and rebel should be reconciled. If you once get into God's peace, then what may you not expect from God? The first favour to such as have been rebels against him, facilitates the belief of all acts of grace.

Now what must we do, that we may be capable of this blessed privilege, that our sins may be pardoned, and our debt forgiven? I shall give my answer in three branches.

I. I will shew you what is to be done as to your first entrance in the evangelic state.

II. What is to be done as to your continuance therein, and that you may still enjoy the privilege. And,

III. What is to be done as to your recovery out of grievous lapses and falls.

I. As to our first entrance into the evangelic state; that is, by faith and repentance: both are necessary to pardon, Acts x. 43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." There remission of sins is granted to a believer. Now repentance is full as necessary, Acts ii. 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Luke xxiv. 47, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." What is in another evangelist, "to preach the gospel to every creature," in this is, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." And this is preaching the gospel; for the gospel is nothing else but the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. So, if we will not hearken to vain men who have perverted the Scripture, but stand to the plain gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; these two duties are necessary to pardon. Christ's

satisfaction is not imputed to us, but upon terms agreed on in the covenant of redemption. As to the interpretation, there is required the intervention of Christ's merit, so to the application faith and repentance. Therefore St. Paul, Acts xx. 21, "testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance respects God to whom we return, and faith in Jesus Christ, by whom we return. We fell from him, as we withdrew our allegiance, and sought our happiness elsewhere; and we return to him as our rightful Lord, and our proper happiness. And faith in Christ is necessary, because the Lord Jesus is the only remedy for our misery, who opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and doth also bring us to walk in his ways.

But to clear this, I will shew you, 1. That it is for the glory of God, and our comfort, that there should be a stated method of applying the gospel. 2. That this method is by faith and repentance, which in many things agree, and in other respects differ. 3. That they are required for distinct reasons and ends. 4. The use of these graces will plainly discover their nature to you, so that none need any longer debate what is repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. It is for the glory of God, and our comfort, that there should be a stated method of applying the privileges of the gospel.

(1.) It is certainly for the glory of God. It is not meet that pardon and life should be prostituted to every one that will hastily challenge these privileges. Our case is not compassionate till we relent and submit to God's terms. I would appeal to your own consciences: is it not more suitable to the wisdom of God, that a penitent sinner should have pardon, than an impenitent? One that continues in his sins, and despiseth both the curse of the law, and the grace of the gospel? It is not agreeable to the honour of God, that such should have benefit by him. Again, for faith, it is not meet we should have

benefit by one we know not and trust not. Whatever be God's mercy to infants, who are not in a capacity to know and trust him, yet in grown persons, it is not fit we should have such great privileges settled upon us without our knowledge, or against our wills ; God will have our consent in an humble and solemn way, that we may thankfully accept what he hath provided for us.

(2.) And it is for our comfort, that we may make our claim, that we may state our interest with the greater certainty. For when great privileges are conditionally propounded, as they are in the new covenant, our right is suspended till the conditions be performed ; and certainly our comfort is suspended till we know they are performed ; till we know ourselves to be such as have an interest in the promises of the gospel. I have told you, blessed are they whose sins are pardoned. But, saith the soul, if I knew my sins were pardoned, I should think myself blessed indeed. What would you reply to this anxious and serious soul ? God hath made a promise, an offer of pardon by Christ : the offer of pardon is the invitation to use the means, that we may be possessed of it. But then the anxious soul replies, to whom is this promise made ? To them that repent and believe. Here is the shortest way to bring the debate to an issue, wherein our comfort is so much concerned. Thus the application is stated, and the fixing these conditions is more for the glory of God and our comfort.

2. The graces or duties upon which it is fixed, faith and repentance, in many things agree, in other respects differ. First, they agree in this, that they are both necessary to the fallen creature, and concern our recovery to God ; and so are proper to the gospel, which is provided for the restoration of lapsed mankind. The gospel is an healing remedy, and therefore is Christ so often set forth by the term of a physician. The law was a stranger to both these duties, it knew no such thing as repentance and faith in Christ. For according to the tenour of it, once a sinner, and for ever miserable. But the gospel is

a plank cast out after shipwreck, whereby we may escape, and come safe to shore. Again, they both agree in this, that they concern our first recovery out of the apostasy of mankind; for afterwards there are other things required: but as to our first entrance into the evangelic state, both these graces are required, and the acts of them interwoven. Again, they both agree in this, that they have a continual influence upon our whole new obedience. For the secondary conditions of the covenant grow out of the first, and these two graces run throughout our whole life. Repentance, mortifying sin, is not a work of a day, but of our whole lives; and the like is faith.

Again, they agree in that both are effected and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; that God, who requires these things, gives them. Lastly, they agree in this, that the one cannot be without the other; neither repentance without faith, nor faith without repentance. Repentance without faith, what would it be? When we see our sins, despair would make us sit down and die, if there were not a Saviour to heal our natures, and convert our souls. Neither can faith be without repentance; for unless there be a confession of past sins, with a resolution of future obedience, we continue in our obstinacy and stubbornness, and so are incapable of mercy.

Repentance without faith would degenerate into the horror of the damned; and our sorrow for sin would be tormenting rather than curing to us. And faith would be a licentious and presumptuous confidence without repentance; unless it be accompanied with this hearty consent of living in the love, obedience, and service of God, with a detestation of our former ways, it would be a turning the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore these two always go together.

Secondly, let me shew you wherein they differ: which is in this, the one respects God, the other Christ.

(1.) Repentance towards God. While we live in sin, we are not only out of our way, but out of our wits.

“ We were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures,” Tit. iii. 3. We live in rebellion against him, against whom we cannot make our case good ; and withal contenting ourselves with a false transitory happiness, instead of a solid and eternal one, we never come to our wits again, till we think of returning to God, as the prodigal, when he came to himself, thought of returning to his father. So long as we lie in our sins, we are like men in a dream ; we consider not whence we are, nor whither we are going, nor what shall become of us to all eternity ; but go on against all reason and conscience, provoking God, and destroying our own souls. Man is never in his true posture again, till he returns to God as his sovereign Lord and happiness : as our sovereign Lord, that we may perform our duty to him ; and our chief good, that we may seek all our happiness in him. And none repent, but those that give up themselves to obey God, and to do his will, as he is the sovereign Lord ; and look upon him as their chief happiness, and prefer his favour above all the pleasures of the world ; that they may be able in truth to say, “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee,” Psal. lxxiii. 25.

(2.) Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary, that we may own our Redeemer, and be thankful to him, as the author of our deliverance, and that we may trust ourselves in his hands. We are to take Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King : to hear him as our prophet ; Matt. xvii. 5, “ This is my beloved Son, hear him.” We are to receive him as our Lord and King, Col. ii. 6, “ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” We are to consider him as the great High-Priest of our profession ; Heb. iii. 1, “ Let us consider the Lord Jesus, the great Apostle, and High-Priest of our profession.” Hear him we must as a prophet, that we may form our hopes by his covenant, and frame our lives by his holy and pure doctrine. Receive him we must as a king, that we may obey him in all things ; and consider him

as a Priest, that we may depend upon his sacrifice and intercession, and may the more confidently plead his covenant and promises to God. Now without this there can be no commerce between us and Christ. Herein these things differ,* repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the one respects the end, God; the other the means, Christ. Repentance more especially respects our duty; faith our comfort. Repentance, newness of life for the future, and returning to the primitive duty, the love of God, and obeying his will: faith, pardon of what is past, and hope of mercy to come. In short, to God we give up ourselves as our supreme Lord; to Christ as Mediator, who alone can bring us to God. To God, as taking his will for the rule of our lives and actions, and preferring his love above all that is dear in the world; to Christ, as our Lord and Saviour, who makes our peace with God, and gives the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, that we may for ever live upon him as our life, hope, and strength.

3. These graces are required in order to pardon for distinct reasons and ends.

First, repentance is required, (1.) Because otherwise God cannot have his end in pardon, which is to recover the lost creation. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. Now to be lost in the first and primitive sense was to be lost to God. So if Christ came to save that which was lost, he came to recover us to God. (2.) Neither otherwise can the Redeemer do his work, for which God hath appointed him, 1 Pet. iii. 18, "He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We accept him in all his offices for this end: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." Therefore whole Christianity, from the beginning to the end, is a coming to God by Christ. Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost, (whom?) all those that come to God by him." (3.) Without it we should not have our happiness. It is our happiness to please and enjoy God; but we are not in a capacity to

please and enjoy God till we are returned to him. "They that are in the flesh cannot please the Lord;" cannot enjoy him here, for here "we see his face in righteousness;" nor hereafter, for "without holiness no man shall see God."

Secondly, but why is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ required, and so much spoken of in Scripture? (1.) Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of God's free gift. Faith and grace always go together, and are put as opposite to law and works. Rom. iv. 16, "It is of faith, that it may be of grace." Eph. ii. 8, "For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Faith establishes and keeps up the honour of grace; for it is the free grace of God to condescend to the rebel world, so far as he hath done in the new covenant. We present ourselves before him as those that stand wholly by his mercy, and have nothing to plead for ourselves but the merit of our Redeemer; by virtue of which we humbly beg pardon and life to be begun in us by his Spirit, and perfected in glory. (2.) Why faith in Christ? Because the way of our recovery is so strange and wonderful. It can only be received by faith: sense cannot convey it to us; reason will not; and nothing is reserved for the entertainment of this glorious mystery, pardon and salvation by our Redeemer, but faith alone. If I should deduce this argument at large, I would shew you, nothing but faith can support us in these transactions with God. The comfort of the promise is so rich and glorious, that sense and reason cannot inform us of it. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. It is not meant only of heaven, but of the whole preparation that God hath made for us in the gospel. It is not a thing that can come to us by eye or ear, or the conceiving of man's heart; we only entertain it by faith. And the persons upon whom it is bestowed are so unworthy, that it cannot enter into the heart of

mān that God will be so good; and do so much good to such. Besides, the way God hath taken for our deliverance is astonishing. “God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That God should become man, that he should submit to an accursed death for our sakes, is so high and glorious, that it can only be entertained by faith.

4. The use of these two graces discovers their nature. What is faith and repentance? Repentance towards God is a turning from sin to God. It is called in Scripture sometimes a turning to God; in other places a seeking after God, a giving up ourselves to God, 2 Cor. viii. 5, “They gave up themselves to the Lord.” This is the repentance by which we enter into the gospel-state. Now what is faith? Besides an assent to the gospel, it is a serious, thankful, broken-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be made to every one of us what God hath appointed him to be, and do for every one of us what God hath appointed him to do for poor sinners: it is a serious and broken-hearted trusting to this Redeemer, that he may do the work of a Redeemer in our hearts.

And thus I have briefly opened this necessary doctrine; as clearly laid down in the Scripture. And this is your entrance into the evangelic state.

II. What is to be done for our continuance therein? I answer, faith and repentance are still necessary. “The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” And repentance is still necessary. But I shall only press two things:

1. New obedience is required. 1 John i. 7, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Holy walking is necessary to the continuance of our being cleansed from sin, and therefore mercy is promised to the forsaking of our sins. Prov. xviii. 13, “He that confesseth and forsaketh his

sins, shall find mercy." Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Christ will be no advocate for them that continue in their sins. Our God is a God of salvation; we cannot speak enough of his saving mercy: "But he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses," Ps. lxxviii. 20, 21.

2. Daily prayer is required. We must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may still be partakers of his benefit.

III. The third thing is our recovery out of grievous lapses and falls. In them there is required a particular and express repentance; and repentance and faith must be carried with respect to those four things that are in sin: the fault, the guilt, the stain or blot, and the punishment. You know the law supposeth a righteous nature that God gives to man, therefore in sin there is a stain or blot, defacing God's image. The precepts of the law require duty; so it is a criminal act: the sanction of the law, as threatened, makes way for guilt; as executed, calls for punishment.

(1.) For the fault, in the transgression of the law: see that the fault be not continued; relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. You are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound soundly closed.

(2.) The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance, and humiliation before God, and suing out our pardon in Christ's name. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There must be a solemn humbling for the sin, and then God will forgive us. Suppose a man forbear the act, and never commit it more, yet with serious remorse we must also beg our peace

upon the account of our Mediator. Therefore something must be done to take away the guilt.

(3.) There is the blot or evil inclination to sin again. The blot of sin in general is, the defacing of God's image, but in particular sins it is also some weakening of the reverence due to God. A man cannot act a grievous wilful sin, but there is a violent obstruction of the fear of God. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again; the evil influences of the sin continue. Now the root of sin must be mortified. It is not enough to forbear or confess a sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well.

(4.) There is the punishment. Now we must deprecate eternal punishment, and bless God for Jesus Christ, "who hath delivered us from wrath to come." But as to temporal evils, God hath reserved a liberty to his fatherly justice, to inflict them as he shall see good. "The righteous are recompensed upon earth," partly to increase our repentance, that when we smart under the fruit of sin, we may best judge of the evil of it. God doth in effect say, "Now know it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against me." God doth not do it to complete our justification, but to promote our sanctification, and to make us warnings to others, that they may not displease God as we have done. Now for these reasons, the Lord, though he doth release the eternal punishment, yet reserves a liberty to chastise us in our persons, families, and relations. Therefore what is our business? Humbly to deprecate this temporal judgment thus; Lord, "correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure." We should be instant with God to get it stopt or mitigated. But if the Lord see fit that it shall come, patiently submit to him, and say as the church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." These afflictive evils, some of them belong to God's external government, and some to his internal. Some to his external government, as when many

are sick, and weak, and fallen asleep. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." There are other things belonging to his internal government, as the withdrawing the comforts of his Spirit, or the lively influences of his grace; for this was the evil David feared, when he had gone into wilful sins; Psal. li. 11, 12, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." When we fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his loving-kindness from us, he may abate the influences of his grace so far as that we may never recover the like measure as long as we live.

SERMON III.



2 PETER I. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

IN these words the apostle extolleth the grace of God towards us in the gospel. In them take notice of,

I. The means.

II. The end and use of them.

III. The method and order in which this effect is wrought in us.

I. The means whereby God conveys his grace to us, viz. The promises of the gospel, which are set forth, 1. By their excellency; "exceeding great and precious promises." And, 2. Their freeness; "are given unto us."

1. Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts: they are "exceeding great and precious;" τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα. The one noteth their intrinsic value; they are, (1.) Τὰ μέγιστα, *exceeding great*; so called from the matter of them, which is great; such as pardon, and life begun in sanctification, and perfected in glory. (2.) Τὰ τίμια, *precious*, deserving and challenging our esteem, being so suitable to our necessities and desires. Our necessity ariseth from the fears of misery so justly deserved. Our desires are after a proper happiness;

which is offered to us in the promises of God, and that not only as probable, but as certain to be ours if duly qualified. Now these promises, being so great and precious, should attract us to all purity and holiness ; for what is greater, and deserveth to be more esteemed by us, than remission of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified ?

2. Their freeness (given,) made freely, made good freely.

II. Observe the end and use of them ; “ That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.” By the Divine nature is not meant here the essence of God, but his communicable excellencies, or such Divine properties as can be imparted to the creature ; and these not considered in their absolute perfection, but as they are agreeable to our present state and capacity. These are sometimes called the image of God, Col. iii. 10, “ The new man, which is renewed in holiness after the image of him that created him ;” because they imply a likeness to him. And sometimes the life of God, Eph. iv. 18, “ being alienated from the life of God ;” because they contain a vital principle. And here the Divine nature, and that for two reasons : 1. Because these are communicated to us by God, they are created in us by his Divine power ; and therefore the word [*created*] is so often used on this occasion. Eph. ii. 10, “ We are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor. v. 17, “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” Creation is proper to God. We have them by virtue of our communion with him. They flow from God as the light doth from the sun. 2. Because by these perfections we resemble God. Therefore it is said, 1 Pet. ii. 9, “ We shew forth his praises ;” *tas agetas*, his virtues, or Divine attributes, his wisdom, goodness, bounty, holiness ; for in these we most resemble him. If you take in his power, there is some resemblance in that too as to the moral exercise in taming our flesh, mastering our inordinate lusts and passions, and vanquishing all temptations. This is a spiritual power, and so spoken of, Prov. xvi. 32, “ He

that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." And *παντα ισχυω*, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," Phil. iv. 13. To live above the hopes and fears of the world is a great ability and power. And vanquishing the world is made the fruit of the new birth; 1 John v. 4, "That which is born of God overcometh the world." And in that place where the spirit of a Christian is described, it is said to be a spirit (2 Tim. i. 7,) of love, power, and a sound mind. We conceive God to be a spiritual Being, of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. To his wisdom answereth the spirit of a sound mind; to his goodness, a spirit of love; and what is the original and pattern of the spirit of power, the very name discovereth, namely, God's own power. So all his attributes leave their impress upon us.

III. Observe the way, the method, and order, how we receive the Divine nature. Having first escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. As we die to sin, the Divine nature increaseth in us. There is a putting off, before there can be a putting on; Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24, "We put off the old man, which is corrupt by its deceitful lusts." We begin the work of sanctification with mortification, and then proceed to the positive duties of a new life. For the plants of righteousness will not thrive in an impenitent and unmortified heart. As the corruption of sin is driven out, so the Divine nature succeedeth. These things cannot be joined together. The corruption that is in the world and the Divine nature can no more agree than light and dark. But let us see how this mortification is expressed: let us see, 1. What is to be avoided. 2. The manner of shunning it.

1. What is to be avoided. The corruption that is in the world through lust. Observe sin is called corruption in Scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity, Psalm xiv. 1, "They are all corrupt and abominable;" that is, degenerated, fallen from their pristine purity. Observe the seat of this corruption is

said to be in the world, where all uncleanness reigneth ; therefore called *μιασματᾶ Κοσμου*, the pollutions of the world, 2 Pct. ii. 20. The generality of men are corrupted in their faith, worship, and manners ; therefore it is said, “ Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Conversion to God implies a renouncing the corruptions of the world, having no fellowship with them. So that the question is, Whether we will conform to God or the world ; whether we will have fellowship with the corruptions of the world, or be partakers of the Divine nature. We must avoid the one to obtain the other. Lastly, observe that this corruption is said to reign in the world through lust. The bait is the appetite ; this makes our abode in the world unsafe and dangerous. If it were not for lust, neither the baits nor the examples of the world would pervert or hurt. Mortify the lust, and you have pulled up the temptations by the roots.

2. Let us see the manner of shunning in the word [*escaping*.] There is a fleeing away required, and that quickly, as in the plague, or from a fire which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us. We cannot soon enough escape from sin. No motion but flight becomes us in this case.

We may learn hence, that the great end and effect of the promises of the Gospel is, to make us partakers of the Divine nature. And herein let us consider,

I. The effect or end.

II. The means appointed to attain it.

III. The influence of the one on the other.

I. For the effect or end : observe, 1, That it is a natural, not a transient effect. There may be such a sense of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as may produce a sudden passion, as suppose of fear or love ; yet it may only affect us for the present, and not produce a thorough change of heart and life. There is an impression we cannot deny, and an impression suitable to those apprehensions that we have of God ; but it is not a constant principle of holy spiritual operation. But the promises of the Gospel are

to breed in us such a temper of heart as may be a second nature to us ; an habit or constitution of soul that may incline us to live to God.

A habit serveth for this use, that a man may act easily, pleasantly, and constantly. (1.) To act easily. There is an inclination and propensity to holiness. God created all things with an inclination to their proper operations ; as fire to ascend, and water to descend. So true Christians have a tendency to holy actions ; their hearts are bent to please God, and serve him, and they do whatever they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination. They act not only as enjoined, but as inclined. The law of God is in their hearts, and consequently they act not by constraint, but with a ready mind. (2.) To act pleasantly. They have not only a new bent, bias, and tendency, but it is a delight to them to do what is holy, as being in their element when they are thus employed. What is against nature is harsh, but what is with nature is sweet and pleasant. It is hard, a kind of force to bring them to do the contrary. There needeth some kind of violence to bring a good man to sin, as also a bad man to do good. (3.) It is a constant principle of holy operations, so that a man doth not only obey God easily, but evenly, and without such frequent interruptions of the holy life. Many do that which is good, or forbear evil uneasily, because of the restraints of Providence, or dictates of conscience ; and unevenly by fits and starts. But, Psalm evi. 3, “ Blessed is he that keepeth judgment, and doth righteousness at all times.” They are continually exercising all duties of godliness, righteousness, and mercy ; for the operations of nature are constant, however obstructed or diverted at certain times. This we are to look after, that the sanctifying grace we have received become a new nature ; that the soul have a tendency and delight as to spiritual objects, and be constantly and easily carried to them, and that this be the whole frame and drift of our lives.

2. It is a Divine nature ; that is, not only such as floweth

from God, but as carries a resemblance to him. It floweth from God, for we are partakers ; it is but a ray from his excellency, and it carrieth a likeness to him, or cometh nearer to the nature of God himself than any thing that a man is capable of. Now this is said for two reasons :

(1.) To shew the dignity of it. Nothing known to man is so like God as a sanctified soul. The saints have their Maker's express image ; therefore if God be excellent and holy, they are so. The image and picture of God and Christ is in them, not made by a painter or carver, but by the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. iii. 18. This is not a forbidden image, which may stain our minds, or form in us ill conceptions of God, but raise our hearts to him. Natural conscience doth homage to the image of God shining in the saints. Mark vi. 20, Herod "feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy." So of Moses it is said, Exod xi. 3, "Moses was a great man in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of all the people." His person and presence were awful to them, as having something rare in it. There is a secret excellency in holiness that often maketh even wicked men stand in awe of those in whom it is eminent ; but especially when they come to die, they have a sense of this excellency, and approve a sober, righteous, and godly life. Then all things appear in their own colours, and the fumes of lust being dissipated, they begin more clearly to discern the happiness of those who are made like God. They would fain die with the righteous. Numb. xxiii. 10, "Let my last end be like his." When entering on the confines of eternity, they grow wiser.

(2.) To shew the quality and condition of it. You must have a new nature, and such a nature as may be a Divine nature. If you have nothing above nature, you are strangers to the promises of the Gospel. It is a thought that possesseth many when they are pressed to Christian duties, We are not saints, and therefore cannot abstain from such sins. But do you mark what is said here, Christians must be partakers of a Divine nature.

Not only they are cut off from any privilege by Christ, "who corrupt themselves as brute beasts," Jude 10; that is, against the light of nature ingulf themselves in all manner of dissoluteness and sensuality; but also they that walk as men, only according to the rule of men who mind nothing beyond the present world. 1 Cor. iii. 3, "Are not ye carnal, and walk as men?" that is, they are not raised above the pitch of mere men, and have nothing of the Spirit of God in them. This Divine nature may be considered three ways. Either,

(1.) As begun. When we are "first renewed in the spirit of our minds, and regenerated according to the image of God," Eph. iv. 23, 24. There is a wonderful change wrought in sinners by reason of the Divine qualities impressed on them. So that the creature becometh to look like God himself, their nature is altered; their course of life is altered; and their designs and actions have something Divine in them.

(2.) As increased; when more like God in a conspicuous degree. At first the impression is but weak, and this glory is darkened by remaining imperfections; and we shew forth much of Adam upon all occasions, as well as somewhat of Christ. But where any are sincere and diligent, the old nature is more suppressed, and the Divine nature doth more eminently appear. 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We are changed from glory to glory." We grow more like God, and come nearer to the nature of God every day. And it is a shame if we are not, having been so long acquainted with the Word.

(3.) As it is perfected in heaven: for there we have the nearest communion with God, and so the highest conformity to him that we are capable of. 1 John iii. 2, "We shall see God as he is, and be like him." Perfectly like him: there is not the least blemish upon a glorified soul. Besides, then we are like him not only in point of holiness, but in point of happiness. For God is an holy and happy Being. Here we resemble God more in holiness and purity. For many times the most eminent holiness may

be accompanied with remarkable afflictions ; but there as our holiness is exact, our felicity is complete also. First, we are made holy, and then immortal, and in both like God. Well then this is the effect, partakers of a Divine nature. So that when you come among the people of God, and you are asked what kind of men do you find them to be ? (as Gideon in another case asked Zeba and Zalmunnah concerning his brethren, who answered, “ Each one resembled the children of a king,” Judg. viii. 18 ;) you may answer concerning them, who are really and eminently partakers of the grace of the Gospel, they are all children of the most high God ; as like God as mortal men can be.

II. Let us now see the means by which God doth accomplish this effect. “ To us are given great and precious promises.”

1. It is an instance of God’s love that he will deal with us in the way of promises. The world is depraved by sin, and sunk into fears and despair of any good from God, whom we have so highly provoked : therefore God invites and allures us to himself by promises. For promises are declarations of God’s will in the Gospel, whereby he signifies what good he will freely bestow upon us if we will look after it. These advantages we have by them.

(1.) A promise is more than a purpose : for the purpose of a man is hidden in his own bosom ; but a promise is open and manifest : thereby we get the knowledge of the good intended to us. If God had only purposed to bestow all his grace upon us, we could not have known his intention till it were manifested in the effect ; it would have been as an hidden treasure, or sealed fountain, of no comfort or encouragement to us till we had found it. But now the Word is gone out of his lips, we may know how we shall speed if we will hearken to his counsel. God’s promises are on his part the overflow of his love. His heart is so big with thoughts of good to us, that his love cannot stay till the accomplishment of things, but he must tell us aforehand : Isa. xlii. 9, “ Before they spring

forth I tell you of them." He might have done us good, and given us no notice, but that would not have satisfied him. It is an obligation God takes upon himself. God's promises are a security put into our hands; which not only gives us notice, but assurance that thus it shall be. We have the greater holdfast on him, and may put his bond in suit. Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the Word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

(2.) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to reveal a doctrine, another to promise a benefit; that making a thing known, this maketh a thing sure; that gives us notice, but this gives us interest. If "life and immortality had been only brought to light in the Gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10, it would have been a great mercy. That eternal life is set before us, is a great matter. But God hath put it into a promise, 1 John ii. 25, that we may make our title and claim. Surely that is matter of still greater comfort. Psalm cxix. 111, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart."

(3.) It is more than a prophecy, or simple prediction. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled, because of God's veracity; but Scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also his fidelity and justice. For by God's promise man cometh to have a right to the thing promised. It was his mercy to make the promise, but his justice and fidelity bind him to make it good. 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 8.

2. The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature. They are not about things of little moment, but about worthy and dear-bought blessings. They contain spiritual and eternal riches, such as the healing of our nature, the pardon of our sins, a safe conduct unto eternal happiness: the glorifying of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies, and an un-

changeable state of happiness. These are the greatest things, to which all the things of the world are but vain and empty. Reconciliation with God is our privilege here. And is it a light thing to be at peace with the living God; to enjoy his amity and love? To study and fit ourselves to do his will? To live in constant communion with him now? To have access to him at all times? To obtain from him whatever in reason and righteousness we can ask? A Christian is never upbraided with the perpetuity of addresses, never denied audience, never has cause to doubt of success; has more familiarity with God, and a surer interest in his love, than the greatest favourites have in any prince or potentate upon earth. But then what shall we say of the eternal enjoyment of God hereafter; Phil. iii. 14, "I press towards the mark, for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is an high prize that is set before us; then we shall have a larger capacity to know God, and enjoy him, and receive his benefits. Psalm xvii. 15. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

3. They are precious promises, worthy of esteem. They are not about things that we have nothing to do with; but such wherein we are deeply and intimately concerned. In God's promises there is due provision made for the desires, necessities, and wants of mankind. Let me instance in pardon and life, the first inviting benefits, Acts xxvi. 18, pardon answereth the fears, and life those desires of happiness which are so natural to us. (1.) The consciousness of sin, and the fear of God's wrath and displeasure, should make offers of pardon acceptable to us. The great scruple of the guilty creature is, how sin shall be expiated, and God appeased, Mic. vi. 6, 7. We fear punishment from a holy and just God, and cannot get rid of bondage till sin be forgiven. Till then the justice of the supreme Governor of the World will be dreadful to us. The Gospel serveth for this use, to give us the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.

Luke i. 77. (2.) The other great privilege is eternal life. Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity. There was never a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself. Therefore what more powerful inducement to bring us into the way of holiness than this blessed hope set before us, that we may see God, and live for ever? Tit. ii. 12, 13.

4. All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours. Without our asking or thinking, the covenant was framed and modelled to our hands, and in the frame and contexture of it we may see a constant strain of grace; in the richness of the benefits, the graciousness of the Donor, the seasonableness of the offer, the readiness of the help, when once we set ourselves to seek after God, and please and serve him; and lastly, in the sureness of the reward, notwithstanding frailties and imperfections.

III. Let us consider the influence of the one upon the other; or, how do these promises promote the Divine nature?

1. From their drift, which is to draw us from the creature to God, and the world to heaven; to mortify the esteem of the false happiness which corrupteth our natures, and to raise us to those noble objects and ends which dignify and adorn the soul. It breedeth an excellent spirit in us, which is carried above the world, and the hopes and fears of it, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Alas! what a mean spirit have they that drive no higher trade than providing for the flesh, or accommodating a life which must shortly expire. Like foolish birds, who with great art and contrivance feather a nest, which within a little while they leave. But how God-like are they who look to higher things, to please God, enjoy communion with him, and live with him for ever?

2. From the matter of the promises. Many of which concern the change of our hearts, the cleansing or healing of our natures. Heb. viii. 10, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be

to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, "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. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Jer. xxxiii. 8, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity." All which are encouragements of prayer to God for this benefit. If God doth not exclude us, we should not exclude ourselves.

3. The conditions or terms on which our right is suspended. Not pardon without repentance. Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts ii. 28, "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." Not heaven or eternal life without holiness. Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

4. The power with which the promises are accompanied. 2 Pct. i. 3, "According as his Divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." He gives us life, temporal and spiritual, and that immutable life of felicity hereafter. The Divine nature is communicated to us by virtue of the promises; for the Spirit is our Sanctifier, that worketh all in all.

From what hath been said, we may learn, 1, To believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain. God's testimony of the good things which he will bestow upon us cannot deceive us, or beget a vain and uncertain hope. His promise is a testimony of his will, and against his power nothing can stand. "There shall be a performance of those things spoken of by the Lord," Luke i. 45.

2. To esteem them. Heb. xi. 13, "These all died in

faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." We can never embrace them till we are persuaded of their truth. But then consider their worth. Great is the stupidity of those who are nothing taken with these things. If a great man engages himself any way, we make great reckoning of his word, and shall we not make great matter of the Word of God, and esteem his promises? Esteem them so as to get them at any price. Sell all for the pearl of price. Esteem them so as to be contented with a mean condition in the world. Though God keep us low, it is enough to be made partakers of his holiness. Esteem them so as to perform the duties required, Psalm cxix. 14. Esteem them so as to keep up our rejoicing in Christ; Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." 3. Labour to improve the belief of every promise for the increase of holiness, that we may be like God, pure and holy as he is. 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

SERMON IV.



MARK IX. 49.

For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

IN the context you have a caution, which our Lord gives against offences given to others, either by defection from the truth, or by a sinful conversation. And, 1, He intimates the cause of these offences, which is some beloved lust; and that is better mortified than satisfied. There is something precious, profitable, and pleasant in our opinion and affection, that calls us from God, and the duties we owe to him, and apprehended by us as so necessary for us, that we can no more spare it than a right eye, a right hand, or a right foot.

2. Our Lord compares the loss of satisfaction in such lusts with the danger of perishing for ever: and shews, that (all things considered) it were better to be deprived of this profit, pleasure, or honour, than to lose eternal life. Either that pleasure or lust must be denied, or we perish for ever. The right hand must be cut off, or else we shall be cast into hell fire.

3. Our Lord shews the danger of perishing for ever, amplified by a notable description, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." The Scripture lisps to us in our own dialect, and speaks in such notions as we can best understand, and therefore represents the state of the damned by what is terrible to sense. By the worm

is meant the anguish of conscience, by fire the wrath of God. The torment of the wicked arises partly from their own consciences. There is a vexing remembrance of what is past, their folly in the neglect of grace; and there is a bitter sense of that state into which they have now plunged themselves, and a fear of what is to come. Now beside this remorse for their folly, there is also a "fire that shall never be quenched," the sharp torments that are prepared for the wicked.

4. Here is a comparison of the pains of hell, with the trouble of mortification. First or last we must endure troubles and difficulties. Now it is much more eligible to take pains in the mortifying of sin, than to bear eternal pains in the punishment of it. This is that which is expressed in the text, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." In the words,

Observe, 1, a double salting, either with fire, or with salt; the one referring to one sort of people, and the other to the other. They agree in the common nature: for salt is of a fiery nature, and apt to consume; but they differ in the matter to be consumed. Salt consumes the superfluous moisture, which is apt to cause putrefaction; but the fire consumes the substance itself. So that to be salted with fire, is to be given up to everlasting destruction. Fire consumeth all things; and God is called a consuming fire to the wicked.*

* As the words, *Every one shall be salted with fire*, seem evidently to refer to the preceding, respecting the punishment of those who will not cut off the offending members, which render them obnoxious to future punishment, the import of them, as Dr. Whitby observes, will be, that all such "shall be seasoned with fire itself, so as to become inconsumable, and shall endure for ever to be tormented, and therefore may be said to be *salted with fire*, in allusion to that property of salt, which is to preserve things from corruption." This interpretation supposes the word *πας*, *every one*, to signify the same as if the expression had been *πας γὰρ αὐτῶν*, *for every one of them*, viz. whose

2. Here is also an allusion to sacrifices; for every man that lives in the world, must be a sacrifice to God. The wicked are a sacrifice to God's justice; the good are a sacrifice offered to him, that they may be capable of his mercy. The first are a sacrifice against their wills; but the good are a free-will offering, a sacrifice not taken, but offered. Now the law of all sacrifices was, that they were to be salted with salt, Levit. ii. 13. Three times it is repeated there, to shew, that every sacrifice must be salted. That the wicked, the objects of God's vindictive justice, are accounted sacrifices, is evident by Scripture. So when God intended a great carnage of his enemies, he calls upon the fowls of heaven, Ezek. xxxix. 17, "Assemble yourselves and come to my sacrifice;" with an allusion to the beasts offered in sacrifice. This may be gathered from the signification of the sacrifices, the burnt-offerings especially, which signified the guilt of the sinner; the death of Christ, which is the propitiation for sin;



fire is not quenched; shall be salted with, or in the fire; i. e. preserved from corruption in and by it. So chap. xii. 44, *παντες παρ*, for all, i. e. all they, as our translators render it, all those rich men there spoken of. So Luke xvi. 16, "The kingdom of God is preached, *και πας*, and every one," (viz. who believes,) "presseth into it." And Luke xxi. 32, "This generation shall not pass away, *ως αν παντα γινεται*, till all things be done," i. e. *παντα ταυτα*, all these things, there mentioned. The reader may see many other instances in Grotius. The sense, therefore, of the clause is, *Every one who does not comply with the preceding advice, and consequently is cast into hell, shall be, as it were, salted with fire, preserved and not consumed thereby. And every sacrifice, that is, every person who offers himself unto God in repentance, faith, and new obedience, as a living sacrifice, shall be salted with salt; even with the salt of Divine grace, which purifies the soul, (though frequently with pain,) and preserves it from corruption. It is evident, that there is an allusion here to that part of the law of Moses, which required every meat-offering, or sacrifice, to be seasoned with salt* See Benson's *Commentary on the passage.*

and the obedience of the sacrificer, as devoted to God. Now the first signification took place, and had its effect upon them, if they neglected the other two meanings of the sacrifices, and therefore they were to be looked on as salted with fire; whereas the other, who were accepted, were salted with salt. This may be applied, (1.) To the wicked. "For every one shall be salted with fire," that is, every one of them spoken of before, who indulged their corrupt affections, who did not keep the covenant of God, and renounce their beloved lusts. (2.) To the good. "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;" that is, every one that is not a sacrifice by constraint, but voluntarily gives up himself to God, to be ordered and disposed of according to his will, he is salted, not with fire, but with salt, which every one that is devoted to God is bound to have within himself. So while some are destined to the wrath of God, and salted with fire to be consumed; others are salted with salt, preserved and kept in the profession and practice of godliness.

In the farther opening of this I shall shew,

I. That the true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice or a thank-offering to God.

II. That the grace of mortification is the true salt, whereby this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned.

III. The necessity of this salt, that we may keep right with God in the duties of the covenant.

I. The true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice to God. This is evident by Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" that is, the reasonable part which was figured by the sacrifices and oblations of the law. Under the law, beasts were offered to God, but in the gospel men are offered to him; not as beasts were to be destroyed, slain, and burnt in the fire, but to be preserved for God's use and service. In offering any thing to God, two things were of consideration; there

was a separation from a common, and a dedication to an holy use, and they both take place in the present matter.

1. There is a separation of ourselves from a common use. The beast was separated from the flock or herd, for this special purpose, to be given to God. Thus we are separated from the rest of the world, that we may be a people to God. "We are no more our own," 1 Cor. v. 19. And "we are no more to live to ourselves, but to him that died for us," 2 Cor. v. 15. We are not to live to the world, to the flesh, or to such things as the natural heart craves. We have no right in ourselves, to dispose of ourselves, of our time, of our interest, of our strength, but must wholly give up ourselves to God, to be disposed, ordered, governed by him at his own will and pleasure.

2. There is a dedication of ourselves to God, to serve, please, honour, and glorify him.

(1.) The manner of dedicating ourselves to God is to be considered. It is usually done with grief, shame, and indignation at ourselves, that God hath been so long kept out of his right, with a full purpose to restore it to him with advantage. 1 Pet. iv. 3, "The time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and of man, it is high time to give up ourselves to the will of God. We have been long enough, too long dishonouring God, destroying our souls, living according to the flesh;" and the course of the world, therefore they desire to make restitution. Their past neglects of God fill their hearts with shame; therefore they resolve to double their diligence, and to be as eminent in holiness as before they were in vanity and sin.

(2.) It is with a deep sense of the Lord's love in Christ; for we give up ourselves to God, not as a sin-offering, but as a thank-offering. Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you by the mercies of God." 2 Cor. v. 14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died

for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again:" they are ravished with an admiration of God's goodness in Christ, and so give up themselves to him.

(3.) They entirely give up themselves to God, not to be his in a few things, but in all, to serve him with all their faculties; "You are not your own, but are bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 20, "therefore glorify God both with your bodies and spirits, which are God's." And to serve him in all conditions. Rom. xiv. 8, "Whether we live, we live unto God, or whether we die, we die unto God; for living or dying we are the Lord's." They are willing to be used for his glory, not only as active instruments, but as passive objects; they give up themselves to obey his governing will, to be what he would have them to be, as well as to do what he would have them to do. With all their faculties, in every condition of life, are they to be devoted to God, in all actions. It is said, Zech. xiv. 20, 21, "That holiness to the Lord shall be written not only upon the bowls of the altar and the posts of the Lord's house, but also upon all the pots of Jerusalem; not only upon the vessels of the temple, but upon common utensils;" that is, that not only in our sacred, but even in our common and civil actions, we should live as a people that are offered up to God.

(4.) The end why we give up ourselves to God, is to serve, please, and glorify him. Acts xxvii. 23, "His I am, and him I serve;" to please him by obedience to his will, Rom. xii. 1, 2, "Ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Col. i. 10, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." This is the dedication by

which a Christian becomes a spiritual sacrifice unto God. Now we must be sincere and real in this, partly,

1. Because the truth of our dedication will be known by our use. Many give up themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there is no such matter; they carry it as though "their tongues were their own, and they had no Lord over them," Psalm xii. 4. They speak what they please; they use their hearts as their own, to think and covet what they please; their hands as their own, to do what they please; their bodies as their own, and their wealth, and strength, and time as their own, either to spare it, or lavish it according as their lusts guide and incline them. No, no; a sincere Christian makes conscience of his dedication to God, and if he be tempted to do any thing contrary to this vow and dedication, his heart riseth against the temptation. 1 Cor. vi. 15, "Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." In point of fidelity to God, as we are in covenant with him, we must be careful that we use what is God's for the glory of God, we must make conscience of not alienating that which is sacred, that which is the Lord's: your thoughts, your affections, your time, your strength, all belong to him.

2. Because God will one day call us to an account, Luke xix. 23, he will demand his own with usury. We shall be called to a reckoning, what we have done for God, what part he hath had in our time, our strength, our parts, our interest: therefore every prudent Christian should himself keep a faithful and constant reckoning how he lays out himself for God.

3. We must be sincere in this, because we are under the eye of God, who considers whose business we do, his or our own. Luke i. 75, "That we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." We are ever before him, and though he doth not presently call us to an account, yet many times now he punisheth us for our neglect of his interest. Ezek. xvi. 8,

“Ye entered into a covenant with me, and became mine.” That was the reason of his judgments against them. When those that are his do not carry themselves as his; when that which is sacred is profaned by a common use, then a judgment is coming on a nation dedicated to God, or upon a person, if his ways be not upright with him.

II. The next thing that I am to shew is, that the grace of mortification is the true salt, wherewith this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned. There is some dispute what is meant by the salt, which Christ recommends to his disciples, and what was figured by the salt in the sacrifice, whether wisdom or zeal. In general it is the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which sin is subdued and prevented, and the meaning suits exactly with the emblem: for,

1. Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction, by consuming that superfluous moisture, which otherwise would soon corrupt. And so the salt of the covenant doth prevent and subdue those lusts, which would cause us to deal unfaithfully with God. Alas! meat is not so apt to be tainted as we are to be corrupted, without the mortifying grace of the Spirit. Nothing is so unstable and mutable as an unmortified soul; therefore we can never behave ourselves as a sacrifice, and an offering to God, unless “we mortify our members, which are upon earth, inordinate affections, covetousness, and the like,” Col. iii. 5. In short, the flesh is that which is apt to be corrupted, and therefore the grace that doth preserve us must be something that doth wean us from the interests of the flesh, and what is that but the mortifying grace of the Holy Spirit?

2. Salt hath an acrimony, and doth macerate things and pierce into them; and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to nature: how healthful soever it be to the soul, no question it is distasteful to curb our affections, and govern our hearts in the fear of God; but yet it is wholesome. It is a crucifying of the

flesh, to handle it as Christ suffered on the cross, to give it vinegar and gall, Gal. v. 24 ; but yet this is necessary, this is the thing which our Lord intends here in the context, that the sacrifice must be consumed or macerated ; we either must suffer the pains of hell, or the pains of mortification ; we must be salted with fire, or salted with salt. It is better to pass to heaven with difficulty, than to avoid these difficulties, and be in danger of eternal fire. The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin. We should rather displease ourselves and displease all the world, than displease God, and be unfaithful to Christ. No profit, no pleasure, or secular concernment is so necessary, so comfortable, so useful to us as salvation.

3. Salt makes things savoury, so grace makes us savoury ; which may be interpreted with respect either to God or man.

(1.) It makes us acceptable to God, when seasoned with this salt ; for God would accept of no sacrifice without it. Not that he tasted of their meat-offerings, but in types as well as in similitudes there is a condescension to our apprehension of things. That which is salted is savoury, therefore God would note his acceptance of our persons and services this way. By nature we are all unsavoury, and distasteful to God, Psa. xiv. 3, “ They are all become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one : ” in the Hebrew it is putrefied, stinking like corrupt and rotten flesh. We must be salted and seasoned by the grace of Christ, and so we become amiable and acceptable in the sight of God. The more upright we are, the more he delighteth in us.

(2.) It makes us acceptable to men ; the more we are thus salted and mortified, the more we shall do good to others. Our Lord tells his disciples, Matt. v. 13, “ Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” This is spoken to the disciples as disciples, not

as apostles and publick persons. It is a mistake to think that only ministers are the "light of the world, and the salt of the earth." No, all Christians must "shine as lights in the midst of a crooked generation;" all Christians must be as the salt of the earth." Christ's whole sermon contains general duties, and the disciples were not yet sent abroad as apostles; that was done afterwards, chap. x. and therefore here he speaks to Christians as Christians. Now they are said to be salt, even as they season all those among whom they live. A Christian is never savoury in his conversation with others, till he hath salt in himself; then all his actions are seasoned with grace, and beget a remembrance of God; then his words are seasoned with grace, and do good to others. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 29, "Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths;" that is, communication which vents itself in slandering, railing, foolish jesting, idle discourse. All these come from a corrupt heart. These want the grace of mortification; so are all sapless spirits, that cannot speak any thing of God seriously, but in their most serious discourse are as fresh as water. But go among the mortified, and you receive the savour of good things from them; you have not only savoury prayers, and savoury sermons, but savoury conferences and discourses. Col. iv. 6, "Let your speech be alway seasoned with salt;" that is, do not speak idly, but in an edifying manner. Now Christians ought to take heed they do not lose their savouriness, for then they do not please God, nor profit man, and are fit for nothing but the dunghill. Thus I have proved the second thing, that the grace of mortification is the true salt that seasons Christians.

III. There is a necessity of this salt in all those that have entered into covenant with God. For, 1. By covenant we are bound to the strictest duties, and that upon the highest penalties. The duty to which we are bound is very strict. We have answered God in all the demands of his covenant, 1 Pet. iii. 21, "For baptism saveth as

the answer of a good conscience towards God." The Lord puts in effect this question, Will you die unto sin, and live unto righteousness? This is the tenor of the baptismal covenant that is so often, so solemnly renewed at the Lord's supper; and you are "to reckon yourselves," Rom. vi. 11, "to be dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness through Christ Jesus our Lord;" reckon yourselves, that is, in vow and obligation. And the penalty is very high, Heb. x. 26, if we sin wilfully. So that your admission into Christ's family will be in vain; yea, to your further ruin, if you do not stand to the covenant, if you keep sin still alive, and add fuel to the flames.

Consider, 2. The abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvellous activity of it in our souls: well then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified. It works, it wars, it is very active and restless. The apostle James tells us, (Jam. iv. 5,) "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy:" it is not a sleepy, but a stirring principle, always inclining us to evil, and hindering that which is good. Sin doth not only make us flexible and yielding to temptations, but doth hurry us thereunto: corrupt nature is not a tame thing, that works not till it be irritated by the suggestions of satan, or temptations of the world; but is like a living spring, that pours out water of its own accord; it will not let us alone. The heart of man is evil continually, and so it always hinders us from that which is good. It blunts the edge of our affections, it seeks to weaken our purposes by unbelieving thoughts, or drawing us away from God by the lure of some sensitive delight, in stealing our hearts from him, in the very duties and solemn addresses we make to him, distracting our minds with thoughts of the world, and so turns our very duties into sin. Well then, without this salt of the covenant, what shall we do? Have we not need to keep humble and watchful? If sin be stirring, we must be stirring against it, and improve the grace of

the Holy Spirit upon the account of Christ's death, and use all good means that it may be subdued in us.

Consider, 3. the sad consequences of letting sin alone, either as to further sin or punishment. (1.) As to further sin. For Christ speaks here of scandals. If lust be not mortified, it grows outrageous; it foils us before God, men, and angels, and exposes us to an open shame, or hardens us in a dead, careless course. Lusts let alone, end in gross sins, and gross sins in final apostasy. Love of pleasure will end in drunkenness, or adultery, or the rage of unclean desires, or else in such a vain, light, frothy spirit, as is no way fit for religion. Judas, by his covetousness, was brought to betray his Master. Gehazi was first surprised with covetousness, then blasted with leprosy, and then became a shame and burden to himself. The devil trieth by lust to bring us to sin, and by sin to shame, and by shame to horror and despair. And in all of us old sins, long since laid asleep, may awake again, and hurry us into spiritual mischiefs, if we make not use of this holy salt.

(2.) As to punishment. Sins prove mortal, if they be not mortified. Either sin must die, or the sinner. There is an evil in sin, and there is an evil after sin. The evil in sin is the violation of God's righteous law; the evil after sin is the just punishment of it, eternal death and damnation. Now those that are not sensible, or will not be sensible of the evil that is in sin, they shall be made sensible of the evil that comes after sin. The unmortified person spares the sin, and destroys his own soul; the sin lives, but he dies. In the prophet's parable to the king of Israel, when he had let go the Syrian, saith he, "Thy life shall go for his life." So our lives shall go for the life of our sins. "The end of these things is death," Rom. vi. 21. And, "The wages of sin is death," ver. 23.

Now to make application.

I. For the reproof of those that cannot abide to hear of mortification. The unwillingness and impatience of

this doctrine may arise from several causes. 1. From sottish atheism and unbelief. They despise all sober, spiritual counsel. They despise the word of God. There are some that stand in awe of the word; and though their minds be never so much set upon a thing, yet if a commandment stand in the way, it is more than if an angel with a drawn sword stood in the way to keep them back: but now a careless, unbelieving wretch sets at nought all the precepts, promises, and threatenings of God; nay, he despiseth his own soul; he only cares for the body, but scarce ever considers whether he has a soul to save, or a soul to lose. Now it is in vain to speak to these to mortify their pleasing lusts, till their atheism and carelessness be cured. And their ease is the more desperate, because the disease doth not lie in their minds, but in their hearts. A settled opinion may be vanquished by reason, but a brutish inclination can only be weakened by almighty grace.

2. It may come from *antinomian* principles.

(1.) Some vainly imagine, as if God by Jesus Christ were made more reconcilable to sin, that it needs not so much to be stood upon, nor need we keep such ado to mortify the inclinations that lead to it: they altogether run to the comforts of the gospel, and neglect the duties thereof. Christ died for sinners, therefore we need not to be troubled about it. Some actually speak out, as if all the mortification required were but to quell the sense of sin in the conscience, not to destroy the power of sin in the heart; and if they can but believe strongly they are pardoned, all is well. If this were true, then in the hardest heart would be the best faith, for they have the least trouble about sin. This is to cry up the merit of Christ so as to exclude the work of his Spirit; yea, to set the merit of his death against the end of it, and so to set Christ against Christ: "He bare our sins in his body upon the tree." Why? "That we might be dead to sin, and alive to righteousness," to promote this mortification that we speak of.

(2.) Another sort think such discourses may be well spared among a company of believers ; they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins. It is well if you be come to this height of Christian perfection, that temptations make no impression upon you. But we must warn you, and that of the most gross sins. Christ thought fit thus to warn his disciples, Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." And the apostle every where warns Christians of malice, of hypocrisy, of envy, of lying, of evil-speaking : now is sin grown less dangerous, or men more skilful to avoid it, than heretofore ? Certainly, he that considers how many scandalous professors there are, that would be accounted the people of God, hath no cause to think so. If Paul saw need of mortification, 1 Cor. ix. 27, we are not more strong, but more fool-hardy.

(3.) A third sort are such as think believers are not to be scared with threatenings, but only oiled with grace. But then consider, the words of Christ were spoken to his disciples. And to whom did the apostle Paul write ? To believers, questionless. "If you live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Rom. viii. 13. No part of the Spirit's discipline must be omitted. If one end of Christ's coming was to verify God's threatenings, and that the curse of the law should not fall to the ground, surely there is use of threatenings still.

Let me then persuade you not to neglect the salt of the covenant. It may be fretting, but it is healthful. To help you to improve this kind of argument, which our Lord here useth ;

1. Consider, there are but two sorts of men in the world, and you are one of them. There is no middle state. There are but two principles that men are influenced by, the flesh and the Spirit ; and there are but two ends men propound to themselves, either the pleasing of the flesh, or the enjoyment of God in heaven : and two

places issue into, heaven or hell. The Scripture is peremptory, and tells us who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell. Rom. viii. 13, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Gal. vi. 8, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Or consider that, Prov. xiv. 14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." There are two different persons setting forth in the pursuit of happiness, the backslider in heart, and the good man. The backslider in heart is one that continues in the apostasy of mankind, and for a seeming good leaves God, who is the chief good. But the good men are those who make it their business to keep their hearts chaste and loyal to God. They both desire to be filled and to be satisfied; the one takes his own way, and the other God's counsel: and in the event both are filled. The backslider in heart hath enough of his own ways, when they have brought him to hell; and the good man hath enough when he comes to the enjoyment of the blessed God. And there is one truth more there, they are both filled from themselves, their own ways. The backslider shall have the fruit of his own choice, and a good man is satisfied with that course of godliness that he hath chosen. Prov. i. 31, Those that turn away from God, "shall eat of their own ways, and be filled with the fruit of their own devices." And, Isai. iii. 10, "Say unto the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his own doings."

2. Consider the condition of those that indulge their carnal affections; and that either threatened by God, or executed upon the wicked. (1.) Consider it as it is threatened by God. If God threaten so great a misery, it is for our profit, that we may take heed and escape it. There is mercy in the severest threatenings, that we may avoid the bait when we see the hook: that we may

digest the strictness of any life, rather than venture upon such dreadful evils. Why did our Lord repeat it three times, "Where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched?" But that we may have it often in our thoughts, that we may not buy the pleasures of sin at so dear a rate, as the loss of our precious souls. (2.) Consider the punishment as executed upon the wicked. How many are now burning in hell for those sins which you are ready to commit? The serious consideration of this will check the fervour of your lusts.

3. Consider which trouble is most intolerable, "to be salted with salt," or to be "salted with fire;" with mortification, or the pains of hell; the trouble of physic, or of a mortal disease. Surely, to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest potion. Why? Their lives lie on it. And shall we be unwilling to submit to these wholesome severities, which conduce to save you with an everlasting salvation. There is no remedy, trouble must be undergone. Surely a strict diet is better than a speedy death: and the pricking of a vein by a surgeon is not so bad as a stab at the heart by an enemy. Better be macerated by repentance, than broken in hell by torments. Which is worse, discipline or execution? Would you have sorrow mixed with love and hope? or else mixed with despair? Would you have a drop, or an ocean? Would you have your souls cured, or tormented? Would you have trouble in the short moment of this life, or have it eternal in the world to come?

4. Be sure you be a sacrifice dedicated to God, really entered into covenant with God, and set apart for his use; that this may be your end, your business, your scope to please, glorify, and enjoy him, 2 Cor. i. 9. We can the better speak to you, when you are under a covenant engagement. Christ bound you to this when he died for you. "He sanctified himself, that you might be sanctified through the truth;" that is, dedicated to God. John xvii. 19, "And by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified:" that is, them that are con-

secrated to God, or entered into a holy covenant with him.

5. You will see a need of denying worldly and fleshly lusts; you will see nothing can be done in the spiritual life without mortification, that being dead to all things here below, you may be alive to God. That this must be your daily work, necessity will sufficiently shew. Are there no rebellious desires to be subdued? No corrupt inclinations to be broken? Do you not feel the bias of corruption drawing you off from God? David did; therefore he saith, "Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Do not you find the sensitive lure prevail upon you, enticing your minds, and drawing you from the purity of your conversation? Rejoice then to be seasoned with salt for a while, that you may not be seasoned with fire for ever.

SERMON V.



2 THESS. III. 5.

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

THERE are two things which keep religion alive in the soul, a love to God, and a hearty intent upon the coming of Christ. These are the two necessary graces, which the apostle prays for in the text, the love of God and the earnest waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, the first and chief good; hope or patient expectation respects Christ, who at his glorious coming will give us our full reward. Love is the life and soul of our present duties, and by patient expectation we wait for our future hope. The love of God urgeth us to the duties of religion, and hope strengthens us against temptations, whether they arise from the allurements of sense, or the troubles of the world. Love is our breast-plate, that guards the vitals of Christianity, and hope is our helmet that covers our head, that we may hold up our head in the midst of all the troubles and sorrows of the present life. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin with the former, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." Where note,

1. The grace prayed for, "The love of God."
2. The efficiency, which is necessary to produce it, "The Lord direct your hearts." The word *direct* notes

sometimes conduct and guidance, and sometimes bending, or setting straight the thing that is crooked; conduct and guidance, as we guide men that they may not go wrong. Psalm cxix. 5, "Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." Ships that are best rigged need a pilot; and they that love God most need to have their love directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance and direction. At other times, it signifies the bending, inclining, or making straight what is crooked, or what bends another way: in this sense I take it here. Our hearts are distorted, and averse from God and all good naturally; yea, and after grace received, are apt to wander and return to their old bias again: therefore the apostle prays that God would set their hearts straight, that they might be fixed towards God. And this prayer he makes for the Thessalonians, whose "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope," he had so much commended before; and of whose sincerity he had such confidence; that their love might be directed, and their hearts more fixedly set towards God.

But what is love to God? Love is the complacency of the soul in what is good. Love to God is the complacency of the soul in God as our all-sufficient portion. To open it to you, I shall describe it,

I. By its internal acts.

II. By its external effects. I shall,

III. A little touch upon the properties of it.

I. The internal acts are two, desire and delight. Desire after him, and delight in him.

I. Desire after him. Love affects union with the thing beloved; and so love to God implies an earnest seeking after him, in the highest way of enjoyment that we are capable of in this world. This appears partly by the kind of mercies that we affect, and partly by the fervency of our endeavours after him. (I.) By the kind of mercies that we affect. There are some mercies vouchsafed us that lie nearer to God than others do; as his image and

favour, or his renewing and reconciling grace. When we love God, these are sought in the first place: Psal. iv. 6, 7, "The many say, Who will shew us any good?" but, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and this will put gladness into our hearts." The many, the brutish multitude, seek an uncertain good, and they seek it from an uncertain author: Who will shew us? They do not acknowledge God in these common mercies; but the children of God must have his favour: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us:" As the beams of the sun cheer and refresh the earth, this is that which doth revive their souls. God's sanctifying Spirit witnessing his love to us, is the greatest gift that can be bestowed in this life, and will more witness his love than any thing else that can be given us. This the saints seek after, that they may be like God, that they may be accepted, and well-pleasing unto God; this is all their ambition: 2 Cor. v. 9, "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord." Other things may please the flesh, but that is not their design; those things that bring them nearer to God, take up their mind and heart. Now as this appears by the mercies we affect, so it appears, (2.) By the fervency of our endeavours after these things. For if the image of God, and favour of God, be sought superficially, and the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world earnestly, surely we do not love God. A Christian saith, Psal. lxxiii. 8, "My soul followeth hard after thee." The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul towards God; and the more constantly and earnestly we seek him, to enjoy his saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us. Therefore David expresseth this desire as exceeding all other desires, Psal. 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, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." He sought not the glory of his kingdom, success in battle, victory over his enemies, so

much as converse with God, and attendance on his worship. All was nothing to this, that he might have communion with God. Therefore this is the radical act of love, this fervent, burning desire that carries Christians through all duties, ordinances, services; they are still making their way to a nearer access to God, and larger participation of his grace, till they come to enjoy him in glory.

2. There is another internal act of love, that is a delight in him. Our full joy is reserved for the other world, but delighting ourselves in God is a great duty now; for love being the complacency of the soul in God, or a delightful adhesion to God as our all-sufficient portion and happiness, it cannot be imagined that love can be without any delight in God, even now. In this is not only our hope, but our partial enjoyment of it is matter of happiness to us; his favour is as life, and his frown as death, to the soul that loves him. The saints look on God reconciled as the best friend, God displeased as the most dreadful adversary; therefore, if they have any taste of his love, "their souls are filled as with marrow and fatness." Thus David, Psal. lxxiii. 3—5, "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. I will bless thee while I live; my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." But yet we are not come to the bottom of the matter of delighting in God. Those whose souls are possessed with the love of God are so well pleased with him, that every thing is sweet to them by the relation it hath to God. It is a delight to them to think of God. Psal. civ. 34, "I will be glad and rejoice in him; my meditation of him shall be sweet." It is a delight to them to speak of God: Eph. v. 4, "Not foolish jesting, but giving of thanks." The delight of God's children, or that which serves instead of jesting to Christians, is the grateful remembrance of the Lord's mereies, especially of our redemption by Christ. To draw nigh to him in ordinances, there this delight is exercised again. There is

prayer. A gracious soul cannot be a stranger to it, because it cannot have a greater refreshing than to unbosom itself with God. So for all other Christian duties, Psal. cxxii. 1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Come, let us go into the house of the Lord:" there they entertained commerce with God about matters of the highest concern: nay, all their work, the whole course of their obedience, is sweetened to them, because it is commanded by God, and tends to the enjoyment of God. Psal. cxii. 1, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments;" they not only keep the commandments, but delight (and that greatly,) to keep them. Psal. cxix. 14, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches." Delight in God is a great act of love, to which we should not be strangers, even in the house of our pilgrimage; for it is a duty of the first commandment, that results from the owning of God as our God.

II. For the external effects of love, they are doing and suffering his will; when we are contented to do what God will have us do, and be what God will have us be.

1. For doing. If we love God, we shall be loath to offend him, we shall be desirous to please him. Faith, I confess, is a marvellous grace, it can apprehend things strange to nature, but it can do no worthy thing for God till it be accompanied with love, Gal. v. 6. When the apostle tells us of that faith that carries away the prize of justification, he describes it to be a faith working by love. Faith itself serves as the bellows to blow up this flame in our hearts, as the next and immediate principle of action. In short, love is the over-ruling bent of our souls, the poize upon us that inclines us to God. And look, as all noble qualities when restrained, cannot produce their consummate act, so love suffers a kind of imperfection till it can thus break forth into some act of thankfulness to God; but then it is perfected. 1 John ii. 5, "Whoso keepeth his word, in him the love of God is perfected;" that is, hath attained its consummate act, that which it

aims at. No man certainly can be owned as a lover of God, but he that makes conscience of doing what he commands. None but they have a deep sense of his majesty, none but they have an esteem for his favour; therefore they dare not hazard it by a breach or neglect of their duty.

2. For suffering his will. For when the apostle prays here that God would direct their hearts to love him, he means that they should endure any thing, rather than deny the faith; and should confess Christ, whatever it cost them. As obedience is virtually contained in love, so also courage and resolution. Solomon represents love as a powerful thing, as an affection that will not be bribed nor quenched: Cant. viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it: if a man would give the whole substance of his house for it, it would be utterly contemned." It is true of love in general, much more of love to God. In worldly matters, love is a venomous poison, when it hath invaded the heart; nothing will reclaim us: but in Divine matters, it is a sovereign antidote against temptations, both on the right hand and on the left. All riches, pleasures, honours, are contemned; they cannot bribe them over from Christ that really love him. All the floods of persecution cannot quench this holy desire. This is the genius and disposition of love, when once the bent of the heart is set towards God and heaven, they are vehemently set against any thing that would turn them out of the way, and divert them from their purpose.

III. I come to speak of the properties of it.

1. It is not a speculative, but practical love; not consisting in lofty, airy strains of devotion; no, it is put upon a surer test, our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in an humble subjection and compliance with his will. "He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me;" God's love is a love of bounty, but ours a love of duty; therefore if we love God, we are careful to please him, and

fearful to offend him. The Scripture declares both : The first, "This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." The second, Psa. xcvi. 10, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." When we love, we are fearful of committing or omitting any thing that may be a violation of his law, a grief to his Spirit, or a dishonour to his name. Whatever lofty and luscious strains of devotion we may please ourselves with, here will our trial rest. He doth not love God, that can soar aloft in contemplation, but he that is awful, serious, and conscientious in his duty.

2. It is a transcendent love that we owe to God, we must love him above all other things : for he must be loved as our felicity and end. He must have the chief place in our hearts. If we seek God in order to other things, we do not love him, but our own lusts ; nay, if all other things be not sought after in order to God, we do not set him up as our chief good, or last end. "He that loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. All must be subordinated to our supreme happiness, or else God is not loved as God.

I would consider, secondly, the nature of that influence upon love, which is expressed by the apostle in the word *direct*. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." What doth this imply ?

1. It implies, that God works upon us as rational creatures : he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction. He draws us to himself, but it is "with the cords of a man : " he teacheth while he draws. John vi. 44, 45, "None can come unto me but those whom the Father draws ; and he proves it by this, "because they shall all be taught of God." God's drawing is teaching ; it is both by the attractive force of the object, and the internal efficacy of his grace ; the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful ; it accomplisheth the effect, but without offering violence to the liberty of man. There is not a violent compulsion, but an inclination sweetly raised in us by victorious grace, or the over-powering sweetness of

his love. For "we love him because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who by giving us a deep sense of his benefits, blows up this holy flame in our hearts. We do not love God we know not why: an account can be given of all the Spirit's operations. Look as in an impression, there must be a seal, and wax to the seal, and the hand that stamps it. So all concur here. The word doth its part, that is the seal, and the heart of man receives the impression; but to make it effectual, the hand of God concurs, or the power of his Spirit. The word is the gospel, wherein God commends his love to us by the incarnation, death, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; as also by the new covenant, because he will work upon man after the nature of man; by love he will work upon love. Beside all this, there is an internal powerful agent, the Holy Spirit. The external means cannot do it without the inward cause. Though God's love doth so gloriously shine forth in the gospel, yet the heart of man is not affected with it till it be shed abroad by the illuminating, sanctifying Spirit. The heart of man is dark and dead to these things till changed by grace; and when that is once done, the impression is according to the stamp.

2. The inclination to God as our felicity and end, which is the fruit of this grace, is the inclination of a reasonable creature. So the inclination is necessary, but the acts are voluntary, therefore you must keep them up still. There is an inclination put by God into inanimate things, as in light to move upwards, and in heavy bodies to move downwards; as a stone falls to the earth, but fire ascends. They cannot do otherwise, because they have no choice. But in man there is an inclination to God and heaven, which is the fruit of grace. The inclination is necessary. Why? Because in all those whom the Spirit sanctifies, he begets this tendency towards God; therefore they are so often said in Scripture to be converted, or turned to God. Their hearts were averse before, but now they

bend towards him. The acts, however, are voluntary. There is a duty lying upon us to "stir up the gift that is in us;" the word is *αναζωοποιεiv*, 2 Tim. i. 6. When this holy fire is kindled in our bosoms, we must blow it up, and keep it burning. We must not be negligent, for we cannot reasonably imagine the idle and diligent should fare alike; that the Holy Ghost will direct our hearts into the love of God, whether we will or not; therefore not only as we are rational agents, but as we are new creatures, we are obliged to use the means, and then expect his help and blessing. What is a prayer in the text, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, to the patient waiting for Christ," is an exhortation, Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life." You must look to your love, that your hearts be kept straight, and bent towards God, and not distracted with worldly vanities. The blessing is from God, but you must use the means. This direction is not to encourage slothfulness, but industry. We must charge it upon ourselves, as our main work and duty; the Spirit stirs and quickens; we must rouse up ourselves.

3. It implies, there are many things would turn our hearts another way; the devil, the world, and the flesh. The devil seeks to draw us off from God, to abate the fervour of our love towards him; therefore we are bidden to "flee youthful lusts," 2 Tim. ii. 22; that we may not be taken captive by him at his will. Some tamely yield at his temptations, and he doth unto them as he listeth: but there is more difficulty to get a serious Christian into his snare. Therefore we are exhorted to be "sober and watchful, for our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour." Sobriety is a sparing use of worldly delights; and vigilance is a serious diligence in the use of all those holy means whereby temptations may be vanquished. And as the devil, so the flesh; James i. 14, "A man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his lusts, being enticed," that is,

by seeking to please his mind and appetite. And the world would pervert us, and offers us many baits to that end. "The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life;" these seem sweet baits, but there is a dangerous hook in them, and your love to God may soon be lessened. Well, then, this directing is opposed to wavering by any of these temptations, on the one or the other side; that we may keep in us that ardent love of God, which of duty we owe to him.

4. Directing notes the orderliness of the new creature. There is not a more beautiful thing in the world, when the motions thereof are directed by the Spirit; for then we are in a due posture both to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. To God; for then we are kept in a due subjection to him, and all our motions and actions are subordinated to his glory. When we sin, we are in rebellion against God, and set up the creature against him; as if it were more amiable and fitter to content and delight the soul than God, and so disturb the order and harmony of the world, abusing both ourselves and all things within our grasp. Look as in the motions of a watch, there is such a proportion in every part, that if one wheel be wrong, the whole is put out of frame. So the world, that was made for us, and we for God, is all disordered, when we use the world for ourselves, and not for God. So as to our neighbour: self-lovers and self-pleasers will never heartily do good to others. The most sincere commerce in the world is among those that love God. So for ourselves: till the love of God rule in our hearts all is out of order. Look as in the body, if the feet were where the head should be, the disorder and deformity would be great. So it is in the soul, when the beast rides the man, and conscience and reason are made slaves to lust and appetite. But when once a man is gained to love God, every thing is in frame again; self-government is restored, due obedience to God is provided for.

I proceed to shew you the necessity of this, both as to persons regenerate, and unregenerate.

1. See the necessity of God's direction to persons unregenerate. They cannot love God till the Lord direct and set their hearts straight. It is a hard thing to say, (but we must not mince the matter,) that in the carnal state we are all haters of God, Rom. i. 30. Though men may see some reason for love to God, as he is our Creator and Preserver; yet as he is a law-giver and a judge, so we all hate him. Three reasons there are of that natural enmity that is in the hearts of men against God. I would have you consider them seriously, that we may feelingly bewail our own aversion from God.

(1.) Our inclination to carnal things, which prepossesseth our hearts. Naturally men are addicted to sensual delights; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," John iii. 16. Having no principle to incline them to God, they wholly seek to please the flesh. When men once lost original righteousness, they took up with what came next to hand, and so became "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4. And this inclination we cannot divest ourselves of, till it be cured by grace. Therefore the Lord promiseth this cure; Deut. xxx. 6, "The Lord thy God will circumeise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." The heart must be circumeised before it can love God. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and so shall remain till God set our hearts right to himself.

(2.) The second reason is carnal liberty; and so we hate God as a law-giver, who will bridle our lusts. Because of God's restraint, we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security we desire. His law is in the way; therefore the heart riseth up against God, because he hath made a law to forbid those things that we affect. Rom. viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be." We love sin, therefore we hate God, who forbids it, and makes it so penal and damnable to us.

(3.) Slavish fear is the cause of this enmity. This

relates to the penalty of the law ; thus we hate God, because we fear he will call us to account for our sins. For a condemning God, barely apprehended under that notion, can never be loved by a guilty creature. Thus Adam, when he had sinned, ran away from God. It is in vain to come and tell them of the goodness of God, and his perfections, till he change their hearts. As you do in vain tell a guilty prisoner of his judge, that he is a discreet person, a man of solid judgment, one well skilled and versed in the law ; this sticks, he is one that will condemn him. Therefore the gospel, as a means to induce us to love God, sets him forth as a pardoning God ; “ There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

Come we, 2. to the regenerate. The Thessalonians did excel in all graces, and yet the apostle prays, that the Lord would “ direct their hearts into the love of God.” Why ? Because there are many defects of love even in the regenerate. To give some instances.

1. Love signifies an earnest bent of heart towards God, as our chief good, and last end. Well, then, our end is our measure by which we judge of all means, of the fitness of what is to be avoided and embraced. The seasonableness of all means must be determined by the end, that all means that are inconsistent with and impertinent to our great end may be cut off. Now all sins are inconsistent with making God our end, and all vain and foolish actions are impertinent thereunto. Judge you by this, if we have a perfect love to God. With how many impertinent actions do we fill up our lives ? How many purposes, desires, words, and actions have we, that have no respect to our great end ? How much do we live to ourselves, and how little to God ? How do earthly things occupy and intercept the greatest part of our lives ? Judge then whether we have not need to have the bent kept up, and the tendency towards God, as our end and happiness. It is the natural disease of man’s heart to be loosed from God, and to be distracted by a variety of

worldly objects, therefore it is not enough for a man once to resign his heart to God, as we do when his love is first wrought in us; but we have need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after vanities, that he would direct and keep us straight, and true to our end. The thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us?

2. Another instance is our frequently regarding the profits and pleasures of the world too much. We shew too much unwillingness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye. Now this shews a weakness of love. For where love is strong, there is a thorough inclination to God; we dare love nothing above him, or against him, or without him.

3. Our backwardness to obedience, and the tediousness we find in it, shews a great imperfection in our love. All goes on easily, sweetly, and acceptably, where love is at the bottom. Gen. xxix. 20; seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days, for the love that he had to Rachel: and so love sweetens our obedience; "his commandments are not grievous."

Besides, there needs much to be done about our love, after it is planted in the soul; we need to get it increased, to get it continually excited, and kept in act and exercise. (1.) We need to get it rooted. Our first affection to God and heavenly things may hastily put forth itself, as the early blossoms of the spring do, but they are soon nipt; and those high tides of affections, which we find in our first acquaintance with religion, afterwards frequently sink low enough. Love is more passionately expressed at first, partly by reason of the novelty of the things represented to us, and partly because of our great necessity; as men that are in a violent thirst take large draughts with pleasure. And because our love is not as yet dispersed into the several channels of obedience, but wholly taken up with admirations of grace; but this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be "rooted and grounded in love," to get a more solid, durable affection. (2.) After

it is planted, it needs to be increased, Phil. i. 9, "I pray God your love may abound yet more and more." At first love is but weak; there is fire, but it is not blown up into a flame; afterwards God gets a greater interest in our hearts, and then the constitutions of our souls become more holy and heavenly. Love being the heart of the new creature, he that hath most love, hath most grace, and is the best and strongest Christian. (3.) After it is planted, it needs to be excited, and kept in act and exercise. This is mainly intended here. For, first, all religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ, and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love; as she "wept much, to whom much was forgiven," Luke vii. 47. Diligence in the holy life, is but seeking love. Obedience is pleasing love. Self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love. Sobriety is a retrenching of carnal love. Secondly, if true love be not acted and kept at work, carnal work will prevail. The soul of man cannot lie idle, especially our affections cannot: either they are carried out to God, or to worldly things. When Divine love ceaseth, concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul; for while the neglected principle languisheth, the other principle gets strength.

Oh! then let us seek this benefit from God, that our hearts may be directed into his love. Let us remember, 1. The sanctifying Spirit is given us for this end, to stir up love to God, John iv. 14, "The water I will give him shall be a well of water springing up unto eternal life." It is not a dead pool in the heart, but a living spring. And the same is intimated, John vii. 38, "He that believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: this he spake of the Spirit." 2. The ordinances were appointed for this end. The Word, to represent God amiable to us, both for the goodness in him and the goodness proceeding from him; especially in our redemption by Christ, and also for those rich preparations of grace he hath made for us in another world, to blow up

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this holy fire. And this is the end of the sacrament. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper savour of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flows into our cup out of the wine-press of love. Why do we eat of the crucified body of Christ? but that we may remember "Jesus who loved us, and gave himself for us." The drink that is provided for us at this feast, is the blood of Christ, "Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." 3. All the providences of God tend to this end, that we may love God. All God's mercies are as a new fuel to keep in this fire. "I will love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication," Psal. cxvi. 1. "And thou shalt love the Lord, who is the strength of thy life, and the length of thy days," Deut. xxx. 20. All the mercy we have from God is to refresh and revive our love, that it may not languish and die. Nay, all these sharp corrections God sends, are to recover our love to God; Isa. xxvi. 9, "My soul hath desired thee in the night," (saith the prophet) "and early have I sought thee;" and when was that? "when thy judgments were abroad in the world," when great and sharp afflictions were upon men.

SERMON VI.



2 THESS. III. 5.

—*And into the patient waiting for Christ.*

THE words are a prayer. And the apostle prays here for those things which are most necessary to Christians; love to God, and patient waiting for Christ.

Four things I must speak to here.

I. What this patient waiting for Christ is.

II. The connexion between it and the love of God.

III. That it hath a great influence upon the spiritual life.

IV. The necessity of God's concurrence hereto.

I. What is this patient waiting for Christ? I answer, it is the grace of hope, fortifying our resolutions for God, and the world to come, that we may continue in our duty till our work be finished, and our warfare ended. The act of hope is three ways expressed. Sometimes by looking, which notes a certain expectation; Tit. ii. 13, "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour." Sometimes by loving or longing, which notes a desirous or earnest expectation; 2 Tim. iv. 8, "Not to me only, but to all that love his appearing." Sometimes by waiting, which notes a patient expectation; 1 Thess. i. 10. He makes it there the fruit of our conversion. He saith, "Ye turned to God, to wait for his Son from heaven." This last notion is expressly mentioned in the text, the others are implied: as

looking; there can be no waiting for that we do not look for: and longing, for delay is only troublesome to them that earnestly desire his coming. Faith adds certainty, and love earnestness, and both give strength to patience. Let us open all these things.

1. There is a looking for the coming of Christ. Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." It is not a matter of conjecture, but of faith. Reason saith, he may come, but faith saith, he will come. Nature will teach us it is very likely, for a guilty conscience fears the judge; and the course of things is so disordered in the world, that there needs a review: but Scripture tells us, it is certain; "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. Therefore in the eye of faith it is sure and near.

2. There is a longing or a desirous expectation. 2 Pet. iii. 12, "Looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." It is good to observe how differently this coming of Christ is entertained in the world; it is questioned by the Atheist, it is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent; but it is longingly expected by the godly. To them it is not matter of terror, but delight; not like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzar, but like comfortable tidings to one that expects news from far; they long for it, and would hasten it, if they might have their desire. Cant. viii. 14, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a young hart, or roe, upon the mountains of spices." Christ is not slack, but the churches' affections are strong; therefore she saith, Make haste. So, Rev. xxii. 20, Christ saith, I come; and the church, like a quick echo, takes the words out of his mouth, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

3. There is waiting; and here it is expressed by patient waiting, for patient waiting is an act of hope, as well as longing expectation: 1 Thess. i. 3, "Knowing," (saith he) "your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." Faith will break out into practice; therefore

the work of faith and love will put us upon labour ; and hope produces patience. There is a three-fold patience spoken of in Scripture ; all the branches are near a-kin, for they are all begotten by hope.

1. The bearing patience ; which is a constancy in adversity, or a perseverance in our duty notwithstanding the difficulties and trials that we meet with. Heb. vi. 12, " Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." As we cannot inherit the promises without faith, so not without patience. For our obedience and fidelity to Christ require not only labour, but courage and constancy. Heb. x. 36, " Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might inherit the promise." A child of God cannot be without patience, because he must reckon for troubles and molestations. We have indeed our calms as well as our storms ; many intermissions ; but at other times God will exercise us, and shew us our fidelity is not sufficiently tried in doing good ; but before we go to heaven, we must sometimes suffer evil. God hath something to do by us, and something to do with us : we must be prepared for both, to endure all things, and readily and willingly suffer the greatest evil, rather than commit the least sin.

2. There is a waiting patience, to wait God's leisure. The evil is present, the good is absent ; now we long for the good as well as fear the evil. Rom. viii. 25, " But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." This is the work of patience, to wait ; to refer it to the good pleasure of God when our warfare shall be accomplished, and our troubles at an end, and our final deliverance come. The time cannot be long. For what are a few years to eternity ? This waiting patience is delivered to us under the similitude of a husbandman, James v. 7, " Who waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain." The husbandman that hath laid out all his substance in seed-corn, cannot hope for a present harvest, or that he should receive the

crop as soon as the seed is cast into the ground ; no, it must lie there, it must endure all weathers, before it can spring up in the blade and ear, and ripen, and be fit to be reaped. So though we venture all upon our everlasting hopes, yet we expect our season till we see the fruit and recompence of it.

3. There is the working patience ; which is a going on with our self-denying obedience, how tedious soever it be to the flesh. Thus we are told, the good ground bringeth forth fruit with patience. So the heirs of the promises are described, Rom. ii. 7, “ To be those that continued with patience in well-doing.” And to the church of Ephesus, God saith, Rev. ii. 2, “ I know thy works, thy labour, and thy patience.” Religion is not an idle sluggish profession, the work of it is carried on by diligence and faithfulness. Lusts are not easily mortified ; neither do graces produce their perfect work with a little care. Much labour and serious diligence is required of us ; we have many things to conflict with ; there is the burthen of a wearisome body, the seducing flesh, unruly passions, disordered thoughts, and therefore we need much patience, that we may not faint, but be accepted of the Lord at his coming. Well then, to live in this constant and patient expectation of Christ is the perpetual, necessary duty of all that love him.

II. I am to shew the connection and affinity between it and the love of God. If a man love God, he will wait for the coming of Christ. The one is inferred out of the other, “ The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.”

1. They that love God, level all their thoughts and desires to this, that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified. (1.) That he may be enjoyed, in the fullest manner and measure they are capable of. Now this full enjoyment is the fruit of Christ’s coming ; “ then we shall be ever with the Lord,” 1 Thess. iv. 17, “ When Christ shall appear, we shall see him as he is, and be like him ;” that is, like him in holiness, and like him in

happiness. Our vision will make a transformation. The desire of union, which is so intrinsic to love, is never satisfied till then. Here we have a little of God in the midst of sin and misery. Sin straitens our capacity for receiving more; and God sees fit to exercise us with misery, only affording us an intermixture of heavenly comfort. But our full joy is reserved to the day of Christ's appearing. (2.) They that love God, desire also that God may be glorified, that his truth may be vindicated, his love and justice demonstrated. His truth is vindicated, when his threatenings and promises are all accomplished. His love to the saints will then be seen in their full reward, and his justice demonstrated on the wicked in their full punishment. All matters of faith shall then become matters of sense; and what is now propounded to be believed shall be felt, and God shall be glorified in all.

2. The saints love Christ as Mediator; we love him now, though we see him not. 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love; and believing in him, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." But we desire to know him as our surest and best friend. We have heard much of him, felt much of him, and tasted much of him, but we desire to see him, especially when he shall appear in all his glory. Matt. xxv. 31, "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his angels with him." All clouds about him shall vanish, he shall appear to be what he is, the Saviour and Judge of the world.

3. They have a love for the church; and the church shall at that day be adorned as a bride for her husband. It is no more eclipsed by its lamentable imperfections, corruption of worship, division of sects, or the persecutions of the world, nor polluted by the distempers of its diseased members. All is then holy and glorious. Christ will present it as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27.

4. They love themselves in God; and their own happiness is then fully to be perfected. All the desires and hopes of believers will be then satisfied. They that are

now, scorned and persecuted, shall have the reward of their love to God, be perfectly loved by him. A gladsome day it will be with God's people. 2 Thess. i. 10, it is said, "Christ shall be admired in the saints, and glorified in all them that believe." Poor creatures, that are newly crept out of the dust and rottenness shall have so much glory put upon them, that the angels themselves shall stand wondering what Christ means to do for them. And then for all their labour they shall have rest, all their troublesome work shall be over, for their pain and sorrow they shall have delight, 1 Pet. iv. 13. For their shame they shall have glory put upon them both in body and soul.

III. This waiting hath a great influence upon the spiritual life; which will appear if you take either word in the text, *waiting* or *patience*.

I. If you take the first, *waiting* or *looking*, it draws off the mind from things present to things to come. Looking to the end of things giveth wisdom; Deut. xxxii. 29, "Oh that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end." It is not so much to be stood upon, who is happy now, but who shall be happy at last. If men would frequently consider this, it would much rectify all the mistakes in the world. If we would inure our minds not to look to things as they appear now to such short-sighted creatures as we are, but as they will be judged of at the last day, at Christ's appearing; how soon would this vain shew be over, and the face of things changed, and what is rich, and pleasant, and honourable now, appear base and contemptible at the latter end? Then shall we see, that there is an excellency in oppressed godliness, that exalted wickedness and folly is but shame and ruin. Do but translate the scene from the world's judgment to Christ's tribunal, and you will soon alter your opinions concerning wisdom and folly, misery and happiness, liberty and bondage, shame and glory; the mistaking of which pervert all mankind, and there is no rectifying the mistake, but by carrying our mind seriously to the last review of all

things. For then we shall judge of things not by what they seem now, but by what they will be hereafter. More particularly, this waiting will much quicken us to repentance. Acts iii. 19, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." All things shall be reviewed at Christ's coming, and some men's sins remain, and others be blotted out. None but those that are converted and turned to God can expect that benefit. Unless we be recovered from the devil, the world, and the flesh, and brought back again in heart and life to God, there will be no escape. Now those that wait for this day should prepare for it, that they may stand in the judgment with comfort. The wicked shall have judgment without mercy, but the believer shall be accepted upon terms of grace. Days of torment shall come to the one from the presence of the Lord, and days of refreshing shall come to the other. The state in the world of believing penitents is a time of conflict, and labour, but this trouble and toil shall then be over, and they shall enjoy their rest. Consider these things, where would you have your refreshment, and in what? Many sit down under the shadow of some earthly gourd, which soon withers; but those that seek their refreshment in the enjoyment of God, shall then be satisfied. Nothing certainly makes us so solicitous about a serious reconciliation with God as the consideration of this day.

And it engageth us to holiness, and puts life into our obedience. We that look for such things, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2 Pet. iii. 11. Men are secure and careless, either because they do not believe this day, or do not seriously think of it. Could we bring ourselves to this, to think, and speak, and act, as having judgment and eternity in our eye, we should be other manner of persons than ever we have been. What! believe this day, and be so careless! it cannot be. We should not beat down the price of religion nor serve God so loosely, if we did wait

for the coming of Christ, who will bring every thing into the judgment, whether it be good or evil; we could not then satisfy ourselves in such a negligent profession and practice of godliness.

Lastly, it will produce a more heavenly temper and conversation. This is evident from the apostle's words, Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." Looking for this salvation, and this Saviour, breeds in us the heavenly mind. He comes from heaven to bring us thither, for he comes to receive us to himself, John xiv. 3. Therefore if we be not heavenly, our practice will be a contradiction to our faith. You believe that there is a God, and a Christ, and a life to come; that this Christ came from God, to bring us to God, that we may enjoy him in the life to come; and thereupon you renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and give up yourselves to God, believing that this Christ will come again to lead all his sincere disciples into the glory and happiness of the heavenly state. If you believe this, what follows? That your conversation must be heavenly, either you must live for heaven, seeking it with all diligence, or live upon heaven, solacing yourselves in the foresight and hopes of it. To profess this faith, and yet live as though your happiness were in this world, were to go about to reconcile contradictions.

2. Patience also hath a great influence upon religion; for that which destroyeth all religion is making haste. Therefore it is said, Isa. xxviii. 16, "He that believes shall not make haste." God's promises are not presently effected; and if you cannot tarry, but run to your own shifts, presently you run into a snare. On the other side it is said, Lam. iii. 26, "It is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God." When we can hope and wait, it mightily secures our obedience. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith and hope can tarry God's leisure. Whatever our condition be, afflicted or prosperous, we are in the station where God hath set us, and there we must abide till he bring us to his kingdom.

Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief. What moved the Israelites to make a golden calf but impatience, not waiting for Moses, who according to their fancy remained too long with God in the mount? Hasty men are loath to be kept in suspense, and long expectation, and so miscarry. Look to all sorts of sinners. The sensual cannot wait for the time when they shall have pleasures for evermore at God's right hand, therefore take up with present delights; like those that cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, therefore eat them sour and green. Solid and everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for, therefore "choose the pleasures of sin, though but for a season." A covetous man will wax rich in a day, and cannot tarry the fair leisure of Providence; therefore we are told, "He that makes haste to be rich, cannot be innocent," Prov. xx. 21. An ambitious man will not stay till God gives true crowns and honours in his kingdom, and therefore he must have honour and greatness here, though his affecting to be built one story higher in the world cost him the ruin and loss of his soul. Men flee to unwarrantable means, because they cannot depend upon God, and wait with patience. Look, as an impetuous river is always troubled and thick; so is an impatient spirit out of order, full of distemper, a ready prey to Satan.

IV. I am to shew the necessity of Divine concurrence. The apostle prays here, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ."

And, 1, as to the unregenerate. Till their hearts be changed, they can never attain to this patient waiting for Christ. In the wicked there is no sound belief of these things, for they live by sense, and not by faith. Things of another world are too uncertain, and too far off for them to apprehend, so as to be much moved by them. They hear of the coming of Christ, and speak by rote of it after others, but they do not believe it, therefore till God enlighten them, they are not affected with this matter? And there is an utter unsuitableness of heart to it.

Things present, that suit their fancies, and please their senses, carry away their hearts. Psalm xlix. 18, "Whilst he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thyself." Men bless themselves, and the world applauds them in a sensual course of living. They measure all happiness by their outward condition in the world, and please themselves with golden dreams; and this being seconded with the flattery and applauses of the world, they are fast asleep in the midst of the greatest danger, and so go down into hell before they think of it.

2. Even the regenerate need to have their hearts directed to the patient waiting for Christ :

(1.) Because we have too dim a sight of these things. How dark a prospect have even God's children of the world to come? We may speak of others as unbelievers, but God knows how doubtful our own thoughts often are about eternity and Christ's coming; how little we can shut the eye of sense, and open that of faith. Can we always say, 2 Cor. iv. 18, "We look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal; but to the things unseen, that are eternal?" Alas! we have no thorough sight into another world. We have need to have our eyes anointed with spiritual eye-salve, that our sight may be more sharp and piercing; "to beg the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to open the eyes of our mind, that we may see what is the hope of Christ's calling," Eph. i. 17, 18. There are too many intervening clouds between us and eternity, that darken our sight, and obscure our faith.

(2.) Our thoughts of these things are strange and dull, and too rare and unfrequent. How seldom have we any serious thoughts of his coming. It was a complaint against Israel, that they put away the evil day; but the complaint against us may be, that we put away the good day, when all our desires and hopes shall be accomplished. The world deny it, and we forget it. Solomon saith to the sensual young man, "Remember, that for all these things God shall bring thee to judgment." Young men

put off these thoughts, lest they should check the fervour of their lusts. But alas! grave men, good men, forget these things. When Christ had spoken of his coming to judgment, he said, Mark xiii. 37, "What I say unto you I say unto all, watch." Watching is keeping up this attentiveness to his second coming with all Christian vigilance and endeavour. But few regard the charge; therefore the Lord direct your hearts!

(3.) Because our affections are so cold, and we are no more affected with it, but as if we were senseless of the weight of these things. Some desires we have, but not that lively motion which becomes hope and love. If nature say, come not to torment us before the time; grace should say, come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly! We are not only to look for his appearing, but to love his appearing. Where are these desires, that Christ would either come down to us, or take us up to himself, that we may live with him for ever?

(4.) We need to pray this prayer, because our preparations are too slender for so great a day. Serious preparation is necessary. It is described, 1 Pet. -iii. 14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless;" that is, in a state of reconciliation with God. But we live too securely in an unprepared state. If we have, as we suppose, the habitual preparation, we do not keep up the actual preparation, by refining our souls from the dregs of sense, by honouring God in the world with greater earnestness, that when our Lord comes, he may find us so doing. We do not stand with "our loins girt, and our lamps burning;" that when our Lord knocks, we may open to him immediately. We do not keep up the heavenly desire, the actual readiness. The return of a husband after long absence is welcome to his wife, she would have all things ready for his reception and entertainment.

(5.) Because our motions are inconstant. We interrupt the course of our obedience, faint in our afflictions, do not keep up the fervour of our affections, and follow after

salvation with that industrious diligence. We need often the Christian watch-word, "The Lord is at hand." We lose much of our first love, intermit of our first works. Therefore the Lord direct your hearts to the patient waiting for Christ.

Let these considerations quicken you to take care of this grace, that you may be constantly exercised in it. While we are upon earth, we should continually be expecting Christ's coming from heaven. Before Christ's coming in the flesh, the saints waited for him. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord, saith Jacob," Gen. xlix. 18. And Simeon for Christ, the Saviour of the world; for so it is explained, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And our Lord tells us, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," John viii. 56. And it is said of Anna, and others, "That they waited for the consolation of Israel," Luke ii. 25, 38. And after Christ was come, the disciples were commanded to "wait for the promise of the Spirit," Acts i. 4. So, by parity of reason we must wait for the coming of Christ, for that is the next great promise to be accomplished, and the great thing to put life into our religion.

The people of God are described by this, 1 Thess. i. 10, "Who wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." A man would have thought in those early days, they should have been described by their respect to what was past, rather than to what was to come, which was at so great a distance; that they should have been described by believing Christ was already come in the flesh, rather than waiting for his coming in glory. No: this is proposed as an evidence of their sincerity, "waiting for the coming of Christ." And so it is said, Heb. ix. 28, that Christ "will appear unto the salvation of them that look for him." That is the property of true believers. But they that look not for his coming, cannot expect his salvation. It is an allusion to the people, who upon the day of expiation, when the high-priest went into the holiest before the mercy-seat, were waiting for his

coming out, that he might solemnly bless them. So we must look for Christ's return, now he is gone within the vail of the heavenly sanctuary, that he may come out, and bless us with everlasting blessings.

This waiting for Christ, breeds in us contempt of the world, and enduring of the cross. It breeds in us contempt of the world; because we look for higher and better things to be dispensed to us when Christ comes. "Set not your affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven:" Why? "For your life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 2, 3, 4. The more the heart is given to one, the other gets the less. Earthly things are little regarded in comparison of that glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance. And this gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, "but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 13. Then our reward will much exceed the proportion of our sufferings; they are no more to be set against our reward, than a feather against a talent of lead. "I reckon they are not worthy to be compared," saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18. It would be a disgrace to a man's reason, that these things should bear any competition with our great hopes; "these light afflictions, that are but for a moment, with that exceeding weight of glory."

To conclude; if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as surc, and as near. Rev. xxii. 12, "Behold, I come quickly, and bring my reward with me." We have the promise of the eternal God for it, so attested, and made out to us with such evidence, that we have no reason to doubt of the recompences of religion. But things at a distance, though never so great, will not leave a due impression upon us. Therefore we must look upon this promise with a certainty of persuasion that it will not be long before its accomplishment. Thus faith lessens the distance between hope and enjoyment, and enables us comfortably to wait.

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SERMON VII.



ECCLESIASTES IX. 11.

I returned, and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to them all.

THE discourse on this subject begins chap. viii. 16, 17, "When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business which is done upon the earth, then I beheld all the works of God, that a man cannot find out the work which is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it." God's Providence in the government of the world is secret. When a wise man hath applied his mind to reconcile all the seeming incongruities of it, he cannot get a clear and satisfying account of all the proceedings thereof, but must at last acquiesce in the sovereignty and dominion of God. The footsteps of Providence are not easily traced, his judgments are a great depth, Rom. xi. 33, Psalm xxxvi. 6, and xcii. 5; they may be adored, but not searched out.

Now two things in our reflection upon Providence perplex us. One is, that things are promiscuously dispensed to good and bad men; yea many times the good

are afflicted, and the bad are advanced. To this he speaketh in the beginning of the chapter, where he sheweth that all outward things are dispensed without any great difference. Josiah died in the war; and so did Ahab. Is Abraham rich? So is Nabal. Is Solomon wise? So is Ahitophel. Is Joseph honoured by Pharaoh? So is Doeg by Saul. Had Isaac long life? Gen. xxxv. 28, So had Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17. The other perplexity is, that events and successes do fall out otherwise than the preparation and ability of second causes do seem to promise; as holiness, and unholiness, do not make the difference; so the natural ability and inability of man, the wisdom and folly, the strength and weakness, makes no difference as to their worldly condition. Men of greatest abilities are disappointed of their hopes and ends, which weak and insufficient men do many times obtain. Now this is asserted in the text, "I returned and saw," &c.

In which words observe the preface, and observation. Or,

I. The accurate inspection of the wise man, I returned and saw under the sun.

II. The result of this inspection and observation, propounded negatively and positively.

Observe, I. His accurate inspection. I returned and saw under the sun; that is, besides all the former vanities of the present life. The same phrase is used, chap. iv. 1, "I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun." So ver. 7, of that chapter, "Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun." This phrase is used to shew the great certainty and evidence of his observation; it is a thing I have narrowly observed. The instruments of knowledge are seeing, hearing, observing, and deducing inferences from thence, [under the sun,] that is, here in this lower world; I considered all human actions, the things which are done in this life among men. He looked about and turned himself every way.

II. The observation thence resulting.

First, negatively propounded in five instances, which comprehend all the business of common life.

1. "The race is not to the swift." This may be understood either of the ordinary race, wherein the swift may sometimes fail, or straining themselves beyond their strength, be injured in their bodies, or maimed by some accident; and so when he speaketh of the race, he meaneth it of the successful race, as in the next clause; nor the battle to the strong, he meaneth the successful battle, whereby they get the victory. Success is not always on the side of the swift and strong. Or, secondly, of any course whereby a man endeavours to outrun danger. So Asahel, who was swift of foot as a wild roe, was slain by Abner, 2 Sam. ii. 18—23; and Jer. xlvi. 6, "The swift shall not flee away, nor the mighty man escape," they shall stumble and fall. The swift cannot always flee from danger. Isa. xxx. 16, "They that pursue you shall be swift."

2. "Nor the battle to the strong." Rabshakeh telleth us, that counsel and strength are for the war, Isa. xxxvi. 5. But many times great strength is foiled, and a small army overcomes a greater. The strength of the mighty doth not always avail them to fight and conquer. Thus was Goliath foiled by David, 1 Sam. xvii. 50. And Gideon's three hundred overthrew the mighty host of Midian, Judg. vii. 7. And we are told, Psalm xxxiii. 16, "There is no king saved by the multitude of his host, and a mighty man is not delivered by much strength." And 1 Sam. xiv. 6, "There is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many, or by few."

3. "Nor yet bread to the wise." Bread is put for all means of subsistence, and many wise men have been hard put to it. Certainly wisdom doth much to get a livelihood in the world, Prov. xxi. 20, "There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the house of the wise." Yet many times it falleth out that men of great wisdom scarce get a subsistence. As David was put to desire supplies from Nabal, a fool. And we are told by Solomon, that "folly is set in great dignity, when the wise sit in low places," Eccles. x. 6.

4. "Nor riches to men of understanding." Experience

often verifies this, that the learned are very poor; when lesser wits, mean people, get great substance. We read in Scripture of a rich fool, Luke xii. 20, and a poor wise man, Eccles. ix. 15. And in general, that it is "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich," Prov. x. 22. He is behind-hand with none of his creatures, he giveth to some wit, to others riches.

5. "Nor favour to men of skill." To attain favour with men it availeth not to be skilful, that is, able and well experienced, unless God add the blessing thereunto. Suppose favour in the eyes of princes, or the people. Alas, men of no desert are promoted, as Doeg by Saul. And the populace are carried away with slight persons, rather than those of the greatest wisdom and parts.

Secondly, positively. But "time and chance happeneth to them all."

1. Time, whereby is meant occasion and opportunity. There is a certain time which God hath allotted to every purpose and action, which if men had the wisdom to take hold on, their business would better succeed: but because man knoweth not his time, great is his misery upon earth; therefore he effecteth not the things he undertaketh.

2. The next word is chance, or occurrence; so is the word translated, 1 Kings v. 4, "The Lord hath given me rest, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent:" It is the same word. The success is such as the counsel of God chooseth, yet to us it seemeth to be a mere chance and adventure. That which God sees best shall come to pass at such a time; and likewise in such a manner and by such ways and means as he appoints. Things casual to us are counsels to him. What was chance to others, is the Lord to Job, chap. i. 21. Therefore not uncertain chance is intended, but such as is ruled and governed by God, who disposeth of all occasions and events, according to his own good pleasure, either in escaping out of danger, or obtaining victory, or being supplied with necessaries, or growing rich, or received into favour, it is all as God will order it. The swift, the wise, the strong, though

they are best prepared, disposed, and do most attend to their business, yet the event is in God's hand, who disposeth it according to his own will.

Before we draw the doctrine intended from hence, we shall remove the false inferences that some make.

1. Some think these words to be spoken in the person of the epicure or atheist, whom Solomon introduceth as reasoning against Divine Providence; but it agreeth not with the preface, [I returned and saw under the sun], which is usually prefixed before his observations about the vanity and vexation that ariseth from mere worldly things.

2. This text must be vindicated from them who set up an idol of the heathens' blind fortune, as if all things were carried by uncertain chance. No, it is occurrence; and though it be chance to men, it is Providence to God, the universal and first Agent, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will." It is not chance to him, for he never misseth of his end: for his knowledge is infallible, and his power insuperable.

3. And it must be vindicated from those who reject the use of means, and all operations, dispositions, and preparations of second causes, as if they moved not, and God did not act or move by them. No, this is a false inference, both in natural and spiritual things. (1.) In natural things, for God worketh by means, and by means prepared, Hosea ii. 21, 22, "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth," &c. There is a train of causes governed and influenced by God. The second causes have their operation, but they are under the government of the first, who worketh by them, and also suspendeth their operations at his pleasure. There are two extremes; one of Durandus, that God giveth second causes power to work of themselves, and doth only continue this power to them, but not work with them. But this is false: for all things depend on God, not only for being, but working. Acts xvii. 28, "In him we live, move, and have our being." The other is, that the

creature hath no operation at all, that the first cause doth only work by the presence of the second. But this is also against the wisdom of God; for if the second causes did no way concur to the producing of their effects, then they are made in vain. (2.) In spiritual things, Phil. ii. 12, 13, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." God's working is an engagement to us to wait upon him in the use of means, that we may meet with God in his way, and God may meet with us in our way. In his way: for God hath appointed certain duties to convey and apply his grace to us. We are to lie at the pool till the waters be stirred, to continue our attendance till God giveth his grace, John v. 3, 4. In our way: for God influenceth all things according to their natural inclination, God that enlighteneth with and by the sun, burneth with and by the fire, reasoneth with and by man, acts necessarily with necessary causes, and freely with free causes. He doth not oppress the liberty of the creature, but preserveth the nature and interest of his own workmanship, Hos. xi. 4, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." He draweth by propounding reasons, which we consider, and so betake ourselves to a godly life. In short, we must do what we can, otherwise we are wanting to ourselves; but we must not depend upon our own counsel, wisdom, and strength, for the event is not always to the swift, strong, and wise.

The true observation contained in these words is this, That our endeavours are often frustrated when there is the greatest probability of success. Here Solomon representeth men,

1. Under the several accomplishments of swift, wise, strong.
2. As addressing themselves to some effect to obtain success.
3. As in the issue disappointed. None of these accomplishments alone give the event intended.

4. That all things depend upon time and chance, namely, as they depend upon God's providence.

Therefore from the whole it appears, that instruments most fitted, and most diligent, are frustrated of the event which they so earnestly intended. The reasons whereof are,

I. The best instruments fail through men's ignorance, oblivion, and inadvertency, from which they cannot altogether free themselves in this life, not only in matters spiritual, but secular. This ignorance sheweth itself sometimes in a mistake of instruments whose hearts we know not; or if we know them for the present, we are not sure of futurity, how they may change, or be alienated and drawn off from us. Sometimes about time and opportunity, for the beginning, setting on foot, or carrying on any good works. "Man knoweth not his time." Sometimes in the manner of doing there is some error; for some things we know speculatively, we do not know practically; and what we know in the general is to be done; we do not always know in particular cases: what we know habitually we do not know actually, we do not consider it for the time. In short, no man knoweth all the secrets and circuits of human affairs. God only is omnipotent and omniscient, hath all creatures in his power, and can foresee all events. But it is much for us to understand our duty, we cannot know events; for things are carried strangely beyond men's expectation, and their likeliest projects crossed.

II. Because if we have sufficient knowledge, yet God can easily put some impediment in the way from within or without, to hinder the use of our wisdom, power, and knowledge.

1. From within. He can blast our excellencies in an instant, or obstruct the use of them for the time. As, though he did not destroy the property of the fire, yet he suspended the burning, when the three pious Jews were in the furnace. So of a sudden can he blast our strength. Psalm lxxvi. 5, 6, "The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep; none of the men of might have

found their hands ; at thy rebuke the chariot and horses are cast into a dead sleep." Whatsoever strength, courage, wit, any man hath, God, who gave it, can take it away when he pleaseth, or suspend the use of it. All this God can do with a rebuke, with a word of his mouth. Now as the strong cannot find their hands, so the wise cannot find their hearts. Job v. 14, "They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night." Who are these ? The wise and the crafty, whom he speaketh of in the foregoing verses. In the clearest cases they are to seek, and so their well-contrived plots come to nothing. There is a blast and plague upon their judgments, so that they involve and confound themselves ; or by self-conceit and froward self-will, they drive on their designs so precipitately, that they must needs miscarry. They do not seem to have the judgment of ordinary men. Thus, though men be endowed both with wisdom and strength, God can easily take away their power and will to use them.

2. From without. By casting in some event which we foresaw not, and could not think of. Man cannot foresee all the wheels which move in a business ; if he did, he is not able to turn them. So that, besides taking away his wisdom, courage, and strength, when the work is to be done, God puts some impediment in his way which was unexpected. There are certain sudden accidents which none can foresee or prevent, and any of them able to turn the enterprise another way. The most casual things are ordered by God, for the great ends of Providence. As for instance, Haman travailed with a design to cut off all the Jews, but his chief spite was against Mordecai. Now by chance the king could not sleep that night, and calleth for the book of memorials, Esther vi. 1, and found the discovery of a treason by Mordecai there recorded, which spoiled all the deep plots of Haman. Ahab intended to avenge himself upon Micaiah ; and to escape in the battle, changed his royal apparel, and counselled Jehoshaphat to put on his. " And

a man drew a bow at a venture," 1 Kings xxii. 34. But God directed the arrow to the heart of the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat escapeth, and he is slain. So that notable instance, the sun-shine upon the water, 2 Kings iii. 22, 23, 24, when the Moabites came to distress Jehoshaphat; when they cried, "Moab, to the spoil," it was indeed "Moab to a sore destruction."

Many such instances teach us, that the most casual things fall out by God's providence and heavenly government. And again, that there is some occurrence, which Providence casteth in the way, to disappoint the most likely means; so that whatever qualities men are endowed with, yet events are not in their power, but depend on the free concurrence of God. I speak nothing now of the influence of angels upon human affairs, whom God maketh use of in the government of the world.

III. The most able instruments often provoke God to disappoint them, whilst their abilities are a means of hardening their hearts in carnal confidence; and they often engage in business that proves mischievous to them; I say, in the most lawful businesses they provoke God to disappoint them, because they undertake them without God; but too often, being unrenewed and unsanctified, their wit and power is used against God.

1. It is a great crime to go about any business without God. Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." When our wisdom and strength are set up as an idol or image of jealousy, God is obliged to blast it. Therefore they that make their bosom their oracle, their wit their counsellor, seldom carve out to themselves a good portion. In all secret business we must ask his leave, counsel, and blessing. But, 2, many times men of great abilities employ them against God. They are ordinarily the devil's greatest agents and factors for his kingdom. In seducing our first parents he made use of the serpent, which was "more subtle than any beast of the field," Gen. iii. 1. Now

these make God their opposite party, that engage in any such enterprize upon the confidence of their wisdom and strength, and then they are snared by the work of their own hands, Psalm ix. 16. God delighteth to put rubs and stumbling-blocks in their way, that their craft and power may turn to their own ruin.

IV. To say and do, or to make a thing to be, is the act of Jehovah, which glory he will not communicate to any other. Lam. iii. 37, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" That is, Who is able to bring about what he speaketh and purposeth, unless God permit and give way thereunto? Therefore whatever preparation of means or likelihoods there are, we must not be too confident of future events. We cannot bring them to pass by our own power, and God doth not always work by likely means; he hides events from men, Isa. xlvi. 7, "Lest thou shouldst say, I knew them." Now the event could not be hidden, if the Lord went on in a constant course, giving the race to the swift. God carrieth on his Providence so as to leave no footsteps behind him. He goeth not one way so often as to make a path of it, that men may see the plain tendency thereof.

This teaches us,

1. The nothingness of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of God; which is a great lesson indeed, and mightily useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life.

First, it is a notion which the Scriptures much delight in, to represent God as all, and the creature as nothing. At first, when Moses inquired God's distinctive name, God gave him no other but, "I AM," Exod. iii. 14. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM;" and, "I AM hath sent me unto you." What thing is there under the cope of heaven that cannot say, I am that I am? The least worm hath its own being. But this, as God's distinctive name, implieth, that he encloseth all being with himself. Secondly, the creature is nothing. Isa. xl. 17, "All nations before him are nothing, they are

less than nothing, and vanity." Dan. iv. 35, "The inhabitants of the world are reputed before him as nothing." All created beings must vanish out of sight, when we think of God.

But how are the creatures nothing, which faith teaches us? And how something, which sense teacheth us? Something they are unquestionably, in respect of that dependent being which they have from God. We must not establish the Pyrrhonian conceit, that the whole world is indeed nothing, and our life but a dream. Nor imagine that sense is so far fallible, that a man of sound understanding may not be sure of the objects presented to his sense. Certainly the sceptics need to be scourged as fools, till they feel themselves something. But yet it is of high importance in the work of godliness, to see the creature nothing. And it is so, 1. By way of comparison with God. 2. By way of exclusion of God. 3. By way of opposition to God.

1. By way of comparison with God. So God's name only is, I AM, and then there is none besides him. If the creatures be compared among themselves, some are good, strong, wise, others not; but they are all nothing in comparison of God. Though there be a difference between the stars in the night; some are brighter, and some are darker, some of the first magnitude, second, and third; yet in the day-time they are all alike inconspicuous, all are darkened by the sun's glory. When we compare the creatures one with another, we shall find different degrees of perfection and excellency; but by the glorious brightness of the Father of lights all these inferior lights are obscured. God saith somewhere, "I am, and there is none else, I am alone. I lift my hand to heaven, and swear, I live for ever." It is counted an usurpation of Divine honour for the creature to say, I am. Isa. xlvii. 8, Babylon said in her heart, I am. So Nineveh, Zeph. ii. 15, "This is the rejoicing city, that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, [I am] and there is none besides me." For us to reckon upon our wisdom,

strength, or goodness, is a derogation from God. God in Scripture is *represented as only wise, only strong, and only good*, Job ix. 19, 1 Tim. i. 17, Matt. xix. 17. The creature hath but the shadow of these things. As it is but a borrowed kind of speech to call a picture, or a statue, a man; so the creatures are but a resemblance, when we call them wise, strong, good.

2. By way of exclusion of God. As the sun-beam is nothing when the sun withdraweth; or the sound is nothing, when the musician taketh away his mouth and breath from the pipe and instrument; so the creature in comparison with God, is in reckoning nothing; but in exclusion of God, it is in reality nothing. Because all the life, wisdom, strength, and the acting of it is but borrowed from God, and held only at God's pleasure. Naturally and spiritually it is true. If any of us say, I am, we must add with Paul, "By the grace of God I am that I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10. If God withdraw his providential influence and support, we vanish into nothing. Job vii. 8, "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not." Meaning, that God fastening his eye upon him in anger, would look him into nothing.

3. In way of opposition to God, or to his cause and interest in the world. Isa. xli. 11, "Behold all that are incensed against thee shall be as nothing." The creature beareth a big bulk in the eye of sense, seemeth not only as something, but as all things; and as long as a man looks to what is visible, we have no hope and comfort to fasten upon. But what are the swift, the wise, the strong to God, or against his Providence, when God is angry for sin, and we use ordinary means to avoid the danger, and do not reconcile ourselves to him, and take up the controversy between him and us? Alas! human endeavours can avail nothing against his wrath. Those probable means, which have prevailed at other times, will prove a mere nothing: bc we never so strong and wise, and use never so many politic means to avert the judgment. Amos vi. 13, "Ye rejoice in a thing of nought, which say,

Have we not taken to ourselves horns by our own strength?" They gloried in this, that their strength was renewed and increased, and so hoped to elude the threatened judgment, and to drive away any enemy that might invade them. *They glory in a thing of nought*, saith the prophet. Alas! what are armies, troops, confederacies, councils? Things of nought, when God will blow [upon them. All things on this side God are of nought, and vain to be gloried in, when our sins are come to an height, and judgments are threatened and near.

The true apprehension of this is useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life. For no one thing keepeth the creature upright so much as to see all in God, and nothing in the creature. This establisheth our dependence on God's promises in the most difficult cases. What made Abraham "to believe in hope against hope," and give God so much glory as he did? "He believed in him that quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that are not as though they were." Again, there is nothing that doth so encourage us in the difficult services which God calleth us unto, as to remember God is all, and the creature is nothing. Thus the apostles went to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem, in the very face of opposition. And among the Gentiles, possessed of a religion entailed upon them by the tradition of many ages, and for which they were zealous, the devil stirring up the hatred of many furious spirits against them. The doctrine was novel, and did not court the senses, but persuaded men to row against the stream of flesh and blood; it was slighted by the people, disputed against by their wise men, persecuted by the powers that then were, and had no temporal interest to back it; and this was to be promoted in the face of the learned world by a few poor fishermen, when all civil disciplines were in their height. What encouraged them to this? The apostle telleth you, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. That though they had "not many mighty, not many noble" to own them; "yet God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and

the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty; and the things that were not, to bring to nought the things that were." In short, that though magistracy and populacy were against them, the creature was as nothing, and God all in all. This encourages us to depend on God's Providence in the midst of losses, wants, straits; 2 Cor. vi. 10, "As having nothing, yet possessing all things." Again, if we have a due sense of God's being, the tempting baits of the world will scarce be seen; the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world are forgotten, as if they were not. Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not?" It is as if it were not, if God will blast it, if God will not work by it. It makes us look for a blessing upon all the means, 1 Cor. iii. 7, "For neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The best and wisest ministers can do nothing, either to plant or water, to convert or build up, unless God give the blessing, and set in with their labours. Again, it keeps us humble in the highest enjoyments; 2 Cor. xi. 5, "In nothing I come behind the chiefest apostles, though I am nothing." All is but a borrowed excellency. Thus you see it hath an influence upon our uprightness and sincere dealing, from first to last, to look off from the creature to God alone.

And this is the intent of this lesson, which is given us in this place. For wherefore is the race denied to the swift, and the battle to the strong, and riches to men of understanding? but to shew us that the creature doth not do all, yea, that it is nothing if you exclude God. Why doth the Holy Ghost direct us to this meditation, but to carry up our thoughts to the over-ruling Power of the highest cause, disposing of time and chance, that second causes may be seen to depend upon him both in being and operation, and that we should not abuse our talents by confiding in them without God, or using them against God, either to oppose his interest, or defeat his judgments?

II. This teaches us in this lottery of human affairs to look after surer comforts. This is the whole drift of this book. For Solomon in his critical search and observation of all things done under the sun, aimeth at this, to direct our hearts to blessings which are more stable and sure. God would leave these things at uncertainty, that our hearts might not too much be set upon them; that we might not pursue after favour, riches, and credit, as the best things. If all things here ran in one certain tenour, men that are wrought upon by sense would look no higher; but there is a nobler pursuit, a better happiness to be found elsewhere. *The race is not always to the swift*; but in the spiritual race we run not as uncertainly, 1 Cor. ix. 26. There the crown is sure, if we keep running, and faint not. Here the *battle is not always to the strong*, and, *he that putteth on his harness, must not boast as he that putteth it off*; but, *if you fight the good fight of faith, the God of peace will tread satan under your feet shortly*, Rom. xvi. 20. Here bread is not to the wise. Many persons of understanding labour and toil all their days for the meat that perishes, and at length can hardly get it; but if you *labour for the meat that perisheth not, the Son of Man will give it you*, John vi. 29. In spiritual and heavenly things choose and have, seek and have, labour and have: but it is not so in worldly things; there many times we have but our pains for our travail. Again, *nor riches to men of understanding*. Fools go away with the world, and we need not envy them, if we be wise to salvation. "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; so is he that heapeth up riches to himself, and is not rich towards God," Luke xii. 20, 21. Earthly things cannot make a man truly rich. The true riches are the heavenly treasure, the graces of the Spirit; to be rich in faith, James ii. 5; rich in good works, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. He that valueth an estate, more by the possession than by the use, is a spiritual fool, and will at length be thrown into hell for his perverse choice. No

matter if you want the riches of this world, so you be rich towards God. Christ gave his Spirit to the best disciples, but his purse to Judas, who was a thief and a robber. Once more, *nor favour to men of skill*. The favour of men, princes, or people, is a very uncertain thing, and the best experienced in affairs do not always light on it; but if we have the favour of God, this breedeth solid joy, Psalm iv. 6, 7. Gladness is sent into the heart when God smileth, though the world frowneth. These spiritual and eternal blessings are dispensed by a sure covenant, the others are promiscuously given.

III. This teaches us what need there is God should be seen and sought unto in all our designs, about the disposal of ourselves and ours. 1. What will the use of means and second causes do without God? When we have prepared best, and consulted best, the intentions we travail with may miscarry, for the event is wholly in God's hands, Prov. xvi. 1, "The preparations of the heart are from man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Man propoundeth, intendeth, purposeth; but the success cometh from God. 2. When we have done our duty, and used such means as God affordeth, then we may quietly refer the success to God, in whose hands are all the ways of the children of men, and upon whose good pleasure the issues of all things depend.

IV. The wisest and best of men must not expect always to be successful, for the words are brought in upon the occasion of rejoicing in our comforts. In an uncertain world we must always reserve a liberty of full and free submission to God's Providence, if the event should not answer expectation. "For the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." We must not be too confident of worldly events; for in these things, God, by whose Providence all things are governed, would leave us to uncertainty. Alas! many times we mistake and miss the opportunities, and then the best preparations will be lost. And sometimes God interposeth, and will be glorified by us in an afflicted condition. Therefore you

must reserve a liberty to God, to order and govern you according to^r his own pleasure, as to success in your callings, comfort in your relations, favour with men in your employments. God may make every relation a door to let in affliction. You should often consider the sovereignty of God, and the uncertainty of all worldly things. You speak arrogantly when you presume on success, and take more upon you than you are able to perform. 1 Sam. ii. 3, "Talk no more exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth," that is, presumptuous conceits of absolute success; James iv. 13, 14, &c. "Go to now, ye that say, to-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.—Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. Now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil." Besides there are certain times when God is resolved to proceed with his people in a judiciary way, and then all means we can use will not keep off the stroke,; Amos ii. 14, 15, 16, "Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, nor the mighty deliver himself; neither shall he stand that handleth the bow, nor he that is swift of foot deliver himself, nor he that rideth the horse: he that is courageous among the mighty, shall flee away in that day, saith the Lord." No means, though never so probable, will avail us in a time of judgments, neither speed of horse or foot, neither strength of body, nor courage of mind, nor provision of armour, nor skill to use it; but the judgments shall reach all they aim at. Then it is plainly fulfilled, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

V. This teaches men of the best abilities and sufficiencies for any work, to be humble. 1. Before the event: for many times they meet with more disappointments than those that want those abilities; and their best designs miscarry, when meaner persons are carried through their difficulties. 2. After the event, we must look above second causes; not attribute any thing to our own

strength, or gifts, but to God's blessing. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; nor the strong man glory in his might," &c. Jer. ix. 23. So Deut. viii. 17, 18, "Say not in thy heart, my power, and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth." Let us not sacrifice to our own net. *The battle is not to the strong; nor bread to the wise.* It is God's, and he will not be robbed of his glory. And as we should carry it humbly towards God, so also to men, not despising them of mean gifts. Many times God giveth them more success in the ministry, in ordinary callings, in favour and preferments in the world; or esteem in the eyes of the people. It is God only makes the difference, and what thou hast above others thou hast it from God, and for God; not to lift up thyself, but to exalt God; therefore give thanks, and do not contemn others.

Lastly, this may prevent the discouragement of those that want gifts, or parts, or means. Suppose their adversaries be mighty, "it is nothing with God to help with many, or them that have no power," 2 Chron. xiv. 11. The less in the creature, the more in God; 2 Cor. xii. 9, "His power is perfected in our weakness." God many times passeth over the strong, wise, and understanding, and gets himself most glory in protecting the weak, and providing for them.

SERMON VIII.



ACTS XXI. 14.

*And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying,
The Will of the Lord be done.*

THE history that concerns this passage, begins at the 8th verse. In the whole you may take notice ;

I. Of the occasion.

II. Of the carriage of the saints upon it.

I. In the occasion I observe,

1. That Paul was now at Cesarea, in Philip's house.

Ver. 8, Philip was one of those that was driven out of his dwelling by Paul's persecution, and now he received him into his own house. Philip, that was injured by Paul a persecutor, is easily reconciled with Paul a convert. It is an ill office to rake in the filth which God hath covered, and it argueth envy at the Divine grace to upbraid men with sins committed before conversion. Former miscarriages and injuries should be forgotten. If Christ hath taken them into his bosom, we should not be strange to them.

2. There Agabus comes to him, and prophesieth of Paul's bonds at Jerusalem. Agabus was a prophet, but by what appears of him in Scripture, ever a prophet of evil tidings : he foretold a famine, Acts xi. 28 ; and now Paul's bonds. Some, like Agabus, come always with a sad message in their mouths, and yet these have their use.

Even those that give warning of judgments to come, should be accepted, as well as those that bring us hopes of mercy and deliverance. It was an unjust exception of the king of Israel against Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 8, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." They that do evil do not love to hear of evil. And yet that may be true which is not pleasing.

3. Agabus useth a sign; ver. 11, he goes and binds himself, and sheweth, thus it should be done with Paul at Jerusalem. This was usual with the prophets. Isaiah went naked, and barefoot, to shew what should be their usage under the king of Assyria, Isai. xx. 2, 3. That God might teach his people by visible signs, as well as by word of mouth, and what was received by both senses (sight and hearing) might make a deeper impression upon their souls; therefore he hath instituted sacraments. As kings delight to have their royal deeds not only recorded in chronicles, but to have some monuments set up as signs, which may be perpetuated in future ages; so the Lord Jesus, having vanquished death, hell, the devil and sin, not only has it recorded in his word, but would give us signs and monuments, that we might continually remember both the victory and the comfort we have by Christ.

But what need was there that Paul should be so often warned of his bonds? He had been told before; for he said, Acts xx. 22, 23, "I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me." And again, in this chapter, Acts xxi. 4, there were some disciples "who said to Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." How shall we reconcile these expressions? "They said, through the Spirit, that Paul should not go up to Jerusalem;" and yet Paul was "bound in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem." In this latter place, we must distinguish between the prediction of troubles, and the counsel of safety. They said, through the Spirit, that it would be dangerous for Paul to go to

Jerusalem; but they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem out of their own private affection. But why was he warned so often? That he might be thoroughly prepared. God doth not love to take his children unprovided. Paul was not surprised, but had warning upon warning of his present danger.

II. In the carriage of the saints upon this occasion, we may take notice of four things.

1. The entire affection of the disciples to Paul, ["They besought him," &c.]

2. Paul's entire affection to God, ["Yet he would not be persuaded."]

3. Their discretion, ["When he would not be persuaded, they ceased."]

4. The ground of their discretion, their piety, ["They said, The will of the Lord be done."]

1. We may observe, their entire affection to Paul. "Both we, and they of that place, besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem," ver. 12. This entreaty did not proceed from self-love, for they were resolved to go with him, ver. 15; but zeal for God's glory. The lives and liberties of those that are eminent instruments of God's glory are very dear and precious to God's faithful people. Paul declares of Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 4, "For my life laid they down their own necks." They have them in singular love for their works' sake, and therefore when they are in danger, they weep sore, Acts xx. 37. And when they are dead, they make great lamentation, Acts viii. 2. As the Israelites said to David, 2 Sam. xxi. 17, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel:" that is, lest the glory and splendour of the nation perish with thee. The loss of a good magistrate is a great loss; and such instruments are not easily had again when once lost.

But was this well done to persuade him? Yes; for though the prophet had foretold what Paul should suffer, yet we know of no command they had to the contrary.

Desires against God's secret will are not unlawful, when we submit to his revealed will, 1 Kings viii. 18: "And the Lord said to David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart." That was against God's secret will, yet it was no sin, for there was no command to the contrary. So here it was right to desire the preservation of so precious an instrument as Paul was; yet satan might have a hand in it, from their persuasion to weaken his resolution. Satan often laboureth to take us off from our duty by the persuasion of our loving friends, who mean us well. Matt. xvi. 22, 23, when Christ had told of his sufferings at Jerusalem, Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." Our Saviour replied, "Get thee behind me, satan." Who would have thought that Christ's disciple should have been satan's instrument, and then when speaking in love to his Master? Therefore we must not measure their counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word; and be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God.

We may observe, 2. Paul's firm resolution, "He would not be persuaded." But how doth this agree with that character of heavenly wisdom, that it is "easy to be entreated?" Jam. iii. 17. I answer, *In* our duty it is praiseworthy to be easy to be entreated, but not *from* our duty. Paul went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem; he knew the will of God, and therefore though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose. No persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of danger, should turn us out of the way wherein God commands us to walk. No *persuasion*. So Christ, when desired to avoid suffering, which was the end of his coming into the world, rejected the motion. The Lord Jesus, with the same indignation, rebuketh Peter dissuading him from suffering, as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry. No *dangers*. Here were dangers threatened. Agabus foretold bonds, the Spirit foretold bonds, others told him

of bonds, yet Paul was not persuaded. So when the king of Babylon threatened the three children, they resolutely answered, Dan. iii. 18, "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image." And therefore Paul rebukes them, for they were weeping when they saw his resolution, "What mean you to break my heart? For I am not only ready to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of Christ."

There is a two-fold heart: a heart that is hard against God, and soft for God; and a heart that is hard for God, and soft against God. The first, when it is bold in sinning, but fearful and soft in troubles. As Deut. xx. 8, "The fearful and the faint-hearted." But the heart which is hard for God, and soft against God, is a coward in sin, but undaunted in all manner of sufferings. They who have this, will trust in God, though he kill them; and can confront the greatest dangers, and yet tremble at the least offence against God, and dare not do it. Now, saith Paul, "You break my heart;" that is, weaken my courage, and take me off from my purpose.

3. Observe their discretion, that, "when he would not be persuaded, they ceased." Either Paul told them what intimation he had from God, or else they thought so wise a man would not thrust himself upon danger without a warrant. It is the disposition of humble spirits not to be peremptory, but to submit to them that are wiser than themselves. John would not at first admit Christ to his baptism, out of reverence to him, and humility. But saith Christ, "Suffer it to be so now." Then he suffered him. So those that were so zealous for enclosing the common salvation, "when they heard that God had granted repentance to the gentiles, held their peace, and glorified God," Acts xi. 18. It sheweth we should not be too stiff in our conceits, when plain evidence appeareth to the contrary.

4. Observe their piety, the ground of their discretion;

“The will of the Lord be done.” The Scripture speaks, (1.) Of God’s determining will, Eph. i. 11, “He doth all things according to the counsel of his will.” (2.) Of his approving will, Rom. xii. 2, “That ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.” The text speaks not of his will to be done *by* us, but of his will to be done *upon* us. God’s intended will is secret, before it bring forth the event: and while it is secret, we pray for the accomplishment of it, and we conceive all our desires with submission to it. But now we speak of his will revealed and declared in his providence: there is a submission required to both.

First, to God’s intended will, while it is yet kept secret. In every business we should ask his leave and blessing. (1.) His leave. As Judges i. 1, “Shall I go up and fight against the Canaanites, or shall I not?” And thus Jehoshaphat would inquire of the prophet, “Shall I go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prevail?” The honest heathens had this principle, *A Jove principium*; that every action was to be begun with God. Balaam had a conscience this way, he would inquire of God before he should proceed either to curse or bless. By this means we acknowledge God, our dependance upon him, and his dominion over us. It is robbery to use any goods without the owner’s leave. We and all ours are the goods of God. God hath such a dominion over us as a man hath over his goods; not only a dominion of jurisdiction, as governor in law, but a dominion of propriety. Therefore, in journeys, in removing of our dwelling, in disposal of our children, God must not be left out, but be treated with in the first place. (2.) His blessing. When the event is uncertain, beg the Lord’s concurrence, and the blessing of his providence. Jer. x. 23, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Man cannot manage his own actions with any comfort or success, therefore we must beg it of God, whose will doth all in the case. So Gen. xxiv. 12, “And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I

pray thee send me good speed this day." We are to desire all may speed while we are in God's way. It is a vain thing to promise ourselves great matters without the leave and blessing of providence; for our lives and actions, and all things which concern us, are in God's hands.

2. We must refer the event to his determination. This is a great part of trust in God, and of quietness of mind, when we are so persuaded of the Lord's goodness, wisdom, and power, that we leave the event to him, that he may order it as he pleaseth, being so sensible of the power of his providence, and so confident of the goodness of his conduct. Submitting all things to God's will after the event, is patience; and submitting all things to God's will before the event, is faith. When I trust God absolutely, I say, let him do with me what he pleaseth; for I know he is a good God, and he will do nothing but what is for the best. We are obliged in all things we design to be subordinate to God's will, and to accept of it, Rom. i. 10, "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you." This was a truth evident to the heathens. Plato brings in Alcibiades asking Socrates, how he should speak of future events, and in what manner he should express himself. And Socrates answers, "Even as God will." To use such an express reservation in all our undertakings is profitable to beget reverence in ourselves, and to instruct others. Thus far the light of nature teacheth men. It is not absolutely necessary in all cases to express ourselves so, but this disposition should be in our minds. I speak this as the lowest thing, that we be not too confident of events, but refer them to the Lord's will. But a child of God goeth higher, he knows he hath a good God, a heavenly Father, who guides all things in wisdom, power, and goodness. And the event may be against his desires, appetites, judgment; but he knows God will do better for him than his own choice.

3. Our purposes and desires must be so moderated, that we may be forc-armed for all events, 2 Sam. xv. 25,

26, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; let him do with me as seemeth good unto him." Such an holy indifference should there be upon our spirits, that we should be like a die in the hand of Providence, to be cast high or low, according as it falls. When we are over-earnest for temporal blessings, we do but make a scourge, a snare, and a rod, many times to ourselves. For when God's will is declared to the contrary, this fills us with bitter sorrow; and obstinate desires put us upon great vexation and disappointment; and that layeth us open to atheism, and distrust of God, of the conduct of his providence, and the promises of the invisible world. Therefore, until God hath declared his pleasure, there must be such moderation as to be prepared for all events.

4. When the event depends upon a duty, we must do the duty, and refer the event to God. It is a base principle to say, we must be sure of success before we will engage for God; no, when there is an apparent duty, we must do our duty, and trust God with the event.

5. In a dubious case, observe the leading of Providence. The Israelites were not to remove but as they saw the pillar of cloud before them: and so in all things, the happiness of which depends upon God's will, see what God's providence will lead you to, Acts xvi. 10, "We endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them." Sometimes we are left to gather from our own reason what such or such a thing means. Now, after earnest prayer, when the fair course and tendency of outward circumstances lead us, we may look upon it as the way of God's providence for our good. It is said, Ezra viii. 21, "I proclaimed a fast, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones, and for all our substance." How did they know the Lord was entreated for them? Why, after prayer, they found such an over-ruling instinct, such

a fair invitation of providence, that from thence they apparently gathered, This is the right way the Lord would have us walk in.

This is the direction to be given to Christians, when the event is uncertain. But when the event is declared in God's providence, then we have nothing to do but plainly to submit, and that quietly and contentedly, with hope and encouragement in the Lord. And this is the main point, That it is the duty of all God's children to be willing to submit themselves to the dispensation of God's providence in whatever befalls them or theirs. In this point it is implied, That all things come within the guidance of God's providence. There is nothing so high but God doth it; Dan. iv. 35, "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, and say unto him, What doest thou?" The sun doth not shine by chance, nor the rain fall by chance. There is nothing so mean but it is under God's providence; Matt. x. 29, 30, "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father." A mighty support unto Christians in their affliction. There is nothing so bad but the Lord can turn it to good. Gen. 1. 20, "Ye thought it for evil, but God meant it for good." There is nothing which happeneth from wicked men to his children, but the Lord hath a hand in it; Job i. 23, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken." It is Chrysostom's gloss upon that place, He doth not say, the thief, the Sabean, the Chaldean, hath taken; no, but the "Lord hath taken;" the same God that gave it. If it come from satan, God hath a hand in it; for many of Job's troubles and afflictions, especially upon his body, came immediately from satan; and yet he saith, Job vi. 4, "The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me." They were the arrows of the Almighty, though shot out of satan's bow. This certainly is implied, that God hath a will, hand, and providence in all those things which seem most contrary to us.

That which is expressed is, That we ought to submit to the providence of God. This appears from the example

of the Lord Jesus Christ, Matt. xxvi. 39, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He had more to lose than any of us have, or possibly can have; the comfort and influence of the presence of God in a personal union; and more to suffer; yet he submits, and professeth a full subjection to his Father's will. His cup was a bitter cup, which made him sweat drops of blood; yet he was willing to drink it, even the dregs, since it was his Father's will.

The next pattern we have is David, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, "Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." What a meek submission was here to God's pleasure? Resigning up his person, crown, and estate to the wise and gracious disposal of God; to receive a benefit or punishment, as the Lord should determine. David sets his name to a blank, and bids God write what he pleaseth. It is hard for us to consent to known articles, but David wholly referreth himself unto God, "Let him do what seemeth best unto him."

So Abraham, the father of the faithful, how contentedly doth he speak? He thought no other but that Isaac, the son of the promise, should be sacrificed, Gen. xxii. 8. When his son asked him, "Where is the burnt-offering for sacrifice?" He answered, "My son, the Lord will provide an offering;" and so they went on their way together. When God declareth his will not only contrary to our natural affection, but our gracious hopes; when he taketh away instruments upon whose lives his glory seems to depend, we have the same answer, "God will provide."

The next instance shall be of Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18, "It is the Lord, let him do whatsoever he pleaseth." When the sentence was past, he humbly submitteth. He doth not murmuringly say, Must I bear the punishment of my son's iniquity? Their will is not in my power: if they are wicked, let them answer for it. No; "It is the Lord," and his will must stand: "It is the Lord," who is too just to do us wrong, too good to do us hurt.

The next shall be that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9, "For this I besought the Lord thrice." He knocked thrice at the throne of grace; but the Lord made him no answer but, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The "thorn in the flesh," some painful disease or affliction must continue. And what saith Paul? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, persecutions for Christ's sake." He doth entertain them with cheerfulness and thanksgiving, if he may have experience that the grace and power of Christ may rest upon him. It is enough that God's will is fulfilled, though it be with our pain and loss.

Now let us consider,

I. Wherein this submission consists.

II. Upon what grounds we ought to submit.

I. Wherein this submission consists.

It is not to be insensible. Godliness doth not teach men stoicism, to harden themselves under the rod of God. The Lord complains of that, Jer. v. 3, "I have stricken them, but they have not grieved." We must lay his *hand* to heart as well as his *word*. We are not to be like the corner-stone, which bears the whole weight of the building, and feels nothing. There are two extremes, *slighting the hand of God, or fainting under it*, Heb. xii. 5, and slighting is worse than the other. There is no patience where there is no sense and feeling. Certainly there can be no improvement where there is not a feeling the strokes of his correcting hand.

But it is, 1. A work of the *judgment*, which subscribes to the justice and goodness of the dispensation, that it is just: Dan. ix. 7, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face." It is a dreadful correction, but the Lord is righteous. And to the *goodness* of it, Isai. xxxix. 8, "Good is the word of the Lord." Though it was a terrible word, yet the submission of a sanctified judgment calls it good.

2. An act of the will accepting of it, Lev. xxvi. 41, "If they shall accept of the punishment of their sin." There is a consent of the will; a perfect correspondence between a gracious heart and the will of God. They take it well and kindly from God that it is no worse. There are some reluctances of nature, but their overpowering judgment and will doth approve and accept. Afflictions are to be taken as a potion, not as a drench; not forced upon us whether we will or not. We must accept of them, take them down ourselves; it is a bitter cup, but it is of our heavenly Physician's tempering. Seneca, a heathen, could say, *Deo non pareo, sed assentio ex Animo*; I do not merely submit to Divine Providence, but consent to it. A strange thing that a heathen should say so. It is good, and so we accept it: not barely out of necessity, and through a patience by force, but there is a willing submission to what the Lord ordereth concerning us.

3. There is a command over the affections of anger and sorrow. 1. Anger, that we may not fret against the Lord: Psal. xxxvii. 1, "Fret not thyself against evil doers." Many times when words are kept in, there is a secret rising, and swelling of heart against God's providence; as an oven stopped up is the hotter within. Though it may be words do not break out, yet the heart boils, riseth, and dislikes God's dealing. Psal. lxii. 1, "My soul, keepeth silence to God." Not only my tongue, but my soul. 2. Upon our sorrow, that it may not run into excess. We are allowed to grieve, but with moderation. To be dead and senseless, whatever breaches are made upon us, doth not suit with the temper of a Christian. Christ hath legitimated our fears and sorrows; for in the days of his flesh he had tears, sorrows, and groans; therefore, 1 Cor. vii. 31, mourn we should; but as if we mourned not. If the affection be stubborn and boisterous, it must be cited before the tribunal of reason; We must give an account of it; "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God," Psal. xlii. 5.

4. The tongue is bridled, lest discontent break out.

As "Aaron held his peace," Lev. x. 3. It was a sad stroke, but it was the Lord. He kept his tongue from murmuring against God. If there be a fire kindled in our bosoms, we should not let the sparks fly abroad. Murmuring is a taxing of God, as if he dealt hardly and unjustly with us; and if it vents itself, it is more to his dishonour; Job xl. 4, 5, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." Job was resolute enough before to fill his mouth with arguments; if once he could meet with God, he would reason the case with him. But presently he is damped at God's appearance; and when his passions were a little calmed, he renounceth his former bold resolutions, and would no longer give vent to his distemper. He is resolved to be silent before God, and bury all his discontented thoughts in his own bosom. As if he had said, Once in my foolish passion I was complaining of thee, and desirous to dispute with thee. It is time to give over that debate, and humbly to submit.

II. Let us consider what are the grounds of this submission? For patience is wise and considerate, and proceeds upon solid reasons.

1. They see God in his providence: Psal. xxxix. 9, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." That is the first principle of submission; surely God hath a hand in it: Isa. xxxviii. 15, "What shall I say? he hath spoken to me, himself hath done it." That passage, though it be a song of thanksgiving, doth not relate to the deliverance, but the affliction, the disease and sentence of death which he had received. There is atheism and anti-providence in our murmurings. If we did see God at the end of causes, we could no more murmur against his providence, than we can against his creation. You would laugh at that man that should murmur and complain because God made him a man, and not an angel. It is as ridiculous to oppose ourselves

against the will of God in other dispensations. And the more immediately the affliction comes from God, the greater our submission should be; as in sickness, and death of friends and relations, "It is the Lord." But if subordinate instruments be used in bringing on affliction, every wheel works according to the motion of the first mover. All the links are fastened to God's hands; therefore if we look no higher than the creature, we murmur, and break our teeth in biting at the next link. David was so far from opposing God, that he bears the contumely of the instrument, 2 Sam. xvi. 11, "Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him curse." That was a time of humiliation, not revenge. If God will admonish us of our duty by the injuries of men; and cure our imposthume with the razor of their sharp tongue, we must be content. To resist lower officers of the state, is to contemn the authority with which they are armed. They could not wag their tongues without God.

2. God hath an absolute sovereignty to do what he will: Rom. ix. 20, 21, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay? We are in his hands, as the clay in the hands of the potter." His supreme right, and dominion over the creatures, to dispose of them according to his pleasure, should be often thought of by us: Job ix. 12, "Behold he taketh away, who can hinder? Who shall say unto him, what dost thou?" He hath an absolute dominion, and is not accountable to any. A man may do with his own as he pleaseth. Why should we not allow him the common privilege of all proprietors? If God deprive us of any enjoyment, there is no resisting him by force, seeing God is omnipotent; nor ought there to be any question of the justice of the fact, seeing he hath absolute dominion, and is not accountable to any. All creatures are in his hand, to dispose of them as he pleaseth. And sometimes he sees fit to take them away in a violent manner, so as may most affect the parties interested, and shew us his sovereignty.

He will do it in his own way, by arming the thoughts and humours of our own bodies against us. Here our subjection to God must begin, till he be pleased to give some farther account of his dealing with us, Job xxxiii. 13, "Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters." Before what tribunal will you call the Lord? Where will you cite him to answer for the wrong done to you? This sovereignty of God doth exceedingly calm the heart; God hath a right alone to govern the world. He did govern it before we were born, and will do it when we are gone. He deposeth kings, and disposeth of kingdoms, and all affairs as he will. Men must not prescribe rules to God, nor limit his uncontrollable authority: our work is not to dispute and quarrel, but obey and submit in all things.

3. This sovereignty of God is modified in the dispensation of it with several attributes. As,

(1.) With infinite justice: Deut. xxvii. 26, when every curse was pronounced, they were to say, Amen, let it come to pass, for it is just. All that we suffer is deserved, nay, is less than our iniquities deserve, Ezra ix. 13, as the restored Israelites acknowledge, when they were in Babylon, for they might have been in hell. Job xxxiv. 10, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." All such thoughts are to be rejected with abhorrence and indignation. We have strange conceptions and thoughts of God when under a temptation, ver. 23; but "he will not lay upon man more than right," that he should not enter into judgment with God. No, he goeth on just and sure grounds, though we do not always discern them.

(2.) God doth it too with great faithfulness; we should look on all afflictions as federal dispensations, as appendages of the covenant of grace. Psal. cxix. 75, "In very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." Mark, he doth not say, notwithstanding thy faithfulness, but *in* faithfulness he performs his covenant. When he thresheth us, it is to make our husks fly off; that he may quicken us to a

serious remembrance of himself, and of the duties we owe to him.

(3.) It is ordered with great wisdom: “for God is a God of judgment,” Isa. xxx. 18. He knows what is best for his people. We think this and that best, but God is wiser than we: when many providences fall out, we think it would be better for the church, if it were otherwise. But this is to tax God’s wisdom, or charge him with want of love and tenderness towards his people. They are dearer to him than they are to us. Chrysostom shews how we take upon us to order affairs; he brings in an instance of a man that is very kind to the poor; if he dies, they are undone. Have you more care of them than God their Maker? Job did not eat his morsels alone, but the poor did eat his bread, and were clothed with his fleeee, therefore the sides of the poor are said to bless him. Cannot God provide for the poor without Job? So, in like cases, for the churches’ sake. This providence seems to tend altogether towards its ruin; but God knows how to provide for his people; and you must not prescribe to him. It was blasphemy in Alphonsus to say, *Si Deo a consiliis adfaisset se consultius multa ordinaturum*; ‘That if he had been by when God made the world, he would have ordered some things with greater advice, and better care.’ Such blasphemy do we secretly lisp out in our murmurings and discourses about providence; when we are questioning how this, that, or the other thing can be for his glory. The Lord knows how to guide all things to his glory, and we must absolutely yield to it.

(4.) With much love. For he that hath the wisdom of a father, hath also the bowels of a mother. A mother may sooner forget a poor shiftless child, than God will forget his people, Isa. xlix. 15, &c. There is a great deal of love shewn in our afflictions. Sometimes in mitigating them, 1 Cor. x. 13, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear.” Jacob drove on, as the little ones were able

to bear; so the Lord suits his conduct, and lays on the affliction, as his people are able to bear. Castles are victualled before they are besieged, After great comforts, then comes affliction, Heb. x. 32, "After you were enlightened, ye endured a great fight of affliction." Then again, in refreshing us in our troubles with many gracious experiences. The Lord doth things which seem bitter to the sense; but when he hath refined our taste, then he sheds abroad his love into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 3, 5. Our adoption is cleared up, and the loss of outward comfort is accompanied with a greater increase of spiritual comfort. Again, he shews his love in ordering all things for our good. Out of what corner soever the wind blows, it blows good to the saints. "Arise, O North wind, and blow, thou South." North and South, contrary points, Cant. iv. 16, yet "the spices of his garden flow out." That which is against our will, is not against our profit. God is still pursuing what is for his own glory, and our good. So all that falleth out is either good, or will tend to good.

This teacheth us upon what grounds there should be such a submission to all personal or domestical calamities which may befall any of us, and to all that befall the church. It is the will of God; that is, the great ground of composing the heart, whatever falleth out. Whenever you hear of the increase of violence, or any resolution against the people of God, this should calm us, "The will of the Lord be done." God knows what is best for his people. This is an everlasting ground of comfort, that we are still in God's hands, and whatever befalls us, it comes by his special providence, even by his that numbers the hairs of our heads, and who carves out every condition to us. When the disciples were sore troubled and affrighted, John vi. 20, Jesus comes to them and said, "Be not afraid, it is I." There are many remarkable passages in that story. The disciples were in the dark of the night overtaken with a mighty storm, and for a long time did not know what would become of them; the text saith, they had rowed about

twenty-five or thirty furlongs before Christ appeared : Christ seeth it not fit to appear at first, but lets the trial go on until it be a trial indeed. Now, about the fourth watch of the night Jesus passed by, Mark vi. 48 ; that is, the morning watch, and then Jesus appears. We are very tender of ourselves, and soon think we are tried enough ; therefore would fain be delivered, but our wise Lord seeth we need more. When Christ came, then theirs fears are increased ; Christ came walking upon the water, and they thought it was a spectre. Spirits broken with troubles are very apt to take in afflicting impressions from every thing they see and hear. The very way of our mercies may be matter of terror to us. At length he discovered himself, “ It is I, be not afraid.” I walk upon that water which seems to be ready to swallow you up. I that raised the waves, know how to still them. Here is that which may allay all our disquiets and fears. Remember, it is not the instrument, but Christ, and God must be eyed, and “ the will of the Lord be done.”

SERMON IX.



MATT. VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

IT is a general complaint, that Christians are defective in the duties of the second table. Hypocrites may be so to mask over a dishonest life with a pretence of godliness. But we are not to judge of the people of God by these, no more than of the sound grapes in the cluster by the rotten ones. For certainly all that have truly submitted to Christianity, find that religion doth influence their relations in all the duties which they owe to man, as well as unto God. It was not a boast which Austin said to the heathens, "Let all the religions of the world produce such princes, such subjects, such husbands, wives, parents, children, as the Christian religion produceth." But, be that complaint true or false, it concerns us to take notice of it, and to prevent all suspicion of this kind. And therefore we have need to press moralities upon Christians, and that from the true root, the love of God; for that is the great mistake, to set up a false morality, and forget the true, which is built on faith in Christ, and love to God.

To set down each particular duty would be tedious. The life of man is short, and the law in all its necessary

explications long and voluminous ; therefore to have a sure rule, and a short one, would be a great advantage to us in this matter. And this one direction, which I have read to you, will serve instead of all. It is a sure rule, for Christ gives it us, who is truth itself ; and though it be short, it is full ; for here is the substance of the law and prophets, all drawn into one compendious rule. This sentence is of such weight, that the Emperor Severus wrote it in his palace, and caused it to be engraven in golden letters in the courts of justice, and to be proclaimed at the punishment of offenders. And therefore I shall briefly discourse of this rule, and present it to your serious consideration.

In the words there is,

I. A rule of life, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

II. The commendation of it, “ For this is the law and the prophets.”

III. The illative particle, “ Therefore.”

My business shall be to open these :

I. Here is the rule of life. This general precept may be considered in the affirmative, or in the negative. The affirmative is in the text, “ All those things that you would men should do unto you ;” the negative is in that noted saying, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris* ; ‘ That which you would not have done to you, do not you to another.’ The negative conduceth to restrain injury ; the affirmative urgeth us to do good. The negative enforceth justice and equity in us to others ; the affirmative, love and charity. Heathens by the light of nature were more sensible of negatives, that they should not hurt others in their body, goods, or good name, as we would not in any of these things be wronged ourselves ; therefore Christ passing that, layeth down the affirmative, of which nature is less sensible, of doing good to others, as we desire they should do to us in our necessities.

But because one cannot well be handled without the other, I shall begin with the negative consideration, which

concerns justice to the persons, names, goods, and possessions of others. We are earnest to have fair dealing from others; we should be as earnest to yield the same again. There is no man but hath a quick sense of injuries done to himself. •When we are wronged by lying, slandering, oppression, or by fraudulent bargains, how will we discourse of equity, and plead for right upon these occasions? Why, the like tender respect should we have in our dealings with others. As you would not others should defame, oppress, or over-reach you, so should not you do to them. In other men's dealing with us we are masters, acute discerners of right; in our own case, able to teach what men ought to do; but in our dealing with others, we are scarce scholars. We would be revered, commended, have others tender of our credit; and if we are abused in person, disgraced in speech, endangered in goods, we complain of the wrong. Therefore it was well said of Calvin, "That it would be much better for mankind, if we were as faithful learners of active duties, as we are acute doctors concerning passives;" that is, That we would not offer such usage to others, as we would not be well pleased with ourselves; but give as we would receive.

To impress this rule upon you, I shall give three considerations in the negative sense.

1. That in the duties of the second table we have more light than we have in the first. For when Christ sets forth the sum of both the tables, Matt. xxii. 36, 37, he tells us, that we must "love God with all our hearts, our souls, our strength, and mind;" but when he comes to the love of our neighbour, he gives a measure more easily discernible, we are to "love our neighbour as ourselves." Love will tell us what is good for ourselves. The love of God must be preferred both to love to ourselves, and to our neighbours. And in guiding and expressing our love to God, we need many rules. Our desires of good to ourselves are a complete rule of that respect we owe to our neighbours. This principle would shew us what we

owe to one another. But though nature discovers a God, and reason that this God should be worshipped; yet nature could never carve out such a worship as is proper to God, and as God likes; there needs a larger explication. Let a man free from passion, and inordinate self-love, consider what he would have done to himself; this will direct him plainly what should be done to others, that agree with us in the same common nature, and who have an original right with us in things that belong to justice and equity, and should be as fairly respected by us, as we expect these things to be by them.

The second observation is this, that this rule is spiritual, and concerneth the inward man as well as the outward: not only actions, words, and practices, but thoughts. The whole law of God is spiritual, Psal. xix. 7, "The law of God is perfect, converting the soul;" not only guides the motions of the outward man, but reacheth to the workings of the heart. As is the first table, so is the second: for we are told, Matt. xxii. 39, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." How like to it? It is as spiritual as the first; and therefore not only what I do, but what I think and purpose to do to others, is comprehended in it. Christ therefore speaks of adultery committed in the heart, by wanton thoughts and desires. This rule which concerns the whole second table, not only concerns your actions, but your dispositions and inclinations; and not only provides against hard speeches and outward behaviour, but secret grudgings in your hearts against others. In other places it is, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," Gal. v. 14. So that all the duties and practices which concern the good of our neighbour, must proceed from a principle of love. The justice of the second table, as required of Christians, is a justice excited by love. Though our outward acts be never so pleasant, yet if love be not at the bottom of it, it is not right. "If I give all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it signifieth nothing." If it be not done with love, it is nothing worth, not

accepted, nor rewarded by God. And so we must refer these words, not only to the outward man, but to the principle of love which is in the heart.

Thirdly, all that is done by virtue of this rule, must be done not only out of love to man, but out of love to God, and as an act of obedience. For when Christ gives us this direction, "Whatsoever ye would," &c. he doth not give it as a politic course, to establish peace in the world, but as a compendious rule, to guide us in the duties of the second table. Self-love is the measure, but it is not the reason, ground, or principle of our actions: a measure it is, for we will certainly do right to ourselves; but unless it is an act of obedience, it is not accepted of God. It is a common rule, all moral duties must be done in and to the Lord; out of love to God, the fear of God, and obedience to his blessed Majesty. Therefore it is said, Eph. v. 21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." That must be the great principle which swayeth us; not policy, or respect to our own interest. Therefore here is the great difference between a Christian and another man in the duties of the second table, he turns second table-duties into first table-duties, it is a thing carried on throughout the whole Scripture. Thus, if he gives alms, his alms is a sacrifice; all his commerce, what he doth to men must be done to the Lord. So in this very case, love to man, it is but a stream from a higher fountain, love to God. A Christian loves God first, and indeed he loves nothing but God, for he loves God in all his creatures. In men we love his natural image: but in the saints, his spiritual image. Our love to our ordinary brother must be excited and measured by our love to God: and our love to our Christian brother, our fellow-saints, must be from the love of God, 1 John v. 1, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Now let us come to the affirmative part, which establisheth charity: for it is not enough if we do not hurt others, but we must do them good. Now charity is seen in two things, both in giving, and forgiving.

First, in giving, "What you would men should do to you, do you the same to them." Be as ready to do good as to receive good. A man is never in a right frame of spirit, until he takes as much delight in doing others good as he would take in having good done to himself: nay, more, for our Lord tells us, "That it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive," Acts xx. 30. Why a more blessed thing? Because this comes nearest to the nature of God, who gives to all, and takes of none. And therefore, as we would imitate God in other things, we should in this also; for all God's works should leave an impression upon us. As a child hath part for part, limb for limb, answerable to his father, so should a child of God answer God in all his moral perfections; especially in his goodness. "As you come behind," saith the apostle, "in no gift, so also do not come behind in this," 2 Cor. viii. 2. And the rule of Christ here doth enforce this. Do you afford others that succour, that relief in all their distresses, which you would desire they should afford to you, if you were in the same case? You will say, Pity should be shewed to a man by his friend; and will you shut up your bowels, and not shew this pity to others? If you were pined with hunger, and your children crying for bread, would you not complain of the hardness of their hearts, who have this world's goods, and shut up their bowels against them, and do not dispense any thing to their necessities? Why, if you know the heart of an indigent person, it cannot but move you to observe this rule. And the rather, because usually with what measure we meet to others, it is recompensed into our bosoms by God's providence. For whatever need others have of us, we have infinitely more of God; and there will a time come when we shall be as destitute before God, as they are before us. For instance, in time of sickness, when all outward helps fail, Psal. xli. 1, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will consider him in the time of trouble." Why, he that is affected with another's condition, as his own, when it is

a time of trouble with him, and it may be his brother cannot help him, then the Lord will help him. When all outward comforts are as the white of an egg; when the poor perplexed sinner cries, Mercy! mercy! the Lord will shew him mercy, as he did to others, Matt. v. 7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Those that only seek to enrich themselves, and solace themselves in the good things they have, must not expect the like promises. But to those who have been merciful, and ready to help others, God delights to shew mercy; and when they are most destitute, they shall find that God takes notice of this, that they were ready to relieve others.

Secondly, in forgiving, the same rule holds. A necessary duty. For while we are here in the world, there will be offences, and we need mutually to forgive, and to take pardon. Col. iii. 13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Mark, he proceeds upon this principle that Christ layeth down. We are in the world and in the flesh, and therefore should not rigidly exact upon the failings of others, lest they or others deal so with us when our turn comes.

The apostle reasons from another argument, Eph. iv. 32, "Forgive others, as God hath for Christ's sake forgiven us." There is no man can wrong us as much as we trespass against God; and though we are but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, yet our great and many sins are freely forgiven to us; therefore it should prevail with us freely and easily to pardon one another. When we consider how Christ hath forgiven us,—when we consider the greatness of the wrongs which he pardons, sins that are of a scarlet and crimson die;—when we consider our own baseness, in comparison of him, Isai. xl. 22, "who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;" and when we consider his omnipotency to right himself of the wrongs done to him, how "he can cast body and

soul into hell-fire ;” surely this should move us to forgive others. Yea, and it is not only a motive, but a rule, *Forgive others, as God forgives us* : sincerely, not hypocritically : freely, not unwillingly : fully, not by halves : irrevocably, not for a time only : but as God forgives and casts all our sins into the depth of the sea, so should we forgive the sins of others.

But wherein must we express this forgiveness towards others ? As to the wrong to be forgiven, we must consider it either as an offence against God, or against publick laws, or as it is an offence against us. So far as it is an offence against God, or the public laws, we have not power to forgive. The Lord himself that forgives us, and forgives for Christ’s sake, hath secured the honour of his governing justice by satisfaction. And if the law requires it, we cannot intermeddle there ; only we must pray to God earnestly for them ; and in some cases, we may intercede with the magistrate to take off the penalty. But, in cases of private wrong, forgiveness implieth two things ; a removal of all inward grudges, and a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to them. 1. A removal of all *inward grudges*, and endeavours after private revenge, Lev. xix. 17, 18, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart : thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him : thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Thou shalt not bear a grudge against him, for then thou hatest him in thy heart. 2. There must be a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to him who hath done you wrong, as ministereth occasion and ability. There are many laws for this, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5, “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it **back** to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie under his burden, thou shalt surely help him.” Luke vi. 27, “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you.”

But may not we have recourse to the magistrate for

the recovery of our right, and reparation of our wrongs? Certainly we may, provided we go not to law for trifles, nor until all lawful means and courses are used for taking away the occasion. But then it must not be with a spirit of revenge and rigour; for a Christian should shew his moderation in all things, and his lenity, and gentleness, and readiness to forgive.

But it may be objected, 1. This seems not to be a very perfect rule, because many desire much evil to themselves; should we desire evil to others? I answer, the meaning is, Not what we do in a passion, or with evil desires, but what we do in right reason; what is according to the law of nature engraven upon our hearts, which is most legible in our own case; what the law of nature would judge to be the duty of other men to do.

2. But doth not this rule make all men equal, and destroy all order and superiority, if every man must do as he would be done unto? What shall a master require of a servant no more than he will do to him? Would a poor man have a rich man give him relief? Should he give him no more than he expects back again from this poor man? No: the meaning is, that for that time we should suppose ourselves in the condition of servants, or of that poor man; we should put ourselves in their stead, and suppose, If I were a servant, if I were poor: we should put ourselves in the same equality with them; and by the law of proportion, the same things that would seem reasonable to us, if we were in their condition, we should cheerfully do to them.

3. Doth not this establish revenge and retaliation of injuries, to do to them as they have done to us? I answer, No; but quite the contrary: for it is not what they have done to us; Christ doth not say so: but what we would have to be done to us, that we should do to them. See Prov. xxiv. 29, "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the man according to his work." That is an ill reasoning within ourselves, and takes God's work out of his hands, whose prerogative

it is to give to every man according to his work. The rule is not, look *backward*, but *forward*. It doth not look to what they have done to us, but what we should do to them.

4. It is objected, If all the world were contented to observe this rule, then we should have a quiet world; but others are oppressive and hard to me; therefore this is to live by the loss; and to bring a restraint upon myself from which others are free. I answer, Do your duty to them, though they do not theirs to you. Others sins will not exempt you from the *law of God*, which is your rule, and not *their actions*. Whatever they do to you, yet carry it Christianly and meekly towards them. You are accountable to God for your own actions, not for the actions of another man. Therefore, if you be able to guide your own spirit to them, how perverse soever they be to you, you will have the comfort that you have endeavoured to do your duty.

Having vindicated the rule, let me shew you the grounds and the equity of it. There are two grounds. 1. The actual equality of all men by nature. 2. The possible equality of all men as to their condition and state of life.

1. The actual equality of all men by nature. Mal. ii. 10, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" Were we not all created by the same God? Yea: and mark, the equality goes further, We were "all made of one blood," Acts xvii. 26; all descended from Adam. Diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature. There is a diversity of rank indeed. Some are high, some low; some rich, some poor; some governors, some governed; some command, and some obey: but we are all made of one blood. So, Nch. v. 5, "Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children." Some are highly advanced above others, yet the poorest creature and you are one flesh, and by nature have an equal right: therefore it is said, Isai. lviii. 9, "Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh." Thy poor starved brother is thine own flesh.

2. The possible equality of all men as to condition, and as to state of life. They are equal by nature, and it is possible they may be in the same state of life. You stand to-day, another is fallen ; you are liable to the same corruption, and the same calamities. To the same corruption, Gal. vi. 1, " If any one be fallen, ye that are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Rigid censurers may fall into like sins themselves. The devil is very assiduous in tempting, and the Lord permits him to surprise those that are severe to others. And you are liable to the same calamities, Heb. xiii. 3, " Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Strange changes may come before we go out of the body : they that are highest may be lowest.

There may be great changes in the earth, great calamities may befall us ; therefore since we are in the body, and since those that are high to-day may be low to-morrow, and you may need the like help from others, we must have a fellow-feeling with them. God, who is the great Arbiter of human affairs, can pull down and set up at his pleasure.

II. The second point is the commendation of this rule, " for this is the law and the prophets ;" that is, this is the sum of the doctrine of God. The law and the prophets were the scriptures then in force ; all the bible they had for that time. The law was as the text, and the prophets as the comment upon the text, to expound and confirm the law by a larger explication.

The worship of God and duties to him are also established by the law and the prophets ; for when our Lord had spoken of what we owe to God, as well as to man, he saith, Matt. xxii. 40, " On these two hang all the law and the prophets." These are the two things that all the law and the prophets seek to establish, viz. love to God and man. But our Saviour here speaks only concerning the second table ; what concerns that is comprized in

this sentence. All that part of religion which is of the lower hemisphere of duty is distilled into this extract. As in the spirits of things the virtue is contracted, which otherwise is largely diffused while it is mingled with grosser matter ; so here, the spirit, the extract of the law and prophets, are all distilled, as to moral matters, into this one saying.

III. The third thing to be considered is the illative particle, *therefore*. From what is this inferred ? In the foregoing verses, our Saviour speaks of being heard in prayer. "If ye being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him ? Therefore whatsoever ye would," &c. Christ uses many arguments to shew that God is ready to give good things to us. He proves it from the kindness of earthly parents to their children. But then he adds, that if men have their prayers granted, they must observe this rule ; they must perform all duties of civil righteousness, as well as acts of piety. Upon this limiting it to the hearing of prayer, it plainly implies three things.

1. That God will take cognizance of this, whether you do to others as you would they should do to you, and you shall hear of it in your dealing with God. That is, the first and lowest thing. And remember, you have to do with God as much as they have to do with you. He shews this to bridle the excesses of those that are in power. There are a sort of men that think they may do any thing, if they can do it *safely* ; Mic. ii. 1, "That do evil because it is in the power of their hand." They eagerly prosecute their purposes and desires when they have power to effect them. Now, a Christian should pause upon the matter, and consider not only what is possible to be done, but what is just and lawful to be done. And conscience should put a severe restraint when nothing else can hinder us ; as Joseph said, Gen. xlii. 18, "This do, and live ; for I fear God." He had a *full* advantage against them that wrought him so much mischief ; but he had an

inward principle laid up in his heart which begat a tenderness, "I fear God." But when men will do every thing they are able to effect, they forget that God can requite it, though others cannot. It is not *conscience* which governs the greatest part of the world, but *interest*. When it is not for men's interest, they will do no wrong; but when they have power enough to do what they intend, they care not how they trample upon their brethren. Men forget God: and many times, by a strange providence, are brought to suffer the like hard treatment themselves. When we see the oppressions of the innocent, and things carried so perversely, we are apt to say, Lord, who shall call these men into question? Who shall accuse them? Why, the sighs and groans of the oppressed before God's tribunal, upon which all persons depend every moment; these will be more authentic witnesses than any matters of fact which can be produced in a lower court.

2. It implieth this, that whatsoever usage we expect at God's hands, the same we should deal out to others. He is willing to give all, provided you are willing to do to others as you would be done unto. All the mercy and goodness we expect from him must sway our practice and conversation with men. Whatever need others have of us, the same need we have of God. Eph. vi. 8, "Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free:" so for other relations. In the practice of this rule, Christians are to consider not only how they would be dealt with by men, but by God himself for Christ's sake; which carrieth the precept far beyond the heathen latitude. Alas! from God we have nothing but undeserved mercy. So we are to practise this rule, not only to those that love us, but to our enemies; we must shew mercy to the worst for Christ's sake. Strict justice, by the light of nature, requires the injurious should suffer according to the wrong that they do to us. Aye, but what do we expect from God? We are to consider how God will

deal with us, if we are rigid, severe, exact, and stand upon all things to the uttermost.

3. Another consideration, which mightily enforceth the rule, is, that if we do such things to others as we would not have them do to us, God will do that to us which we have done to others: *they* are not to do the same to you again, but God *will*. It is good to consider God's judgment of retaliation: "As thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head," Obad. ver. 15. They that were pitiless, merciless to their brethren in the day of their flight from Jerusalem, God will pay them home in their own coin. "And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matt. vii. 1, 2; Gen. vi. 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." It is not only a law, *that is to be executed*, but a rule of Providence, *what God will do*. What more usual than malefactors to be dealt with according to their own wickedness? There are many instances of this judgment, God doing to them what they have done to others.

Usually this is the dealing of God. The Israelites had their children drowned in the water by Pharoah: What then? Pharoah and all his host in a little while were drowned in the water. Ahab's blood was lapped up by dogs in the place where was shed the blood of Naboth: and Jezebel, being more guilty, was devoured with dogs. Ahab only *permitted* this contrivance, but Jezebel *acted it*. Ahab *humbled* himself, though he was buried with honour, but Jezebel was intombed in the belly of dogs, and her flesh devoured by them. A gallows, we read, was made for Mordecai, and Haman was hanged on it himself. Henry III. of France, in that very chamber where the massacre was contrived against the Protestants, there he was slain; and his brother before him, Charles IX. was found flowing in blood in his bed, who had shed so much of the blood of God's saints.

But you will say, Is it so with good men also? If they should break his law, doth the Lord give them according

as they have done to others? Yes; God observes the same justice. Though he doth pardon the *eternal* punishment, yet as to temporal they shall have like for like. Jacob supplanted his brother; he came to Isaac as the elder, the younger instead of the elder; and Laban brings him the elder instead of the younger, Leah instead of Rachel. Joseph's brethren they were not *flexible* to their brother, and did not hear him cry: at length they came to Egypt upon an honest errand for corn in time of famine, and the man is *inexorable*. Gen. xlii. 21, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." A greater instance we have of Paul, that consented to the stoning of Stephen, and was present too at his execution. But Stephen had prayed for him too among the rest, "Lord, lay it not to their charge;" yet God gave him some smart remembrance of his sin. When Paul and Barnabas had been preaching at Iconium, though Barnabas had irritated them as well as Paul; yet God ordered it so, he was not stoned; but Paul was stoned, and carried out for dead. What need have we to be exact in observing what is required of us here; for the Lord, by one means or other, will return it into our bosoms. We have done that to others which we would not should be done to ourselves; and therefore will God do that to us which we do to others.

This may inform us, first, what an advantage religion is to mankind, even with regard to the present life. The world hath a prejudice against religion, as if it were an ill-natured thing, and made men forget equity and humanity in dealings with others. But certainly there is no reason for this prejudice, when it doth require not only love of all, in their several capacities, but to do them all the good we can, to seek out objects to whom we may do good, and to be of a God-like affection. Therefore see that it be so in your profession and practice, that you may recover the credit of religion. If this were practised, how

securely and safely might we live one by another? Whence come all the oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth, but from want of men's loving their neighbours as themselves? How easily might we be brought to pardon wrongs? And how patiently would we bear the modest dissent of others, when their judgments are not of our size and mould? How far would we be off doing hurt to others, even as far as doing hurt to ourselves? How beneficial and helpful men would be to each other, seeking others' good as their own; and rejoicing in another's welfare as their own. If the world would but consider how much of Christianity doth consist in loving and doing good, as if all the world had but one soul, it would render it amiable to them. Take this rule quite away, and there is nothing so false, bad, cruel, that you would not be drawn to think, or say, or do against your brother.

Secondly, it informs us how much mankind are degenerated, and how few true Christians are in the world; witness our injustice to the names, persons, and estates of others. We are very critical in determining our own rights and proportions, and what others owe to us: Surely we have all reason to allow others what they justly expect. When you are slandered, you are passionate; and therefore should not you be tender of other men's names and estates? When your debts are detained, you complain of wrong; should you not be as exact in the speedy payment of others? To buy with a great measure and sell with a less, is an abomination to the Lord, and to men. We judge things done to us thus and thus, and shall we be careless what we do to them? Uncharitableness, and want of sympathy with us in our troubles, much more insulting over us in our miseries, we look on with detestation; and shall we pursue and afflict others when we have power to do hurt?

As then that emperor wrote it on the doors of his palace and courts of justice, so let this rule be deeply written upon your hearts. In all matters of dealing

towards others be exact : for God, who is the patron of human societies, observes whether you do as you would be done unto. Remember, it is a short rule, yet sufficient ; and it is a clear rule, therefore it should prevail with you. 1. It is a short rule ; and yet, if it were well learned and observed, it would save the world a great deal of mischief. Change the persons, and we need not many perplexing rules to guide us. If this were done to me, would I take it kindly ? Turn the tables, put yourselves in their stead. 2. It is a clear rule. Look, as the apostle saith of Onesimus, when he was converted, that he was *doubly dear* to Philemon, both in *the flesh and in the Lord* ; the same say I of this rule, it is doubly dear to us, both by nature and grace. The light of nature binds us, and it is prescribed by Christ. If you break this rule, you offer violence to an inbred principle of conscience. There are many talk of being Christians ; yea, but be good heathens first. Never speak of the higher mysteries, of believing in Christ, &c. while you live contrary to the light of nature. It is also prescribed by Christ. Thus our Lord reasons, Luke vi. 46, “ If you call me Lord, and Master, why do ye not the things I say ? ” It is a mockery to call Christ Lord and Master, and disobey his commands ; as it was for them to say, “ Hail ! King of the Jews ; ” that spit upon him and buffeted him. “ Therefore, whatsoever ye would have others to do to you, do ye the same to them ; ” for he hath told you, and confirmed it, “ This is the law and the prophets.”

EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WORKS

OF

ISAAC AMBROSE,

Some time Minister of Garstang in Lancashire.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THE
L I F E
OF
MR. ISAAC AMBROSE.

MR. ISAAC AMBROSE was sometime minister of Preston; but he afterwards removed to Garstang, where the act of uniformity found him in the year 1662. After the king's restoration, there was a meeting of above twenty ministers at Bolton, to consult what course to take. Mr. Ambrose and Mr. Cole, of Preston, declared before them all, that they could read the Common-Prayer, and should do it, the state of their places requiring it, in which otherwise their service was necessarily at present at an end. The ministers, considering the circumstances of their case, approved of their proceeding. Mr. Cole, (afterwards Dr. Cole,) was so forward as to express himself at the same time in words to this purpose: "Gentlemen, I am got to my Hercules's pillars, my *ne plus ultra*, I shall go no farther." And indeed he was turned out of Preston; but found some stronger motives in other parts. For he afterwards conformed, and was lecturer at Dedham, in Essex. But as for Mr. Ambrose, he lived and died a Nonconformist; and was a man of that substantial worth, that eminent piety, and that exemplary life, both

as a minister and a Christian, that it is to be lamented that the world should not have had the benefit of particular memoirs concerning him from some able hand. One thing that was peculiar in him, deserves to be mentioned here. It was his usual custom once in a year, for the space of a month, to retire into a hut in a wood, and, avoiding all human converse, to devote himself to contemplation. Possibly, by this practice, he was the fitter for his sacred ministration all the rest of the year. He lived in the latter part of his life at Preston, and, when his end drew near, was very sensible of it. Having taken his leave of many of his friends abroad, with unusual solemnity, as if he foresaw that he should see them no more, he came home to Preston from Bolton, and set all things in order. In a little time, some of his hearers came from Garstang to visit him. He discoursed freely with them, gave them good counsel, told them he was now ready whenever his Lord should call, and that he had finished all he designed to write; having the night before sent away his discourse concerning angels to the press. He accompanied his friends to their horses, and when he came back shut himself in his parlour, the place of his soliloquy, meditation, and prayer; they thought he stayed long, and so opened the door, and found him just expiring. This was in the year 1668-4, *ætat.* 72. He was holy in his life, happy in his death, and honoured by God, and all good men.

THE
DOCTRINE
OF
REGENERATION:

Written about the Year 1650.

JOHN III. 3.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

IN the prosecution of these words, we shall follow the order set down by the Holy Ghost: where is,

- I. The necessity of it.
- II. The generality of it.
- III. The manner of it.
- IV. The issue of it.

First, the necessity of it; “Except a man be new born, he can never be saved.” It is our Saviour’s speech, and he avers it with a double asseveration, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee.” Again, God the Father thus counsels not only Nicodemus, but all the Jews of the old church, saying, “Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Ezek. xviii. 31. Notwithstanding all their privileges, yet here is *one thing*

necessary, that must crown all the rest ; they must have a new heart, and a new spirit, that is, they must be new born, or there is no way but death.

Nor is this doctrine without reason or ground. For, man is first unholy, and therefore most unfit to enter into heaven ; “ Without holiness no man shall see God,” Heb. xii. 14. And what is man before he is new born ? If we look upon his soul, we may see it deformed with sin, defiled with lust, outraged with passions ; and thus is that image of God transformed to the ugly shape of the devil. Should we take a more particular view, every faculty of the soul is full of iniquity ; the understanding understands nothing of the things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14 ; the will wills nothing that is good, Rom. vi. 20 ; the affections affect nothing of the Spirit, Gal. v. 17. In a word, the understanding is darkened, the will enthralled, the affections disordered, the memory defiled, the conscience benumbed, all the inner man is full of sin, and here is no part that is good, no, not one. How needful now is a new birth to a man in this case ? Can he enter into heaven, that savours all of earth ? Will those precious gates of gold and pearls open to a sinner ? No, he must be new moulded and sanctified.

Secondly, Without this, man is God’s enemy ; no greater opposition than betwixt God and a sinner ; his name and nature is altogether opposite to sin and sinners. View we those attributes of God, his justice, truth, patience, holiness, anger, power ; his justice in punishing the impenitent according to his deserts, his truth effecting those plagues which he hath spoken in his time, his patience forbearing sin’s destruction, till they are grown full ripe, his holiness abhorring all impurities, his anger stirring up revenge against all offered injuries, his power mustering up his forces, yea, all his creatures against his enemies ; and what can we say, but if all these attributes are at enmity with sinful man, woe to man because of offences ? Better he had never been born, than not to be new born.

Thirdly, Except by a new birth, man is without Christ; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:" and if he be not in Christ, what hopes of that man? It is only Christ that opens heaven, it is only Christ that is the way to heaven; besides him there is no way, no truth, no life.

Fourthly, Except a man be born again, he is a very limb of satan, a child of darkness, and one of the family of hell. Consider this, ye that are out of the state of grace, in what miserable thralldom are your souls? Should any call you servants of satan, you would take it highly in disdain; but take it as you please, if you are not regenerate, you are in no better case. Paul appeals to your own knowledge, "Know you not, that to whomsoever you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom you obey?" Rom. vi. 16, 23. If then ye obey the devil's suggestions, what are you but the devil's servants? And if he be your master, what is your wages? "The wages of sin is death;" death of the body, and death of the soul: death here, and death hereafter in hell-fire. Alas, that satan should have this power on man! that he who is the enemy, and means nothing to a sinner but death and damnation, should be his lord, and tyrannize it over him at his own will and pleasure! Would any man be hired to serve lions and tigers? And is not the devil "a roaring lion, walking about, and seeking whom he may devour?" To serve him that would devour his servant, is a most miserable bondage; and what pay can one expect from devils, but roaring, and devouring, and tearing souls? So that whether we consider man in regard of himself, or of God, or of Christ, or of satan, he is (except he be new born,) unholy, God's enemy, out of Christ, in satan.

And if the new birth be thus necessary, how should we labour to be born again? Now then, as you tender your souls, and desire heaven at your ends, endeavour to attain this one thing necessary. Lift up your hearts unto God, that you may be washed, justified, sanctified.

in the name of the Lord Jesus; and that by the Spirit of God you may walk in new ways, talk with new tongues, as being new creatures, created unto good works. If you would thus wait on God in his way, I trust the Lord in mercy would remember you, and his Spirit would blow upon you, and then you would find and feel such a change within you, as that you would bless God for ever, that you were thus born again.

Such is the necessity of being born again. And as to the generality of it, all men (or all mankind,) must be regenerated before they be saved; not one of all the sons of Adam shall ever go to heaven, except he be born again. Let your contemplations (guided by God's Word,) go into the paradise above. All the saints that now "walk in the light of it," were first purged by the Lamb, and sanctified by the Spirit; first they were regenerated, and so they were saved.

And should we consider man in his parts, every part must bear a part in this birth; his body must be regenerated, his soul must be renewed. He must be moulded anew, and all the members of his body be conformed to the sovereignty and rule of grace; yea, his body preserved blameless, holy, and acceptable unto God; made a member of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost: Happy man that is blessed with this body! Sure, a man thus born again, shall see the kingdom of God.

Secondly, as the body, so the soul of this man is to be renewed by grace; "Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 20. The body and the spirit must both glorify God; and as all the parts of the body, so all the powers of the soul. The understanding, that in the old man is blind and ignorant about heavenly things, or if it know many things, yet never can attain to saving knowledge, in the new man must be anointed with the eye-salve of the Spirit, inspired with the knowledge of Divine truths, especially with those sacred and saving mysteries which concern the kingdom of God. Again, the will, that in the old man affects nothing but

vile and vain things, is froward and perverse in the ways of godliness; in the new man must prove what "is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;" yea, it must attend and be subordinate to the grace of God, since God indeed, and God only, works in us both the will and the deed, Phil. ii. 13. Again, the memory, that in the old is slippery in the things of God, or if naturally good, yet not spiritually useful; in the new man must be sanctified to good performances; and although it cannot increase to a great natural perfection, (for grace doth not this,) yet the perfections it hath must be straight, and right, and guided Godward; "Remember the Lord thy God," saith Moses, Deut. viii. 18. Again, the conscience, which in the old man sleeps and slumbers, or if it be awake, tears and roars, as if a legion of devils possessed it; in the new man must be calm and quiet; and yet not sleep or slumber, but rather, in a friendly loving manner, check and controul wheresoever sin is, yea, never be quiet, till with kind and yet earnest expostulations, it draw the sinner before God to confess his fault, and to seek pardon for it. Again, the affections that in the old man are sensual, inordinate, and set on wrong objects; in the new man must be turned another way. To sum up all, all must be renewed, the understanding, will, memory, conscience, affections.

First, I say, in the new man the understanding must be renewed; so the apostle, "The new man is renewed in knowledge," Col. iii. 10; and this knowledge implies two habits, wisdom and prudence, Col. i. 9. First, Wisdom, that is speculative; Secondly, Prudence, and that is practical. By the one the child of God, having the eyes of his mind opened and enlightened, doth see the mysteries of salvation, the secrets of the kingdom, the whole counsel, and the wonders of the law of God; by the other he is enabled, with a judicious sincerity, to determine in cases of conscience, in the practice of piety, and the experimental passages of a Christian man. If we consider the first (wisdom) how is it possible that a man unregenerate should know the mysteries of salvation? He may go as

far as the power of natural discourse and light of reason can bear sway, he may be furnished with store of rare and excellent learning, and yet for all this want the true spiritual wisdom. The man regenerated hath the saving knowledge ; he knows God with a steadfast apprehension, he knows himself a mean, base, and contemptible thing ; his new birth hath learned him how wicked a creature he naturally is, and therefore in that respect is he odious to himself, and loathsome in his own eyes : or if we consider the second, (prudence.) How is it possible that a man unregenerate should experimentally know the practice of piety ? Should we instance in this mystery of regeneration ; here is a ruler of the Jews, and a teacher of Israel ; yet as learned as he was, if he confer with Christ about the salvation of his soul, he is strangely childish, and a mere infant. Tell him of the new birth, and he thinks it as impossible as for an old man to return into his mother's womb, and be born. The natural man cannot discern the operations of grace, he knows not that dark passage, which leads from the state of nature, into the rich and glorious happiness of the kingdom of Christ. And hence it is that many a silly man or woman, whom the worldly-wise pass by with scorn, are in spiritual affairs more wise and learned than the most learned doctors.

Secondly, the will must be renewed ; and this will of the regenerate contains two things, righteousness and readiness. It is first rectified, conformed to the will of God ; secondly, it is so inflamed with the love of goodness, that he pursues it with alacrity of spirit. If we consider the first, (the rectitude of the will,) we see by experience the will of the unregenerate is all out of course, he wills nothing but that which is evil. How should he, considering his want of God's image, his blindness of heart, his proneness to evil, together with the vehemency of his affections, which draw the will after them ? But in the man that is regenerate, the will being moved, it afterwards moves itself, God's grace, that concurs with

it, quickens it, and revives it; so that now his will is nothing but God's will. Or if we consider the second, (the readiness of the will to good,) alas! the will of the unregenerate hath no pleasure in goodness, he understands not the sweetness of it, and therefore nothing is more irksome to him than the ways of godliness; whereas the will of the regenerate is willing, and this willingness indeed is the perfection of his will.

Thirdly, the memory must be renewed; and this memory reflects occasionally on a double object, on God, and the things of God. First, on God, by remembrance of his presence every where. Secondly, on the things of God, by calling them to mind at useful times. If we consider the first object, God, the unregenerate hath no mind on God, "God is not in all his thoughts," like the hood-winked fool, that seeing nobody, thinks nobody sees him; so hath he said in his heart, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven." But contrariwise, the regenerate man remembers his Creator. And though God, as being a Spirit, is absent from his senses, yet by virtue of his sanctified memory, (that makes things absent as present,) his eye is on God, and he considers God as an eye-witness of all his thoughts, and words, and doings. Or, if we consider the second object, (the Word of God,) the unregenerate never burdens his memory with it; if sometimes he falls upon it, it is either by constraint, or by accident, never with any settled resolution to follow it; but the soul that is regenerate, with *Mary*, "keeps all these things in his heart." Whatsoever lessons he learns, like so many jewels in a casket, he lays them up safe, and as need serveth, makes all the good use of them he may.

Fourthly, the conscience must be renewed, and that two ways, either by drawing the soul to good, or from evil: first, to good, by restraining and bridling. If we

consider its first office, (in that it draws and leads the soul to good,) the unregenerate hath not that conscience; for the most part his conscience lies dead in his bosom, or if it stir sometimes, he labours all he can to smother it. It is otherwise with the regenerate, his conscience excites him to good, and he doth good out of conscience; he stands not upon terms of pleasure or profit, but his conscience being guided by the rule of God's holy truth, he submits to it merely out of his obedience to God. Hence it is that come what will, his eye is fixed on God; and if man oppose where God commands, he is quickly resolved. Or if we consider the second office of conscience, (in drawing the soul from evil,) the unregenerate either hears not, or heeds not his reclaiming conscience. If it speak, he first goes about to lull it asleep again; or if it cry out, and will not be at peace, then (in spite of goodness,) he runs out of one sin into another, and usually from presumption to despair. On the other side, the regenerate hath a conscience that draws him from, and keeps him out of evil. It is known especially by these two properties, remorse and tenderness. Remorse hath an eye on all sins past, and tenderness hath an eye on all sins to come. By remorse is bred sorrow for sin, and loathing of sin. No sooner he considers how, by his manifold sins, he hath offended God, crucified Christ, grieved the Holy Spirit, but his heart bleeds and breaks that he hath done so wickedly against so gracious a God. This sorrow for sin brings with it a loathing of sin; he hates the very thought of it; every look back brings a new addition of detestation, and every meditation makes the wound of his remorse to bleed again. By tenderness of conscience is bred a care and watchfulness to avoid sin to come; for no sooner is sin presented to his conscience, but he startles at its sight, and meditates on that strict account he must one day make for it; which thoughts and sin put together in the balance, he dares not do wickedly for a world of gain. And this tenderness, (or easiness to bleed at the apprehension of sin,) is

peculiar to that conscience that is enlightened, and sanctified, and purged by Christ.

Fifthly, the affections must be renewed, and that is done by setting them upon right objects. I shall instance in some of them, as love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, sorrow. Love I place first, which in the unregenerate man is fastened inordinately upon the creature; and as one sin begets another, so on whatsoever object it falls, it begets some sin: thus the love of riches breeds covetousness, love of beauty breeds sensuality: whatsoever he loves, (the object being earthly,) it brings with it some sin, and thereby (the worst of all,) he wickedly prefers earth to heaven, a dunghill to paradise. But the regenerate man fixes his love upon other objects; as he that is carnal minds things carnal, so he that is spiritual loves things spiritual; no sooner is he turned (by a sound and universal change of the whole man,) "from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God," but he presently begins to settle with some sweet contentment, upon the flowers of paradise, saving graces, and his love runs higher and higher, till it embrace him that dwells in the highest, God Almighty; and how sweet is that love that casts itself wholly into the bosom of its Maker. How blessed is that man that yearns, and melts, and cleaves, and sticks unto his gracious God above all?

The second affection is hatred, which in the unregenerate is so inordinate, that he is an hater of God, Rom. i. 30; not that he hates God in himself, but in some particular respect, because he restrains him from his pleasure, or punisheth him for his sin, or crosseth his appetites by his holy commands. And as he hates God, so likewise his brother. Hence arise those envies, emulations, jars, contentions, amongst those that profess themselves Christians; but of all brethren he hates them most, of whom our Saviour is the first-born. God's faithful ones ever were and ever will be "signs, and wonders, and monsters unto many; a scorn, reproach, and derision to them that are round about them:" but he

that is regenerate hates sin in whomsoever it rules, in others, and in himself, when after the commission of any evil he begins to repent, and "to abhor himself," as Job did, "in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 6.

The third affection is hope. Now this hope in the unregenerate is fastened on this world, and the things of this world; he hopes for preferment, riches, or the like; as for his hope of heaven, it is but a waking man's dream; a dream, said I? Yes, as dreams in the night fill us with illusions (you know a beggar may dream he is a king,) so hope, abusing the imagination of the unregenerate, fills their souls many a time with vain or empty satisfactions; but the hope of the regenerate both enjoys the right object, and right means; his eye is fixed on future good, and he endeavours to pursue it, till he get the possession. If in the pursuit he meet with crosses, griefs, disgraces, sicknesses, or other calamities, his hope is able to sweeten the bitterest misery that can possibly befall him; the afflictions of this life bid him look for a better, a cross here minds him of the glory above.

The fourth affection is fear, which in the unregenerate is either worldly or servile. If it fasten on the world, then he fears the loss of his credit or of his profit, and because he and the world must part at last, he fears this separation above all fears; "O death, (saith the wise man,) how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things!" Or if his fear reflect on God, then it is a servile fear; for as the slave or hireling works not for love of his master, but only for fear of punishment; so he fears God through fear of punishment due unto him from God. It is otherwise with the man that is born again; his fear is either initial or filial. In pangs of the new birth, or in the new-born babe, it is called initial; because then he casts away sin both from a sense of God's love, to which he hath partly attained, and of the woful effects of sin, which he hath thoroughly considered; with the right eye he

beholds God, and with the left eye he beholds punishment ; so that this fear is a middle, (as it were,) betwixt servile and filial fear ; and as the needle draweth in the thread, so this fear draweth in charity, and makes way for filial fear ; to which, if by growth in grace he be fully ripened, then he fears God out of love to God, and as the prophet Isaiah proclaimeth, "The fear of the Lord is his treasure," Isaiah xxxiii. 6. Never was treasure more dear to the worldlings, than is God's fear to him ; his love of God, his desire to please God, and his fear of being separated from God, keep him in such awe, that though no punishment, no death, no hell were at all ; yet he would not sin for a world of treasures.

The fifth affection is joy, which in the unregenerate is sensual and brutish ; it hath no better objects than gold, greatness, honours, or the like. And what are all these but a shadow, a ship, a bird, an arrow, a post that passeth by ? Or rather, "as crackling of thorns under a pot," as flashes of lightening before everlasting fire ? But the joy of the regenerate is a spiritual joy, and the matter of it is the light of God's countenance, righteousness, or the promises of God's Word ; or, above all, God Almighty, blessed evermore. Thus David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. This is that joy which no man can conceive, but he that enjoys it ; this is that white stone, Rev. ii. 17, whose splendour shines only upon heavenly hearts ; this is that glimpse of heaven's glory, which springing up in a sanctified heart, out of the wells of salvation, and carried along with addition of fresh comforts (from the word and sacraments,) in a fruitful current through the course of man's life, at last falls into the boundless and bottomless ocean of the joys of heaven.

The sixth affection is sorrow, which in the unregenerate is a worldly sorrow, and the effects of it are death ; so the apostle, "the sorrow of the world worketh death," 2 Cor. vii. 10. In this kind how endless are the sorrows

of men for the losses or crosses, that befall them? And howsoever some may endeavour to comfort themselves in Christ, nothing can relish with them that concerns heaven or salvation. But in the regenerate, the beholding of sin breeds sorrow, and this the apostle calls "godly sorrow, working repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."

Examine then yourselves, you that desire heaven at your end. Would you inherit the kingdom? Would you live with angels? Would you save your souls? Examine and try whether your bodies and souls be sanctified; and if you have no sense or feeling of the new birth, (for it is a mystery to the unregenerate) then never look to see (in that state) the kingdom of God; but if you perceive the working of saving grace effectually in you, (and you cannot but perceive it if you have it,) if you feel the power of godliness first seizing the heart, and after dispersing itself over all the parts and powers of body and soul; if your hearts be softened by the Spirit, if your eyes wait upon God, if your ears listen to his Word, if your tongues shew forth his praise, if your understandings attain to saving knowledge, if your wills conform to the will of God, if your memories be stored with heavenly doctrine, if your consciences be tender and sensible of the least sin, if you love that which is good, if you hate that which is evil, if you hope for the blessings above, if you fear him that can destroy both body and soul; in a word, if you joy in goodness, if you sorrow for sin, then are you born again. Happy is the man in this case that ever he was born; and thus every man must be, or he cannot be happy. "Except a man," (every man, every part of man,) "be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We come now to speak of the manner of it.

Except a man be regenerated, or begotten (saith Valla:) "As man that is born of a woman is begotten of a man, so he that is born again must have a begetting too." If you ask of whom is the new man begotten? St. James tells you, James i. 18, "Of his own will begat

he us with the Word of truth." The former words denote the impulsive cause, the latter the instrument ; it was God that begat us, and with the seed of the Word. It was the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but in respect of the last act, it is of the Holy Ghost, and not of the Father, or the Son ; and thus our Saviour concludes, John iii. 6, 8, " That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," and " so is every man that is born of the Spirit." And, as God's Spirit is the principal, so God's Word is the instrumental cause of our regeneration, " Ye are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23. And this Word (says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) is " quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12. They that are born again, cannot but remember how quick and powerful, and sharp God's Word was at their regeneration. First, perhaps, like an hammer it beat on their hearts till it broke them all to pieces, and then like a sword, by a terrible cutting, piercing power, it struck a shaking and trembling into the very centre of their souls ; last of all, like oil it began to supple their wounds, and to heal their bruises, and to refresh the weak and tender heart with all the promises of God revealed in Christ. And thus a man being begotten of the Spirit with the Word of truth, he comes at last to the birth ; to be born again, to be born after the Spirit ; and this is that second birth : a man is first born of the flesh, and he must be again born of the Spirit.

Hence appears the difference of the first and second birth, the first birth is of the earth, earthly ; the second birth is of the Lord, from heaven ; the first birth is of nature, full of sin ; the second is of grace, full of sanctity ; the first birth is originally of flesh and blood, the second birth is originally of the Spirit and water. In a word, the first birth kills, the second gives life ; generation lost

us, it must be regeneration that recovers us. O blessed birth, without which no birth is happy, in comparison of which (though it were to be born heir of the whole world) all is but misery!

As to the new birth itself, I know it is not wrought in all after one manner, nor is the manner known to us, only so far as it is sensible in us, and therefore we must consider man before baptism, in baptism, and after baptism.

In some is the new birth wrought before baptism, as in the eunuch under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, Acts viii. 37; and in Cornelius, together with his kinsmen and near friends, Acts x. 47; and so our charity tells us, that every infant dying before baptism, is renewed by the Spirit. But the manner of this working we know not, for it is the secret of the Spirit of God. In others is the new birth wrought in baptism, which indeed is the sacrament of the new birth and seal of regeneration; but howsoever we see the outward seal, yet we see not the manner of the inward working; for this also is the secret of the Spirit of God. In others is the new birth wrought after baptism; for whensoever men receive Christ by faith, then do they feel the power of God regenerate them, and work all things in them which he offered in baptism. Now the manner of this feeling (or of God's Spirit working) proceeds usually thus: there are certain steps by which it passeth; and howsoever in those whom God hath blessed with great favour of a holy education, (the Spirit of God dropping grace into their hearts betimes,) these steps or degrees are not so easily perceived; yet in those men who have lived long in sin, no sooner come they to a new birth but they can feel grace work in them step after step, and these steps we shall reckon to the number of eight.

The first is a sight of sin, and this our Saviour reckons the first work of the Spirit, "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin," John xvi. 8. Of sin, how? Why thus: no sooner begins this blessed change from

nature to grace, but the conscience (wrought upon by God's Word,) opens its book, and presents to the soul a roll of those many, mighty, heinous sins, committed against God and man. There he may read in bloody, burning lines, the abominations of his youth, the sins of all his life; and to bring them into method, the commandments of God stand as a remembrancer before his eyes: The first tells him of his loving somewhat above God; the second, of his worshipping a false god, or a true God after a false manner; the third, of his dishonouring the great and mighty name of God; the fourth, of his breaking the Lord's day, either in doing the works of the flesh, or leaving undone the works of the Spirit: nor is this all; as against God so against his neighbour hath he sinned; the fifth tells him of his stubbornness and disobedience; the sixth of his passions and desires of revenge; the seventh, of his lewdness; the eighth, of his covetous thefts; the ninth, of his lies and slanders, back-bitings, and rash judgments; the tenth, of his covetous thoughts, and motions of the heart to all manner of evil. Good Lord! what a number of evils, yea, what innumerable swarms of lawless thoughts, and words, and actions, doth he read in his conscience? But above all, his beloved sin is writ in greatest characters; this he finds to have bewitched him most, and to have domineered above all the rest in his wasted conscience; where, that he may read it, together with his other sins, the Spirit of God now opens the eyes of his mind, and lets him see the very mud and filth of his soul, that lay at the bottom before unseen, and undiscerned. This is the first working of the new life, to wit, a feeling of the old death of his soul in sins and trespasses; and here the axiom is true, no generation without corruption; a man must first feel this death before he is born again.

The second step is, a sense of Divine wrath, which begets in him fear. No sooner hath the man a sight and feeling of his sin, but then God's Spirit, (now called the Spirit of bondage) presents to him the armory of God's

flaming wrath and fiery indignation ; this makes him to feel (as if he were prieked with the stroke of an arrow, or point of a sword, or sting of an adder,) that he is a most accursed and damnable creature, justly deserving all the miseries of this life, and all the torments of hell in that life to come ; yea, this makes him tremble, and stand, and look, as if he were thoroughly frightened with the angry countenance of God Almighty. Would you view him in this case ? His conscience hath now awaked him out of his dead sleep, by the trumpet of the law ; his heart is now scorched with the secret sense of God's angry face ; his soul is now full sorely crushed under the most grievous burthen of innumerable sins ; his thoughts are now full of fear and astonishment, as if no less than very hell and horror were ready to seize upon his body and soul. I say not what measure of this wrath is poured on all men, for I suppose some feel more and some less ; but I verily believe, some there are that (in these pangs of the new birth) have been scorched (as it were) with the very flames of hell. And no wonder, for this is the time of fear. Now it is that satan strives busily to stifle the new man in the womb ; and therefore he that before diminished his sins, and made them appear little in his eyes, when he once sees the man smitten down "into the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death," then he puts into his mind his innumerable sins, and (that which immediately follows) the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, which he yet makes more grisly and fierce, with a purpose to plunge him into the abyss of horror and despair. By this means he persuaded Cain to cry out, "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven," Gen. iv. 13. Thus far the unregenerate goes with the man born again ; both have a sight of sin, and sense of wrath, but here they part ; for the man unregenerate either sinks under it, or labours to allay it with worldly comforts. But the man born again, seeks the right way to cure it, and at last (by the help of God's Spirit) he passeth quite through it ; I mean through this hell upon earth, into the

spiritual pleasures of the kingdom of grace, which is to be born again.

The third step is sorrow for sin, and this is more peculiar to God's child; his heart grieves, his eye weeps; the way to God's kingdom is to cry like children coming into the world; the way to be new born is to feel throes (as a woman labouring of child) and so is Christ formed in us. Can a man be born again without bitterness of soul? No, if ever he come to a sight of sin, and that God's sanctifying Spirit work in him sorrow for sin, his soul will mourn. True it is, some infants are born with more pain, and some with less: but more or less, it cannot be so little, but the man who labours in these pangs shall mourn.

The fourth step is, seeking rightly for comfort. He runs not to the world, or flesh, or devil, miserable comforters all; but to the Scriptures, to prayer, or to the ministry of God's Word. If he find comfort in Scriptures, he meets with it in the gospel. And if it please God that the man, now labouring in his pangs of the new birth, do but rightly settle his thoughts on the gospel of Christ, no doubt but thence he may suck the sweetest comforts that ever were revealed to man. Or if he find comfort in prayer (to which he ever and anon repairs in every step,) then it is by Christ, in whose name he only approacheth to that throne of grace. No sooner had the king of Nineveh humbled himself, but his proclamation ran, "Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God.—Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" And thus the man now wrestling with grievous terrors of conscience, "Who can tell" (saith he) "but God will turn away his fierce anger?" Let me then cry mightily unto the Lord of heaven; let me cry, and continue crying until the Lord of mercy look upon me. And if, notwithstanding all this, God give him a repulse, for reasons best known to himself; if at the first, second, third, fourth, or at many more times, he seem to have

cried in vain, at last he flies to the ministry of the Word, and if he may have his will, he would hear the most soul-searching man amongst God's messengers. At last he comes to God's minister, with a "What shall I do; what must I do to be saved?" Alas! Now I feel the wounded conscience, the broken heart, the spiritual blindness, the captivity and poverty, of which often you have told me. If then there be any instruction, direction, or duty which may tend to my good, now direct me in God's fear, and I will willingly follow it with my utmost endeavours.

And now, (and not till now,) hath God's minister a strong and seasonable call to magnify the sufficiency of Christ's death and passion. Were the blood of Christ, and promise of salvation, proffered to an unwounded conscience, what were it, but like the pouring of a most sovereign balsam upon a sound member of a man? It is the only, right, everlasting method, first to wound by the law, and then to heal by the gospel; first to cause smart for sin, and then to lay to a plaister of Christ's blood; and therefore, when the heart is broken, then hath the man of God his warrant to bind it up again, then may he magnify God's mercy, then may he set out to the height the beauty of Christ's passion and person, and thus by his high and holy art of comforting the afflicted, at last the child of God (prepared for his birth) is born again.

The fifth step is a clear, (I say not a general sight, which he had before, but) a clear sight of Christ laid open to the eye of faith. No sooner is the poor wounded soul informed thoroughly in the mystery and mercy of the gospel, but he then looks on his Saviour as the Jews on the brazen serpent, and seeing him lifted upon the cross, he cannot but see in him an infinite treasury of mercy and love, a boundless and bottomless sea of tender-heartedness and pity, a whole heaven of sweetness, happiness, peace, and pleasures. After the spirit of bondage, enters the spirit of adoption; the terrors of the law lead him to the comforts of the gospel; his sorrow for sin brings him to the clear light of his Saviour; and then as a man in death-

pangs, that lifts up his eyes to heaven, whence cometh his help, so he in birth-pangs lifts up his eyes to Christ, who must either help him, or he sinks under his sin to the bottom of hell. And this sight of Christ Jesus to an humbled sinner, (together with those glorious privileges which he brings with him,) is a most pleasant, ravishing, heavenly sight. Not all the curious sights on earth, nor all those glittering spangles in heaven, can possibly afford such pleasure to the eye of man, as doth this one object (Christ bleeding on the cross) to the soul of a sinner. Imagine you saw some malefactor led to the place of execution; if this man should suddenly see his king running towards him with his pardon in his hand, what a sight would this be! Thus it is with the man sorrowing for sin; whilst he is bewailing his case, and confessing what a little step there is between him and damnation, in a maze he looks upon Christ, whom he sees with a spear in his side, with thorns on his head, with nails in his feet, with a pardon in his hands, offering it to all men that will but receive it by faith. Oh! here is a sight indeed, able to revive the wickedest man upon earth, dead in sins and trespasses. And now there is hope of the birth. We may call this the stirrings of God's child, or the first feelings of life, before he is born again.

The sixth step is, an hungering desire after Christ and his merits. O here is a thirst above all thirsts! It breeds ardent desires, vehement longings, unutterable groans, mighty gaspings, just like the dry and thirsty ground, that gasps and cleaves, and opens for drops of rain. This is that violent affection that God puts into the hearts of those who seek him in sincerity and truth. Never was Ahab more sick for a vineyard, nor Sisera for milk, nor Sampson for water, than is a truly humbled soul after Christ; ever thirsting and longing, that he may hide himself in that blood which his Saviour shed for him. I have read of a gracious woman, who labouring in these pangs, and longing after Christ Jesus, cried out, "I have borne nine children with as great pain as other women, and

yet I would with all my heart bear them all over again, yea, bear them all the days of my life, to be assured of my part in Christ Jesus." One replying, Doth not your heart desire and long after him? "Oh" (said she) "I have an husband and children, and many other comforts, I would give them all, and all the good I shall ever see in this world, or in the world to come, to have my poor thirsty soul refreshed with that precious blood of my Saviour." So eager and earnest is the heart of each man (parched with the angry countenance of God) after this blood of his; "I thirst, I faint, I languish, I long," (saith he) "for one drop of mercy; my spirit is melted in me into tears of blood; my heart, because of sin, is so shaken and shivered; my soul, because of sorrow, is so wasted and parched, that my thirst is insatiable, my bowels are hot within me after Christ." Stay! All these expressions are far short of those longings; no man knoweth them, save he that receives them, save he that is born again.

The seventh step is, a relying on Christ. A man no sooner considers those invitations of our Lord and Saviour: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me: ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden;" but, (resting himself on these blessed promises) he throws himself into the merciful arms of his crucified Lord. Come life, come death, come heaven, come hell, come what will, here will he stick for ever: "Who," (saith Paul) shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No, "I am persuaded" (not these, nor more than these) "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. Thus it is with the man labouring in this birth; What? (saith he) doth Christ call the heavy-laden? "Why, Lord, I am heavy-laden with a weight, a mass of

sin ; and if he may come that is called, Lord, I come, I come, and now I come, with thee will I build my tabernacle, with thee will I rest for ever." This *affiance, dependence, reliance*, (or whatever else we call it) *upon the merits of Christ, is the right justifying faith*, whither if a man once come, there is but one degree more, and he is then born again.

The last and highest step is, universal obedience to Christ. No sooner hath he cast himself upon him, but he takes him (not only as a Saviour to redeem him from the miseries of sin, but) as an husband, a lord, a king, whom he will serve, love, honour, and obey : now will he *take his yoke upon him* ; now will he *bear his cross, and follow him* ; now will he *walk in the holy path* ; now will he associate himself to that *sect that is every where spoken against* ; now will he oppose himself against all sin whatsoever ; now will he shake off his old companions, *brethren in iniquity* ; now will he keep peace and a good conscience towards God and man, now will he watch against secret sins, occasions of evil ; now will he direct his words to the glorifying of God, and to give grace to the hearers ; now will he conform all his actions to the sovereignty of grace ; now will he delight in the Word, the ways, the saints, the services of God ; will sell all, all that he hath, even all his sins, to the last filthy rag of his beloved bosom-sin. And now " Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. His heart, his eye, his ear, his tongue, his understanding, his will, his memory, his conscience, his love, his hatred, his hope, his fear, his joy, his sorrow ; will you have any more ? His thoughts, his words, his actions, his affections, are all new ; this conversion is universal. This change is a thorough change ; now is Christ formed in him, now is he transformed into a new creature, he is made new ; God the Father accepts him for his Son, God the Son stamps upon him the image of his Father, but more immediately God the Holy Ghost hath thus moulded and fashioned him, as I have let you

see him, and now he is born again, which except a man be,—he (shall not) “cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Lo here those steps that raise up a man to the state of regeneration, a sight of sin, sense of misery, sorrow for sin, seeking for comfort, a sight of Christ, desire after Christ, relying on Christ, obedience to Christ. One word more before we have done.

You see how God brings along the man whom he purposeth to make his; and yet let no truly humbled sinner be discouraged if he observe not so distinctly the order of these steps, and especially in that degree as we have related; for if in substance and effect they have been wrought, if he have them in truth, (though perhaps not in this degree,) I dare pronounce that he is surely born again. It is one of our worthies hath said, “In our humiliations, and other preparative dispositions, we do not prescribe precisely just such a measure and quantity; we do not determine peremptorily upon such or such a degree and height, we leave that to the wisdom of our great Master in heaven. But sure we are, a man must have so much, and in that measure, as thoroughly to humble him, and then to bring him to his Saviour; he must be weary of all his sins, and of satan’s bondage wholly, willing to pluck out his right eye, and cut off his right hand; I mean, to part with his beloved, bosom-lusts, to sell all, and not to leave so much as an hoof behind; he must see his danger, and so haste to the city of refuge; he must be sensible of his spiritual misery, that he may heartily thirst for mercy: he must find himself lost, that Christ may be all in all unto him; and after must follow an hatred of all false and evil ways for the time to come, a thorough change of former courses, company, conversation, and setting himself in the practice of sobriety, honesty, and holiness.” And another observes, “That the discovery of the remedy, as soon as the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble, and make the distinct effects on the soul to be with much more difficulty

discerned. Nay, the actings of the soul are so quick, and oft so confused, that the distinct orders of these workings may not be apprehended, or remembered. And perhaps the joyful apprehension of mercy may make the sense of misery sooner forgotten." The sum is, of every soul is required thus much: first, a truly penitent sight, sense, and hatred of all sin. Secondly, a sincere and insatiable thirst after Jesus Christ and his righteousness, both imputed and inherent. Thirdly, an unfeigned and unre-served resolution of an universal new obedience for the time to come. If any man hath had the experience of these affections and effects in his own soul, whatsoever the order, or whatsoever the measure be, he may go on comfortably in the holy faith.

Now, then, let me advise thee, (whosoever thou art that readest,) to enter into thine own soul, and examine thine own state, whether or not thou art yet born again. Search and see, whether as yet the spirit of bondage hath wrought its effects in thee; whether thou hast been enlightened, convinced, and terrified with a sensible apprehension, and particular acknowledgment of thy wretched estate. Search and see, whether as yet the spirit of adoption hath sealed thee for his own; whether, (after thy heart was broken, thy spirit bruised, thy soul humbled, thy conscience wounded and awakened,) thou hast had a sight of Christ, and hast thirsted after him, and hast followed his ways and commandments by an universal obedience. If upon search thou canst say (without self-deceit) that so it is with thee, then mayest thou bless God that ever thou wast born; certainly, (I dare say it,) thou art born again. But if not, if all I have spoken are very mysteries to thee, what shall I say? If ever thou meanest to see the kingdom of God, strive, endeavour with all thy might to become truly regenerate. Thou mayest say, perhaps, it is not in thy power; who can command the Spirit of the Lord, that "bloweth where he listeth?" I answer, it is indeed the Spirit, and not man, that regenerates or sanctifies. But I answer withal, the doctrine of the gospel is the

ministration of the Spirit, and wheresoever that is preached (as I preach it now to thee,) there is the Holy Ghost present, and thither he comes to regenerate. If then as yet thou fcelest not this mighty work of God in thee, and yet fain wouldst feel it; I shall lend thee two wings to bear thee, two hands to lead thee to the foot of the ladder, where if thou ascend these steps aforesaid, I dare certainly pronounce of thee, thou art born again.

The first wing is prayer, which first brings thee to God's throne, and then to the new birth; Hos. xiv. 2, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously:"—and then it follows, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." The soul may object, "I may say thus, and be no better:" but I answer, Say it though thou be no better, because God bids thee say it. Say it, and say it again; it may be he will come in when thou sayest it. The soul may object again, How can I pray and have not faith? I answer, Put thyself upon prayer, and who knows but blessing and faith may come? It is the Lord that converts, and heals, and saves; and *prayer is the means to produce this effect in thee*. When we are required to pray, to repent and believe, we are not to seek strength in ourselves, but to search into the covenant, and turn the promise into prayer. Therefore bow thy knees, and humbly, heartily, frequently, fervently implore the influence of God's blessed Spirit. Wouldst thou ask, and continue asking, wouldst thou cry, and continue crying, then could I assure thee of the fulfilment of the promise which God hath made, and cannot deny, "He that asketh receiveth;" and, "he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh," (by continuance and perscverance,) "it shall be opened," Matt. vii. 8.

The second wing that bears thee to these steps of *the new birth*, is, *constant hearing of the Word*: thou must attend *the gates of wisdom, and wait on her posts*. Thou must come to God's house, and hearken to the ministry of the Word. And thou shalt see, at one time or

other, God will remember thee in mercy. It is true, I know not when; and therefore I wish thee miss no day to repair to God's house, lest the day of thy neglect might have been the day of thy conversion. Certain it is, no man should expect God's blessing without his ordinances, no eating of bread without ploughing and sowing; no recovering of health without eating and drinking; so no blessing, no grace, no regeneration, without waiting upon God in his ways, and in his ordinances. Now, then, as thou desirest heaven or (the way to heaven) to be born again, I beseech thee make high account of this ordinance of God. In preaching of the gospel, light, motion, and power go out to all, which men resist. And some are destroyed, not because they can not believe, but because they resist, and will not obey, and so die, Acts vii. 51, Luke xiii. 34, Ezek. xxxiii. 11, Hos. xiii. 9; and yet I wish thee not only to hear it, but after thou hast heard consider of it, ponder on it; and lay the threats and reproofs, the precepts and promises, unto thine own soul. Thus if thou hearest and meditatest, I doubt not but God's Word will be a Word of power to thee, and (together with prayer) bring thee towards the new birth, whither except a man come, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." To see, is all one as to enjoy. Yet a man may see that which he doth not enjoy. But without regeneration there is no sight, much less possession of the kingdom of God.

If by the kingdom of God is meant the kingdom of grace, (whereof our Saviour speaketh, "the kingdom of God is within you," Luke xvii. 21.) See to what a privilege the new man hath attained; all the graces of God, all the fruits of the Spirit are now poured into him. If you ask, What graces? What fruits? Paul tells you, Gal. v. 22, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" or would you have us to contract them? Paul doth it elsewhere, "The kingdom of God is,—righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17.

First, righteousness. No sooner is a man born again,

than he enters into the holy path, he declines all evil, and stands at the sword's point with his beloved sin; or if ever any sin (through the violence of temptation) seize on him again, he is presently put again into the pangs of the new birth, and so renewing his sorrow, and repairing repentance, he becomes more resolute and watchful over all his ways. And as he *abhors evil*, so he *cleaves to that which is good*; his *faith* like the *sun*, sets all those heavenly stars on shining, *hope, and love, and zeal, and humility, and patience*; in a word, *universal obedience, and fruitfulness in all good works*. Not one, but all good duties of the first and second table, begin to be natural and familiar to him.

Secondly, no sooner is a man righteous than he is at peace with man, at peace with God, at peace with himself. He is at peace with man; "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid," saith the prophet Isaiah, chap. xi. 6. The meaning is, that in the kingdom of Christ, when a man is called into the state of grace, (however by nature he was a wolf, or a leopard, or a lion, or a bear, yet) he shall then lay aside his cruelty, and live peaceably with all men. He is at peace with God, he hath humbled himself and confessed his fault, and cried for mercy, and cast himself upon Christ; so that now God, by his Word, hath spoken peace to his soul; by the mediation of Christ it is obtained, and by the testimony of the Spirit he feels it within him. This is that "peace which passeth all understanding;" it made the angels sing "peace upon earth;" it makes his soul reply, "My peace is in heaven." He is at peace with himself, I mean his own conscience; that which before stirred up the fire, that brought him to a sight of sin, and sense of Divine wrath, that filled him with fearful terrors, remorse, and sorrow, is now quiet. Solomon calls it a continual feast, Prov. xv. 15. Who are the attendants, but the holy angels? What is the cheer, but joy in the Holy Ghost? Who is the feast-maker, but God himself, and his good Spirit dwelling in him? Nor is this feast without music;

God's Word and his actions make a blessed harmony, and he endeavours to continue it by keeping peace, and a good conscience towards God and man.

Thirdly, from this peace issueth "joy in the Holy Ghost." No sooner is a man at peace with man, with God, with himself, but he is filled with joy that no man can take from him ; this joy I take to be those blessed stirrings of the heart, when the seal of remission of sins is first set unto the soul by the Spirit of adoption. For thus it is, the soul having newly passed the pangs of the new birth, it is presently bathed in the blood of Christ, lulled in the bosom of God's mercies, assured by the Spirit of its inheritance, and so ordinarily follows a sea of comfort, a sensible taste of everlasting pleasures.

If by the kingdom of God is meant the kingdom of glory, see then what a privilege waits on the new man. No sooner shall his breath and body be divorced, but his soul, mounted on the wings of angels, shall straight be carried above the starry firmament, there to inherit the kingdom of God, truly called so, for it is a kingdom of God's own making, beautifying, and blessing ; a kingdom beseeming the glòrious residence of the King of Kings. But here my discourse must give way to your meditations. In this fountain of pleasure, let the new-born Christian bathe his soul ; for his it is, and he it is only that shall see it, enjoy it ; " Except a man be born again," no man shall ever " see the kingdom of God."

Thus far of the privileges of the new birth. There waits on it faith, and righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; in a word, the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory.

THE
DOCTRINE
OF
REGENERATION
FURTHER EXPLAINED.

CHAP. I.

The Occasion and Method of this Treatise.

SOME there are who, hearing the new birth to be so necessary to salvation, but never feeling in themselves any such change, have desired further helps. I advised them in the former treatise to be frequent in prayer, and hearing of the word: but so we have done, (say they) and yet we feel no conversion. It may be so, for not always the doing of these things, but perseverance in them through Christ obtains the blessing. I shall, for their further satisfaction, give them a more particular method.

The two things necessary for them that would have a part in the new birth, are, 1, To enter into the experience of it. 2. To be brought through it.

1. The means necessary to enter into the experience of the new birth are, 1, Examination of themselves. 2. Con-

fession of their sins. 3. Heartly prayer for the softening of their hearts. By which are obtained the three first steps : sight of sin, sense of Divine wrath, sorrow for sin.

2. The means to be used in order to be brought through it, are an application of the promises ; and these produce their several effects ; as, a sight of Christ ; a desire after Christ ; a relying on Christ ; and obedience to Christ.

CHAP II.

The first Means in order to experience the New Birth.

The means to be used as preparatory to this change are, first, examination. And the way to examine, is to set before men that crystal-glass of the law for their light and rule. To this purpose I have here annexed a catalogue ; not that I can possibly enumerate all sins, but only the kinds ; and if herein I come short, yet conscience may hereby bring into men's thoughts those others not mentioned.

Now, then, (whosoever thou art that beginnest this blessed work,) examine thyself by this catalogue, but do it warily, and truly ; and where thou findest thyself guilty, either note the particulars in this book, or transcribe them into some paper, that so they may be ready for thine eye when thou comest to confession.

I. Sins against the First Commandment.

In every commandment we must observe both the duties required, and sins forbidden, for both these are implied in every one of the commandments ; if in the first thou art guilty, thou must answer negatively ; if in the second, thou must answer affirmatively.

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BUT ME.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou ever taken the true God in Christ to be thy God ? Hast thou abounded

in those graces by which thou shouldst cleave unto God, as in knowledge and love, and fear, and joy, and trusting in God? Hast thou observed God's mercies, and promises, and works and judgments upon thee, and (by a particular application) taken special notice thereof? Hast thou communicated with the godly, and joined thyself to God's people, and delighted chiefly in them?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes been guilty of blasphemy, or idolatry, or witchcraft, or atheism? Hast thou not been guilty of pride, a sin flatly opposing God, and first committed by devils? Hast thou not had inward reasonings that there is no God, or that he seeth not, or knoweth not, or that there is no profit in his service? Hast thou not trusted in man, or feared man, or loved the world, and thereby alienated thy heart from God? Hast thou not resorted to witches, or in the first place to physicians, and not to the living God? Hast thou not tempted God, and in the matters of God been either cold, or lukewarm, or preposterously zealous? Hast thou not been careless to perform the inward duties of God's worship in sincerity and truth? If in those thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

II. *Sins against the Second Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE TO THYSELF ANY GRAVEN
IMAGE.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou ever worshipped the true God purely according to his will? Hast thou observed all the outward duties of his worship, as prayer, and vows, and fasting, and meditating, and the rest? Hast thou repaired to God's house, observed family duties, received the preachers of the gospel?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes "walked after the imaginations of thy own heart," serving God out of custom? Hast thou not committed idol-worship, conceiving of God in thy mind in the likeness of a creature? Hast thou not made an image to liken God

to it, or used any gesture of love and reverence to any such images? Hast thou not carelessly neglected to worship God, to call upon the Lord, to receive God's ministers, or to perform some other of the outward duties of God's worship? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

III. *Sins against the Third Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou been a constant learner, hearer, and doer of God's Word and will? Hast thou prayed with perseverance, understanding, and power of the Spirit, without doubting or wavering? Hast thou come preparedly to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and being come, hast thou discerned the Lord's body? Hast thou used all the titles and properties, and works, and ordinances of the Lord with knowledge, faith, reverence, joy, and sincerity?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes in thy talk dishonoured the titles, attributes, religion, Word, people of God, or any thing that hath in it the print of his holiness? Hast thou not caused the name of religion, or people of God to be ill thought of by thy ill course of life? Hast thou not rashly, or unpreparedly, or heedlessly, read the Word, heard sermons, received the sacraments, or performed any other part of the worship of God? Hast thou not thought or spoken blasphemously, or contemptuously of God, or of any thing whatsoever pertaining to God? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

IV. *Sins against the Fourth Commandment.*

REMEMBER THOU KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH-DAY.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou (according to the equity of this commandment) always observed the

thy wife, or injured her in thought, word, or deed? If thou art a wife: Hast thou not been wasteful, or froward, or idle? If thou art a parent: Hast thou not been careless, especially of thy children's souls? If thou art a child: Hast thou not despised thy father's or mother's instruction? Hast thou not mocked them, or shamed them, or grieved them? If thou art a master: Hast thou not governed thy family negligently? Hast thou not withheld that which was just and equal in diet, wages, encouragement? If thou art a servant, hast thou not been idle and slothful? Hast thou not served grudgingly, and not from the heart? Secondly, for the commonwealth. If thou art a magistrate: hast thou not been as a lion, or a bear, roaring and raging over the poor people? Hast thou not decreed unrighteous decrees? Respecting the persons of the poor, or honouring the persons of the mighty? If thou art a subject: hast thou not "reviled the gods, or cursed the rulers of thy people?" Hast thou not disobeyed the higher powers, or denied "tribute, or custom, or honour, or fear, to whom they are due?" Thirdly, for the church. If thou art a minister: hast thou not been profane in thy life and conversation? Hast thou not run before thou wast sent? Or being sent, hast thou not been negligent in using the gift that was in thee? Hast thou not caused God's people to err? Hast thou not committed simony, or sought indirectly for the fleece, not regarding the flock? Hast thou not strengthened the hands of evil doers, in preaching peace to wicked men? Hast thou not "given heed to fables, (or to some unprofitable matter,) rather than godly edifying which is in faith?" If thou art an hearer: hast thou not resisted the minister, and the word preached by him? Whatsoever thou art, husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, magistrate or subject, minister or hearer, if in any of these thou hast transgressed, then thou hast certainly broken this commandment.

VI. *Sins against the Sixth Commandment.*

THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER.

1. *The duties required.* Hast thou ever desired and studied by all means lawful, to preserve thine own person, and the person of thy neighbour?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes envied others? Hast thou not offended others in words, by censuring, or reviling, or “rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing?” Hast thou not offended others in deeds, plotting against the just, or doing evil to any man? Hast thou not been angry with thy brother without cause, or continued long in anger? Hast thou not rejoiced at others’ fall; or wished a curse to their souls? Hast thou not done evil to thyself, by inordinate fretting, or grieving, or drinking, or saying in thy passions, “Would to God I were dead?” Hast thou not been a sower of discord, or some way or other, an occasion of the discomfort, or of the death of thy neighbour? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, thou hast then broken this commandment.

VII. *Sins against the Seventh Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou ever kept thyself pure in soul and body, both towards thyself and others?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes been defiled with whoredom, adultery, polygamy, or self-pollution. Hast thou not offended in the occasions of uncleanness, as in idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, wanton company, or gay attire? Hast thou not sinned in thy senses, or gestures, or words? Hast thou not harboured in thy heart impure thoughts, inordinate affections? Hast thou not behaved thyself immodestly, using some manner of dalliance and wantonness? If in any of

these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

VIII. *Sins against the Eighth Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou by all good means furthered the outward estate of thyself and of thy neighbour?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes got thy living by an unlawful calling? Hast thou not impoverished thyself by idleness, or unnecessary expences? Hast thou not withheld from thyself, or others, that which should have been expended? Hast thou not gotten or kept thy neighbour's goods by falsehood or force, and made no restitution? Hast thou not stolen by usury, or oppression, or fraud in buying or selling? Hast thou not robbed God of his tythes and offerings? Hast thou not some way or other impaired thy neighbour's estate? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

IX. *Sins against the Ninth Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou always, by all means, sought to maintain thy own and thy neighbour's good name, according to truth and a good conscience?

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes loved (or made) a lie? Hast thou not raised a false report? Hast thou not censured or judged others? Hast thou not flattered thyself and others, saying unto the wicked, thou art righteous? Hast thou not condemned some without witness, or forborne to witness for others when thou knewest the truth? Hast thou not been uncharitably suspicious, or a despiser of thy neighbour?

Hast thou not told a lie, whether jestingly, or officiously, or perniciously? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

X. *Sins against the last Commandment.*

THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

1. *For the duties required.* Hast thou always been truly contented with thy own outward condition? Hast thou rejoiced at others' good, and "loved thy neighbour as thyself?"

2. *For the sins forbidden.* Hast thou not sometimes conceived evil thoughts in thy heart? Hast thou not been discontented with thy own condition? Hast thou not coveted after something or other that was thy neighbour's? If in any of these thou hast transgressed, then hast thou broken this commandment.

CHAP. III.

The second Means preparatory to the New Birth.

-AFTER examination, (which may serve thee for one day's work or two,) the next duty is confession. Take a catalogue of those sins which thou hast noted, and spread thy catalogue before the Lord; there read thou seriously and particularly, saying, "O Lord, I confess I have committed this sin, and the other sin:" (as they are before thee in order,) "of all these sins I am guilty, especially of those sins wherein I delighted, my bosom-sins; and now, O Lord, standing, as it were, at the bar of thy tribunal, I arraign myself, and accuse myself, and judge myself worthy of the utmost of thy wrath and indignation. For one sin thou castedst Adam out of paradise; for one sin thou castedst the angels out of heaven; and what then shall become of me, that have

committed a world of sins?" Here pause awhile, and meditate on thy unworthiness: "O that I should be so foolish, so brutish, so mad to commit these sins, these manifold sins! O that by these sins I should break so holy a law, provoke so good and great a Majesty! What should I do, but remembering my evil ways, even loathe myself in my own sight, (yea, abhor myself in dust and ashes,) for my iniquities and my abominations?" For conclusion, thou mayest imitate the publican, who, not daring "to lift up his eyes, smote his breast:" so do thou, and say with him, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

CHAP. IV.

The third Means to be used in order to the New Birth.

AFTER confession, (which may well serve thee for another day's work,) seek for true sorrow and mourning for thy sins. Seek thou must, and never leave seeking, till thou feel thy heart melt within thee. To this purpose, read some tracts on death, judgment, hell, Christ's passion, and the joys of heaven; last of all, (and I judge it best of all,) resolve to set every day some time apart to beg it of the Lord. And, at the time appointed, fall down on thy knees, spread thy catalogue, confess, accuse, judge, condemn thyself again; which done, beg of the Lord to give thee that soft heart he promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Say then to thyself, "Is this the Lord's promise? O Lord perform it to my heart; take away my stony heart, and give me an heart of flesh, a new heart, a new spirit," &c. Here make thine own prayer. Be not careful of words, only let the words be the true voice of thy heart. Pray, and call, and cry with vehemency and

fervency not to be uttered. When thou hast done, if the Lord do not yet hear thee, pray again the next day, and the next day, yea, put on this resolution, that thou wilt never leave praying till the Lord hear thee in mercy, till he make thee to feel thy heart melt within thee, yea, (if it may be,) till thou seest thy tears trickling down thy cheeks, because of thy offences. The Lord will, perhaps, hear thee at the first time, or at the second time, or if he do not, be not discouraged, God hath his times. God speaketh once and twice, and a man perceiveth not; happy he who relenteth at last. Give it not over, persist thou, thy suit is just, and importunity will prevail.

The first Reason for this Sorrow.

This must be done; First, because without pangs there is no birth. The sorrows of a penitent man are as the pangs of a woman. Now as there can be no birth without pains of travail going before, so neither true repentance without some terrors of the law, and straits of conscience. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," saith the apostle to the Romans; to shew us, they once did receive it. When? but in the very first preparation to conversion. Then it was that the Spirit of God in the law did so bear witness unto them of their bondage, that it made them to fear. And certainly thus it is, in some degree, with every man in his first conversion; his contrition must be vehement, bruising, breaking, renting the heart, and causing throws, (as of a woman labouring of child,) before there can be a new birth.

The second Reason for this Sorrow.

Again, without contrition there can be no interest in, or union with Christ. Therefore it was that John the Baptist, saith Chrysostom, "first thoroughly frightened

the minds of his hearers with the terror of judgment and expectation of torment, and when he had thus taken down their stubbornness, then at length he made mention of Christ." Certainly, the first thing that draws to Christ, is to consider our miserable estate without him: no man will come to Christ except he be hungry: no man will take Christ's yoke upon him, till he come to know the weight of satan's yoke. To this end, therefore, must every man be broken with lashes of conscience, that so despairing of himself he may flee unto Christ.

The third Reason for this Sorrow.

Again, without hearty sorrow there can be no spiritual comfort. We must first be humbled before the Lord, and then he will lift us up. God pours not the oil of his mercy save into a broken vessel? God never comforts thoroughly, save where he finds humiliation and repentance for sin. "The Word of God (saith one,) hath three degrees of operation in the hearts of his chosen: First, it falleth to men's ears as the sound of many waters, a mighty, a great, and confused sound, and which commonly bringeth neither terror nor joy, but a wondering and acknowledgment of a strange force. This is that which many felt, hearing Christ, when they were astonished at his doctrine. The next effect is the voice of thunder, which bringeth not only wonder, but fear also; not only filleth the ears with sound, and the heart with astonishment, but moreover shaketh and terrifieth the conscience. The third effect is the sound of harping, while the word not only ravisheth with admiration, and striketh the conscience with terror; but also, lastly, filleth it with sweet peace and joy. Now albeit the two first degrees may be without the last, yet none feel the last who have not in some degree felt both the former." He saith true, in some degree, though commonly the deeper the sense of misery, the sweeter is the sense of mercy.

CHAP. V.

The Means to be delivered out of the pangs of the New Birth.

I. AND NOW if (by God's blessing,) thou feelest this sorrow and melting of heart, the next thing thou must do is to seek for the remedy, which remedy consists of these ingredients: 1. A sight of Christ. 2. A desire after Christ. 3. A relying on Christ. 4. Obedience to Christ. 5. Comfort in Christ sought for and obtained. Thou wilt say, these ingredients are pearls indeed, but how shall I obtain them? I answer, By the application of the promises. And since every ingredient hath its particular promises, I shall let thee see them in order, only do thou apply them thyself. Some may object, I dare not look to the promise, I cannot believe; if I could believe, then I could expect good from the promise. I answer, Thou wilt never believe on these terms; thou must not first have faith, and then go to the promise; but go to the promise, and expect faith from thence: this is the rule; "I must not bring faith to the promise, but receive faith from it, and therefore there will I hang, and wait till the Lord please to work it."

II. *The Declarations and Promises procuring a sight of Christ.*

The first step that brings comfort to thy heavy soul is the sight of Christ: and to procure this sight, thou hast these promises and declarations. Matt. i. 21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have life everlasting." Rom.

iii. 25, "God hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a reconciliation through faith in his blood." 1 Cor. i. 30, "Christ Jesus of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a true saying, and by all men worthy to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 John ii. 1, 2, "If any sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

All these tell thee, that, as thou art a sinner, so thou hast a Saviour; only do thou apply them, and certainly they will help thee in the first step of this remedy, to wit, the sight of Christ.

III. *The Invitations and Promises procuring a Desire after Christ.*

Thou mayest say, I see Christ, and I see that his person, and death, and blood-shedding are precious and saving; but how may I make him mine? How may I know that he is my Saviour? I answer, thou must hunger and thirst after him; this desire is the second step. And to provoke thee to this duty, consider these invitations and promises: Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." John vii. 37, 38, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; he that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Rev. xxii. 17, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

These may excite thee to thirst after Christ, that sovereign fountain, opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

IV. *The Invitations, Declarations, and Promises procuring a relying on Christ.*

Yet thou mayest say, I thirst indeed, but I dare not drink; I desire, but I dare not come near to lay hold on Christ. I am a most vile, unworthy wretch, and my sins are of a scarlet die. True it is, for thee to pretend to a part in Christ, while wallowing yet in thy sins: for thee to believe that Christ is thy righteousness, while purposing to go on in any one known sin, were a most cursed, horrible presumption indeed; but where all sin is a burden, there a man may be bold. A man may; yes, he must. If thou groanest under sin, if thou longest after Christ, apply these promises, and they will force thee to lay hold on the Rock, to take Christ for thine own, to throw thy sinful soul upon the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and to cast thyself with confidence into the bosom of his love.

Matt. xii. 28, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Isaiah lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." And lest thou say, I am so far from bringing any thing in my hand, that I bring a world of wickedness in my heart, and my sins, I fear, will hinder my acceptation; no, saith he; Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, [and this is thy desire, thy case,] and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." If all this will not do without a more solemn invitation, see how the Lord of heaven sends forth his ambassadors to entreat thee to come in: 2 Cor. v. 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God." Or, if he cannot woo thee, lo, he commands

thee: 1 John iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Or, yet to drive thee to Christ, he not only commands, but threatens: Heb. iii. 18, "And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not." How is it possible, but that all, or some of these, should bring in every broken heart to believe, and every one that is weary of his sins, to rely upon the Lord of life for everlasting welfare?

V. *The Declarations and Promises procuring Obedience to Christ.*

And yet thou mayest say, I have east myself on Christ; is this all I must do? No, there is yet another step; he is not only to be thy Saviour, but thy Husband; thou must love him, and serve him, and honour him, and obey him; thou must endeavour not only for pardon of sin, and salvation from hell, but for purity, obedience, ability to do or suffer any thing for Christ. And to provoke thee to this duty, consider these texts. Jer. xxxi. 33, "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Matt. vii. 21, "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xi. 29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. xvi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." 2 Cor. v. 15, "He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." 1 John i. vi. 7, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk

in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another: and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John ii. 5, 6, "He that keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." 1 John iii. 6, 9, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." All these may invite thee to enter into the holy path, and to fight under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unto thy life's end.

DIRECTIONS TO A MAN
IN THE
ACT OF THE NEW BIRTH.

The Occasion of this Treatise.

HITHERTO I have given the doctrine of the new birth; yet one thing is wanting, to wit, the practice of some saint in this one necessary thing. And what man hath written more on this subject than T. Hooker? Therefore I thought fit, not only to contract his books in this appendix; but also to set before you those pathetic expressions of his soul-pangs in the new birth, as matter for your imitation.

CHAP. I.

The Soul's Preparation.

BEFORE the soul can share in Christ's merits, (to speak in the author's language, without any alteration,) two things are required. 1. A preparation to receive Christ. 2. An implantation of the soul into Christ. That there must be a preparation, is the first ground we lay; and herein observe we, the matter, the manner, and the means of this preparation.

1. For matter: the soul of a sinner must be prepared for Christ, before he can entertain him. When kings go to any place, they send, (to make readiness,) their harbingers before them; if Christ (the King of saints) come into a soul, there must be a preparation before he enter: and good reason, for he is not a mere man, an ordinary person, but a king, a king of glory.

2. The manner of this preparation consists in these three passages: 1. The soul breaks league which formerly it had with corruptions. 2. The soul is willing to give way to Christ Jesus, and to let him overthrow whatsoever shall oppose him. 3. The soul is content that God should rule all, not only the eye, or hand, or tongue, or heart, but the whole man; it opens all the gates, and desires Christ to come, and take all the keys of the house upon him.

3. The means of this preparation is the powerful ministry which God hath appointed for this work; and it is discovered in three particulars: First, in a particular application of the truth to the souls of men. Secondly, in a confirmation of the truth by soundness of argument, and plain evidence of Scriptures. Thirdly, in a kind of spiritual heat in the hearts and affections of the minister, answerable to that which he communicates to the people. If any soul that hath enjoyed these means any while, is not yet fitted and prepared, it is a fearful sign; the state of that soul is extremely dangerous. Go home then, (if there be any such,) and plead, saying, "Lord, why am I not yet humbled and prepared? Will exhortations never prevail with me? Will terrors and reproofs never break my heart into pieces? I have heard sermons that would have shaken the very stones; the fire of hell hath flashed in my face; and if any thing can do me any good, why not these exhortations, admonitions, and reproofs." The Lord turn the heart of such a poor sinner, that he may lay hold on mercy in due time.

CHAP. II.

The general Circumstances of Preparation on God's Part.,

I. IN this preparation two things are considerable; the general circumstances, and the substantial parts. The general circumstances are, some on God's part, some on man's part. On God's part they are these; 1. The offer of Christ and grace. 2. The condition of this offer. 3. The easiness of this condition. On man's part, two things are considerable: 1. That corruption doth oppose this grace. 2. That God will remove this corruption.

The first general circumstance of the soul's preparation is on God's part, wherein is the offer of Christ Jesus, the condition of this offer, and the easiness of this offer. We may have all in this one comparison: As with a malefactor convicted of high treason, if (after the discovery of all passages,) the king make a proclamation, that upon the surceasing of his enterprizes, he shall be pardoned; nay, if the king shall send message after message, to tell him, That would he yet lay down his arms, and take a pardon, he should be graciously accepted: If this traitor now should rather fling away his pardon than his weapons;—then, should the king raise an army and overcome him, and take him, and execute him without any mercy, I appeal to your own consciences, is he not justly rewarded? Why, this is the condition of every poor soul under heaven; we are all rebels and traitors; and yet, after all our pride and stubbornness, the Lord is pleased to proclaim mercy still to every one that will receive it: “All you that have dishonoured my name, all you that have profaned my sabbaths, and contemned my ordinances,—all you cursed wretches, come; come who will, and take a pardon;” therein is the offer: only let them lay aside all their weapons, therein is the conditions, and then have Christ for the taking; therein is the easiness of the condition.

“Blessed God,” (may every soul say,) “If I will not do this for Christ, I will do nothing. Had the Lord required a great matter of me to have attained salvation; had he required thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil; had he required the first-born of my body for the sins of my soul; one drop of mercy at the last gasp would have quitted all this cost. But what goodness is this, that the Lord should require nothing of me but to lay down my weapons, and to receive Christ offered?”

Lo, the Lord hath this day sent from heaven, and offered salvation unto you sons of men; the Lord Jesus is become a suitor to you, and I am Christ’s spokesman. Shall the Lord and his messengers thus woo and entreat? And will any yet stand out against God, and say, “I will none of Christ, I will try it out to the last?” O, then, if the great God of heaven and earth shall come with ten thousand thousand of judgments, and execute them upon that man? If he shall bring a whole legion of devils, and say, “Take him, devils, and torment him in hell for ever; because he would not have mercy when it was offered, he shall not have mercy.” If God should thus deal with that man, the Lord would be just in so doing.

II. The second general circumstance of the soul’s preparation is on man’s part; and herein is observable,

1. That corruption opposeth grace. 2. That God will remove this corruption. The first is clear, 1 Cor. ii. 14, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them.” Give us a man in the state of nature, and though all the ministers under heaven should preach mercy unto him; though all the angels in heaven should exhort and entreat him; though all glory and happiness were laid before him, and he were wished only to believe and take it, and it should be his for ever; yet in his natural condition he would have no power to receive so blessed an offer: howsoever, this hinders not, but he is to wait upon God in the means. And then, secondly, God may remove this corruption,

which the man himself cannot do: herein observe we, first, the author, and, secondly, the time of this grace.

First, the author is God: "I will take away the stony heart, (saith God,) and give them an heart of flesh." The taking away of the indisposition of the soul to any duty, and the fitting and disposing it to perform any spiritual service, is the alone work of God. Quiet then thy soul; thou mayest say, "I have an hard heart, and it will receive no good; the Word prevails not, the sacraments have no power over me; all the means, and cost, and charges that God hath bestowed upon me is lost, and my heart is not yet humbled, my corruptions are not yet weakened." But in this be thou comforted; though means cannot do it, yet the Lord can do it; there is nothing difficult to him. Be then exhorted, you that have stony hearts, to have recourse unto this great God of heaven. You wives, that have husbands with stony hearts, and you parents, that have children with stony hearts, tell them, you have heard this day of a Physician that will cure them, and exhort them to repair unto him.

Secondly, the time of this grace is either in regard of the means, or the men. 1. In regard of the means; and that is, when the sons of men have the gospel shining in their faces; if ever God work upon their hearts, it will be then. This should teach us how thankful we ought to be unto the Lord, that enjoy these liberties in the land of the living. That a man was born in such a time, in such a place, wherein the way of life and salvation is so fully, so plainly, and so powerfully made known, that the sun of the gospel shines full in his face, and is not yet set; O, how thankful should he be! And for those that neglect the means of their salvation, how should we pity them? Methinks I see a poor creature, that slighted mercy and salvation when it was offered him, lying upon his death-bed, light is departing from his eyes, and his soul is departing from his body; methinks I hear such a man say at his last gasp, "The day is gone, the gate is

shut, and now it is too late to enter." And thus the soul departs from his body, the body to the grave, and the soul to hell. Oh! what bitter lamentations will that soul make in hell. "Oh! the golden time that I have seen, and not regarded! Oh! the gracious opportunities of salvation that my eyes have beheld, and yet I neglected! Oh! the mercy, and grace, and goodness of God, that have been offered unto me! All these I have contemned, and trampled under my feet, and therefore now must I be tormented with the devil and his angels, from everlasting to everlasting." Now, the Lord give us hearts to take notice of these things! If I were now breathing out my last breath, I would breathe out this legacy to all surviving Christians, "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation."

2. In regard of the men on whom God works; that is to say, on some in their tender age, on some in their ripe age, on some in their old age. But however the Lord doth at several times convert several of his servants, yet most, and most usually, before their old age. O let this provoke us, that while the flower is in prime, we should use all means for our good; let us now, in the summer of our days, improve ourselves in good works, so that when the harvest comes, we may be gathered into God's barn. Oh! would we be exhorted to take the best time and opportunity of salvation; then might we receive the fruits of our labours, the salvation of our souls!

CHAP. III.

The substantial Parts of Preparation on God's Part.

HITHERTO of the general circumstances of the soul's preparing for Christ. The substantial parts of this preparation are generally two; the dispensation of God's work on the soul, and the disposition of the soul by God's work. The dispensation of God's work discovers itself

in drawing the soul from sin to himself. But because these two are made up by one action and motion, we shall therefore handle them together; and the sum is this, that God, by an holy kind of violence, (which is called *drawing*, John vi. 44,) doth pluck the soul from those sins that harbour in it, unto himself. Wherein we may consider two things: 1. What the nature of this drawing is. 2. The means whereby God draws.

First, for the nature of this drawing, it is of a double kind. 1. There is a *moral drawing*, when by reasons propounded, and good things offered to the understanding and will, a man comes to have his mind enlightened, and his will moved. Thus was it with Paul, when he was "constrained by Lydia to abide in her house," Acts xvi. 15. 2. There is a *physical drawing*, when the Lord is pleased to put a new power into the soul of a sinner, and withal to carry the will to the object propounded; when the Lord not only offers good things to the soul, but enables the soul to lay hold upon the things offered. And thus the Lord draws a sinner from sin unto himself.

Secondly, for the means whereby he draws, they are these four: first, the Lord lets in a light into the soul of a poor sinner, and discovers unto him that he is in a wrong way. This the soul marvels at, because usually it comes on a sudden, the sinner perceiving nothing less.

Secondly, though a man would defeat the power of this light, yet God still follows it with forcible arguments, and draws with the cord of his mercy. "I taught Ephraim to go, (saith God,) taking him by the arms; I drew them by the cords of love, and with the bands of a man." This love is made up of four cords.

1. The Lord reveals himself to be ready to receive, and willing and easy to entertain sinners when they come to him. "Let the wicked (saith the prophet,) forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The word in the original is, "He will multiply pardons."

Hast thou multiplied rebellions? The Lord will also multiply pardons. The bowels of compassion are still open, and the arms of mercy are still spread abroad; his pardons are multiplied; there is yet mercy for thee also, and for a thousand thousand more.

2. The Lord is not only *ready* to forgive when men come to him, but that they may come, he also *calls* and *commands* them. "O, but may I," (saith a poor sinner,) "may I dare I go unto the Lord God for mercy? May I be so bold as to press in for favour at the hands of the Lord? I have been a grievous sinner, and have heaped abomination upon abomination; I am afraid, therefore, to approach near unto the Lord's presence." Is it so? Hear what the Lord saith, "Come unto me, ye rebellious people, and I will heal your rebellions. You that never prayed, never came to hear, all rebels, come unto me." And then the people answer, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art our God." This is great encouragement to a poor sinner; he begins now to wonder, and say, "Lord, shall all my sins be pardoned? Shall all my abominations be forgiven? I that have slighted so many mercies, and committed so many follies, shall I be entertained?"—"Yes," (saith the Lord,) "come unto me, and thou shalt be forgiven? Come; I command thee, come."

3. The Lord doth not only *command* a poor sinner to come, but when the sinner says, "There is mercy with God, but not for me;" the Lord followeth him still, and sends another *cord* after him, that if it be possible, he may *win* him, and woo him to receive mercy. If command therefore prevail not, he entreats and beseeches him to come and receive mercy; and this (methinks,) should move the hardest heart under heaven. "We," (saith the apostle,) "are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Rather than you should go away from Christ, even Mercy itself will come and kneel down before you, and beseech you, and entreat you, "for the Lord Jesus's sake, to pity your poor souls,

and to receive pardon for your sins :” a sinner is not able to comprehend this, but he begins to be at a stand : “What, that the Lord should beseech him! Oh! that thou wouldst receive pardon for thy sins, and be blessed for ever! Good Lord! (saith the soul) is this possible, that the great King of heaven should come and beseech such a traitor, such a rebel as I am, to take pardon? That a king on earth should proclaim a pardon to some notorious traitor, this were much; but that the King of heaven should lay down his crown, and beseech me (on his knees as it were) to take mercy; this is a thing beyond all expectation: what, shall heaven stoop to earth? Shall Majesty stoop to misery? Shall the great God of heaven and earth, that might have condemned my soul, and if I had perished and been damned, might have taken glory by my destruction,—is it possible that this God should not only entertain me when I come, and command me to come, but entreat and beseech me to come and receive mercy from him? Oh! the depth of the incomprehensible love of God!” Imagine you saw God the Father entreating you, and God the Son beseeching you, as he doth this day, “Come now, and forsake your sins, and take mercy, which is prepared for you, and shall be bestowed upon you:” would not this make a soul think thus with itself, “What! for a rebel? Not only to have mercy offered, but to be entreated to receive mercy; it were pity (if I will not take it) but I should go to hell, and be damned for ever.” The Lord complains, “Why will ye die? As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner: turn ye, turn ye, why-will ye die?” Mercy is offered you, the Lord Jesus reacheth out his hand to you. Fain would he pluck the drunkard out of the ale-house, and the adulterer from his whore: Oh! if you break this cord, I know not what to say to you; this is able to break mountains in pieces. “Shake, O mountains,” saith the prophet. Why? “Because God hath redeemed Jacob.” The redemption of Jacob was enough to break a mountain; let his mercy break our

hearts, for it is God that begs, the blessing is our own, on our accepting it.

4. If yet all this prevail nothing at all, the Lord will then wait, and stay in long patience and suffering, to see if at any time a sinner will turn unto him. Our Saviour follows poor sinners from ale-house to ale-house, and says, "I beseech you, drunkards, take merey, and have your sins pardoned:" the Lord (as we may say) wearieith himself with waiting one day after another, and one week after another: "It may be (saith Christ) this week, this sabbath, this sermon, a sinner will turn unto me: what, will it never be?" Are you not ashamed, my friends, that the Lord Jesus should thus wait your leisure, and follow you from house to house, and from place to place; nay, that Christ should every morning appear to your understanding, and every night come to your bedside, saying, "Let this be the last night of sinning, and the next day the first day of repentance: Oh! when will you be humbled? When will you receive merey, that it may go well with you, and with yours for ever?" If none of the other will move you, yet for shame let this cord draw you to the Lord: hear his pangs, "Oh! Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? Oh! when will it once be?" A woman that is in travail, Oh! how she expects and longs for her delivery! Now a throb comes, and then she cries: anon comes a second throb, and then she cries again; "Oh! when comes deliverance?" Thus God the Father takes on him the person of a travailing woman; he travails and travails, until some soul be converted, and brought home unto him, "O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When will it once be? I have waited; one, ten, twenty, thirty, forty years long have I waited on this generation; when will it once be?" The Lord thus travails in patience, looking when we will receive mercy. Will our proud hearts never be humbled? Will our stubborn hearts never be softened? Will our profane hearts never be sanctified? When will it once be? Christ hath waited this day, this week, this month, this quarter, this

year, these ten, twenty, thirty, forty years on us. You old sinners, that are grey-headed in your wickedness, how long hath the Lord waited on you? Oh! for shame let him wait no longer, but turn, turn ye unto him, that ye may receive mercy from him.

Thirdly, if bands of love move not, the Lord hath iron cords, that will pluck in pieces; to wit, the cords of conscience; which thus disputes, "He that being often reprov'd, doth still harden his heart, shall perish everlastingly."

"But thou, being often reprov'd, dost still harden thy heart: therefore thou shalt perish everlastingly."

1. In the first proposition, conscience gives the sinner a monition to turn from sin, upon pain of the heaviest judgment that can be inflicted. It is the Lord that sends the conscience on this errand, "Go to such a man, and tell him, you have spoken against God's saints, and you have broken God's sabbaths, and you have contemned God's ordinances: be it known unto you, (saith the conscience) that I have a command from heaven, and from God; I charge you, as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, take heed of those evils that heretofore you have committed, lest you damn your souls for ever." Will you question his commission? See Prov. xxix. 1, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed." If you are often reprov'd, and will not be bettered, then the Lord says, and conscience from the Lord tells you, "Be it at your own peril, ye shall suddenly be destroyed:" no sooner conscience thus speaks, but the sinner hangs the wing, and withdraws himself from his former lewd courses. But now when wicked persons see their companion is gone, they make after him amain, and then conscience plucks one way, and they pluck another way; at last by carnal company, and cursed persuasions, the soul is drawn back again to his former courses, and so perhaps this twist is broken, and the sinner is gone.

2. If so, conscience, that was a monitor, now turns

accuser; before it was only God's herald to forewarn him, but it is become a serjeant to arrest him. It follows him to the ale-house, and pursues him home; then takes him in his bed, and arrests him in his sleep; there (by a meditation) it hauls the soul before the tribunal of God, saying, "Lo, Lord, this is the man, this is the drunkard, adulterer, blasphemer, this is he, Lord; an enemy to thy servants, an hater of thy truth, a despiser of thy ordinance. At such a time, in such a place, with such a company this man despised thy truth; this is he, Lord, this is the man." And when conscience hath thus dragged him before God, and accused him, then, "Take him, jailor, take him, devil, (saith the Lord) and imprison him; let vexation, and horror, and trouble, and anguish lie upon his soul, until he confess his sins, and resolve to forsake them."

In this case was David, when he was forced to say, "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture was turned into the drought of summer: then (said David) I acknowledged my sin unto thee,—I confessed my transgressions unto thee, O Lord, and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." David folded up his sins at the first, and therefore his bones were consumed, and he roared continually; when the Lord had him on the rack he made him roar again, and would never leave tormenting, till David came to confessing; but when he confessed his sin, then the Lord forgave him the iniquity of it. Thus conscience brings the soul of a sinner on the rack, (as traitors are used that will not confess otherwise) and makes him confess sins, and then he cries, "Oh! the abominations I have committed which the sun never saw; in such a place, at such a time." Thus conscience receives some satisfaction, and begins to be quiet; and now having got some quiet, his cursed companions set upon him again, he listens again, and then he begins to follow his old sins, perhaps with

more eagerness than ever, and now is another twist broken.

3. If so, conscience, that was a monitor and accuser, turns executioner. The first proposition admonished, the second accused; if neither of these prevail, then conscience concludes, "Thou must go to execution, thou shalt perish everlastingly." And now conscience cries, "Monitions or accusations could not prevail with this man; come, ye damned ghosts, and take away this drunkard, this blasphemer, this adulterer, and throw him headlong into the pit of hell. He would not be amended, let him be condemned. He would not be humbled, therefore let him be damned." The man hearing this, is amazed, and thinks himself past hope, past help, past cure. Did you ever see or hear a tormented conscience in these pangs? He cries, "Lo, where devils stand, the heavens frown, God is incensed, hell's mouth is opened:" and now a minister is sent for, who displays to this despairing soul the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus: "Oh! (replies he) this is my bane, my damnation. If I had never heard of mercy, if I had never lived under the gospel and the means of salvation, then had I been an happy man. Alas! it is mercy I have neglected, it is salvation I have contemned, how then should I be saved? O the persuasions of the Lord that I have had! the Lord hath even wept over me, as he did over Jerusalem, *Oh! that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace!* yet all these persuasions have I contemned, and therefore certainly to hell I must go." The minister replies, Truth it is, you have done thus, but would you do so still? Is it good now to be drunk, or to blaspheme, or to rail on God's saints, or contemn God's ordinances? "O no, no, (saith he) I now find what the end of these wicked courses will be; God's Word could not prevail with me, the minister could not persuade me. O the good sermons that I have heard, but alas! I despised the Word, and mocked the minister::

woe, woe unto me for ever!" The minister replies again, The truth is, you have done thus, but would you do so now? Would you still blaspheme, and curse, and be drunk, and riotous; or rather, would you not now part with these practices, and take mercy instead of them? Then the poor soul cries out, "Now the Lord for his mercies' sake remove these sins from me: O, I had never so much delight in my sins heretofore, as now I have misery for them; but alas! it is not in my power to help my soul; if the Lord would do this, let him do what he will with it." What? (saith the minister) you are then willing to part with your sins? "O yes, (saith the soul) I would rather offend all the world than God; I had rather go to hell than commit a sin; if it would please God to help me, I would forsake my sins with all my heart." Why, now the poor soul is coming again, and God is drawing him again from his corruptions.

Fourthly, when the soul is thus loosened, the Lord then fully plucks it by the cord of his Spirit. With an almighty hand he cuts the soul off from sin, and takes it into his own hand, that he may govern him, and dispose of him, according to his own good pleasure. Thus much of preparation for the substance of it on God's part.

CHAP. IV.

The substantial Parts of Preparation on Man's Part.

Now are we to observe the disposition of the soul on man's part, which God works in the heart. It is known in two works, 1. Contrition, whereby the soul is cut off from sin. 2. Humiliation, whereby the soul is cut off from itself. For so it is, that either the soul seeth no need to depart from sin, or else it thinks it can help itself out of sin. The first is called security, when the soul, seeing no need to be better, desires it not. Against this the Lord sends contrition, causing men thereby to know

the misery of sin, and to see their need of a change. The second is carnal confidence, when a sinner begins to seek succour, and to scramble for his own comfort in his self-sufficiency. Against this the Lord works humiliation, causing a man hereby to see the weakness and emptiness of his duties, and that there is enough in his best services to condemn him for ever. Before we speak of the works, it is not amiss to begin with the hinderances.

The first is security : when the soul thinks itself in a secure course, and therefore never sees any need of a change. Now while a man lives thus, and blesseth himself in his sin, it is impossible he should receive faith, or by faith repair unto Christ : the Lord therefore, to remove this hinderance, burdens the soul, and says, " You will live in drunkenness, in covetousness ; you will have your sins, then take your sins, and get you down to hell with them." At this voice the sinner begins to see where he is : " Is this true ? (saith he) then I am the most miserable creature under heaven ;" so the soul comes to a restless dislike of itself, and saith, " I must be otherwise, or I am a damned man for ever."

2. When the soul seeth its wound and its sin ready to condemn it ; it thinks by duties, or some such like matters, to succour itself ; and it begins to say, " My hearing and my prayer, will not these save me ?" Thus the soul in conclusion rests on duties. I will not say but these duties are all good, honourable, and comfortable : yet they are not God, but the ordinances of God. It is in the nature of a sinful heart to make the means meritorious of salvation. A man, that seeth his drunkenness and his base contempt of God, voweth to take up a new course, and cries, " No more drunkenness, no more scoffing at those that go to hear the Word ; and then he thinks, What can I do more ? To heaven I must go." All this is but a man's self. Christ, who is the substance of all, is forgotten ; and therefore the poor soul famisheth with hunger. Mistake not, I pray you ; these duties must be used, but a man must not stay here. Prayer saith, " There is no

salvation in me ;” and the sacraments and fasting say, “ There is no salvation in us :” all these are helps, not causes of salvation. A man will use his bucket, but he expects water from the well ; these means are the buckets, but all our life and grace is in Christ. If you say your bucket shall help you, you may starve, if you let it not down into the well for water : so though you boast of prayer, and hearing and fasting, and of your alms, if none of these bring you to Christ, or settle you on Christ, you shall die, though your works were as the works of an angel. As it is with a graft therefore, first it must be cut off from the old stock ; secondly, it must be pared, and made fit for implantation into another. So the soul by contrition being cut off from sin, then humiliation pares it, (pares away all a man’s privileges,) and makes it fit for ingrafting into Christ. Thus much of the lets, now for the works of contrition and humiliation.

I. *A Sight of Sin.*

For a further discovery of these two necessary things, we shall enter into particulars, and begin first with contrition ; which contains these steps. A sight of sin. A sense of Divine wrath. And a sorrow for sin.

The first step is a sight of sin : and sin must be seen clearly and convictingly. First, clearly ; it is not a confused sight of sin that will be sufficient ; it is not enough to say, it is my infirmity, we are all sinners. No, this is the ground why we mistake our evils, and reform not our ways. A man must search narrowly, and prove his ways, as the goldsmith does his gold in the fire : “ I considered my ways,” (saith David,) “ and turned my feet unto thy testimonies ;” in the original, I turned my sins upside down, he looked all over his ways. And this clear sight appears in two particulars. 1. A man must see his sin nakedly, in its own colours. We must not look on sin through the medium of profits and pleasures ; but the soul of a true Christian that would see sin clearly, must

strip it of all content and quiet that ever the heart received in it; as the adulterer must not look upon sin in regard of the sweetness of it, nor the covetous man on his sin in regard of the profit of it. You that are such, the time will come when you must die, and then consider what good these sinful courses will do you. How will you judge of sin then, when it shall leave a blot on your souls, and guilt on your consciences? 2. A man must look on sin in the venom of it; and that you may do partly, if you compare it with other things, and partly if you look at it in regard of itself. (1.) Compare sin with those things that are most fearful and horrible; as suppose any soul here present were to behold the damned in hell, then propound this to your heart, What are those pains which the damned endure? and your heart shall quake at it; yet the least sin that ever you did commit, is a greater evil (in its own nature) than the greatest pains of the damned in hell. (2.) Look at sin simply as it is in itself, What is it, but a professed opposing of God himself? A sinful creature joins side with the devil, and comes in battle-array against the Lord God of Hosts. I pray you in cold blood consider this, and say, "Good Lord! what a sinful wretch am I! That a poor damned wretch of the earth should stand in defiance of God: that I should submit myself to the devil, and oppose the Lord God of Hosts!"

Secondly, convictingly, that sin may be so to us as it is in itself; and that discovers itself in these two particulars: 1. When whatsoever sin is in general, we confess it the same in our own souls. It is the cursed distemper of our hearts, howsoever we hold the truth in general, yet when we come to our own sins, to deny the particulars. The adulterer confesseth the danger and filthiness of that sin in gross, but he will not apply it to himself: the rule thereof is, "Convict thy soul, (whosoever thou art,) of those sins particularly whereof thou standest guilty." To this purpose, say, "Are pride, and drunkenness, and uncleanness such horrible sins? O Lord, it was my

heart that was proud and vain ; it was my eye that was wanton, and my heart that was unclean ; Lord, here they are :” thus bring thy heart before God. 2. When the soul sits down with truth, and seeks no shift to oppose it. The minister saith, God hates such and such a sinner : “ And the Lord hates me too, (saith the soul,) for I am guilty of that sin.” Thus many a time, when a sinner comes into the congregation, (if the Lord please to work on him,) the mind is enlightened, and the minister meets with his corruptions, as if he were in his bosom, and he answers all his cavils, and takes away all his objections. With that the soul begins to be in amaze, and saith, “ If this be so, (as it is for ought I know,) and if all be true that the minister saith, then the Lord be merciful unto my soul, I am the most miserable sinner that ever was born !”

You that know not your sins, that you may see them convictingly, get you home to the law, and look into the glass thereof, and then enumerate all your sins in order thus. “ So many sins against God himself in the first commandment, against his worship in the second, against his Name in the third, against his sabbath in the fourth ; nay, all our thoughts, words, and actions, all of them have been sins, able to sink our souls into the bottom of hell.” And secondly, that you may see them clearly, consider their effect, both in their doom, and in the execution. Only to instance in their doom ; methinks I see the Lord of heaven and earth, and the attributes of God appearing before him, “ The mercy of God, the goodness of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the patience and long-suffering of God ;” and they all come to a sinner, and say, mercy hath relieved you, goodness hath secured you, wisdom hath instructed you, power hath defended you, patience hath borne with you, long-suffering hath endured you. Now all these bid you adieu, “ Farewell, damned soul ; you must go hence to hell, to have your fellowship with damned ghosts. Mercy shall never more relieve you, goodness shall never more succour

you, wisdom shall never more instruct you, power shall never more defend you, patience shall never more endure you." And then shall you go to endless, caseless, and remediless torments, where you will ever remember your sins, and say, "My covetousness and pride were the cause of this, I may thank my sins for this." Think of these things, (I beseech you,) seriously, and see your sins here, to prevent this sight hereafter.

II. *A Sense of Divine Wrath.*

The sinner by this time having his eyes so far opened that he beholds his sins, begins to consider that God hath him in chace; and this sense of Divine wrath discovers itself in these two particulars: 1. It works a fear of some evil to come. 2. It possesseth the soul with a feeling of this evil.

First, the soul considers that the punishment which God hath threatened shall be executed on him sooner or later: he cries therefore, "What if God should damn me? God may do it: and what if God should execute his vengeance upon me?" Thus the soul fears that the evil discovered will fall upon him. It is with a soul in this fear, as it was with Belshazzar, when he commanded the cups to be brought out of the house of the Lord; "An hand-writing came against him on the wall, and when he saw it, his thoughts troubled him, and his knees smote one against the other;" so it is with this fear; he that runs riot in the way of wickedness, there comes this fear and hand-writing against him, and then he cries, "These are my sins, and these are the plagues and judgments threatened against them, and therefore why may not I be damned; why may not I be plagued?"

Secondly, the Lord pursues the soul, and discharges that evil upon him which was formerly feared; and now his conscience is all on a flame, and he saith to himself, "Oh! I have sinned, and offended a just God, and therefore I must be damned, and to hell I must go." Now

the soul shakes, and is driven beyond itself, and would utterly faint, but that the Lord upholds it with one hand, as he beats it down with the other; he thinks every thing is against him, he thinks the fire burns to consume him, and the air will poison him; and that hell's mouth gapes under him, and that God's wrath hangs over him, and if now the Lord should but take away his life, that he should tumble headlong into the bottomless hell. Should any man, or minister, persuade the soul in this case to go to heaven for mercy, it replies in this manner: "Shall I repair to God? Oh! that is my trouble! Is not he that great God, whose justice, and mercy, and patience I have abused? And is not he that great God of heaven and earth, that hath been incensed against me? Oh! with what face can I appear before him? and with what heart can I look for any mercy from him? I have wronged his justice, and can his justice pardon me? I have abused his mercy, and can his mercy pity me? What, such a wretch as I am? If I had never enjoyed the means of mercy, I might have had some plea for myself; but Oh! I have refused that mercy, and have trampled the blood of Christ under my feet, and can I look for any mercy? No, no, I see the wrath of the Lord incensed against me, and that is all I look for."

III. *Sorrow for Sin.*

The next step is sorrow for sin; concerning which are two questions: 1. Whether it be a work of saving grace? 2. Whether God work it in all alike?

To the first, I answer, There is a double sorrow; one in preparation, the other in sanctification. They differ thus: sorrow in preparation, is when the Word of God leaves an impression upon the heart of a man, so that the heart only bears the blow of the Spirit; and hence come all those phrases of Scripture, as wounded, pierced, pricked. So that this sorrow is rather a sorrow wrought on me, than any work coming from any spiritual ability in

me. But sorrow in sanctification flows from a spiritual principle of grace ; and from that power which the heart hath formerly received from God's Spirit ; so that in this a man is a free worker.

To the second I answer, Howsoever this work may be the same in all for substance, yet in a different manner it is wrought in most. Two men are pricked, the one with a pin, the other with a spear ; so the Lord deals gently with one soul, and roughly with another. There is the melting of a thing, and the breaking of it with hammers ; so there is a difference in persons. For instance, if the person has been a scandalous liver, and an opposer of God and his grace ; if a man have continued long in sin ; if a man have been confident in a formal, civil course ; or, if God purpose by some man to do some extraordinary work ; in these four cases he lays an heavy blow on the heart ; the Lord will bruise them, and rend the caul of their hearts, and make them seek to a faithful minister for direction, and to a poor Christian for counsel, whom before they despised. But if the soul be trained up with godly parents, the Lord may reform this man, and cut him off from his corruptions gently. But give me a Christian that God doth please to work upon in this extraordinary manner, and to break his heart soundly, and to throw him down to purpose, though it cost him full dear ; this man walks ordinarily with care and conscience, hath more comfort himself, and gives more glory unto God.

Here observe, I, Is it so, that the soul of a man is thus pierced to the quick, and run through by the wrath of the Almighty ? Then let this teach all how to carry themselves towards such as God hath thus dealt with. Are they pierced men ? O pity them ! O let the bowels of compassion be let out toward them ! Let us never cease to do good to them, to the uttermost of our powers ! O pray, and pity these wounds and vexations of spirit, which no man finds or feels but he that hath been thus wounded. It is to be feared that person is wholly devoted to destruction that hath a disdain against poor wounded

creatures. Is it possible there should harbour such a spirit in any man? If the devil himself were incarnate, I cannot conceive what he could do worse.

2. If ever thou wouldst be comforted, and receive mercy from God, never be quiet till thou dost bring thy heart to a right pitch of sorrow. Thou hast a little slight sorrow; but oh! labour to have thy heart truly touched, that at last it may break in regard of thy many distempers; remember, the longer the seed-time, the greater harvest: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Matt. v. 4.

IV. *The Extent of this Sorrow.*

Hitherto of contrition; the next work is humiliation, which differs from the other, not in substance, but circumstance. For humiliation is only the extent of sorrow for sin, of which we have spoken; and it contains these two duties: 1. Submission; 2. Contentedness to be at the Lord's disposal.

The first part of humiliation is submission, which is wrought thus: The sinner now having had a sight of his sins, and sorrow in some measure for them, he seeks far and wide, improves all means, and takes up all duties, that, (if it were possible,) he might heal his wounded soul. Thus seeking, but finding no succour in what he hath, or doth, he is forced at last to make trial of the Lord. It is true, for the present he apprehends God to be just, and to be incensed against him; yet because he sees he cannot be worse than he is, and that none can help him but God; therefore he falls at the footstool of mercy, and submits himself to the Lord, to do with him as it seemeth good in his eyes. He saith, "This I know, all the means in the world cannot save me; yet who can tell but the Lord may have mercy on me, and cure this distressed conscience, and heal all these wounds that sin hath made in my soul?"

Or for a further light, this subjection discovers itself in

four particulars : First; he seeth and confesseth that the Lord may, and (for ought he knows.) will proceed in justice against him, and execute upon him those plagues that God hath threatened, and his sins have deserved. Secondly, he conceives that he cannot avoid what God will do ; if the Lord will come, and shew the glory of his justice against him, there is no way to avoid it, nor to bear it. And this crusheth the heart, and makes the soul to be beyond all evasions, whereby it might seem to avoid the dint of the Lord's blow. Thirdly, he casts away his weapons, and falls down before the Lord, and resigns himself to the sovereign power of God. Thus David, when the Lord cast him out of his kingdom, said to Zadock, " Carry baek the ark of God into the city ; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say to me, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here I am, let him do with me as seemeth good in his eyes." Fourthly, the soul freely acknowledgeth that it is in God's power to dispose of him as he will ; and therefore he lies in the dust, and cries, Mercy, mercy, Lord ! He thinks not to purchase mercy at the Lord's hands, but only saith it is in God's good pleasure to do with me as he will, only he looks for favour, and cries, " Mercy, Lord, mercy to this poor distressed soul of mine !" O, (replics the Lord,) dost thou need mercy ? Cannot thy hearing, and praying, and fasting, carry thee to heaven ? Gird up now thy loins, and make thy most fervent prayers, and let them meet my justice, and see if they can bear my wrath, or purchase mercy. " No, no," (saith the sinner,) " I know it by lamentable experienee, that all my prayers and performances will never procure peace to my soul, nor give satisfaction to thy justice ; I only pray for mercy, and I desire only to hear some news of mercy, to relieve this miserable soul of mine ; it is only mercy that must help me. O mercy, (if it be possible,) to this poor soul of mine !"

The second part of humiliation is contentedness to be

at the Lord's disposal ; and this point is of an higher pitch than the former. This contentedness discovers itself in these three particulars :

First, the soul reflects on God's mercy, which though he begged when he submitted, yet now he seeth so much corruption in himself that he acknowledgeth himself unfit for mercy : O mercy, mercy, Lord ! What ! (saith the Lord,) cannot thy own duties purchase mercy ? " O no, (saith the soul,) it is only mercy that must relieve and succour me ; but such is my vileness, that I am not fit for the least mercy ; and such is the wickedness of this wretched heart of mine, that whatsoever are the greatest plagues, I am worthy of them all, though never so insupportable. All the judgments that God hath threatened, and prepared for the devil and his angels, they are all due to my wretched soul. Had the devils had such hopes, and such offers of mercy, they would, (for ought I know,) have given entertainment to it. And do I seek for mercy ? The least of God's mercies are too good for me, and the heaviness of God's plagues are too little for me. I only for one sin deserve eternal damnation, for the wages of all sin is death, being committed against Divine justice and against an infinite Majesty ; and then what do all my sins deserve, committed, and continued in, against all checks of conscience and corrections, and the light of God's Word ? Hell is too good, and ten thousand hells too little to torment such a wretch as I am. What, I receive mercy ? I am ashamed to expect it. With what heart can I beg this mercy, which I have trodden under my feet ? The Lord hath often wooed me, and when his wounds were bleeding, his side gored, and his cries coming into mine ears, ' My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ' Then, even then, this Christ have I slighted, and made nothing of his blood ; and can this blood of Christ do me any service ? Indeed I crave grace, but how do I think to receive any ? It is more than I can expect, I am not worthy of any ; oh ! no, I am only worthy to be cast out for ever.

Secondly, the sinner reflects on justice, and now acknowledgeth the equity of God's dealings, be they never so harsh; he confesseth that he is as clay in the hands of the potter, and the Lord may deal with him as he will. Yea, he is driven to an amazement at the Lord's patience, and that he hath been pleased to reprove him so long; that God hath not cast him out of his presence, and sent him down to hell long ago. Hence it is that he will not maintain any kind of murmuring, or heart-rising against the Lord's dealings. Or, if nature will be striving sometimes, and say, "Why are not my prayers answered? I see such a person comforted, and why not I as well as he?" Then the soul stifles, and crushes, and chokes these wretched distempers, and doth also abase itself before the Lord, saying, "What if God will not hear my prayers? What if God will not pacify my conscience, doth the Lord do me any wrong? Vile hell-hound that I am, I have my sin and my shame; wrath is my portion, and hell is my place: it is mercy that God thus deals with me." And now the soul clears God in his justice, and saith, "It is just with God that all the prayers, which come from this filthy heart of mine, should be abhorred, and that all my labours in holy duties should never be blessed. It is I that have sinned against checks of conscience, against knowledge, against heaven, and therefore it is just that I should carry this horror of heart with me to the grave. It is I that have abused mercy, and therefore it is just that I should go with a tormenting conscience down into hell. And O! that (if I be in hell,) I might have a spirit to justify thy name there; and say, "Now I am come down to hell amongst you damned creatures, but the Lord is righteous in all his doings, and I am justly condemned."

Thirdly, hence the soul comes to be quiet under the heavy hand of God in that helpless condition. It takes the blow, and lies under the burthen, and goes away quietly and patiently. O this is an heart worth gold! "O, (saith he,) it is fit that God should glorify himself,

though I be damned for ever. Whatsoever I have, it is the reward of my own works, and the end of my own ways. If I be damned, I may thank my pride, and my stubbornness, and my peevishness of spirit. What, shall I repine against the Lord, because his wrath and displeasure lies heavy upon me? Oh no! Let me repine against my sin, the cause of all; let me grudge against my base heart, that hath nourished these adders in my bosom, but let me not speak one word against him." Thus you see what is the behaviour of the soul in this contentedness to be at the Lord's disposal.

But some may object, Ought the soul to be thus content to be left in this damnable condition? I answer, Such contentedness may include two things: First, a carnal security, and this is a cursed thing: Secondly, a calmness of mind, not murmuring against the Lord's dispensation. And this contentedness, (opposed against quarrelling with the Almighty,) every humbled soul doth attain to, although in every one it is not so plainly seen. A thief taken for robbery, on whom the sentence of death hath passed, should not neglect the means to get a pardon; and yet if he cannot procure it, he must not murmur against the judge for condemning him to death. So we should not be careless in using all means for our good; but still seek to God for mercy. Yet we ought to be contented with whatsoever mercy shall deny, because we are not worthy of any favour. The soul in a depth of humiliation, first stoops to the condition that the Lord will appoint; he dares not flee away from God, nor repine against the Lord, but lies down meekly. Secondly, as he is content with the hardest measure, so he is content with the longest time, saying, "Although the Lord hide his face, and turn away his loving countenance from me, yet I will look towards heaven, so long as I have an eye to see, and an hand to lift up; the Lord may take his own time;" nay, the poor broken heart resolves thus, "If I lie and liek the dust all my days, and cry for mercy all my life

long, if my last words might be mercy, mercy, it were well." Thirdly, as he is content to stay the longest time, so he is content with the least pittance of mercy: "Let my condition be never so hard," (saith the soul,) "do Lord what thou wilt with me, let the fire of thy wrath consume me here, only recover me hereafter; if I find mercy at the last I am content, and whatsoever thou givest I bless thy name for it." He quarrels not, saying, "Why are not my graces increased? and why am I not thus and thus comforted?" No, he looks for mercy, and if he hath but a crumb of mercy, he is comforted and quieted for ever.

Hence we collect, 1, That they who have the greatest parts and gifts, and honour, are (for the most part) hardly brought home to Christ: they that are most hardly humbled, are most hardly converted. What is humiliation but the emptying of the soul from whatsoever makes it swell? The heart must not joy in any thing, nor rest upon any thing, but only yield to the Lord, to be at his disposal. Now these parts, and abilities, and means are great props for the heart of a carnal man to rest on; whence the apostle, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called;" indeed, (blessed be God,) some are, but not many. Few, that have so much of themselves, are brought to renounce themselves. 2. That an humble heart makes all a man's life quiet, and marvellously sweeteneth whatsoever estate he is in. Indeed, sometimes he may be tossed and troubled, yet he is not distracted; because he is contented; as it is with a ship on the sea, when the billows begin to roar, and the waves are violent, if the anchor be fastened deep, it stays the ship. So this work of humiliation is the anchor of the soul, and the deeper it is fastened, the more quiet is the heart. When Job, in time of his extremity, gave way to his proud heart, he quarrelled with the Almighty, his friends, and all; but when the Lord had humbled him, then, "Behold, I am vile; once have I

spoken, yea twice, but now no more." And this humiliation quiets a man both in the fiercest temptations, and in the heaviest oppositions.

1. In the fiercest temptations ; when satan begins to besiege the heart of a poor sinner, and lays a battery against him, see how the humbled heart runs him out of breath at his own weapons. Dost thou think (says satan,) to get mercy from the Lord? God will not respect the prayers of such vile sinners. "True," (saith the poor soul,) "I have often denied the Lord when he called upon me, and therefore he may justly deny me all the prayers I make ; yet he hath commanded, that I should seek to him for mercy ; and if the Lord will cast me away, and reject my prayers, I am contented therewith : What then, satan?" What then, saith the devil? I thought this would have made thee to despair. But this is not all ; for God will give thee over, and leave thee to thyself, to thy lusts and corruptions, and thy latter end shall be worse than thy beginning. To this answers the humbled soul, "If the Lord will give me up to my base lusts, which I have given myself so much liberty in, and if the Lord will leave me to my sins, because I have left his gracious commands ; and if I shall fall one day, and be disgraced and dishonoured, yet let the Lord be honoured, and let not God lose the praise of his power and justice, and I am contented therewith : what then, satan?" What then, saith the devil? I surely thought now thou wouldst have despaired ; but this is not all, for when God hath left thee to thy sins, then will he break out in vengeance against thee, and make thee an example of his heavy vengeance to all ages ; and therefore it is best for thee to prevent this timely judgment by some untimely death. To this replies the soul, "Whatsoever God can or will do, I know not, yet so great are my sins, that he cannot, or (at least) will not, do so much against me as I have justly deserved. Come what will come, I am contented still to be at the Lord's disposal : what then, satan?" And thus he runs satan out of breath. So in

all temptations of satan, lie low, and be contented to be at God's disposing, and all these fiery temptations shall not be able to hurt you.

2. In the heaviest oppositions. When satan is gone, then come troubles and oppositions of the world, in all which humiliation will quiet the soul. Cast disgrace upon a man of humble heart, and he cures it thus. He thinks worse of himself than any man else can do, and if they would make him vile and loathsome, he is more vile in his own eyes than they can make him. O that I could bring your hearts to be in love with this blessed grace of God! Is there any soul here that hath been vexed with the temptations of satan, oppositions of men, or with his own distempers? And would he now arm himself, that nothing should disquiet him, but in all, to be above all, and to rejoice in all? Oh! be humbled, and then be above all the devils in hell. Certainly they shall not so disquiet you as to cause you to be misled, or made destitute of comfort, if you would be humbled.

What remains then? Be exhorted (as you desire mercy and favour at God's hands,) to this humiliation. And for motives, consider the good things that God hath promised, and which he will bestow upon all that are truly humbled; I shall reduce all to these three. First, by humiliation we are made capable of all those treasures of wisdom, grace, and mercy that are in Christ. Secondly, humiliation gives a man the comfort of all that is good in Christ. To be truly humbled is the nearest way to be truly comforted: "The Lord will look to him that hath an humble, contrite heart, and trembles at his Word." The Lord will give him such a gracious look as shall make his heart dance in his breast. Thou poor humbled soul, the Lord will give thee a glimpse of his favour, when thou art tired in thy trouble; when thou lookest up to heaven, the Lord will look down upon thee, and will refresh thee with mercy. Oh! be humbled then every one of you, and the Lord Jesus, who comes with healing under his wings, will comfort you, and you shall

see the salvation of our God. Thirdly, Humiliation ushers glory: "Whosoever humbles himself as a little child, shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven;" he shall be in the highest degree of grace here, and of glory hereafter. For as thy humiliation, so shall be thy faith, and sanctification, and obedience, and glory. Now the Lord make me, and thee, and all of us humble, that we may have this mercy. Who would not have the Lord Jesus to dwell with him? Who would not have the Lord Christ, by the glory of his grace, to honour and refresh him? Methinks your hearts should yearn for it, and say, "O Lord, break my heart, and humble me, that mercy may be my portion for ever." Then might you say with comfort on your death-beds, "Though I go away, and leave wife and children behind me, poor and mean in the world, yet I leave Christ with them." When you are gone, this will be better for them than all the gold or honours in the world. What can I say? Since the Lord offers so kindly, now "kiss the Son," be humble, yield to all God's commands, take home all truths, and be at God's disposing; let all the evil that is threatened, and all the good that is offered prevail with your hearts; or if means cannot, yet may the Lord prevail with you; may the Lord empty you, that Christ may fill you; may the Lord humble you, that you may enjoy happiness and peace, and be lifted up to the highest glory, there to reign for ever and ever.

CHAP. V.

The Call on God's Part, for the Soul to close with, and to rely on Christ.

HITHERTO of our first general, the preparation of the soul for Christ. The next is, the implantation of the soul into Christ: and that hath two parts, 1. The putting of the soul into Christ. 2. The growing of the soul with Christ. As a graft is first put into the stock, and

then it grows together with the stock: these two things are answerable in the soul, and when it is brought to this, then a sinner comes to be partaker of all spiritual benefits.

The first part is, the putting in of the soul; when the soul is brought out of the world of sin, to lie upon, and to close with the Lord Jesus Christ. And this hath two particulars; the call on God's part; and the answer on man's part. The call on God's part is this, when the Lord, by the call of his gospel, and work of his Spirit, doth so clearly reveal the fulness of mercy, that the soul humbled returns answer. In which observe the means, and the cause whereby God doth call.

1. The means is the ministry of the gospel; the sum whereof is this, that there is fulness of mercy, and grace, and salvation brought unto us through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the phrase of Scripture calls this gospel, or this mercy, a treasury; all the treasures of wisdom and holiness are in Christ; not one treasure, but all treasures. Where the gospel comes, there is joy for the sorrowful, peace for the troubled, strength for the weak, relief seasonable and suitable to all wants, miseries, and necessities, both present and future. If then sorrow assail thee (when thou art come thus far,) look not on thy sins, to pore upon them; neither look into thy own sufficiency, to procure any good there. It is true, thou must see thy sins, and sorrow for them, but this is for the lower form, and thou must get this lesson before-hand; and when thou hast gotten this lesson of contrition and humiliation, look then only to God's mercy, and the riches of his grace in Christ.

2. For the cause: the Lord doth not only appoint the means, but, by the work of the Spirit, he doth bring all the riches of his grace into the soul truly humbled. If you ask, how? First, with strength of evidence; the Spirit presents to the broken-hearted sinner, the freeness of God's grace to the soul: and, secondly, the Spirit, by an over-piercing work, doth leave a supernatural and

spiritual virtue on the heart. Now the word of the gospel, and the work of the Spirit always go together; not that God is tied to any means, but that he tieth himself to the means. Hence the gospel is called, "The power of God to salvation," because the power of God ordinarily, and in common course appears therein. The waters of life and salvation run only in the channel of the gospel. Nay, observe this, when all arguments are used to persuade the heart to go to God, one text of Scripture will stand a man in stead above all human learning and inventions, because the Spirit goes forth in this, and none else.

CHAP. VI.

I. The Answer on Man's Part, for the Soul to close with, and to rely on Christ.

HITHERTO of the call on God's part; now we are come to the answer on man's part. No sooner hath the gospel and God's Spirit clearly revealed the fulness of God's mercy in Christ, but the soul gives answer to the call of God. Mercy is a proper object of the mind to be enlightened, of hope to be sustained, of desire to be supported, of love to be cheered. Nay, there is a full sufficiency of all good in Christ, that so the will of man may take full repose and rest in him; therefore the Lord saith, "Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden;" come, mind, and hope, and desire, and love, and will, and heart. They all answer, We come. The mind saith, Let me know this mercy above all, and desire to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. Let me expect this mercy, saith hope, that belongs to me, and will befall me. Desire saith, Let me long after it. Oh! saith love, let me embrace and welcome it. Oh! saith the heart, let me lay hold on the handle of salvation; here we will live, and here we will die at the footstool of God's mercy.

II. *A Sight of Christ, or of Mercy in Christ.*

But for a further discovery of these works of the soul, we shall enter into particulars. And for their order; first, the Spirit lets in a light into the person's heart, and discovers unto him, that God will deal graciously with him. It is with a sinner, as with a man that sits in darkness, and is in the dungeon all the while, and he thinks, "How good were it, if a man might enjoy that light?" So many a poor sinner seeth God's mercies at a distance: "Ah! (thinks he,) I am in darkness still, and never had a drop of mercy vouchsafed unto me." At last the Lord lets a light into his house, and puts the candle into his own hand, and makes him see by particular evidence, Thou shalt be pardoned.

The manner how the Spirit works this is discovered in three particulars. First, the Spirit of the Lord, meeting with an humble, broken-hearted sinner, (he that is a proud, stout-hearted wretch, knows nothing of this matter,) opens the eye, and now the humbled sinner begins to see some glimmering, that he can look into the things of God. Then the Lord, 2, lays before him all the riches of the treasure of his grace. No sooner hath he given him an eye, but he lays engaging objects before him, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ," that he may look, and fall in love with those sweet treasures; and then saith the soul, "Oh! that mercy, and grace, and pardon were mine! Oh! that my sins were done away!" The Lord saith, "I will refresh them that are heavy-laden." Then saith the soul, "Oh! that I had that refreshing!" "You shall have rest," saith God. "Oh! that I had rest too," saith the soul: and now the soul looks after mercy and compassion.

3. The Spirit of the Lord doth witness thoroughly and effectually to the soul, that this mercy in Christ belongs to it. Observe, none either in heaven or in earth, but only God's Spirit can give this assurance. When it is

night, all the candles in the world cannot take away the darkness: so though all the means of grace and salvation, and all the candle-light of the ministry, are good helps, yet the darkness of the night will not be gone before the Sun of Righteousness arise in our hearts. Hence it is that it proves so difficult a matter to comfort a distressed soul; "I shall one day go down to hell," saith the soul. Let all the ministers under heaven cry, "Comfort ye, comfort ye:" still he replies, "Will the Lord pardon me? No." Let me speak therefore to you that are ministers, you do well to labour to give comfort to a poor fainting soul; but always say, "Comfort, Lord: O Lord, say unto this poor soul, that thou art his salvation."

III. *Hope in Christ.*

The mind being thus enlightened, the Lord calls on the affections; come desire, come love; but the first voice is to hope. Now this affection is set out to meet mercy afar off, it is the looking out of the soul; "Oh! when will it be, Lord? Thou sayest mercy is prepared, thou sayest mercy is approaching; oh! when will it come, Lord?"

The manner how God's Spirit works this, is discerned in three particulars. The Lord doth sweetly stay the heart, and fully persuade a person that his sins are pardonable, and that all his sins may be pardoned, and that all the good things he wanteth may be bestowed. When a poor sinner seeth no rest in the creature, nor in himself; though all means, all helps, all men, all angels, should join together; then the Lord lifteth up his voice, and saith from heaven, "Thy sins are pardonable in the Lord Jesus Christ." 2. The Lord doth sweetly persuade the sinner that all his sins are pardoned; the Lord persuades his heart that he intendeth mercy; by this means hope comes to be assured, knowing the promise shall be at the last accomplished. The former only sustained the heart, but this comforts the soul, that undoubtedly it

shall have mercy. "The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, saith the broken and humble sinner, "God saith, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden : ' I am weary, and unless the Lord intend good unto me, why should he invite me, and bid me come ; surely he means to shew me mercy ; nay, he promiseth to relieve me when I come, therefore he will do good unto me." 3. The Lord lets in some taste of the sweetness of his love, so that the soul is deeply affected with it ; it is the letting in the riches of his love, that turneth the expectation of the soul another way, yea, it turneth the whole stream of the soul thitherward.

I desire you, I intreat you, if you have any hope of heaven, if you have any treasure in Christ, labour to quicken this affection above all ; the means are these : 1. Labour to be much acquainted with the precious promises of God, to have them at hand, and upon all occasions. These are thy comforts, and will support thy soul. 2. Maintain in thy heart a deep and serious acknowledgment of that supreme authority of the Lord to do what he will, and how he will, according to his pleasure. Alas ! we think too often to bring God to our bow ; " We have hoped thus long, and God hath not answered, and shall we wait still ? " Wait ! aye, wait, and bless God that you may wait. If you may lie at God's feet, and put your mouths in the dust, and at the end of your days have one crumb of mercy, it is enough. Therefore check those distempers, " Shall I wait still ? " It is a strange thing, that a poor worm, worthy of hell, should take state, and stand upon terms with God ; " He will not wait upon God : " who must wait then ? Must God wait, or man wait ? It was the apostles' question, " Wilt thou now restore the kingdom to Israel ? " To whom our Saviour answered, " It is not for you to know the times and seasons ; " as who should say, It is for you to wait, and to expect mercy, it is not for you to know. If you begin to wrangle, and say, " How long, Lord ? When, Lord ? And why not not now, Lord ? Why not

I, Lord?" Now check thy own heart, and say, "It is not for me to know, it is for me to be humble, abased, and wait for mercy."

IV. *A Desire after Christ.*

When a man's soul is humbled, and his eye opened, then he begins thus to reason, "Oh! happy I that see mercy, but miserable I, if I come to see this, and never have a share in it! O why not I, Lord? My soul now thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land, my affections now hunger after righteousness, both infused and imputed." Now this desire is begotten thus :

When the soul is come so far, that after a thorough conviction of sin, and sound humiliation under God's mighty hand, it hath a seasonable revelation of the glorious mysteries of Christ, of his excellencies, invitations, truth, tender-heartedness, of the heavenly splendour of "the pearl of great price;" then doth the soul conceive, by the help of the Holy Ghost, this desire and vehement longing: and lest any cozen themselves by any misconceits about it, it is then known to be saving,

1. When it is joined with an hearty willingness and unfeigned resolution to sell all, to part with all sin, to bid adieu for ever to our darling delight. If thou desirest earnestly, thou wilt work accordingly; for as the desire is, so will thy endeavour be.

2. When it is earnest, vehement; extreme thirsting after Christ, as the parched earth for refreshing showers, or the hunted hart for the water-brooks. We read of a Scottish penitent, who, a little before his confession, freely confessed his fault, to the shame (as he said,) of himself, and to the shame of the devil, but to the glory of God; he acknowledged it to be so heinous and horrible, that had he a thousand lives, and could die ten thousand deaths, he could not make satisfaction. Notwithstanding, (saith he,) "Lord, thou hast left me this comfort in thy word, that thou hast said, 'Come unto

me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' Lord, I am weary, I am heavy laden with my sins, which are innumerable, I am ready to sink, Lord, even into hell, unless thou in thy mercy put to thine hand, and deliver me: Lord, thou hast promised by thine own word out of thy mouth, that thou wilt refresh the weary soul." And with that he thrust out one of his hands, and reaching as high as he could towards heaven, he with a louder voice cried, "I challenge thee, Lord, by that word, and by that promise which thou hast made, that thou perform and make it good to me, that call for ease and mercy at thy hands." Proportionably, when heavy-heartedness for sin hath so dried up the bones, and the angry countenance of God so parched the heart, that the poor soul begins now to gasp for grace, as thirsty land for drops of rain; then the poor sinner, (though dust and ashes,) with an holy humility, thus speaks unto Christ, "O merciful Lord God, thou art Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; thou sayest it is done, of things that are yet to come, so faithful and true are thy promises. Thou hast promised by thine own word, out of thine own mouth, that 'unto him that is athirst, thou wilt give of the water of life freely.' O Lord, I thirst, I faint, I languish, I long for one drop of mercy: 'As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' and after the yearning bowels of thy compassions. Had I now in possession the glory, the wealth, and pleasures of the whole world; nay, had I ten thousand lives, joyfully would I lay them down, to have this poor trembling soul received into the bleeding arms of my blessed Redeemer. O Lord, my spirit within me is melted into tears of blood, my heart is shivered into pieces; out of the very place of dragons and shadow of death do I lift up my thoughts heavy and sad before thee. The remembrance of my former vanities and pollutions is a vomit to my soul, and it is sorely wounded with the grievous representation thereof; the very flames of hell, Lord, the fury of thy just wrath,

the scorplings of my own conscience, have so wasted and parched mine heart, that my thirst is insatiable, my bowels are hot within me, my desire after Jesus Christ, pardon and grace, is greedy as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame. And, Lord, in thy blessed book thou callest and criest, ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.’ In that great day of the feast, thou stoodest and criedst, with thine own mouth, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;’ and these are thine own words, ‘Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.’ I challenge thee, Lord, in this my extremest thirst after thine own blessed self, and spiritual life in thee, by that word, and by that promise which thou hast made, that thou make it good to me, that lie grovelling in the dust, and trembling at thy feet. Oh! open now that promised well of life, for I must drink, or else I die.”

The means to obtain this desire are three: 1. Be acquainted thoroughly with thine own necessities, with that emptiness that is in thyself. A groundless presumption makes a man careless; see into thine own necessities, confess the want of this desire after the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Labour to spread forth the excellency of all the beauty and glory that is in the promises of God. Couldst thou but view them in their proper colours, they would even ravish thee, and quicken thy desires. 3. After all this, know it is not in thy power to bring thy heart to desire Christ; thou canst not hammer out a desire upon thy own anvil, hew thy own rock as long as thou wilt; nay, let all the angels in heaven, and all the ministers on earth provoke thee, yet if the hand of the Lord be wanting, thou shalt not lift up thine heart, nor step one step towards heaven; then go to him who is able to work this desire in thy soul. Remember, desires grow not in thy garden, they spring not from the root of thy abilities. O seek unto God, and confess, “In truth.” Lord, “it is thou from whom come all our good desires,

it is thou must work them in us, and therefore, Lord, quicken thou this soul, and enlarge this heart of mine, for thou only art the God of desire." Thus draw down a desire from the Lord, and from the promise, for there only must thou have it. "The smoking flax God will not quench." Flax will not smoke, but a spark must come into it, and that will make it catch fire and smoke. Thus lay your hearts before the Lord, and say, "Good Lord, here is only flax, here is only a stubborn heart, but strike thou by the promise onc spark from heaven, that I may have a smoking desire after Christ, and after grace."

V. *A Love of Christ.*

We have run through two affections, hope and desire, and the next is love: a possible good stirs up hope; a necessary excellency in that good scuttleth desire; and a relish in that good settled kindles love. Thus is the order of God's work: if the good be absent, the understanding saith, "It is to be desired, O that I had it!" Then it sends out hope, and that waits for good, and stays till it can see it; and yet if that good cannot come, then desire hath another work; it goes up and down wandering, and seeketh and sueth for Christ Jesus. After this, if the Lord Jesus be pleased to come himself into the view of the heart, which longeth thus after him, then love leads him into the soul, and tells the will of him, saying, "Lo! here is Jesus Christ, the Messiah, that hath ordered these great things for his saints and people."

The ground of this love is God's Spirit in the promise, letting in some intimation of God's love into the soul. "We love him, because he loved us first." The burning-glass must receive heat of the beams of the sun before it burn any thing; so there must be a beam of God's love to fall upon the soul, before it can love God again; "I drew them with the cords of a man, even with the bands of love." God lets in the cords of love into the soul, and that draws love again to God.

Now this love of God doth beget our love in three particulars: First, there is a sweetness and a relish which God's love lets into the soul, and with which it warms the heart. A fainting sinner is cold at the heart, and therefore the Lord lets in a drop of his loving-kindness, and this warms the heart, and the soul is even filled with the happiness of the mercy of God. Secondly, as that sweetness warms the heart, so the freeness of the love of God begins to kindle this love in the soul, that it sparkles again: God setteth out his love towards us in shewing us, "that while we were yet sinners, Christ did for us." This commends the love of God, the Lord sends to poor and miserable sinners, and saith, "Commend my mercy to such a one, and tell him, that though he hath been an enemy to me, yet I am a friend to him, and though he hath been rebellious against me, yet I am a God and Father to him." When a poor sinner considers this with himself, he saith, "Is the Lord so merciful to me? me that loved my sins, and continued in them? Had it not been just that I should have perished in them? But will the Lord not only spare his enemy, but give his Son for him? O let my soul for ever rejoice in this inconceivable goodness of God!" Be thy heart never so hard, if it have but the sense of this, it cannot but stir thee to love. Thirdly, the greatness and freeness of this mercy of God, being settled upon the heart, inflames it; the sweetness warms the heart, this freeness kindles the fire; and when the greatness of the sweetness comes to be valued, this sets the heart all on a flame. This will make the soul say, "What? I that have done all that I could against this good God! O it breaks my heart to think of it! There was no name under heaven that I did blaspheme more than this name; no command under heaven I so much despised, as the command of God and of Christ; no spirit that I grieved so much as the good Spirit of God; and therefore had the Lord only given me a look, or spoken a word to me, it had been an infinite mercy; but to send his Son to save me, it is in-

comparable: I could not conceive to do so much evil against him as he hath done good to me: O the breadth of that mercy beyond all limits! O the length of that mercy beyond all time! O the depth of that mercy below a man's misery! O the height of that mercy above the height of my understanding! If my hands were all love, that I could work nothing but love; and if mine eyes were able to see nothing but love, and my mind to think of nothing but love; and if I had a thousand bodies, they were all too little to love that God, that hath thus immeasurably loved me a poor sinful hell-hound. O Lord, my strength, O how should I but love thee!"

But how may I know whether my love be a true love, or a false love? How may I know that my love is of the right stamp? Let every man put his love upon the trial, and examine thus, whether he welcomes Christ and grace, according to the worth of them? If he does, it will appear in these particulars: 1. Observe the root from whence thy love came. Canst thou say, "I love the Lord, because he hath loved me?" Then thy love is right. God cannot but like that love which came from himself. Is thy soul affected and enlarged in love to the Lord, because thou hast felt the sweetness of his grace? Canst thou say, "The Lord hath let in a glimpse of his favour? And the Lord hath said in his truth, he looks to him that trembles at his word; the minister said it, and the Spirit saith it, that my mercy is registered in heaven. O how should I love the Lord? My sins are many, which I have bewailed; my sighs I have put up to heaven, and at the last the Lord hath given me a gracious answer. O how shall I love the Lord, my strength?" If it be thus with thee, thy love is sound. 2. If thou entertain thy Saviour as it becometh him, thou must entertain him as a King, give up all to him, and entertain none with him but such as are attendants upon him: love all in Christ, and for Christ, but express thy love and joy to Christ above all. He is a King, and all the rest are but

as retainers. He that loves any thing equal with Christ, doth not rightly love Christ. 3. The soul that rightly entertains Christ, he is marvellous wary and watchful, that he may not grieve the good Spirit of God, and cause him to go away. The spouse sought long for her beloved, and at last brought him home; and when she had welcomed him, she gives a charge to all the house, "not to stir, nor awake her love till he please." When a prince comes unto the house of a great man, what charge is there given to make no noise in the night. The soul, when it hath received the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, doth thus; he gives a peremptory charge to keep watch and ward, and gives a charge to hope, and desire, and love, and joy, and the mind, and all, not to grieve and molest the good Spirit of God; "Let there be no motion but to entertain it, no advice but to receive it, and do nothing that may work the least kind of dislike unto it."

And now let me prevail with your hearts to regard this duty, "Love the Lord, all ye his saints." Whom will you love, if you love not him! Oh! you poor ones, "love ye the Lord," for you have need; and all you rich ones, "love ye the Lord," for you have cause; and you little ones too, he knocks at every man's heart, and persuades every man's soul, "Love ye the Lord." The means are these: 1. Give attendance daily to the promise of grace and Christ; drive away all other suitors from the soul, and let nothing come between the promise and it. 2. Labour to be thoroughly acquainted with the beauty and sweetness of Christ in the promise.

Christ is worthy in himself: if we had a thousand hearts to bestow upon him, we were not able to love him sufficiently. What wouldst thou love? Wouldst thou have beauty? Then thy Saviour is beautiful; "fairer than the children of men," Psal. xlv. 2. Wouldst thou have strength? Then thy Saviour is strong; "Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most mighty," Psal. xlv. 3. Wouldst thou have riches? Thy Saviour is more rich (if it be possible,) than he is strong, "He is heir of all things,"

Heb. i. 1. Wouldst thou have wisdom? Then thy Saviour is wise, yea, wisdom itself; "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. Wouldst thou have life eternal? Christ is the Author of life and happiness to all that have him.

And Christ deserves our love, in regard of benefits to us. Be man never so worthy in himself, yet if he have manifested the disposition of an enemy, a woman saith, "I will not have him, though he have all the world." This takes off the affection. It is not so with the Lord Jesus. As he is worthy of all love in himself, so he hath dealt mercifully with you. In your sickness, who helped you? In wants, who supplied you? In anguish of heart, who relieved you? It was Jesus Christ! Oh! therefore love him, deal with him as he deserves; enlarge your hearts to him for ever.

Yea, Christ seeks our love. Here is the admiration of mercy, that our Saviour, who hath been rejected by a company of sinful creatures, should seek their love. For shame refuse him not, but let him have love ere he go. Had the Lord received us when we had come to him, and humbled our hearts before him; had he heard when we had spent our days, and all our strength, in begging and craving, it had been an infinite mercy. But when the Lord Jesus Christ shall seek to us by his messengers, (it is all the work we have to do to woo you for the Lord Jesus Christ; yea, and if we speak for ourselves, it is pity but our tongue should cleave to the roof of our mouth;) when the Lord Jesus shall come and wait upon us, and seek our love,—oh! this is the wonder of mercies! He looks for no portion, he will take thee and all thy wants. Get you home, then, and every one in secret, labour to deal truly with your own hearts; make up a match in this manner, and say, "Is it possible that the Lord should look so low?" That a prince should send to a poor peasant; that majesty should stoop to meanness? Heaven to earth? God to man? "Hath the Lord offered mercy to me? And doth he require nothing of me but to love him again?" Call upon your

hearts, I charge you, and say thus, "Lord, if all the light of mine eyes were love, and all the speeches of my tongue were love, it were all too little to love thee: Oh! let me love thee!"

VI. *A relying on Christ.*

We are now come to the work of the will, which is the great wheel of the soul. The former affections were but as hand-maids to usher in Christ. The Mind saith, "I have seen Christ;" Hope saith, "I have waited;" Desire saith, "I have longed;" Love saith, "I am kindled:" then saith the Will, "I will have Christ, it shall be so:" and this makes up the match. The seeds of faith went before, now faith is come to some perfection, now the soul reposes itself upon the Lord Jesus.

And this reposing or resting itself, implies a five-fold act. First, it implies, a going out of the soul to Christ. When the man seeth this, that the Lord Jesus is his aid, and must ease him, and pardon his sins, then "Let us go to that Christ," saith he; it is the Lord's call, "Come to me, all ye that are weary." This voice coming home to the heart, and the prevailing sweetness of the call overpowering the heart, the soul goes out, and flings itself upon the riches of God's grace. Secondly: It lays fast hold upon Christ. When the Lord saith, "Come, my love, come, my dove, O come away!" "Behold, I come," (saith she;) and when she is come, she fasteneth upon Christ, saying, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his!" Faith lays hold on the Lord, and will not let mercy go, but cleaves unto it, though it should seem to conflict with the Lord: "Should he slay me, (saith Job,) yet will I trust in him." Thirdly, it flings the weight of all its troubles, guilt, and corruptions upon the Lord Jesus Christ. As when a man cannot go of himself, he lays all the weight of his body upon another; so the soul goes to Christ, and lays all the weight of itself upon Christ, and saith, "I have no comfort, O Lord; all my discomforts I lay upon Christ, and rely on the Lord for comfort and

consolation." "Who is this, (saith Solomon,) that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Cant. viii. 5. The party coming is the church, the wilderness is the troubles and vexations the church meets with, and the Beloved is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the church leans herself all upon her husband, she walks along with him, but he bears all the burden: "Cast all your care upon him, (saith Peter,) for he careth for you," 1 Pet. v. 7. Fourthly, it draws virtue, and derives power from the Lord Jesus Christ for succour and supplies; and here is the especial life of faith, it goes for mercy, and grace, and comfort to Christ; the believer knows it is to be had from him, and therefore fetcheth all from him: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," Isai. xii. 3. The fountain of salvation is Christ, and all the waters of life, of grace and mercy, are in Christ Jesus. Now it is not enough to let down the bucket into the well, but it must be drawn out also; it is not enough to come to Christ, but we must draw the water of grace from Christ to ourselves. Fifthly: Faith leaves the soul with the promise; yea, notwithstanding all delays, denials, discouragements from God, faith brings on the heart still; it will be sure to lie at the gate, and keep the soul with the promise, whatever befalls it. The faithful soul lays hold upon the Lord for mercy, pardon, power and grace; and though the Lord seem to give him up to the torment of sin and corruption, yet the soul saith, "Though my soul go down to hell, I will hold here for mercy till the Lord comfort, and pardon, and subdue graciously these cursed corruptions, which I am not able to master myself."

Hast thou gotten faith? Then labour to husband this grace well. It is a shame to see those that have a right and title to grace and Christ, yet live at such an under-rate. I would have you to live above the world, for the Lord doth not grudge his people comfort, but would have them live cheerfully, and have strong consolations, and mighty assurance of God's love. Is there not cause? Surely there is. Why, faith (if it be right,) will make

the life of a Christian most easy, most comfortable. Unfaithful souls sink in their sorrows upon every occasion, but faith gives ease to a man in all his conversation.

1. Because faith hath a skill to put over all cares to another. We take up the cross, but faith casts all the care on Christ: an easy matter it is to lie under the burden, when another bears all the weight of it. Look how it is with two ferry-men, the one hales his boat about the shore, and cannot get off, but tugs, and pulls, and never puts her forth to the tide; the other puts his boat upon the stream, and sets up his sail, and then he may sit still in his boat, and the wind will carry him whither he is to go: Just thus it is with a faithful soul and an unbeliever. All the care of the faithful soul is, to put himself upon the stream of God's providence, and set up the sail of faith, and take the gale of God's mercy, and so he goes cheerfully, because it is not he that carries himself, but the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas every unfaithful soul tugs and pulls at the business, and can find neither ease nor success.

2. Because faith sweetens all afflictions. Howsoever it apprehends all troubles and afflictions, yet withal it apprehends the faithfulness of God ordering all for our good. And that is the reason why all our troubles are digested comfortably, without any harshness at all.

You will say, If faith bring such ease, how may a man that hath faith improve it, to have such comfort by it? I answer, the rules are four.

1. Labour to gain some evidence to thy own soul, that thou hast a title to the promise. The reason why poor Christians go drooping, and are overwhelmed with their sins and miseries, is, because they see not their title to mercy, nor their evidence of God's love.

2. Labour to set an high price on the promises of God. One promise, and the sweetness of God's mercy in Christ, is better than all the honours or riches in the world; prize these at this rate, and thou canst not choose but find ease, and be contented.

3. Labour to keep the promises ever at hand. What is it to me, though I have a thing in the house, if I have it not at

my need? Now, for the Lord's sake, let me entreat thee, be wise for thy poor soul. There is many a fainting fit comes over the heart of many a poor Christian; persecutions without, and sorrows and corruptions within; therefore keep thy cordials about thee, and be sure to have them within reach: take one, and bring another, and be refreshed by another, and go singing to the grave, and to heaven for ever.

CHAP. VII.

The growing of the Soul with Christ.

HITHERTO of the first part of the soul's implantation; to wit, Of the engrafting the soul into Christ. We are now come to the second, which is, The growing of the soul with Christ. Now this growing is accomplished by two means. 1. By an union of the soul with Christ. 2. By a conveyance of sap or sweetness (all the treasures of grace and happiness) that is in Christ to the soul.

First, every believer is joined unto Christ. 1. He is joined as a friend to a friend; as a father to a child; as a husband to a wife; as a graft to a tree; as the soul to a body. So is Christ to a believer; "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." 2. So joined that the believer becomes "one spirit with Christ." This mystery is great, and beyond the reach of that little light I enjoy. Only I shall communicate what I conceive in these three particulars: 1. That the Spirit of God (the third Person in the Trinity,) doth really accompany the Word, but more especially the precious promises of the gospel. 2. The Spirit (accompanying the promise of grace and salvation,) doth thereby leave a supernatural power, a spiritual and operative virtue upon the soul, and thereby brings it unto Christ. It is not so much any thing in the soul, as a spiritual assisting, and moving, and working upon the soul, by virtue whereof it is moved and carried to the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The Spirit of grace in the promise working thus upon the heart, causeth the heart to close with the promise, and with itself in the promise; and this is to be *one spirit*.

This may shew us, that the sins of the faithful are grievous to the blessed Spirit; not only because of mercies, bonds, and engagements, which the believer hath received, but because a man is come so near to Christ and the Spirit, as to be "one spirit with Christ." What! lodge an unclean spirit with the clean spirit of the Lord! The Holy Ghost cannot endure this: "Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth," Ephes. iv. 29. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, because by it you are sealed unto the day of redemption." The good Spirit of the Lord hath sealed you unto redemption, and knit you unto himself; and will you rend yourselves from him and grieve him? O grieve not the Holy Spirit!

Secondly, as there is an union with Christ, so there is a conveyance of all spiritual grace from Christ, to all those that believe in him. 1. There is fully enough in the Lord Jesus Christ for every faithful soul. 2. As there is enough in Christ, so Christ doth supply or communicate whatsoever is most fit. 3. As the Lord doth communicate what is fit, so he doth preserve what he doth bestow and communicate. 4. As the Lord preserves what he communicates, so he quickens the grace that he now doth preserve; and in the end he crowns it all.

Hence we see whither the saints of God should go to fetch a supply of whatsoever grace they want; yea, the increase and perfection of what they have already. Christ is made all in all to his servants; why, then, go to the Lord Jesus; he calls and invites, "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve." If thou be under condemnation, buy of Christ justification: if thou be a polluted creature, buy of Christ sanctification. "With thee is the well-spring of life," (saith David,) "and in thy light only we shall see light." It is not with us, but with thee; it is not in our heads, or hearts, or performances, it is only in Christ to be found, only from Christ to be fetched. I deny not but we should improve all means, and use all helps, but in the use of all seek only to Christ; with him is the *well of life*. Away to Christ; wisdom, righteousness, all is in him; and there we must have them.

You will say, What are the means to obtain these graces from Christ? I answer: First, eye the promise daily, and keep it within view. Secondly, yield thyself, and give way to the stroke of the promise, and to the power of the Spirit. For instance, imagine thy heart begins to be pestered with vain thoughts, or with a proud haughty spirit, be not discouraged; no, but eye the promise, and hold fast thereon, and say, "Lord, thou hast promised all grace unto thy servants, take therefore this heart and these affections, and let thy Spirit frame them aright, according to thy own good will; by that Spirit of wisdom (Lord) inform me; by that Spirit of sanctification (Lord) cleanse me from all my corruptions; by that Spirit of grace (Lord) quicken and enable me to the discharge of every holy service." Thus carry thyself by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, and thou shalt find thy heart strengthened upon all occasions.

For conclusion, (to impress this deeper into your hearts,) If every believer be joined with Christ, and from Christ there be a conveyance of all spiritual graces unto every believer; then, above all, labour for Christ in all things. Never let thy heart be quieted, never let thy soul be contented, until thou hast obtained Christ. Grace indeed is good, and duties are good; seek for all, we should do so; perform all, we ought to do so; but, oh! Christ in all, above all, more than all. Thus I have shewn you the way to the Lord Jesus; I have shewn you also how you may come to be implanted into the Lord Jesus; and now I leave you in the hands of a Saviour, in the bowels of a Redeemer; and I think I cannot leave you better.

END OF VOL. VII.

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