

TWENTY SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

by
Thomas Manton

TWENTY SERMONS.

SERMON I. - Ps. 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—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.

THE title of this psalm is ‘A psalm of instruction,’ and so called because David was willing to show them the way to happiness from his own experience. Surely no lesson is so needful to be learned as this. We all would be happy: the good and bad, that do so seldom agree in anything, 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 and righteousness 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 shows 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, pardon of sin.
2. A description of the persons who shall enjoy it: *in whose spirit there is no guile.*

The privilege is that I shall confine my thoughts to; it is set forth in three expressions: *forgiving transgression*, *covering of sin*, and *not imputing iniquity*. The manner of speech is warm and vehement, and it is repeated over again: *blessed is the man*.

I shall show what these three expressions import, and why the prophet doth use such vehemency and emphatical inculcation 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: Mat. 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. As the Israelites were to inarch with a paddle tied to their arms, that when they went to ease themselves they might dig, and cover that which came from them: Deut. xxiii., you have the law there, and the reason of it, ver. 14, 'For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.'

And then 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: Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.' Thus is the act set forth.

The object of pardon about which it is conversant is set forth under divers expressions—iniquity, transgression, and sin; as in law many words of like import and signification are heaped up and put together, to make the deed and legal instrument more comprehensive and effectual. I observe it the rather because, when God proclaims his name, the same words are used: Exod. xxxiv. 7, 'Taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Well, we have seen the meaning of the expression. Why doth the holy man of God use such vigour and 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—'Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven.' And then partly too 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 pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine, then, which I shall insist upon is this: That it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain the pardon of our sins by Christ Jesus. I shall evidence it to you by these three considerations:—

1. I shall show what necessity lies upon us to seek after this pardon.
2. Our misery without it.
3. I shall speak of the annexed benefits, and our happiness if once we attain it.

1. The necessity that lies upon us, being all guilty before God, to seek after our justification, and the pardon of our sins by Christ. That it may sink the deeper into your minds, I shall do it in this scheme or 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 man kind unavoidably, unless the Lord will compromise the matter, and find out some way in the chancery of the gospel 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 broken-heartedly to quit the one covenant, and accept of the grace provided for us in the other.

[1.] 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 the judgment a man makes upon his actions morally considered, the good or the evil, the rectitude or obliquity, that is in them with respect to rewards or punishment. As a man acts, so he is a party; but as he reviews and censures his actions, so 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. I say, our passions and affections raise clouds and mists which darken the mind, and do incline the will by a pleasing violence; but after the evil action is done, when the affection ceaseth, then guilt flasheth in the face of conscience. As Judas, whose heart lay asleep all the while he was going on in his villainy, but afterwards it fell upon him. Thou hast ‘sinned in betraying innocent blood.’ When the affections are satisfied, and give place to reason, that was before condemned, and reason takes the throne again, it hath the more force to affect us with grief and fear, whilst it strikes through the heart of a man with a sharp sentence of reproof for obeying appetite before reason. Now this conscience of sin may be choked and smothered for a while, 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 anything, 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 warnings and checks of conscience, without which they would be weak and ineffectual, and all the hopes and fears they stir up in us would be vain fancies and fond surmises. I need not insist upon this, a conscience implies a law. The heathens had a law, because they had a conscience: Rom. ii. 15, ‘Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.’ They have a conscience 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 y and this sense is strengthened and increased 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 slight or 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. Now the precept, *that* 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 shows 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, as ready to let fly, with his sword not only drawn but whetted, as if he were just about to strike, if we turn not, Ps. vii. 11-13.

[4.] A sanction implies a judge, who will take cognisance of the keeping or breaking of this law; for otherwise the sanction or penalty were but a vain scarecrow, 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, is a thought so unreasonable, so much against the sense of conscience, against God's daily providence, against scripture, which everywhere (in order to this, to quicken us to seek forgiveness of sins) 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 shows us there is such a judge that looks after the keeping and breaking of his law, 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;' hath owned either table, by punishing sometimes the ungodliness, and some times the unrighteousness of the world; nay, every notable breach by way of omission or commission. The apostle saith, 'every transgression,' and 'every disobedience.' These two words signify sins of omission or commission: it hath been punished, and God hath owned his law, that it is a firm authentic rule. And the scripture

also usually makes use of this notion or argument of a judge to quicken us to look after the pardon of our sins: Acts x. 42, 43, 'And he hath commanded us to preach and testify to the people, that it is he that was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' So Acts iii. 19-21. 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, when he will reckon with the lapsed world. He reckons sometimes with nations now, for ungodliness and unrighteousness, by wars, and pestilence, and famine. He reckons with particular persons at their death, and when their work is done he pays them their wages: Heb. ix. 27, 'It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment.' But there is a more general and final judgment, when his justice must have a solemn trial, which is in part evident in nature; for the apostles did slide in the Christian doctrine mostly by this means into the hearts of those to whom they preached: Acts xxiv. 25, 'He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' The particularity of it belongs to the gospel revelation, but nature hath some kind of sense of it in itself, and they are urged to repent, 'because God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,' Acts xvii. 31. God judgeth the world in patience now, but then in righteousness, when all things shall be reviewed, and everything restored; virtue to its public 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 certainly infers a condemnation to a fallen creature, unless God set up another court for his relief; for now man is utterly disabled by sin to fulfil the law, and can by no means avoid the punishment that is 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 aught that yet appears, if God do not take another course, is unavoidable.

(1.) The duty of the law is impossible. The apostle tells us ‘what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the weakness of our flesh.’ It could not justify us before God, it could not 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 stick to the law as long as he can, and will 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 curtails the law of God, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, and brings it down to a poor contemptible thing, requiring a few external superficial duties of men. We read often of being ‘dead to sin,’ and ‘to the world;’ it is as certainly true we must be ‘dead to the law.’ Now how are we dead to the law? The scripture tells us in one place, that ‘through the law we are dead to the law;’ and in another place, that we are ‘dead to the law through the body of Christ.’ The first place is Gal. ii. 19, ‘Through the law I am dead to the law.’ Men are apt to stand to the legal covenant, and have their confidence in the flesh, to place their hopes of acceptance with God in some few external things, which they make their false righteousness. For the carnal world, as it cries up a false happiness as its God, so men have a false righteousness which is their Christ. Now through the law they are dead to it. How? The law supposeth us as innocent, and requires us to continue so: ‘Cursed is every one that continues not in every thing.’ Suppose a man should exactly fulfil it afterwards, yet the paying of new debts will not quit old scores. And then we are ‘dead to the law by the body of Christ,’ Rom. vii. 4; by the crucified body of Christ, by which he hath merited and purchased a better hope and grace for us. Well, the duty 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 I would ask you, what hope can you have in Go⁴, whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice obligeth him to punish it?

(1st.) 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, it comes from their lessening thoughts of God's holiness; and if their hearts were sufficiently possessed with an awe of God's unspotted purity and holiness, they would more look after the terms of grace God hath provided: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' Why do men live securely in their sins, and do not break off their evil course? They think God is not so severe and harsh, and so all their confidence is grounded upon a mistake of God's nature, and such a dreadful mistake as amounts to a blasphemy: 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' The other reason is this, particularly because I observe the bottom reason of all 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 bottomed and grounded upon his holiness, and upon the purity of his nature.

(2dly.) His justice obligeth him to punish sin, that the law might not seem to be made in vain. It concerns the universal judge to maintain the reputation of his justice in reference to men, and to appear to them still as a righteous God: 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, if you could suppose he should fail in point of righteousness, this were to be denied, that God should be the judge of the world. Therefore God's righteousness and justice, which gives to every one their 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 this God but wrath and eternal destruction? Therefore 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 and chancery of the gospel, where condemned sinners may be taken to mercy, and their sins forgiven, and they justified and accepted unto grace and life, Upon terms that may salve God's honour and government over mankind. There is a great deal of difference between the forgiving private wrongs and injuries, and the pardoning of public offences; between the pardon of a magistrate, and the pardon of a private person. When equals fall out among themselves, they may end their differences in charity, and in such ways as best please themselves, by a mere forgiving, by acquitting the sense of the wrong done, or a bare submission of the party offending. 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 compromise and agreement, but by satisfaction, that his law may be satisfied, and the honour of his justice secured. Therefore to make the pardon of man a thing convenient to the righteous and holy judge to bestow, without any impeachment to the honour of his justice and authority of his law, 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 shows 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 sanctuary and 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; and the avenger of blood at our heels, that causeth us to fly to our proper city of refuge, and to take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, Heb.

vi. 18. So that if you mince and extenuate sin, you seem to hold to the first covenant, and had rather plead innocent than guilty. No; if you would have this 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 merit 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 what is his due, acknowledging his guilt, and this with much brokenness of heart before God, when he hath involved himself in God's eternal wrath and displeasure. I observe, that the law-covenant is in the scripture compared to a prison, wherein God hath shut up guilty souls, Rom. xi. 32, 'He hath concluded or shut them up, that he may have mercy upon them;' Gal. iii. 21, 'He hath shut them up under sin.' 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 and righteousness 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

showed himself willing to be reconciled, we must enter into his peace, not look upon ourselves in a hopeless and desperate condition, but 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.

2. Secondly, I must show our misery without this; and this will be best done by considering the notions here in the text. Here is filth to be covered, a burden of which we must be eased; and here is a debt that must be cancelled: and unless this be, 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: elements are not burdensome in their own place; 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, and to be obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure: Ps. xxxviii. 4, ‘Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me.’ Broken bones are sensible of the least weight; certainly a broken heart cannot make light of sin. What kind of hearts are those that sin securely, and without remorse, and are never troubled? Go to wounded consciences, and ask of them what sin is: Gen. iv. 13, ‘Mine iniquity is greater than I can bear;’ 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; and some have chosen strangling rather than life. Ask Cain, ask Judas, what it is to feel the burden of sin. Sinners are ‘all their lifetime subject to this bondage;’ it is not always felt, but soon awakened: it may be done by a pressing exhortation at a sermon; it may be done by some notable misery that befalls us in the world; 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. There needs not

much ado to put a sinner in the stocks of conscience. Therefore do but consider 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 it. Lot’s righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the conversation of the wicked. A wicked man hates a godly man with a hatred of enmity and abomination; but a godly man doth not hate a wicked man with a hatred of enmity—that is opposite to good-will—but with that of abomination, which is opposite to complacence. It is loathsome to an indifferent man, for holiness darts an awe and reverence into the conscience. ‘The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,’ and a wicked person is a vile person in the common esteem of the world: horrible profaneness will not easily down. Nay, it is loath some to other wicked men. I do not know whether I expound that scripture rightly, but it looks somewhat so, ‘Hateful and hating one another.’ We hate sin in another, though we will not take notice of it in ourselves. The sensuality and pride and vanity of one wicked man is hated by another; nay, he is loathsome to himself. Why? because he cannot endure to look into himself. We cannot endure ourselves when we are serious. ‘They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.’ 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; as it was David’s experience, Ps. xxxii. 3. That was the cause of his silence: he kept off from God, having sinned against him, and had not a heart to go home and sue out his pardon. Oh, what a mercy is it, then, to have this filth covered, that we may be freed from this bashful inconfidence, and 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; and if it be not pardoned, the judge will give us over to the jailer, and the jailer cast us into prison, ‘till we have paid the uttermost farthing,’ Luke xii. 59. To have so vast a debt lying upon us, what a misery is that! Augustus bought that man’s bed who could sleep soundly

when he was in debt so many hundred of sesterces. Certainly it is a strange security that possesseth the hearts of men, when we are obliged to suffer the vengeance of the wrath of the eternal God by our many sins, 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 for; you must get a discharge, or else you are undone for ever. Our debt comes to millions of millions; well, if the Lord will forgive so great a debt, oh, the blessedness of that man. Put altogether now; 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, certainly you would be more and more affected with this wonderful grace. ‘Oh, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his transgressions!’

Thirdly, The consequent benefits. I will name three:—

[1.] It restores the creature to God, and puts us in joint again, in a capacity to serve, and please, and glorify God: Ps. 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 take it as God dispenseth it; it inclines us to return to God, and encourages us to live in a state of amity and 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. It inclines us to serve and please God; for where God pardons he renews, he puts a new life into us that inclines us to God: Col. ii. 13, ‘He hath quickened you together with Christ, having forgiven all your trespasses.’ 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 you 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 when the conscience

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

[2.] It lays the foundation for solid comfort and peace in our own souls, for till sin be pardoned you 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 justly deserved, and whom we still apprehend as offended with us, and provoked by us. We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will be soon spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, a poor, sorry peace, that dares not come to the light and endure the trial,—a sorry peace, that is soon disturbed by a few serious and sober thoughts of God and the world to come; but when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy indeed' Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,' Mat. ix. 2. Then misery is plucked up by the roots: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' Why? 'Her iniquity is forgiven,' Isa. xl. 1, 2; 'And we joy in God as those that have received the atonement,' Rom. v. 11. The Lord Jesus hath made the atonement; but when we have received the atonement, 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 is *gratia removens prohibens*, that grace that removes the impediment, that takes the makeable out of the way, removes that that hinders our entrance into heaven. Sanctification is the beginning; but till we are pardoned, there can be no entrance into heaven: now this removes the incapacity. I observe remission of sins is but for all the privilege part, as repentance for the duties: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.' There are two initial benefits—repentance, as the foundation of the new life; and remission of sins, as the foundation of all our future mercies. There are two chief blessings offered in the new covenant, 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.’ When we are pardoned, then we are capable to look for the blessed inheritance; the impediment is taken out of the way that excludes from it.

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.’

A WORD OF APPLICATION.

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, and to reduce him to God: 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 and trouble. Now these are fully made known and 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 own repentance, without which our case is not compassionable. The first I will chiefly 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 and faulted in his duty and subjection to him, and is therefore obnoxious to God’s just wrath and vengeance, are truths evident in the light of nature and common experience; and therefore the heathens had some convictions of this, and saw a need that God should be atoned and propitiated by some sacrifices of expiation; and the nearer they lived to the original of this tradition and institution, the more burdened and pressing were their conceits and 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 puzzle and distraction of their own thoughts, and could not make God merciful without some diminution of his holiness and justice, nor make him just without some diminution of his mercy. Somewhat they conceived of the goodness of God by his continuing forfeited benefits so long: 'God left them not without a witness;' 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, giving 'their first-born for the sin of their soul,' Micah vi. 7. And all those notions they had about this apprehended expiation were too weak to change the heart or life of man, or to reduce him to God. Come we now to the Jews. The Jews 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 which was 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 are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. 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 handwriting of ordinances that were against them.' The redemption of souls was then spoken of as a great mystery, but sparingly revealed: Ps. xlix. 3, 4, 'My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable, I will open my dark sayings upon the harp.' What was that wisdom? What was that dark saying? 'The redemption of souls is precious; it ceaseth for ever.' As it lies upon mere man's hand, 'none can give a ransom for his brother.' Eternal redemption by Christ was a dark 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. I have spent my time in presenting to you what a blessed thing it is to have our sins pardoned. Christians, a man that flows in wealth and honour, till he be pardoned, is not a happy man. A man that lives afflicted, contemned, not taken notice of in the world, if he be a pardoned sinner, oh, the blessedness of that man! They are not happy that have least trouble, but they that have least cause; not they that have a benumbed conscience, but they that have a conscience sound, established, and 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. By these and such like arguments I would have you put in for a share of this privilege. But what must be required? I would fain send you away with some directions.

Let me entreat 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, Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), '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, tunder the law, they had a lamb every morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4-6. 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 clear, and 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 out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break 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 earnestly come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. 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 our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus; yet he that is clean, need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world; and we must 1 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 make us 'possess the sins of our youth.' An old bruise is felt upon every change of weather. When we prove unthankful, and careless, and stupid, and negligent, 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 a ghost, or one risen from the dead. Few believers have, upon right terms, the assurance of their own sincerity; and though God may blot sins out of the book of his remembrance, yet he will not blot them out of our consciences. The worm of conscience is killed still by the application of the blood of Christ and the Spirit. This short exhortation I would give you, the other would take up too much time.

SERMON II. - Ps. 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.—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.

In this text I observed, that it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain pardon of our sins upon the account of Christ's righteousness.

I showed the necessity which lies upon men, who are all become guilty before God, to look after this pardon; and thereupon took occasion to represent the excellency of the Christian religion, that hath provided a salve for the great sore that runs upon all mankind, above that of the pagans, and also that of the Jews, to whom this mystery was but darkly revealed. To proceed to another use, 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 and impediment in the way hinders your blessedness. 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 accounted happy men. Do you account him a happy man who is condemned to die, because he hath a plentiful allowance till his execution? or him a happy man that makes a fair show abroad, and puts a good face upon his ruinous and breaking condition, but at home is pinched with want and misery, which is ready to come upon him like an armed man? or him a happy man that revels it out in all manner of pleasure, but is to die at night? Then those that remain in the guilt of their sins may be happy. But now, on the other side, 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 a 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, Ps. vii. 11-13, '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 at a distance; he is bending his bow: the arrow is upon the string, and how soon God may let it fly we cannot tell; therefore we are never safe till we turn to God, and enter into his peace. 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 sin, (Qu. 'the pardon of our sin'?—ED) but stupidity and folly.

[2.] On our part, 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 they

are not happy that feel least trouble, but those that have least cause. A benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness; they only put off that which they cannot put away, which God hath neither forgiven nor covered. They do but skin the wound till it fester and rankle into a dangerous sore. God is the wronged party, and supreme judge, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. If he justifies, then who will condemn? We may lay ourselves asleep, and sing peace to ourselves; but it is not what we say, but what God saith: '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 or loosing that obligation. Now, the punishment is exceeding great, no less than hell and damnation; and hell is no vain scarecrow, nor is heaven a May-game. Eternity makes everything truly great. Look at the loss—an eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God: Mat. xxv. 41, 'Go, ye cursed,' &c.; and Luke xiii. 27, 'Depart, ye workers of iniquity.' When God turned Adam out of paradise, his case was very sad, but God took care of him, made him coats of skins to clothe him, gave him a day of patience, afterwards promised the seed of the woman, who should recover the lapsed state of mankind, and so intimated hopes of a better paradise. That exile, therefore, is nothing comparable to this; for now man is stript 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 *poena sensus*, 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 worm 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, distracting their minds with a clatter of 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 notes 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 to punish him, and will show 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, 'It is a fearful thing 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 evermore, till his wrath be appeased, and your sins forgiven; 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 to say, it is far more credible that a reconciled man should be glorified, than that a sinner and rebel should be reconciled. If you can pass over this difficulty, and 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 filth covered, and our debt may be forgiven? I shall give my answer in three branches:

—

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

II. What is to be done as to your continuance therein, and that you may still enjoy this privilege; and—

III. What is to be done as to your recovery out of grievous lapses, and falls, and wounds, as are more troublesome to the

conscience, for which a particular and express repentance is required.

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 out 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 a doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. So if we will not hearken to the vain fancies of 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 impetration there is required the intervention of Christ's merit, so to the application faith and repentance, without which we are not pardoned. These two graces have a distinct reference, and it is intimated by that passage of Paul, for he gives this account of his ministry, Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' Here, in short, repentance respects God, to whom we return, and faith Jesus Christ, *by* whom we return. From God we fell, to God we must 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 then 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 by his renewing first, and then reconciling grace; and faith is that that respects him. Who will take physic of a physician whose art he does not trust, or go to sea with a pilot whose skill he questions? Who will venture his eternal interest in Christ's hands, if he be not persuaded of his ability and fidelity, as one that is able to make our

peace with God, and bring us to the enjoyment of him? But I would not lightly mention it, but bring it to a distinct issue.

1. I will show you it is for the glory of God and comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of entering into God's peace, or applying the gospel; for we must not so look to the impetration, or merit and righteousness of Christ, as not to consider the application, and how we come to have a title to these things.

2. I will show that these two graces and duties are faith and repentance, which do in many things agree, and in other respects differ.

3. I will show you that they, differing in their use, are required for distinct reasons and ends.

4. The use of these graces will plainly discover their nature to you, so that a poor Christian, that would settle his soul upon Christ's terms, and this blessed gospel made known to us, need not any longer debate what is repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. It is for the glory of God and the comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of applying the privileges of the gospel, or of entering into God's peace.

[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. Pardon we are upon; our case is not compassionate till we relent and submit to God's terms. I would appeal to your own consciences: surely it is more suitable to the wisdom of God that a penitent sinner should have pardon rather than an impenitent, or one that securely 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, and the wisdom of his transactions with man, 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 adult and grown persons, it is necessary we should not have such great privileges settled upon us without our knowledge, or besides and against our wills. God will have our consent in a humble and solemn way, that we may come

and thankfully accept what he hath provided for us. So this is very much for the glory of God.

[2.] And then for our comfort, that we may make our claim, that we may state our interest with the greater certainty and assurance; 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 be 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 a blessed creature 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 serious anxious soul replies still, To whom is this promise made? How shall I come to know that I am thus blessed and accepted by God, and that my sins are pardoned? What is to be replied here? Look to whom the promise is made. Certainly it is made to some, or to all. If you say the promise is to all, you deceive the most; if to some, you must say, from scripture, to them that repent and believe—to the penitent believer. Here is the shortest way to bring the debate to an issue, wherein our comfort is so much concerned, to see we be penitent believers. For thus the application is stated, and the fixing these conditions is the more for the glory of God, and the comfort of the creature.

2. The two graces or duties upon which it is fixed faith and repentance—do in many things agree, in other respects differ.

[1.] They both agree in this, that they are both necessary to the fallen creature, and do concern our recovery to God, and so are proper to the gospel, which is provided for the restoration of lapsed man kind. The gospel is a 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 tenor 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 entrance and first recovery out of the defection and 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 so interwoven, that we can hardly distinguish them.

Again, they both agree in this, that they have a continual influence upon our whole new obedience. For the secondary conditions of the covenant do 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; partly, because there is no use of faith without repentance. Christ as mediator is the means; now the means are of no use without respect to the end. Now Christ and the whole gospel grace is the means to come to God. Besides, these things cannot be graces but in a concomitancy. Repentance without faith, what would it be? When we see our sins, and bewail them, 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 we are incapable of mercy, our case is not compassionable.

In short, repentance without faith would degenerate into the horror of the damned, and our sorrow for sin would be tormenting rather curing to us. And then 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. Which is the first, I will not enter upon; but the one cannot be without the other.

[2.] Let me show you wherein they differ: 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,’ Titus iii. 3. We live in rebellion against him against whom we cannot make our party 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,’ he thought of returning to his father; and Ps. xxii. 27, ‘They shall remember, and turn to the Lord.’ So long as we lie in our sins, we are like men in a dream, we consider not from 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 chief happiness: as our sovereign Lord, that we may perform our duty to him; and our felicity and chief good, that we may seek all our happiness in him. And none do repent but those that give up themselves to obey God and to do his will, as he is the sovereign Lord: 1 Peter iv. 2, ‘That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;’ and look upon him as their chief happiness, and prefer his favour above all the sensual 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,’ Ps. lxxiii. 25. This is repentance towards God.

(2.) There is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This grace is necessary, that we may own our Redeemer, and be thankful to him, as the author of our deliverance: Rom. vii. 25, ‘wretched man that I am! But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ And also faith is necessary, 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: Mat. 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 confession: Heb. iii. 1, ‘Let us consider the Lord Jesus, the great apostle and high priest of our confession.’ 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. Consider him as a priest, that we may depend upon the

merit and value of 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. Who will learn of him as a prophet, whom he takes to be a deceiver? obey him as a king, who doth not believe his power? or depend upon him with any confidence or hopes of mercy, if he doth not believe the value of his merit and sacrifice? 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. Thus I have briefly showed you how repentance respects God, and faith our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. That these graces having their peculiar reference, are required in order to pardon, for distinct reasons and ends.

First, Repentance is required for these reasons:—

[1.] Because otherwise God cannot have his end in pardon, which is to recover the lost creation, that we may again live in his love and obedience. Surely 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. Take the lost sheep or goat, it was lost to the owner, the son to the father; and so, if Christ came to save that which was lost, he came to recover us to God, therefore said to redeem us to God.

[2.] Neither can the Redeemer do his work for which God hath appointed him: 1 Peter 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, truth, and life; no man comes to the Father but by me.’ Therefore, whole Christianity, from the beginning to the end, a short description of it is this,—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. 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;' nor to 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? I will content myself but with two reasons at this time:—

[1.] Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of God's free gift. Faith and grace do 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 not of your selves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.' Faith establishes and keeps up the interest and honour of grace; for it is the free grace and favour 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 to his mercy, have nothing to plead for ourselves but the righteousness and 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 can not 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 show you nothing but faith, or the belief of God's testimony concerning his Son, can support us in these transactions with God. The comfort of the promise is so rich and glorious, 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 preparations and rich provisions God hath made for us in the gospel. It is not a thing can-come to us by eye or ear, or the conceiving of man's heart; we

only believe and entertain it by faith. And then, the persons upon whom it is bestowed are so unworthy, that certainly it cannot enter into the heart of man that God will be so good, and do so much good to such. Adam, when he had sinned, grew shy of God, and ran away from him. Besides, the way God hath taken for our deliverance is so supernatural: '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 such an accursed death for our sakes, is so high and glorious, it can only be entertained by faith. Besides, our chief blessedness lies in another world: 'He that lacketh faith is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Here in this lower world, where our God is unseen, and our great hopes are to come, where the flesh is so importunate to be pleased, where our temptations and trials are so many, and difficulties so great, we are apt to question all, and we can never keep waiting upon God, were it not for faith, and a steady belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. For these reasons (if you look into the scriptures), it is why faith is so much insisted upon, that we may keep up the honour of God's grace, and because this grace of the Redeemer is so mysterious and wonderful.

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. The *terminus a quo* of repentance is our begun recovery from sin, and therefore called, 'Repentance from dead works,' Heb.

vi. 1. The *terminus ad quem*, to which we return, is God, and our being devoted to God in obedience and love. God never hath our hearts till he hath our love and delight, till we return to a love of his blessed majesty, and delight in his ways. This is called in scripture some times a turning to God, in many 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, which is at the bottom of it, it is a serious, thankful, broken-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be 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 serious and broken-hearted, done by a creature in misery, and thankful for such a wonderful benefit, a trusting to this Redeemer,

that he may do the work of a redeemer in our hearts, to save us from the evil of, and after, sin.

And thus I have briefly opened this necessary doctrine, as clearly laid in the scripture.

And this is your entrance in the evangelic state.

II. For our continuance therein; for we must not only mind our entrance, but our continuance. Our Lord Jesus tells us of a gate and a way: the gate signifies the entrance, and the way our continuance. And we read of making and keeping covenant with God; we read of union with Christ, that is our first entrance. For this faith is the closing act, and expressed sometimes by a being married to Christ. But there is not only an union with Christ, but an abiding in him: 'Abide in me, and I will abide in you.' Now as for our continuance, I would show you that the first works are gone over and over again, faith and repentance are still necessary: 'For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.' And repentance is still necessary. But I shall only press two things—first, new obedience; secondly, daily prayer.

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. xxviii. 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 thought; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Our hearts were not sound with God in the first covenanting if we undo what was done: 'If we build again the things we have destroyed, then we are found transgressors,' Gal. ii. 18. Well, then, a man that seeks after pardon, seeks after it with the ruin and destruction of sin. Sin was the greatest burden that lay upon his conscience, the grievance from whence he sought ease, the wound pained him at heart, the disease his soul was sick of. And was all this anguish real? And shall a man come to delight in his sores again, and take up the burden he groaned under, and tear open the wound that was in a fair way of healing, and willingly relapse into

the sickness he was almost recovered from with so much ado? Sure this shows our first consent was not real and sincere. And then Christ will be no advocate for them that continue in their sins. 'Our God is a God of salvation,' we cannot enough speak 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. [This was spoken unto at the close of the first sermon.] Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), '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. 4-6. 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 clear and 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 out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break 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, earnestly, come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. 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 our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus, yet he that is clean need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world, and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this 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: *culpa*, the fault, *reatus*, the guilt, *macula*, the stain and blot, and *poena*, 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 *culpa*, a criminal act; the sanction of the law as threatened makes way for guilt, as executed calls for punishment; you see how it ariseth.

1. For the fault in the transgression of the law, or the criminal action. See that the fault be not continued; relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound be soundly closed; as Lot doubled his incest, and Samson goes in again and again to Delilah. But in wicked men frequently, as that king sent fifty after fifty, and nothing would stop him. There is an express forsaking of sin required of us, otherwise it would abolish all the difference between the renewed and the carnal.

2. The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance, and humiliation before God, and suing out our pardon in Christ's name. 1 John i. 9, he speaks of believers: '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 (as Judah forbore the act, after he had committed incest with Tamar, but it seems he repented not till she showed him the bracelets and the staff); yet with serious remorse we must beg our peace humbly upon the account of our Mediator. Therefore some thing 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 some weakening of the reverence of God. A man cannot venture to 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. As Jonah, he repented of his tergiversation and forsaking his

call. The fault was not repeated: he goes to Nineveh and does his duty. Yet the core of the distemper was not taken away; for you read of him, Jonah iv. 2, 'Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew thou wert a gracious God, and repentest thee of the evil.' On the contrary, Peter fell into a grievous sin, denying his Lord and Master with oaths and execrations; but afterwards, John xxi. 15, Christ tries him: Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' pointing to the rest of his disciples. Peter had been bragging, Mat. xxvi. 33, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet I will not forsake thee.' Now when he was foiled, though he had wept bitterly for his fault, Christ tries if the cause be removed: 'Lord, saith he, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' But he doth not say now, 'more than these.' The root of the distemper was gone; Peter is grown more modest now than to make comparisons.

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 in the covenant to his wisdom and fatherly justice, to inflict temporal punishments as he shall see good. 'If they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments; then will he visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33. If 'judgment begin at the house of God,' what shall become of the sinner and ungodly? The righteous are recompensed upon earth, partly to increase their repentance, that when they smart under the fruit of sin, they 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 their justification, but to promote their sanctification, and to make us warnings to others, that they may not displease God as we do. Now for these reasons the Lord, though he doth forgive the sin and release the eternal punishment, yet he reserves a liberty to chastise us in our persons, families, and relations. Therefore what is our business? Humbly deprecate this temporal judgment: 'Lord, correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' We should be instant with God to get it stopped or mitigated; but if the Lord see it fit 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.’ A rod dipped in guilt may smart sore upon the back of God’s children, if they will play the wantons and rebels with God. Eli broke his neck, his sons were killed in battle, the ark taken. But then there are some 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: Ps. li. 11, 12, ‘Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not away thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.’ When God’s children fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his lovingkindness from them, he may abate the influences of his grace so far as they may never recover the like measure again as long as they live.

SERMON III. - Acts III. 26.

Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.—
Acts III. 26.

THESE words are the conclusion of the second sermon that was preached after the pouring out of the Spirit, and in them you may observe three things:—

- I. The parties concerned: *unto you first.*
- II. The benefit offered: *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.*
- III. The blessing interpreted, or what kind of blessing it is we shall have by the Mediator: *he hath sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.*

Let me a little open these, before I come to observe anything.

- I. For the parties concerned: *unto you first.* Why was the first offer of Christ made unto the people of the Jews? For sundry reasons. Partly:—

1. Because they were the only church of God for that time, and the people that were in visible communion with him. And God hath so much respect for the church, that they shall have the refusal and the morning-market of the gospel. And whatsoever dispensations of grace are set on foot shall be first brought to them: 'He hath showed his statutes unto Jacob: he hath not dealt so with other nations,' Ps. cxlvii. 19.

2. They were the children of the covenant: 'Ye are the children of the covenant,' therefore 'unto you first,' God was in covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God follows a covenant people with more offers of grace than he doth vouchsafe unto others, and bears with sin after sin till he can bear no longer. And when the branches of the covenantstock run quite wild, then they are cut off, Rom. xi. 20.

3. Christ came of them after the flesh, and was of their seed, Rom. ix. 5; to teach us first to seek the salvation of our kindred, and countrymen, and near relations: those that are nearer to us lie next our work and service. Therefore, *to you first*.

4. That he might magnify his grace and faithfulness, not only in the matter of the gospel, but even in the first offer of it. He doth magnify his faithfulness herein, for it is said, 'Christ is the minister of the circumcision to confirm the truth to their fathers,' Rom. xv. 8. God had promised their fathers that he would raise up a Saviour, therefore he must be first discovered here; and he magnifies his grace, for there was Christ preached where he was crucified. They had the first handsel of this good news, and wrath came not upon them to the uttermost till they had despised the gospel, as well as killed the Lord of glory, 1 Thes. ii. 14, 15.

5. This was necessary too for the confirmation of the gospel: *to you first* Christ did not sneak nor steal into the world *clancularly* and privately, but he would have his law set up where it was likely to be most questioned. They were most concerned to inquire into the truth of matters of fact upon which the credit of the gospel had depended. If he had first gone to the Gentiles, the Jews might have objected their condemning Christ as a malefactor, and that his messengers and apostles durst not set on foot the report of his miracles, life, and death in their confines. But Christ would have the

gospel preached there, where, if there were any falsehood in it, it might easily be disproved; and because the main of the Jewish doctrine was adopted into the Christian, and was confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, they were the only competent judges to whose cognisance these things should be first offered. Therefore he saith, 'Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.'

6. That the ruin of that nation might be a fit document and proof of God's severity against the contemners of the new gospel, Acts xiii. 45-47. There it is showed that they were the first people to whom it was offered, and they contemned it, and therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Therefore this did authorise and confirm this doctrine, wherever it should be preached and offered.

7. That the first ministers might be a pattern of obedience, to preach where God would have them, to preach in the very face and teeth of opposition. Christ appoints their station. The Jews were like to be the most virulent enemies against the gospel, because the rulers put Christ to death: Go, preach the gospel to all nations, but begin at Jerusalem, though there you meet with a great deal of spite and opposition. Now, because of these reasons, 'Unto you first, the Lord, having raised up his Son,' &c.

II. The second thing to be explained is the benefit offered: wherein is set forth the great love of God unto the people to whom the gospel comes.

1. In designing such a glorious person as Jesus Christ: *having raised up his Son Jesus*.

2. In that he gave notice, and did especially direct and send him to them: *hath sent his Son*.

3. Why he came among them in his word: it was *to bless them*.

[1.] In designing the person who should do them good, 'God hath raised up his Son Jesus.' It may seem to be meant of his resurrection from the dead; but I think rather to raise up is to exalt, to call, to authorise, to appoint to some notable work; and it is used for installing, consecrating, as in this very chapter: ver. 22, 'He shall raise up a prophet from among you;' Acts xiii. 23, 'Of this man's seed hath God raised up to Israel a Saviour;' that is, hath put

authority upon him, given him commission to save sinners, raised up, designed him to this work. But then:—

[2.] The special direction of his providence: ‘God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.’ Sometimes the word is said to be sent to us: Acts xiii. 26, ‘To you is this word of salvation sent.’ He doth not say, We have brought this salvation to you, but ‘To you it is sent,’ God hath a great hand in directing the course of the gospel. And sometimes Christ is said to be sent, as here in the text; for where the gospel is preached to a people, Christ is sent to them as a token from heaven; if he be neglected, you despise the riches and bounty of God, and the best and choicest gift that ever could be bestowed upon the sons of men. Therefore he saith, ‘God having raised his Son, hath sent him.’ Where the gospel goes, there Christ is sent; there he conies that he may have work to do.

[3.] Here is the end and purport of his coming; not to take vengeance of the affronts and contumelies they had put upon him, but he comes to bless. For the opening of this word, you must look to the preceding verse. He speaks of the covenant made with Abraham, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Now Jesus was sent unto them to assure this blessing. The blessing is any good that accrues and results to us from the covenant of grace, but chiefly those special blessings we have by Christ, reconciliation with God, and life eternal, those things which he minded to purchase for us, and hath dispensed to us by his gracious covenant. This is the blessing intended,—All nations are to be blessed in the seed of Abraham; now God having raised Christ of this man’s seed, hath sent him to bless you.

III. Here is the blessing interpreted and restrained, and that is conversion from sin: ‘In turning every one of you from his sins.’ They expected a pompous Messiah, that should make them an opulent and potent nation. But Christ came upon another errand, to convert souls unto God. Only mark, when the apostle speaks this, he speaks it not of the intention of God, but the offer of his grace; otherwise every particular Jew must be converted, or God missed his end. God may send him to bless, and yet some may contemn the offer; others God prevents by the special efficacy of his grace, or else all would contemn it. They that do contemn it are justly passed by; and they that receive it, owe it to his grace, and not to

themselves. It was the secret purpose of his grace to bring in many, and this brought in three thousand men. There were others refused this blessing offered from the Mediator, and they justly perish for their unbelief.

The point, though there be many, that I shall insist on, is:—

Doct. That a main blessing we have by Christ is to be turned from our iniquities.

- I. Here I shall inquire, What it is to be turned from sin.
- II. I shall show you, That certainly this is a very blessed thing.
- III. That this is the great blessing of the Mediator that we have by Christ in the gospel.

IV. In what manner Christ turneth us from our iniquities.

I. What it is to be turned from sin. Take these considerations:—

1. Man fallen, lay under the power and guilt of sin: he was ‘dead in trespasses and sins, and liable to the wrath of God,’ Eph. ii. 1-3. So man was both unholy and guilty.

2. Christ came to free us from both these. The guilt: Eph. i. 7, ‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;’ and the power: Titus iii. 5, ‘He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ To be freed from guilt, and delivered from hell and wrath to come, is a blessing for which we can never be sufficiently thankful; but to be freed from sin, that is the greater mercy, and therefore ‘he hath sent his Son to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.’

3. To be turned from sin implies our whole conversion. Though one part only be mentioned, the term *from which*, yet the term *to which* is implied; that we are turned to God as well as turned from sin; to God, as our happiness, and our supreme Lord, that we may love him, and be happy in being beloved by him. Acts xxvi. 18.

4. That remission of sins is included in our conversion to God. The meaning is, that he may turn you from your unbelief and impenitency, and so make you capable of his pardon and mercy; for so it is explained, ver. 19, ‘Repent, and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out,' &c. Without sound repentance the Mediator's blessing will not be had; and when Christ came to save us from wrath, his way was to turn us from sin. These two must not be severed: 'God hath exalted him to be a prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins,' Acts v. 31. You see, then, what is meant by the blessing the Mediator offers,—to be turned from our sins.

II. It is a blessed thing to be made partakers of this benefit. Blessedness imports two things: negatively, a removal of evil; and positively, a fruition or enjoyment of some great good. When we are turned from our sins, there is both.

1. An immunity from, or a removal of, the great evil, and that is sin.

[1.] The great cause of offence between God and us is taken out of the way: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and have hidden his face from you.' Sin makes the distance between you and God, that you cannot delight in God, nor God in you. You cannot delight in God, for your hearts are alienated from him. You are become 'enemies in your mind by wicked works.' Where sin reigns, man is an enemy to God; partly through carnal prepossession: there is something takes up his heart, and diverts it from God: 1 John ii. 15, 'If any man love the world, how dwelleth the love of the Father in him?' His heart is taken up with another love. And partly through carnal liberty: we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security, by reason of the restraints of his law, that would curb us and cut us short of our desires; and partly through slavish fear. We hate those whom we fear. A condemning God can never be loved by a guilty creature. We look upon him as one that will call us to an account for our sins. Now, all these reasons concur to show us, that till sin be taken away, we cannot love nor delight in God, neither can God love us and delight in us. God will not have communion with us while we are in our sins. Christ, when he came to bring us to God, he came not to make any change in God, to make God less holy, but to make us holy and amiable in his sight. The reasonable nature cannot digest this conceit, that the holy God should take sinners into his bosom without any change. Would it become the governor of the world to be indifferent to good and bad, the holy God to be a friend to

sinners? The new nature in, us showeth the contrary; for that causes an abomination and abhorrence both of impurity and the impure; as Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the Sodomites. And we are told, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.' If a man be sanctified but in part, he cannot delight in the wicked freely to converse with them. He hath a hatred, not of enmity so as to seek their destruction, not a hatred opposite to goodwill—that is contrary to the nature of grace, which is made up of love—but a hatred of abomination, which is contrary to the love of complacency; he cannot take any delight in him. Now, then, without a manifest reproach to the holy God, we cannot imagine he should admit sinners into an intimate communion with him: 'Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity,' Ps.

v. 5. God said to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19, 'Let them return unto thee, but return not thou to them,' God will not return to us in our sins, but we must come off from our sins to him.

[2.] We are freed from the great blemish of our natures. Sin defaced the image of God in us: Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' We lost not only the favour of God, but the image of God; the great excellency of our nature was eclipsed and defaced. Now the plaster will not be as broad as the sore, nor our reparation by Christ correspondent to our loss by Adam, if our nature be not healed, and the image of God restored in us. If Adam had only left us guilty, the pardon of sin had been enough; but he conveyed an evil nature, and therefore we must be turned from our sins, as well as pardoned, otherwise Christ would not restore all that Adam took away, Ps. lxxix. 4. Is he a good physician that takes away the pain, and leaves the great disease uncured? But Christ has procured the favour of God for us, and repaired the image of God in us, and therefore certainly put us into a way of blessedness again. Holiness was our primitive excellency and amiableness.

[3.] We are freed from that that is the great burden of the creature, as well as his blemish. Whatever it be to the common sinner, that is no matter; he hath no right thoughts of things, and is besotted with his carnal choice; for sin is an evil, whether it be felt or no. But the awakened sinner is sensible not only of the guilt of sin, but it is his greatest burden that he should have a nature inclines him to grieve

and dishonour God. Pharaoh could say, 'Take away this plague.' But a penitent, broken-hearted sinner cries, 'Take away all iniquity.' They desire a change of this state by regeneration. Therefore the promises of the gospel, considering a penitent soul under such a distress, are suited to the case: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If you know what sin is, and penitently bemoan yourselves to God, you will be troubled with the power and pollution of it, as well as the guilt: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He will turn again, he will have compassion, he will subdue our iniquities.' A heart truly affected doth not only desire pardon and ease, but power against sin. A man that hath his leg broken would not only desire ease of his pain, but to have his leg set right again. A leprous condemned malefactor desires not only to be freed from the sentence of condemnation, but to be cured, or his pardon will do him no good. Now, surely, it is a great blessing to be turned from our sins, to be freed from that a penitent soul finds to be so great a burden; and the Mediator gives us a not able proof of his love in it.

[4.] Being turned from our sins, we are freed from the great bane of our persons and all our happiness. Sin is a cursed inmate, it fires the lodging where it is entertained and harboured, unless speedily cast out of doors; it involves us in the curse of the law, 'The wages of sin is death;' therefore Christ, that he might free us from misery, doth first free us from sin. If pardon of sin be a blessing, certainly to be turned from sin is a blessing (for the one cannot be had without the other); till you are turned from sin you cannot be pardoned, not justified till you are sanctified: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, and whose iniquity is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin, in whose spirit there is no guile.' When God hath given us a holy sincere heart, and turned us from our sins, then we have the blessedness of pardon: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' Rom. viii. 1. We are freed from the condemning power of the law when freed from sin, and all that woe and wrath that belongs to every soul that doth evil.

By all these considerations it appears how great a blessing the turning us from sin is in the privative notion, that is, the removal of so great an evil.

2. Take blessedness in the positive notion, that is, to enjoy a great good; and it will appear it is a blessed thing to be turned from our sins.

[1.] Because this is the matter of our serenity, comfort, and peace here, and the pledge and beginning of our eternal felicity hereafter. The soul can never be settled in a holy peace till it be turned from its sins; we can never find rest till we get out of Satan's yoke and get into Christ's blessed liberty: 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' Isa. xxxii. 17. We are freed from those unquiet and troublesome thoughts wherewith others are haunted. A wicked man's soul is in a mutiny, one affection wars against another, and all against the conscience, and the conscience against all; but where the heart is framed to the obedience of God's will, there is peace. *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*, when all things keep their place, as in an accurate orderly life they do: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and the whole Israel of God.' There is peace, for there is a harmonious Accord between God and them, and between them and themselves: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law;' not only peace, but great peace, 'a peace that passeth all understanding.' Whilst we are in our sins, there is ever a fear of the war which is between God and us, and there is a war in ourselves, conscience disallowing our practices, and our practices disliking the conduct of conscience, so that there is no peace to the wicked. But when the Lord Jesus hath taken us in hand, and begun to cure us, and frame us aright, and show us his wonderful grace in turning us from our sins, here is matter provided for serenity and peace.

[2.] It is the pledge of our eternal felicity hereafter; for heaven is the perfection of holiness, or the full fruition of God in glory. Now, when the Mediator begins to take away sin, he blesses you; for the life is then begun which shall be perfected in heaven. Unless it be begun here, it will never be perfected there: for 'without holiness no man shall see God,' Heb. xii.

14. But if it be begun, it will surely be perfected there; for ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ The vision and fruition of God is begun here, the spirit of holiness is the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. Oh, what blessedness is it then to have the new heart planted into us by Christ, and to live the new life! It is the beast about you that delights in the momentary, base, dreggy pleasures of sin. But when Christ hath turned you from your sins, you are blessed indeed, you are in the way to blessedness, and you shall be blessed for ever; he gives peace as a pledge of happiness and eternal glory.

III. I shall prove that this is the Mediator’s blessing.

1. Let me lay down this, that those blessings that are most proper to the Mediator are spiritual blessings. We forfeited all by sin, but especially the grace of the Spirit, whereby we might be made service able to God. Other mercies run in the channel of common providence, but spiritual blessings are the discriminating graces and favours that are given us by the Mediator: Eph. i. 3, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.’ Christ came not to distribute honours, and greatness, and worldly riches to his followers, but to turn away every one of us from our sins, to reduce us to God, that we may love him, and be beloved of him. He came as a spiritual Saviour, to give us grace rather than temporal happiness. Most men have a carnal, Jewish notion of Christ, they would have a temporal safety and happiness, they would have deliverance from affliction, rather than deliverance from sin. To be ‘delivered from every evil work’ is more than to be ‘delivered from the mouth of the lion.’ This is most proper to the Mediator, 2 Tim. iv. 18. A sanctified use of troubles is more than an exemption from them; a carnal man may have exemption from them, but not a sanctified use of them. Poverty, lameness, blindness, are not as bad as ignorance, unruly lusts, and want of grace. Moral evils are worse than natural. Daniel was cast into a lion’s den, you would think that was a misery; but it was a greater misery when Nebuchadnezzar was thrust out among the beasts, being given up to a brutish heart. Exemption from trouble may be hurtful to us, but deliverance from sin is never hurtful to us.

Among the spiritual blessings we have by the Mediator, conversion from sin to God is the chiefest we have on this side heaven. That it was the main part of Christ's undertaking, I shall prove by scripture and reason. For scripture, the text is clear for it; for thus the apostle interprets the covenant-blessing, 'In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed,' namely, 'God hath sent him to bless you.' Wherein? In turning every one of you from your sins.' 'He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins,' Mat. i. 21; not only from the guilt, but the power of sin; not only from the evil *after* sin, but the evil *of* sin itself. *Denominatio est a majori*—the name is taken from what is chiefest. And so when he is promised to the Jews, 'The Redeemer shall come out of Sion, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' There is his principal work: 1 John iii. 5, Christ came 'to take away sin, and in him is no sin.' He means not only the condemning power, but the power of it in the heart; for he is pleading arguments for holiness, why believers should not run into sin, which is 'a transgression of the law.' One is from the undertaking of Christ, he came 'to take away sin;' and from the example of Christ, 'in him is no sin.' He plainly means the power of sin.

2. Now, to give you some reasons why this is the chief benefit, most eyed by Christ, and should be most regarded by us.

[1.] Christ's undertaking was principally for the glory of God: 'All the promises are in him, yea and amen, to the glory of God;' and it should not be a question which should have the precedence, the glory of God or our good. Christ came to promote God's glory, and that must have the precedence of our benefit. Now, then, the abolishing the guilt of sin doth more directly respect our interest and good; but the abolishing the power of sin, or the turning and cleansing the heart from it, doth more immediately respect the glory of God, and our subjection to God. Therefore Christ would not only pacify the wrath of God, but his chief work, that doth mostly concern the glory of God, was to heal our evil natures, and prevent sin for the time to come.

[2.] To be turned from sin is to be freed from the greatest evil; for pardon gives us an exemption from punishment, which is a natural evil, but conversion gives us freedom from our naughty hearts, which is a moral evil; and, certainly, vice is worse than pain, and

sin than misery. Besides, sin is the cause of all evil, and the taking away the cause is more than ceasing the effect.

[3.] This hath nearer connection with the life of glory. Pardon only removes the impediment, but the sanctifying and healing of our natures is the beginning of the life of glory, and introduction into it. Pardon removes our guilt, which hinders our happiness; therefore, divines say, justification is *gratia removens prohibens*, that that removes the impediment; but the sanctifying the heart is an introduction into our glorious state, and the more sanctified the more meet to be partakers thereof, Col. i. 12. Now that which doth positively make us capable of glory and happiness is a greater privilege than that which only removes the impediment.

[4.] That is the greatest benefit which makes us more amiable in the sight of God, and is the object of his delight. Now he delights in us as sanctified rather than pardoned. We love him, indeed, for pardoning and forgiving so great a debt: 'She loved much, because much was forgiven her;' but God delighteth in holiness, and the reflection and impress of his own image upon us: Prov. xi. 20, 'The upright in the way are his delight.' When the Spirit hath renewed us according to the image and nature of God, that makes us amiable in his sight, and an object of divine complacency; therefore, surely this is the great privilege and blessing we have by the Mediator here in this world. I come to the fourth thing.

IV. In what way doth Christ turn us from our iniquities?

1. He doth purchase this grace for us; and—

2. He works it in us.

1. He purchaseth this grace for us that we may be turned: 1 Peter ii. 24, 'He bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness.' That was his end, not only to lay the obligation upon us, but to procure the grace whereby we may be enabled to do so. This sacrifice was a truly propitiatory sacrifice, whereby God was appeased, and forfeited blessings restored. The loss of God's image was a great part of our punishment, and it is a part of our deliverance that Christ hath purchased this grace as well as pardon. He hath given himself for us, that he might cleanse us, and sanctify us, and make us a pure and holy people unto God, Eph. v. 25, 26.

2. As he hath purchased it for us, so he works it in us, partly by the power of his internal grace, and partly by blessing and sanctifying external means and helps for such an end and purpose.

First, I say, by the power of his internal grace changing our hearts and minds: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;' and he acteth in us as Christ's Spirit, and as we are members of Christ. It is the Spirit enlightens the mind, so that we begin to see the evil that is in sin, the necessity to get rid of it: 'After I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh;' and also to overcome the obstinate heart of man and turn it to God, and to fix the inclination of the soul against sin. In short, by his preventing grace he doth convert us, by his exciting grace sanctify us, by his assisting grace he makes us persevere, in turning us more and more from sin to holiness.

Secondly, He sanctifies and blesses external helps and means. I shall instance in two—ordinances and providences.

[1.] Ordinances, such as the word and sacraments: John xvii. 19, 'I sanctified myself, that they might be sanctified by the truth,' that is, the preaching of the word. 'He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word.' Mark these and other places of scripture, and you will find the merit of Christ doth reach the ordinances, that by them grace may be conveyed, and sin might be mortified and subdued in us. The word calls us to excite our resolutions against sin, and strengthen them to avoid occasions to cut off the provisions of the flesh, to make it our daily task to war and strive against it; and none conscientiously wait upon the word but something by every attendance is given out for the weakening of sin and setting them afresh against it. And then the sacrament, that represents the death of Christ as the price of our dying to sin; and it represents him as the pattern according to which we must be conformed, that we may know that our old man is crucified, and that we may renew our covenant with God, and our resolutions, and bind ourselves to more serious endeavours against sin. The Lord Jesus, after he had procured the Spirit, and this wonderful grace to turn us from our sins, hath appointed congruous and fit ordinances, whereby he may

dispense this grace to us more and more. And as he sanctifies ordinances, so—

[2.] Providences; for we are threshed, that our husks may fly off. Wherefore doth he chasten us sometimes, and very sorely, but to make us out of love with sin: ‘The fruit of all shall be to take away sin,’ Isa. xxvii. 9; and ‘He chastens us verily for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness,’ Heb. xii. 10. By all these means we are sanctified, by ordinances and providences, and by the all-powerful grace of this Holy Spirit.

Thus I have opened the fourth thing, how the Lord Jesus doth turn us from our sins. The uses we may make of this point are:—

I. Of information. It informs us:—

1. Of the vain hopes of the carnal, and such as yet live in their sins; for at present they have no interest in him, and so living and dying will find him rather a judge than a Saviour, for the greatest part of their work is undone. We must be saved from the guilt and power of sin, and the latter is the proper sign of our recovery. We are ‘justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified also in the Spirit of our God.’ Christ did not purchase our salvation by piecemeal, nor can we receive it by piecemeal; a whole Saviour we must have, or no Saviour. She was the true mother that pleaded against the dividing of the infant. They are true Christians, I am sure, who would have Christ undivided, who would have him ‘wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;’ for if you take him in one respect and neglect him in another, especially the chief thing you should make use of him for, you do not take him at all. Therefore the carnal, that live in their sins, are at present excluded from all claim to Christ.

2. It shows us what we should mainly seek in our prayers. Leave not the Redeemer till he hath blessed you with his principal blessing. Our prayers for temporal happiness are not so welcome to Christ as our prayers for sanctifying grace and power against sin. Natural sense will put us upon asking corn and wine and oil; but the new creature saith, Lord, take away iniquity. Every man hath a sense of outward evils, and would fain be at ease; but every man hath not a sense of sin, and an hunger and thirst after righteousness. Self-love will prompt us to beg exemption from trouble, but sin is the

worst burden to a tender heart. When your children ask you for apples and plums, and such things as are pleasing to their childish appetite, they do not please you so much as when they desire you to teach them and instruct them in their duty, that they may not offend God and you. When you ask temporal things of God, you do not sin, for God hath given a liberty to ask daily bread; but when you ask grace, that you may be free from sin, that you may not offend God, or be a scandal to the gospel, this is most pleasing to God. When Solomon had asked wisdom, and not riches and honours, the thing pleased the Lord. These prayers are most acceptable to God, they will bring their answers with them; then you set your Redeemer about his proper work, for God 'sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.' Nay; if you beg only for pardon, and do not mind the destruction of sin, you are no more willing to be saved than the devils are. Certainly the devils are willing to be saved from the wrath of God. Every creature seeks its own ease, and they would be eased of their torments. Every one would have eternal life: 'Evermore give us this bread.' But you are unwilling to be saved upon Christ's terms, if you will not let him mortify your lusts, and submit to his healing.

3. If this be the Mediator's great blessing, to turn you from your sins, then it follows that those who have their corruptions most mortified are the best Christians. The Redeemer hath been at work in their hearts, and they have most of the Mediator's blessing. He is not the best Christian that hath the most plausible gifts, that can with art and parts best perform outward duties, that hath the strongest memory, clearest apprehension, readiest elocution; but he that hath a humble, mortified, holy, pure, and self-denying spirit; for this is a more weighty point of Christ's undertaking, to make you holy, humble, and meek, than to furnish you with gifts, and make you free in speech. Again, he is not the best Christian that hath most fanatical raptures of joy, or pretended admirations of grace; but he that is crucified to the world, and hath felt the power of Christ's death. Many who are not careful, watchful, and exact in their conversations, yet will pretend to live upon Christ, and think they need not be so scrupulous to be troubled about their sins. These neglect the main end of Christ's coming, which was to turn every one of us from our iniquities.

4. It shows the necessity and excellency of holiness. The necessity of it will appear thus:—It is not only an evidence of our interest in the relative privileges, such as pardon, adoption, and the like; not only necessary by way of gratitude for salvation received, but it is necessary as a part of salvation itself. This is the salvation, the blessing of the Redeemer, this is the thing wherein he hath showed his free grace, in that he hath purchased the Spirit to heal our natures, and restore the image of God to us which was defaced by sin. Herein is Christ a Saviour, in saving his people from their sins, and ‘he hath saved us by washing us in the laver of regeneration.’ And once more, it is not only a main part of our salvation, but a necessary means to obtain the rest. No obtaining pardon without conversion, nor heaven till sin be quite done away. Secondly, The excellency of holiness appears. For this end we are redeemed by Christ, Luke i. 74, 75. And renewed by the Holy Ghost, Eph. iv. 24. Yea, our everlasting blessedness consists in the perfection of holiness, Eph. v. 27.

It informs us how much Christians are to blame, that they improve their Christianity no more to get power and strength against sin. Christ, consider him as a prophet, priest, or king, doth still discover himself to be one that came to take away sin. As a prophet, he hath given us such a doctrine as is fit for such a use, John xvii. 17. His word is the best glass to see corruption. The highest motives in the world are propounded to purge it out His calls, promises, and threats are all to take away sin; and as a priest, he hath paid the price that was necessary to preserve the honour of God’s justice, that there might be no stop in the way of that abundant grace, and that we may have the gift of the Spirit, 1 John i. 7. Because his blood was that meritorious price that was shed, that we might be turned from sin, and this blood is pleaded before God, ‘He lives for ever to make intercession for you,’ that in all your conflicts and temptations you may have necessary strength against sin. As a king, he doth powerfully by his Spirit maintain his interest against the devil, world, and flesh, and helps you to overcome sin. He is ‘the captain of your salvation.’ Yet lamentable it is to see what a poor cowardly spirit is in most Christians, how soon captivated with every slender assault and petty temptation, and their resolutions so soon shaken, not so much for want of strength, as sluggishness and cowardice, and want of care. Men spare their pains, and then cry out they are

impotent, when there is such grace provided in the Redeemer. Like lazy beggars that personate and act diseases because they would not work, they are not able to stand before the slightest motions of sin, because they do not stir up themselves and improve the grace they have, or might have by Christ. Certainly idle complaints of sin will not become those that profess an interest in Christ, for his main great undertaking, which is by all methods carried on still, is the taking away sin. So much for the information.

II. Take home with you this truth in your hearts, that Christ's work is to turn you from sin, and it is the great blessing we have from him in the new covenant. Then do not neglect this work, nor contemn this blessing. You know the fault of those, they made light of these things. Especially do not resist this work, nor grieve the Holy Spirit of Christ which would work it in you, and quench not his sanctifying motions; rather deliver up yourselves to all his healing methods, and be so far from resisting, that you should improve the power of his grace every day. He turns us indeed by way of efficiency, but we turn ourselves by submission to his blessed motions. He draws, and we run after him. Therefore, every time Christ offers this saving help, thou art put to thy choice, whether thou wilt have Christ or sin to reign over thee. Christ, that doeth it for thee, must do it in thee. Christ is the author that turns, but the sinner is the subject, and he first works upon you, and afterwards he works by you. He converts you to God by the victorious impressions of his grace, and afterwards, 'ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.' We cannot do it; Christ must do it, but he will do it in his own way. He hath sanctified ordinances to convey this to you. Now, wilt thou wait diligently till it be accomplished? The physician cures the disease, but the patient must take the appointed medicine. You must not expect he should cure it, and thou feel it not, as it were by spells and charms without thee, without putting thee to the trouble of physic. Take up a resolution to look after the cure of thy soul, and observe the whole progress of the work, and what a wound is given to sin in every ordinance: what in the word, what in the Lord's Supper; how thy resolution is strengthened against it; how the carnal nature wears off every day. The work is not perfect in an instant, but he is still turning; therefore when thou beginnest to be dead to sin, die more. Ye are dead, therefore mortify. Christ hath perfectly bought off all sin in

every kind and degree; should not we strive to have all that he hath purchased? At least do not strengthen thy bonds, the sin thou canst not avoid hate it, and keep up the lively resistance still. Hear diligently, pray earnestly, watch narrowly, and keep thyself from thy sin: do not only pare the nails of it, but cut off thy very right hand, and mortify and subdue it yet more and more, that Christ may have his conquest in thy soul.

SERMON IV. - 2 Pet. 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.—2 Pet. I. 4.

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

First, The means.

Secondly, The end and use of them.

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

First, 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.*

2. Their freeness: *are given to 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 worth and value; they are ‘exceeding great.’ The other, our esteem of them; they deserve to be ‘precious’ to us.

[1.] Τὰ μέγιστα, so called from the matter of them, which are great and precious gifts, such as pardon, and life begun in sanctification and perfected in glory.

[2.] Τὰ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα, 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 only offered to us in the promises of God, 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.

Secondly, 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 it is 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 Christ Jesus;’ 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 somewhat resemble God. Therefore it is said, 1 Peter ii. 9, ‘We show forth his praises: τὰς ἀρετὰς, 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 of that too, as to the moral exercise in taming our own 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 πάντα ἰσχύω, ‘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 of love, power, and of a sound mind,’ 2 Tim. i. 7. 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.

Thirdly, The way, method, and order how we receive this benefit of 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. 22-24, ‘We put off the old man, which is corrupt by its deceitful lusts.’ We begin the work of sanctification with mortification in the first place, 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 and expelled, so the divine nature succeedeth. *Intus existens prohibet alienum*, these things are not consistent, cannot be joined together. The corruption that is in the world and the divine nature can no more agree than darkness and light, Rom. xiii. 12. But let us see how this mortification is expressed.

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*, as often in scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity; Gen. vi. 12, ‘All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;’ Ps. xiv. 1, ‘They are all corrupt and abominable;’ that is, degenerated, fallen from their pristine or former purity. Observe, the seat of this corruption is said to be in the world, where lust and all uncleanness reigneth; therefore called *μιάσματα κόσμου*, ‘the pollutions of the world,’ 2 Peter ii. 20. The generality of men are defiled with them, corrupted in their faith, worship, and manners; therefore conversion is called for under these terms: Acts ii. 40, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ Conversion to God implies a renouncing or an escaping the evil fashions and

corruptions of the world, or ‘having no fellowship with them,’ with their sins, but ‘reproving them rather.’ So that the question is, whether we will conform ourselves 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.’ Besides the bait there is the appetite; it is our naughty affections that make 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. The manner of shunning, in the word *escaping*. There is a flying away required, and that quickly, as in the plague, *cito longe*; or from a fire which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us. We cannot soon enough escape from sin: Mat. iii. 7, ‘Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come;’ Heb. vi. 18, ‘Who have fled for refuge,’

&c. No motion but flight becomes us in this case.

Doct. That the great end and effect of the promises of the gospel is, to make us partakers of the divine nature.

I. Let us consider 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. There 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. It may only affect us for the present, but inferreth no 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, a habit or constitution of soul that may incline us to live to God. A habit serveth for this use, *ut quis facile, jucunde et constanter agat*, 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 air to ascend, and water to descend. So the new creature hath a tendency to those actions that are proper to it. Their hearts are bent to please God and serve him, and do whatever they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination. They act not only or barely as enjoined, but as inclined. The law of God is in their hearts, Heb. viii. 10. So 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 do what is holy, Ps. xl. 8, as being in their element when they are thus employed. What is against nature is ingrate and harsh, but what is with nature is sweet and pleasant. It is hard, a kind of force, to bring them to do the contrary, 1 John iii. 9. There needeth some kind of violence to bring a good man to sin, as also a naughty 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, be cause of the restraints of providence or dictates of conscience, and unevenly by fits and starts: Ps. cvi. 3, ‘Blessed is he that keepeth judgment, and doth righteousness at all times.’ They are continually exercising of all duties of godliness, righteousness and mercy; for the operations of nature are constant, however impeded, 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 this should 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 may carry some resemblance with him or 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 anything that a man is capable of. Now this is said for two reasons:—

[1.] To show 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 pollute and stain our minds, or form in us ill thoughts and 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 a 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 people.' His person and presence was awful to them, as having something rare in it. There is a secret sentiment of the excellency of holiness that draweth eyes after it, and maketh wicked and carnal men wonder at it, stand in awe of those in whom it is eminent, and extorteth a reverence from them. But especially when they come to die they have a sense of this excellency; all then approve a sober, righteous, and godly life, and disallow that which is dissolute and carnal. 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. Then those that would live with the carnal would fain die with the righteous: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let my last end be like his.' When entering on the confines of eternity they grow wiser.

[2.] To show 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 natural men or corrupt nature, you are strangers to the promises of the gospel. It is a thought that possesseth many when they are pressed to Christian duties, they will say, we are not saints or angels, and therefore cannot abstain from such sins, or attain unto a heavenly life. But do you mark what is said here: Christians must be partakers of a divine nature; and not only they are cut off from any privilege by Christ 'who corrupt themselves as brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed,' 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.

[3.] 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 beginneth 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 show 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 curbed, and the divine nature doth more eminently appear: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We are changed from glory to glory.' It is a work capable of spiritual progress. We should grow more like God, and come nearer to the nature of God every day; and it is a shame 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; for the being of sin is then utterly abolished: there is not the least stain or blemish upon a glorified soul. Besides, then we are like him, not only in point of holiness, but in point of happiness and felicity; for God is a holy and happy being. Here we resemble God more in holiness and purity; for many times the most eminent and exemplary holiness may be accompanied with remarkable afflictions; at least, sanctifying grace doth not exempt us from them. 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 be 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,' Judges viii. 18, they were goodly and majestic persons,—so it will be said concerning the saints, 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,—bear his image, and express resemblance of the grace of the gospel.

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 and (Qu. 'are'?—ED.) declarations of God's will in the gospel, whereby he signifies what good he will freely bestow us, if we will look after it. These advantages we have by them:—(1.) A promise is more than a purpose; for the purpose and intention of a man is secret and 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 and purpose till it were manifested in the effect; it would have been as a hidden treasure or sealed fountain, of no comfort and 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 eruption or 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 satisfy him. It is an obligation God takes upon himself, *promittendo, se debitorem fecit*. God's purposes are unchangeable, but promises are a security put into our hands, not only give us notice, but assurance that thus it shall be. We have the greater holdfast upon him, and may put his bond in suit: Ps. 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 maketh a thing known, this maketh a thing sure, and upon certain terms; 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, which was only obscurely known to the heathens, it were a great mercy that we were not left to blind guesses and dark conjectures. That eternal life is set before us, a thing real and excellent, is a great matter. But God hath put it into a covenant form and promise, 1 John ii. 25, that we may make our title and our

claim. Surely that is matter of great comfort to us: Ps. 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 and goodness to make the promise, but his justice and fidelity bindeth 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. Divines say, of all lies, a promissory lie is the worst; for this is not only against truth, but right, even though that right entirely accrueth from your own free promise.

2. The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature. They are not about small things, or 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 then life everlasting, or an unchangeable state of happiness. These are the greatest things indeed, in comparison of which all the things of the world are but as a May-game, vain and empty, or the smallest matters, as the apostle calleth them, 1 Cor. vi. 2. 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 the eternal enjoyment of God hereafter: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling in God in Christ Jesus.' It is a high prize that is set before us; then we shall have a larger capacity to know God, and enjoy him, and receive his benefits: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Oh! cry out: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath

not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’

3. They are precious promises, worthy of our esteem; for 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 xx vi. 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, Micah vi. 6, 7. We fear punishment from a holy and just God, and cannot get rid of bondage till sin be forgiven. The justice of the supreme governor of the world will be ever 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? Titus ii. 12, 13. It is true, we are greatly enchanted with false happiness, but shall not such an offer be precious to us? John vi. 34, ‘Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.’

4. All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours; nay, we had deserved the contrary. 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 covenant 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. 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 tainteth and corrupteth our natures; and to raise us to those noble objects and ends which dignify and adorn the soul, and make it in a sort divine. 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 divine and god-like are they who look to higher things, to please God, enjoy communion with him, and live with him for ever!

2. 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 might be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Acts ii. 38, 39, '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,' &c. 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;' 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' Mat. v. 8.

4. The power with which the promises are accompanied: 2 Peter 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, and he works by congruous means.

Use 1. Believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain. God's testimony of the good things 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. 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, Mat. xiii. 46. Sell all for the pearl of price. Esteem them so as to be contented with a mean condition in the world. Though God keeps us low, it is enough to be 'made partakers of his holiness:' Heb. xii. 10, 'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Esteem them so as to perform the duties required, Ps. cxix. 14; esteem them so as to keep up your rejoicing in Christ: Phil.

iii. 8-10, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;' and ver. 3, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

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 the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'

SERMON V. - Mark IX.

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

49.

In the context you have a caution which our Lord gives against scandals and offences given to others, either by defection from the truth, or by a sinful conversation. And—

1. He intimates the cause of these scandals, which is some beloved lust; and that is better mortified than satisfied. There is something precious, profitable, and pleasant in our opinion, estimation, 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 shows that (all things considered) it were better to be deprived of this profit, pleasure, or honour, than to lose eternal life, and run the hazard of eternal death. 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 shows the danger of perishing for ever, amplified by a notable description, ‘Their worm never dies, and their fire shall never be quenched.’ The scripture lisps to us in our own dialect, and speaks in such notions 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. *Memoria praeteritorum, sensus presentium, metus futurorum.* 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 doleful state into which they have now plunged themselves, and a fear of what is yet to come. Now, beside this remorse for their folly, there is also a ‘fire that shall never be quenched,’ or the sharp torments that are prepared for the wicked.

4. Here is a collation or comparison of opposites—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—

1. Observe, 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, Heb. xii. 29.

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; but the godly are a sacrifice dedicated and offered to him, that they may be capable of his mercy. The first are a sacrifice against their wills, but the godly 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: Lev. ii. 13, 'And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.' Three times it is repeated there, to show that every sacrifice must be salted. That the wicked, the objects of God's vindictive justice, are accounted sacrifices, is evident by scripture. When the destruction of Moab is spoken of: Isa. xxxiv. 6, 'The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.' So Jer. xlvi. 10, God threatens there that the sword shall devour, and be made drunk with their blood, 'For the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country, by the river Euphrates.' What is in these places called a slaughter is also called a sacrifice. 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; 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.

3. The third observation for the opening of this is the two references of these saltings, or the distinct and proper application of them.

[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 entirely and heartily keep the covenant of God, and renounce their beloved lusts.

[2.] Here is the application to the godly: ‘Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;’ that is, every one that is not a sacrifice by constraint, but voluntarily surrenders and 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 and destroyed, others are salted with salt, preserved and kept savoury in the profession and practice of godliness. The doctrine is this:—

Doct. The grace of mortification is very necessary for all those who are devoted to God. I shall prove three things:—

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. I shall show you 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: and so Isa. lxvi. 20, 'They shall bring your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.' 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 anything to God, two things were of consideration; there was a separation from a common, and a dedication to a 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 and set apart from the rest of the world, that we may be a people to God. We are 'no more our own,' 1 Cor. vi. 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, pleasing the flesh, living according to the flesh and the course of the world; therefore they desire to make restitution: Rom. vi. 19, 'For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' Their forepast neglects of God and duty to him 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 the Lord;' and 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 which 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 do 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; therefore glorify God both with your bodies and souls, which are God's,' 1 Cor. vi. 20; 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, and to submit to his disposing will, to be what he would have them to be, as well as to do what he would have them to do: Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' Thus 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 bowels of the altar and the pots 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, translate it into a gospel phrase, that not only in our sacred, but even in our common and civil actions, &c., 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 the obedience of 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.’ And also to glorify him is their end and use. Phil. i. 21, 1 Cor. x. 31. This is the dedication by which a Christian becomes a spiritual and a holy 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 had no Lord over them, Ps. 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, to prostitute them to all excess and filthiness; 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, the reality and sincerity of it is seen in the use of themselves, and if he be tempted to do anything 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 a harlot? God forbid.’ In point of fidelity to God, as we are in covenant with him, we must be careful that we employ and use what is God’s for the glory of God; we must make conscience of alienating that that is sacred, that that is the Lord’s: your thoughts, your affections, your time, your strength, do 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 and portion he hath had in our time, our strength, our parts, our interest; therefore every prudent and wise Christian should himself keep a faithful and constant reckoning how he lays out himself for God, for he must have a share in all things that we have or do.

(3.) We must be very sincere in this, because we are under the eye and inspection 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 and mindlessness 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 that is sacred is profaned by a common use, then a judgment is coming upon a nation, if dedicated to God, and it warps from him, or upon a person, if his ways be not upright with him.

II. The next thing I am to do is to prove 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 and representation: for—

1. Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction by consuming that superfluous and excrementitious 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 and weakened in our resolutions to God, without the mortifying grace of the Spirit. 'That which is lame is soon turned out of the way, unless it be healed,' Heb. xii. 13. And 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? The apostle saith, Eph. vi. 24, 'Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,' or 'in incorruption.' There are many crooked lusts which are apt to corrupt us and withdraw our love to other things, but when these are mortified and subdued, that we may have a greater amplitude of affection towards God and Christ, then we are said to love him in sincerity and in incorruption.

2. Salt hath an acrimony, and doth macerate things and pierce into them; and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to the carnal nature. How healthful and useful soever it be to the soul, no question it is distasteful to curb our affections, and govern our hearts in the fear of God, and to row against the stream of flesh and blood; 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; 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 and austerity, than to avoid these difficulties and run into sin, and so be in danger of eternal fire. The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin. The philosophers, when they speak of the nature of man, observe that in the concupiscible part, τὸ ὑγρὸν, something like moisture inclines to pleasure, in the irascible, τὸ ψυχρὸν, something like cold inclines to fear. This salt is to fetch out both, by checking our sensual inclination and also our worldly fears. We must crucify the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof; they that are Christ's have done so, Gal. v. 24. We should rather displease ourselves and displease all the world than displease God, or be unfaithful in our duty 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.] 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, or did eat the fat or flesh of bulls and goats, and drink their blood, and so would have it seasoned for his palate and appetite; it is not so to be understood; but in types as well as in similitudes there is a condescension to our sense and apprehension of things. That that is salted is savoury, therefore God would note his acceptation of our persons and services this way. By nature we are all odious, unsavoury, and distasteful to God by reason of sin: Ps. xiv. 3, 'They are all become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one: 'in the Hebrew, it is putrified, 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.] To men: the more we are thus salted and mortified, the more shall we do good to others. Our Lord tells his disciples, Mat. 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 public persons. It is a mistake to think that only ministers are the light of the world and the salt of the world. No; all Christians must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse 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, nor ever heard of such a commission, or that their master would send them abroad for the proselyting the world to the kingdom of God: 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 mouth;' that rotten and corrupt communication which vents itself in slandering, railing, ribaldry, foolish jesting at holy things, lies, cursing, and the like: all these come from a corrupt heart, as a stinking breath argues rotten lungs. These want the grace of mortification: so are all sap less spirits, that cannot speak anything 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 powdered with salt;' that is, do not speak idly, much less profanely, 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, and have dedicated and devoted themselves to him.

1. By our covenant vow 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 Peter iii. 21, 'For baptism saveth as the answer of a good conscience towards God.' The Lord demands and 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 to be dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness, through Christ Jesus our Lord,' Rom. vi. 11; reckon yourselves, that is, in vow and obligation. Arid the penalty is very high if we sin wilfully, Heb. x. 26; so that our admission into Christ's family will be in vain, yea, to our further ruin if you do not stand to the covenant, if you keep sin still alive, and add fuel to the flames.

2. The abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvellous activity of it in our souls. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till our tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay tumbled into the dust. Paul groaned sorely under it: 'wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24. And it is called 'sin that doth easily beset us,' Heb. xii. 1. Well, then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified. It works, it wars, there is a marvellous activity in it, it is very active and restless: Rom. vii. 8, 'Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;' he means sinful nature. And the apostle James tells us, chap. iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' There 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 a little flexible and yielding, to temptations, but doth hurry us and impel us thereunto. It is 'a law warring in our members, that brings us into captivity to sin,'

Rom. vii. 23. 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 that is good: Rom. vii. 21,

‘When I would do good, evil is present with me.’ 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 the pomp and glory thereof; and so turns our very duties into sin, and makes us lose the comfort and sweetness of them: it blasts and perverts our most sincere endeavours. Well, then, without this salt of the covenant, if this be so, 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.

3. Consider the sad consequences of letting sin alone, both 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 has foiled us before God, men, and angels, and exposed 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, which is no way fit for religion. Envy will end in mischief and violence, if not in murder. 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 burthen to himself. The devil trieth by lust to bring us to sin, and by sin to shame, and by shame to horror and despair. But do the children of God run into such notable excesses and disorders? Yes; when they let sin alone, discontinue the exercise of mortification; when they do not remember the sacrifice must be salted with salt. Witness David, who ran into lust and blood. Witness Peter, who ran into denying Christ with oaths and execrations. Witness Solomon, who ran into sensuality and idolatry. And in all of us, old sins, long since laid asleep, may awake again and hurry us into spiritual mischiefs and in conveniences, if we make not use of this holy salt.

[2.] As to punishment. Sins prove mortal if they be not modified. 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 sin. 'The end of these things is death,' Rom. vi. 21; and 'The wages of sin is death,' ver. 23.

But you will say, What is this to a justified person?' 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.'

I answer—You must take in all. Those 'who are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' they have the salt of the covenant. But if you can suppose a justified person to live after the flesh, you may suppose also a justified person shall be condemned. Eternal death may be considered two ways either as to the merit, or as to the event. As to the merit, as an evil which God hath appointed to be the fruit of sin; or as to the event, an evil that will certainly befall us. A justified person, one that is really so, may, must fear it in the first sense. There is such a connection between living in sin and eternal punishment, that he ought to represent the danger to his soul of living willingly and allowedly in his sins, that he may eschew it; for this is nothing but a holy making use of the threatenings, or considering the merit of sin. But as to the actual event, and perplexing trouble that ariseth from the apprehension of it; if his sincerity be clear and unquestionable, he must not fear it.

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 make no conscience of yielding obedience to God. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 16, 'He that keepeth the commandments keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his way shall die.' There are the different issues of a strict obedience, and a slight vain conversation. And mark the opposition of the two

tempers—*he that keeps the commandments, and he that despiseth his own ways*; that is, takes no heed to his life and actions, to order them according to the will of God; he cares not whether he please or displease, whether he honour or dishonour God, but leaves the boat to the stream, lives as his brutish lusts incline him, come of it what will come. He despiseth his own ways, and so runs into vanity, luxury, riot, fraud, injustice, and all manner of licentiousness. Now, no man thus despiseth his own ways but he despiseth other things which should be very sacred and of great regard and esteem with him. He despiseth God, and the word of God, and his own soul: Prov. xiv. 2, ‘He that walketh in his uprightness, fears God; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.’ He that makes conscience of his duty hath a high esteem of God, he looks on his authority as supreme, his powers as infinite, his knowledge of all things exact, his truth in promises and threatenings as unquestionable, his holiness as immaculate, his justice as impartial, and his goodness exercised to us in sundry benefits as rich and every way glorious. Therefore he dare not but please God; he hath such a deep reverence for him, that he is always saying within himself, What will the holy and all-seeing God have done? Or, ‘How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?’ But now the careless and slight person that takes no care to govern his actions according to the will of God, hath contemptuous and slight thoughts of God, as if he were a senseless idol that took no notice of human affairs, that sees not, or would not punish the breaches of his laws. They also despise the word of God: Prov. xiii. 13, ‘He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed; but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.’ There are some gracious hearts 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; they dare not break through God’s hedge. But now a carnal, careless, and unbelieving wretch sets at nought all the precepts, promises, and threatenings of God, and can break with him for a trifle, for a little vain delight and profit. Nay, further, he despiseth his own soul: Prov. xv. 32, ‘He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his own soul.’ He only cares for the body, but neglects his soul, scarce ever considers whether he has a soul to save or a soul to lose, as if he counted all fabulous which is spoken of God and immortality, of

the day of judgment, or of heaven and hell. Now it is in vain to speak to these to renounce and mortify their pleasing lusts till their atheism and carelessness be cured. And their case is the more desperate because the disease doth not lie in their minds, but in their hearts, and comes not so much from opinion as inclination. A settled opinion must be vanquished by reason, but a brutish inclination must be weakened by almighty grace.

2. It may come from libertinism. And these harden their hearts in sinning by a mistaking the gospel.

[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 to be so exact, to keep such ado to mortify and subdue 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 these things 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 their hearts, 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, and least conscience of sin. This is to cry up the merit of Christ, to exclude the work and discipline of the spirit, yea to set the merit of his death against the end of it, and so to set Christ against Christ. He bore our sins: 'He bore our sins in his body upon the tree, 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, and they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins; that they have such good command of themselves that they can keep within compass well enough. It is well if you be come to this height of Christian perfection, that temptations make none, or no considerable impression upon you. But we must warn you, and that of the most gross sins. Christ thought fit 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 everywhere warns Christians of malice, of hypocrisy, of envy, of lying, of evil speaking: 1 Thes. iv. 6, 'Take heed that you do not

overreach and defraud one another, for God is the avenger of all such.’ But these men would be fed with refined strains of contemplative divinity, and have no sins reproved, but such kind of sins as would seem a credit rather than a disgrace; like those diseases that are incident only to the best complexions and constitutions. If you speak against something that may rather argue their excellency than shame them of their sin, you shall be welcome. This over-spiritual preaching ends in an airy religion. 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 foolhardy.

[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 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.

3. It may arise from another cause, that is, the passionateness of carnal affections. Men are so wedded to their lusts, they cannot leave them, and so strangely besotted, they are even ready to sit down and say they will venture their souls rather than live a strict life. Is the pleasing of the flesh so sweet to you? or hell so slight a matter? And will the day of judgment be so slubbered over? There is a raging despair, and there is a sottish despair. The raging despair of a Cain, Gen. iv. 13, ‘My evil is greater than can be borne!’—when we are ready to sink under the burden of our sins; and a sottish despair, when we are not sound with God, and loth to improve the grace of the Redeemer, but say, There is no hope; we will go on in the imaginations of our own heart, Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope; it is an evil, and I must bear it. If I be damned, I cannot help it, I must bear it as well as I can. What! will you bear the loss of heaven, the wrath of the almighty and eternal God? Surely you know not

what eternity means, what hell and heaven means. You will know, when the eyes that are now blinded by the delusions of the flesh shall be opened, when you shall see others 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you shall be shut out,' Canst thou bear this? If Rachel could not endure the want of children, and Jacob the supposed loss of Joseph, when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him; if Ahitophel could not endure the loss of his credit in counsel, how wilt thou endure the loss of thy soul and the glory of the blessed to all eternity? When thou hast nothing to be guile thy mind, and thou art divested of all other comforts, and thou must feed upon this for ever. So for the pains of hell. Thou that canst not endure to be scorched a day or two in feverish flames, or the pain of the stone or gout, when God arms the humours of thine own body against thee, and canst not endure the torment of an aching tooth, how canst thou endure the wrath of an eternal God? 'Can your hearts endure, or your hands be made strong in the day that I will deal with you? saith the Lord.'

Use 2. Is to persuade you not to neglect the salt of the covenant. It may be fretting, but it is healthful; as the most salutary medicines are usually most troublesome. 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 neutral, 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 upon earth, or the enjoyment of God in heaven; and two places they issue into, heaven or hell. The scripture is peremptory, and tells you 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 commencing and 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 and defection of mankind, that

indulgeth his lusts and vain pleasures, 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, it is said, 'They shall eat of their own ways, and be filled with the fruit of their own devices;' and Isa. 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 doleful 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 a holy 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—so hard a price 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 it will check the fervour of your lusts, that you may not easily venture upon an everlasting hell.

[3.] Consider which trouble is most intolerable—to be salted with salt, or to be salted with fire; with unpleasing mortification, or the pains of hell; the trouble of physic, or the danger of a mortal disease. Surely to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest pill, take the most loathsome potion. Why? their lives lie on it. And shall we be unwilling to such a necessary strictness,

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 chirurgeon 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? Here the question is put: you must be troubled first or last. Would you have a sorrow mixed with love and hope, or else mixed with desperation? 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 consecrated to God, or entered into a holy covenant with God. Christ bound you to it, and your own gratitude will suggest it to you: ‘I beseech you, by the mercies of the Lord, present yourselves,’ &c. Nay, the new nature will incline you to it: Rom. vi. 13, ‘Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’ The new life will presently discover itself by its tendency and end, if this be indeed your end and work to be faithful to God’s covenant.

[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, your necessity will sufficiently show. Are there no rebellious desires to be subdued? No corrupt inclinations to be broken? Do not you 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 hopes, and

strictness of conversation? ‘Every man is drawn away, when he is enticed by his own lusts,’ James i. 14.

[6.] Consider the sad condition of a believer that is under the corrective discipline of God, though he do not vacate his justified state. A sinning believer, that hath made bold with forbidden fruit, how doth he smart for sin? What a wound in the conscience will wilful heinous sins make? Witness David, Ps. xxxii. and li. He gives an account how uneasy his heart did sit within him, he was afraid of God, who before was his joy and delight, and speaks as one ready to be cast out of his presence.

SERMON VI. - 2 Thes. III. 5.

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.—2 Thes. III. 5.

HERE are two things 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. Here is the love of God, that is the first grace, and the earnest or patient waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, *primum amabile*, as being the first and chiefest good; but 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 breastplate 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, 1 Thes. v. 8. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin now with the former, ‘The Lord direct your hearts to 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: Ps. 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 ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance, and direction. But at other times it signifies the bending, inclining, or making straight what is crooked, and what bends and tends another way; in this sense I take it here. Our hearts are distorted and writhed, and averse from God and all good naturally; yea, and after grace received, are apt to wander, and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably 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 great confidence; for those he prays that their love might be directed, and their hearts more fixedly set towards God. The note then will be plain and easy.

Doct. That we cannot have or keep up any true love to God, unless the Lord set our hearts straight, and keep them bent towards himself. I shall inquire here:—

1. What is love to God? Love is the complacency of the soul in what is good. Love to God is the complacency and well-pleasèdness of the soul in God as our all-sufficient portion. To open it to you, I shall describe it:—

I. By its radical and internal acts.

II. By its external effects.

III. A little touch upon the properties of it, and then you will see what the love of God

I. The radical and internal acts are two—desire and delight; desire after him and delight in him.

1. 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.

[1.] By the kind of mercies that we affect. There are some mercies vouchsafed to the creature that lie nearer to God than others do, and do least detain us from him, as his image and favour, or his renewing and reconciling grace. When we love God, these are sought in the first place, as you shall see how the temper of the saints is described and distinguished from the temper of the brutish multitude: Ps. iv. 6, 7, ‘The many say, Who will show 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 show 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 do cheer and refresh the earth, this is that that doth revive their souls. So Mat. v. 6, ‘Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.’ Well, then, they that desire to be like God in purity and holiness, and to recover his favour lost by sin, do certainly more love him than those that only seek temporal mercies from him. God’s sanctifying Spirit witnessing his love to us is the greatest gift can be bestowed in this life, and will more witness his love than anything else 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 it 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, or as things that we may be well without, and the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world be most earnestly sought after, surely we do not love God: Ps. 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 more of 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: Ps. xxvii. 4, ‘One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might 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 the kingdom, success in battle, victory over his enemies, in the first place, or not so much as converse with God, and attendance on his worship in the tabernacle; 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 the soul 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 eternally to enjoy him in glory.

2. There is another internal radical 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 greater duty now; for love being the complacency of the soul in God, as apprehended to be good, or a delightful adhesion to God as our all-sufficient portion and happiness, it cannot be imagined love can be without any delight in God even now. Now in this valley of tears, the hope of enjoying him hereafter is our comfort and solace in the midst of our weaknesses and afflictions, that there is a time coming when we shall more perfectly ‘see him as he is,’ and ‘be like him,’ 1 John iii. 2. The apostle tells us, ‘We rejoice now in the hope of the glory of God;’ that we have this in expectation, that we shall have an estate of complete felicity and excellent holiness; that we shall behold our nature united to the godhead in the glorified redeemer, and our persons admitted into the nearest intuition and fruition of God we are capable of, and live in the exercise of a constant uninterrupted love, and be perfectly capable of receiving his highest benefits. Surely this joy we have in our pilgrimage. But there 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.’ Ps. 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 if God hide his face; if God be altogether a stranger, then they are troubled indeed, Ps. xxx. 7. But yet we are not gone 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 everything is sweet to them by the relation it hath to God. It is a delight to them to think of God: Ps. 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 mercies, 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 be alone with God, and unbosom himself with God. The hypocrite is rejected from being capable of this character: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Sometimes he will call upon God, he is frightened into a little religiousness, it may be, when death is at his back, in great afflictions, or time of great judgments; but he hath no constant delight in God. The constant delight in God is that that brings the saints into his presence. So for all other Christian duties: Ps. cxxii. 1, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Come, let us go into the house of the Lord.' There they entertained traffic and commerce with God about matters of the highest concernment to their precious and immortal souls. 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: as Ps. 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 the commandments. And Ps. 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, though we have no assurance or sensible enjoyment of his favour; 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 loth to offend him, we shall be desirous to please him. Faith, I do 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 weight and 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 perfect,' that is, hath attained its consummate act, that which it aims at. No man certainly can be owned as a perfect, sincere 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 of 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 God would direct their hearts to love him, he means that they should endure anything rather than deny the faith, and 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 carnal 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. For right-hand temptations, all the 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 anything that would turn them out of the way, and divert them from their purpose.

III. To speak of the properties; if it be sincere:—

1. It is not a speculative but practical love, not consisting in lofty airy strains of devotion too high for the common rate of us poor mortals. No; it is put upon a surer and infallible test our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a 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 we are properly said to love God when 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, Ps. xcvi. 10, ‘Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.’ When we are fearful of committing or omitting anything may be a violation of his law, a grief to his Spirit, or a dishonour to his name, then we are said to love God. Whatever lofty and luscious strains of devotion we may otherwise please ourselves with, here will our trial rest. He doth not love God that can most accurately discourse of his attributes, or soar aloft in the nice speculations of contemplative divinity, or pretences of secrecy with God, but he that is most awful, serious and conscientious in his duty.

2. It is a transcendental love 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 chiefest place in our hearts, and our principal design must be to please, serve, and glorify him. 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,’ Luke xiv. 26; ‘If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,’ Many have a partial, half love to God, but a greater love to other things; then God’s interest will be least minded, for there is some thing nearer and dearer to us than God, which will be soon preferred before the conscience of our duty to him. No; all must be subordinated to our supreme happiness and last end, or else God is not loved as God.

But now the second thing propounded is the nature of that influence upon love, which is expressed here by the apostle in the word direct’

‘The Lord direct your hearts in 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 be all 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, accomplisheth the effect, but without offering violence to the liberty of man. We are not forced, but directed. There is not a violent compulsion, but an inclination sweetly raised in us by victorious grace, or the overpowering sweetness of his love. For ‘we love him, because he loved us first,’ 1 John iv. 19. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who by giving us an esteem and serious remembrance of his benefits, blows up this holy flame in our hearts. We do not love God we know not why or where fore; 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 and durable, the hand of God concurs, or the power of his Spirit. The object 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 objective means cannot do it without the inward cause. Though God’s love doth so gloriously and resplendently 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, that 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 and airy bodies to move upwards, and in heavy bodies to move downwards; as a stone falls to the earth, but fire and smoke ascend, they cannot do otherwise, because they have no choice. But now in man there is an inclination to God and heaven, which is the fruit of grace. The inclination is necessary. Why?—because all those whom the Spirit sanctifies, he sanctifies them not in vain, he certainly begets this tendency in them towards God: therefore so often they are said in scripture to be converted or turned to God. Their hearts were averse before, but then they tend and bend towards him; but the acts are voluntary. There is a duty lying upon us to ‘stir up the gift of grace that is in us;’ the word is ἀναζωπυρεῖν, 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 and secure, 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.’ There is both again; 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 writhe, and crook, and 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 and pleasure. Some tamely yield to his temptations, and he doth unto them as he listeth; but there is more tugging and drawing to get a serious Christian into his snare. Therefore, we are bidden to be ‘sober and watchful, for your 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 fleshly mind and appetite. And then the world would pervert us, and offers many baits to that end and purpose: 1 John ii. 15, 16, ‘Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For whatsoever is in the world, is either the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life;’ that is, pleasures, riches, and honours. 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 reason of any of these temptations on the one or the other side, that the Holiest 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 the creature is 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 to a wrong end. 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 there 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, everything is in frame again, selfgovernment is restored, due obedience to God is well provided for.

To give you some reasons to show you the necessity of this, both as to persons regenerate and unregenerate.

1. 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 were all haters of God, Rom. i. 28. And it were well if this enmity and hatred were thoroughly got out of our hearts. How can this be? Nature tells us that he from whom we have received being, and life, and all things, deserves our love. I answer—Though men may see some reason of love to God as he is our creator and preserver, but as he is a lawgiver 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, and then there is no room for any inclination to God. Naturally men are addicted to vain and sensual delights, for 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' John iii. 6. 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 pleasures 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 circumcise 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 circumcised before it can love God. Till God pare away the foreskin, and till this carnal love be mortified, there is no place for divine love to be raised and quickened in our hearts. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and shall so remain till God bend the crooked stick the other way, and God set our hearts right to himself.

[2.] The second reason is carnal liberty, and so we hate God as a law giver, who would bridle our lusts. There is in the law the precept and the sanction. The precept is to our purpose, the sanction will come to be considered in the next. 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 natural mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be;’ Col. i. 21, ‘Enemies in your mind by evil works.’ 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 sanction and penalty of the law. Thus, we hate God, because we fear he will call us to account for our sins, and punish us; 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, and hid himself in the bushes, Gen. iii. 7, 10. Now 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 induce a guilty prisoner to love his judge, to tell him 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 sin-pardoning God: ‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.’

2. Come we to the regenerate. The Thessalonians did excel in all graces, and yet the apostle prays that the Lord would ‘direct their hearts to the love of God.’ Why?

[1.] Because there are many defects of love in the best. To give some instances:—

First, Love signifies a strong inclination, or 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 aptness and 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 great end, and all vain and foolish actions are impertinent thereunto. Judge you by this, if we have such a perfect love to God, if this be love, as questionless it is. But now with how many impertinent and extravagant actions do we fill up our lives? How many purposes, desires, words, and actions have we that have no respect to our great end at all? How much do we live to ourselves, and how little to God? How great a passion have we for earthly things, so that they can occupy and intercept the far greatest part of our lives? And

then judge whether we had not need have the bent kept up, and the tendency towards God, as our end and happiness: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Unite my heart to the fear of thy name.' It is the natural disease of man's heart to be loosed from God, and to be distracted in variety of worldly objects, which obtrude themselves upon our senses, offer themselves to us daily; therefore it is not enough for a man once to resign over his heart to God, as we do in conversion, when this love was first wrought in us, but we need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after carnal vanities, that he would direct and keep us straight and true to our end, that we may love him more, and at a better rate. So, if you consider the nature of love; the thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us?

The second evidence is those slavish fears which do oppress us and hinder our delight in God and comfortable communion with him in the means of grace. Certainly the more we are under slavish fear, the less love we have to God and thankfulness for his grace. The apostle tells you, 1 John iv. 18, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' Surely we should seek after such a spirit of love, that all we do for God may be done with great delight; that we may not serve him by compulsion, but by inclination; not as en joined only, but as inclined; not as putting a force upon ourselves, but as delighting in our work. And then—

Thirdly, Another instance is our frequent preferring the profits and pleasures of the world before the service of God, and if it doth not go so far as to forfeit our right, yet how often do we expose and put our spiritual comforts to hazard for every trifle? As Esau, that sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 15, 16. The best of us show too much lothness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, or to do that which is signified by it. This shows 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.

Fourthly, Our backwardness to obedience, and the tediousness we find in it, shows a great imperfection in our love. All goes on easily, sweetly, 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.' But when we are wedded to worldly things, and will not be reclaimed from them, then every heavenly business is an interruption to what we would be at, what we delight in.

Fifthly, The many conflicts we have with carnal self-love, or our own foolish and hurtful lusts, show our love is not perfect; as the weakness of faith is seen and felt by the remainders of unbelief, and our frequent conflicts with doubts and fears: 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. So the weakness of our love is known by the opposition of carnal and inordinate self-love. The flesh will say sometimes, 'Favour thyself,' or 'What a weariness is it,' Mal. i. 13, and grudge everything that is done for God. It doth excuse us in our stragglings and deviations from our great end, and applaud us in our negligent course of living; as 'the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason,' Prov. xxvi.

16. Nay, sometimes it will urge us to please ourselves to the grief of the Spirit, and to take our fill of carnal delights. All this belongs to the first reason.

[2.] There needs much to be done about our love after it is planted in the soul; we need to get it rooted, 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 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 yet this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be 'rooted and grounded in love,' as the apostle saith, Eph. iii. 17, to get a more solid, durable affection to God.

(2.) After it is planted it needs to be more 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 in the soul 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 our carnal love.

Second, If love be not acted and kept at work, carnal love will prevail. The soul of man cannot lie idle, especially our affections cannot; either they are carried out to God, or they will leak out to worldly things. When our love ceaseth, yet concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul; for the neglected principle languisheth, while the other principle gets strength, and secures its interest to God. The—

Third is the benefit we have by keeping love in act. This makes us more sincere, and to act purely for God: 2 Cor. v. 14, ‘The love of Christ constrains us: for we thus judge, that they that live should no more live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.’ The constraining influence of love is that that keeps us from living to ourselves; and this makes us more diligent. Labour and love are often coupled in the scripture: ‘Knowing your labour of love, the work of faith and patience of hope;’ ‘and God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love;’ the church of Ephesus ‘lost her first love,’ she ‘left her first work,’ Rev. ii. 4, 5.

Use. Oh, then, let us seek this benefit from God, that our hearts may be directed into his love.

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, always springing up unto eternal life.’ It is not in the heart a dead pool, 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 this holy fire; and this is the end of the sacrament. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper do all taste and 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?' Gal. ii. 20. And also the drink that is provided for us at this feast is the blood of Christ: Rev. i. 5, '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 new fuel to keep in this fire. 'I will love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication,' Ps. 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 the 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 them.

SERMON VII. -2 Thes. III. 5.

And into the patient waiting for Christ.—2 Thes. III. 5.

HE 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.

I come now to handle the second branch. The point is this:—

Doct. That when the heart is bent by love to God, we need also the direction of his grace to keep it intent upon the coming of Christ.

Four things I must speak to:—

- I. What this patient waiting for Christ is.
- II. The connection between it and the love of God.
- III. That it hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, or keeps religion alive in the soul.
- IV. The necessity of God's concurrence hereto: 'the Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.'

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: Some times by looking, which notes a certain expectation: Titus 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 and 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 Thes. i. 10. He makes it there the fruit of our conversion: he saith, we are 'turned to God, that we may 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, and build their hopes upon it. Faith adds certainty, and love earnestness; and both give strength to patience. Let us open all these things. As

1. 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 very certain that 'he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. x. 37. Therefore, in the eye of faith it is sure and near. As Rebecca spied Isaac at a distance, so faith looks upon Christ as if he had begun his journey, and were now upon the way, and makes the believer stand ready to meet him and welcome him. Though it come not to pass

presently, the thing is promised, and the time certainly determined in God's eternal purpose, which is enough for faith.

2. There is a longing or a desirous expectation: 2 Peter 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.

[1.] For the first sort: 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' They would eternally enjoy the pleasures of the present world, and therefore labour to dash all thoughts of this great day out of their hearts, and take up all obvious prejudices to smother the belief of it: they would be glad in their hearts to hear such news that Christ would never come. Now, their wishes do easily commence into opinion. Christ's coming is the burden and torment they would willingly get rid of; and men readily believe what they earnestly desire.

[2.] The second sort. It is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent. And therefore hated and abhorred by them. At the mention of it Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25. There is reason for it, for Christ comes to them as a terrible judge. In scripture his coming is set forth by light, and sometimes by fire. Light is comfortable, but fire dreadful: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flames of fire to render vengeance to them that obey not the gospel.' But—

[3.] To the godly it is not matter of terror, but delight; not like the handwriting 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 church's 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.' Christ's voice and the church's voice are unisons. You will say this is the desire of the church in general; but doth every particular believer so desire it? I answer—The part follows the reason of the whole, the same Spirit is in all the faithful; the Spirit in the bride says come; the Holy

Ghost in necessary things works uniformly in all the saints, therefore he breeds this desire in them. The meanest, the weakest, even those that tremble at their own unpreparedness, have some inclination that way. There may be a drowsiness and indisposition, but no total extinction of the desire of meeting with Christ.

3. There is waiting; and here it is expressed by its adjunct, 'patient waiting;' for patient waiting is an act of hope, as well as longing expectation: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Knowing,' saith he, 'your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope,' Faith, or a sound belief of things, will break out into practice; therefore the work of faith, love, will put us upon labour, and hope produces patience. There is a threefold patience spoken of in scripture; all the branches are near 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 in our passage to heaven: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.' As we cannot inherit the promises without faith, so not without patience; for our obedience and fidelity to Christ requires not only labour and great pains, but courage and constancy to suffer as well as to do: Heb. x. 36, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God you 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 show 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, that so at length we may be accepted in the judgment.

[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 bear 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 about. The time cannot be long, for what are a few

years to eternity? This waiting patience is delivered to us under the similitude of an husbandman, James v. 7, who 'waiteth for the precious fruits 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 a while 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 must expect our season, till we see the fruit and recompense of it. This is the waiting patience.

[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.' They were hasty to have present satisfaction, or else grew weary of religion, and turned aside to worldly things. 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 and 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 perfunctory care. Much labour and serious diligence is required of us, we have many things to conflict withal, there is the burden of a wearisome body, the seducing flesh, unruly passions, disordered thoughts, a dark mind, dead affections, and sometimes the misery of a troubled conscience that we conflict withal: 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 those that love him.

II. The connection and affinity between it and the love of God; for 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 to 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 Thes. 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 from 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 because his threatenings and promises are all accomplished: sin will no more be had in honour, nor pride and sensuality bear sway. Love to the saints will 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 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen, we love; and believing in him, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' But desire to see 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: Mat. xxv. 31, 'The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his angels with him.' All clouds about his person 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; for the church in general shall at that day be adorned as a bride for her husband, and fully freed from all sin and trouble. 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 are 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 Thes. i. 10, it is said, 'Christ shall be admired in the saints, and glorified in all them that believe,' Glorified, not actively, but objectively. 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, they shall rest from their labours; that is, all their trouble some work shall be over, for their pain and sorrow they shall have delight, 1 Peter iv. 12. For their shame they shall have glory put upon them both in body and soul. Our Lord Christ despised the shame for the glory set before him, Heb. xii. 2.

III. It hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, and keeps religion alive in our souls. That will appear if you take either word in the text, *waiting* or *patience*.

1. If you take the first notion, waiting or looking, as it draws off the mind from things present to things to come.

[1.] 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 seem at present, or relish to the flesh, or 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 show 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 notions pervert all mankind, and there is no rectifying the mistake but by carrying of our mind seriously to the last review of all things:

for then we shall judge things not by what they seem now, but by what they will be hereafter. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 20, 'Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.' That is true wisdom, to be found wise at last. Time will come when we shall wish and say in vain, Oh, that we had laid up treasure in heaven, that we had laboured for the meat that perisheth not, that we had esteemed despised holiness, that we had set less by all the vanities of the world, that we had imitated the strictest and most mortified believer, for those are only esteemed and have honour in that day. More particularly—

(1.) It would much quicken us to repentance: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the day 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 are 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 with out 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, labour, and sorrow, but this trouble and toil is then over, and they shall enjoy their rest. Consider these things, Where would you have your refreshment, and in what? Many seek their refreshing now either in brutish pleasures, and 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.

(2.) 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 Peter 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 do as having judgment and eternity in our eye, we would be other manner of persons than ever we have been. What! believe

this day, and be so careless! It cannot be. We would not beat down the price of religion to so low a rate, 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.

(3.) It would produce a more heavenly temper and conversation. That is evident from the apostle's words: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Looking for this salvation and this Saviour, it 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 and penitent believers 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, as seeking it with all diligence, that you may at length certainly obtain it, and not be excluded with the wicked, or live upon heaven, solacing yourselves in the foresight and hopes of it. Otherwise, to profess this faith, and yet to live as though your happiness were altogether in this world, were to go about to reconcile contradictions; to pretend you place your blessedness in heaven, and yet fly from it as a misery. You profess to look and long for that you have no mind to. The second notion is patience.

2. Patience, that also hath a great influence upon religion; for that which destroyeth all religion and godliness 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 we cannot tarry, but run to our own shifts, because they are next at hand, 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, till those better things which he hath promised do

come in hand. Whatever our condition be, afflicted or prosperous, we are in the place and 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 mind and fancy, remained too long with God in the mount? What made Saul force himself to offer sacrifice, but because he could not tarry an hour longer for Samuel, and so lost the kingdom? 1 Sam. xiii. 12-14. What made the bad servant, or church officer, to smite his fellow-servant, and eat and drink with the drunken, that is, to abuse church censures, countenance the profane, and smite and curb the godly, but only this? Mat. xxiv. 48, 'My Lord delays his coming.' He sees the strictest are hated in the world, and the others befriended; and honour and interest runs that way, and Christ comes not to rectify these disorders. 'My Lord delays his coming.' Hasty men are loth to be kept in suspense and long expectation, and so miscarry. Look to all sorts of sinners. The carnal and sensual, they 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 who 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, that are 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. xxviii. 20. 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 climbing and affecting to be built one storey higher in the world cost him the ruin and loss of his soul. All revolt and apostasy from God proceeds from hence, because they cannot wait for God's help, and tarry his fulfilling the promise; but finding themselves pressed and destitute, the flesh, that is tender and delicate, grows impatient. It is tedious to suffer for a while, but they do not consider it is more tedious to suffer for evermore. Thence comes also our murmuring and distrustful repining: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication.' Just at that time when God was about to hear him. So, 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.' And thence also our unlawful attempts, and stepping out of God's way. Men fly 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 a precipitate, impatient spirit out of order, full of distemper, a ready prey to Satan.

IV. 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.' It concerns this clause as well as the former.

1. As to the carnal and unregenerate. Till their hearts be changed, they can never attain to this patient waiting for Christ, for two reasons:—

[1.] In the wicked there is no sound belief of these things, for they live by sense and not by faith. The apostle tells us, 'He that lacketh grace is blind, and cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9. 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, how shall they be affected with this matter?

[2.] There is an utter unsuitableness of heart to them. Things present, that suit their fancies and please their senses, carry away their hearts. Ps. xlix. 18, 'Whilst he lived he blessed his soul; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.' Men bless themselves, and the carnal world applauds them in a sensual course and way of living. They measure all happiness by their outward condition in the world, and please themselves with golden dreams of contentment; and this being seconded with the flattery and applauses of the deceived world, they are fast asleep in the midst of the greatest soul-dangers, and so go down into hell before they think of it.

2. Come we now to the regenerate. Such the apostle looks upon the Thessalonians to be. They need to have their hearts directed to the patient waiting for Christ, for these reasons:—

[1.] Because we have too dim and doubtful a foresight of these things. How dark a prospect have even the best of God's children of the world to come! We may speak of others as unbelievers, but God knows how doubtful our own thoughts are about eternity and Christ's coming; how little we can shut the eye of sense, and open

that of faith, and say truly with the apostle, 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 through sight into another world. The best Christians have need to have their eyes anointed with spiritual eye-salve, that their sight may be more sharp and piercing; to beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to open the eyes of their mind, that they 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, and how unwelcome are they to our hearts! It was a complaint against Israel, that they did put far away the evil day; but the complaint against us may be taken up thus, that we put far away the good day, when all our desires and hopes shall be accomplished and satisfied. The atheistical 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 forget or put off these thoughts, lest, like cold water cast into a boiling pot, 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 saith, 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,' &c.

[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 dead and drowsy desires we have, but not that lively motion which will become hope and love. If nature say, 'Come not to torment us before the time,' grace should say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, oh, 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.] This prayer need to be made for the renewed too, because Christians think of it with too much perplexity and fear, Is the sight of a Saviour unwelcome to you? or should the drawing nigh of

your redemption be a comfort or a terror? Why do you then believe in Christ, and choose his favour for your happiness? We thought that this had been all your hope, and your desire, and your great comfort; and shall your hope be your torment, and beget horror rather than joy? Oh, beg the Lord to direct your hearts, that you may 'hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13. We do not only wait for glory, but for grace; and shall not this be a comfort to you?

[5.] We need to pray this prayer, because our preparations are too slender for so great a day. Serious preparation is necessary. It is described 2 Peter 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 and quietly, in an unprepared state. If we have the habitual preparation, we do not keep up the actual preparation by clarifying and 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 the 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 more welcome to the wife than to a harlot; but she would have all things ready for his reception and entertainment.

[6.] Because our motions are too inconstant. We interrupt the course of our obedience frequently, 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 watchword, '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.'

The exhortation is to 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. The motives may be these:—

1. 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.

2. The people of God are described by this, 1 Thes. i. 10, 'Who wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered 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: 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 and Christianity, 'Waiting for the coming of Christ.' And so it is said, Heb. ix. 28, 'That Christ would 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, love not, and long 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 must we look for Christ's return, now he is gone within the veil of the heavenly sanctuary, that he may come out and bless us with everlasting blessings.

3. This should move us to it, the benefits that will come to us hereby; for this waiting for Christ breeds in us contempt of the world, mortification of the flesh, tolerance and enduring of the cross.

[1.] 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. 2-4. The more the heart is given to one, the other gets the less. Earthly things be little regarded in comparison of that glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance.

[2.] This conduceth to the mortification of the flesh; therefore we deny ourselves present satisfactions, that we may not be castaways, disallowed in the judgment. 'Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the coming of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13.

[3.] The tolerance and enduring of the cross. This gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, 'but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy,' 1 Peter iv. 13. And then our reward will very much exceed the proportion of our sufferings; they are no more to be set against them 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,' Christ shall bestow upon us.

For means, all I shall say is this: if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as sure 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 recompenses 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.

SERMON VIII. - Eph. I. 8.

Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.
—Eph. I. 8.

N the context the apostle speaks of the spiritual blessings we have by Christ: he considers them under a threefold reference;—(1.) As they were appointed and prepared for believers in God's decree of election. There was the first stone laid towards this building. (2.) As

they were purchased by Christ in the great and wonderful work of redemption. (3.) As conveyed and applied to us in effectual calling, and so brought home to our souls. In all these God gave evident proofs of the riches of his free grace. For (1st,) If he ‘chose us to be holy before the foundations of the world,’ nothing anteceded his love; not in us—for there was nothing in being then; we were not, and so could do nothing to deserve it—nor in that prospect and foresight which God had of things; for he could foresee nothing but what was the effect of his free grace: not because holy, but ‘that we *might be* holy and without blame before him in love.’ (2dly,) Consider his purpose to bring about all this by Christ, still he showed his free grace. For when there was nothing to move him, much to hinder the design of his grace, yet he found out a way to bring this about by Christ. (3dly,) In the effectual application to us, who were ignorant, obstinate, unbelieving, his grace doth more shine forth that he would do all this for creatures so much unworthy. Now, in the application, God discovers two things;—(1.) His abundant favour, or the riches of his grace, ver. 7. That his love, so long hid in his decree, did after wards overflow in the effects to persons so averse and unworthy. (2.) His excellent wisdom in the text, ‘Wherein he hath abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence.’

The only difficulty in the words is, What is this wisdom and prudence spoken of? Whether it imply the wisdom of God, or the wisdom wrought in us by the Spirit in conversion? Many interpreters go for the last. The former, I suppose, is here meant, which is eminently discovered in the mysteries of the gospel: Rom. xi. 33, ‘Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!’ Surely it is not meant of wisdom in us; for how little a portion have we of true and heavenly wisdom. Now, the two words used: *wisdom* noteth the sublimity of the doctrine of the gospel, and *prudence* the usefulness of it. As Prov.

viii. 12, ‘I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,’ which showeth there is some distinction between those words. It was wisdom to find out a way of recovering lapsed mankind, and it was prudence to dispose it into so good and convenient order that it might be commodious for our acceptance. If any think it relateth to the effects wrought in us, I am not against it. Christ is wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 24, and ‘made wisdom’ to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. These Asiatics, to whom the apostle

wrote, gloried in their secular wisdom and curious arts; now the true wisdom was found in the mysteries of the gospel.

viii.

Doct. That in the dispensation of grace by Christ, God hath showed great wisdom and prudence.

When his grace overflowed to us, he showed therein not only his goodness but his wisdom. Now, though we can easily yield to this assertion, yet to make it out needeth more skill. ‘The manifold wisdom of God’ is better seen to angels than to us, Eph. iii. 10. They have more orderly understandings; whereas we are confused and dark. Yet to discover it to you in a few particulars, the grace of the Redeemer may be considered three ways:—

I. As to the purchase and impetration of it by the incarnation and death of the Son of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace.

III. The application of it to particular believers. In all these God hath shown great wisdom.

I. As to the purchase and impetration of grace by the death and incarnation of the Son of God.

1. There is wisdom in this, that in our fallen estate we should not come immediately to God without a mediator and reconciler. God is out of the reach of our commerce, being at such a distance from us, and variance with us. The wise men of the world pitched on such a way, 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. The heathens saw so far that it was an uncomfortable thing to make their immediate approaches to their supreme God. But here is the true God and the true Mediator: ‘But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.’ One God, the Father, from whom we derive all graces, to whom we direct all services; one Lord, Jesus Christ, who conveyeth the graces and benefits to us, and returneth our prayers and acts of obedience to God. This is a mighty relief to our thoughts; for the apprehensions of the pure Godhead do amaze us and confound us when we come to consider of that glorious and infinite being. As heretofore, before they found out the use of the compass, they only coasted, as loth to venture themselves in the great ocean;

so by Christ we come to God. He is the true Jacob's ladder, John i. 51.

2. That this Mediator is God in our nature. Therein the wisdom of God appeared, in crossing and counterworking Satan's design. Satan's great design was double—to dishonour God, and depress the nature of man. (1.) To dishonour God to man by a false representation, as if he were envious of man's happiness: Gen. iii. 5, 'God doth know in the day that ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' His first battery was against the goodness of God, to weaken the esteem thereof. Now, by the incarnation of Christ, the Lord's grace is wonderfully manifested. He is represented as lovely and amiable in our eyes, not envying our holiness and happiness, but promoting it, and that at the most costly rate, and showing love to man above all his other creatures. 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 8. It is eminently demonstrated to us in the Son of God assuming our nature and dying for us, Rom. v. 8. When Christ was incarnate, love was incarnate. Love walked up and down and healed all sicknesses and diseases, love died, and love hung on a cross, love was buried in the grave. When that ill representation was suggested to us, it was necessary there should be some eminent demonstration of the love of God to man. Especially after we had made ourselves liable to his wrath, and were conscious to ourselves that we had incurred his displeasure; and so it was necessary that we should have some notable discovery of his *philanthropy*, or love to mankind. Many believers are harassed with doubts and fears, and cannot come to be persuaded that God loves them. 'Herein is love,' and 'God commended his love to us in that his Son died for us.' (2.) The next design of Satan was to depress the nature of man, which in its innocence stood so near to God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and debased by the malicious suggestion of the tempter, should be so elevated and advanced, and set up so far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union, it is a mighty counter-working of Satan, and showeth the great wisdom of God. When he laboured to put God and us asunder, the Lord sent his Son, who took the unity of our nature into his own person.

3. That being in our nature, he would set us a pattern of obedience by his holy life; for he lived by the same laws that we are bound to live by. He imposed no duty upon us but what he underwent himself, that he might be an example of holiness unto us. We learn of him obedience to God at the dearest rates; contempt of the world, and contentation with a low and mean estate, and to be lowly and meek in heart, Mat. xi. 29. Now man being so prone to imitation, it is the greatest effect of the wisdom of God thus to oblige us, unless we would be utterly unlike him whom we own as our Lord, and from whom we have all our hopes and expectations.

4. That he should die the death of the cross to expiate our sins. Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' &c.; Phil. ii. 8, 'He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;' that the justice of God might be eminently demonstrated, the lawgiver vindicated, and the breach that was made in the frame of government repaired, and God might keep up his just honour without prejudice to his people's happiness, that he might be manifested to be holy, and a hater of sin, and yet the sinner saved from destruction, Rom. iii. 25, 26. An absolute pardon without satisfaction might have exposed God's laws to contempt, as if the violation of them were not much to be stood upon; therefore God dispensed his grace with all wisdom and prudence; would show eminent mercy, but withal a demonstration of his justice and holiness, that the world might still be kept in awe, and there might be a full concord and harmony between his mercy and justice.

5. That after his death he should rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, to prove the reality of the life to come, 1 Peter iii. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, strangely haunted with doubts about the other world; therefore did Christ in our nature arise from the dead and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration of the visible resurrection, and life to come, which he had promised to us; and so encourage us, by a life of patience in sufferings, to follow after him into those blessed mansions. So that from first to last you see the wisdom of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace. It is 'ordered in all things and sure,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The messengers by whom it is published are not extraordinary ones, but men of like

passion with ourselves. The great thing in a minister is love to souls. Christ saith, he ‘came not to be ministered unto but to minister.’ In the covenant of grace, you see the wisdom of God in two things;— (1.) The privileges offered; (2.) The terms or duties required.

1. In the privileges offered to us, which are pardon and life. In these benefits, pardon and life, there is due provision made for the desires, necessities and wants of mankind. Pardon answereth the fears of the guilty creature; and life, those desires of happiness which are so natural to us, and therefore are the most powerful and inviting motives to draw our hearts to God.

[1.] The consciousness of God’s displeasure, and the fear of his wrath, should make offers of pardon acceptable to us. When sin entered into the world, fear entered with sin. The grand scruple which haunteth the guilty creature is, how God shall be appeased, and the controversy taken up between us and his justice: Micah vi. 6, 7, ‘Wherewith shall he be appeased, and what shall I give for the sin of my soul?’ We fear death and punishment from a holy and just God, and this is the bottom cause of all our troubles. Therefore till the forgiveness of sin be procured for us, and represented to us upon commodious terms, we know not how to get rid of this bondage, the justice of the supreme governor of the world will be ever dreadful to us. These fears may be for a while stifled in men, but they will ever and anon return upon us. Now let us admire the wisdom of God, who hath provided such a suitable remedy to our disease as reconciliation and remission of sins by Jesus Christ; and that God showed himself so ready to pardon us, who are so obnoxious to his wrath and vindictive justice.

[2.] The other great privilege offered in the covenant is eternal life, which suiteth with those desires of happiness which are so natural to us. Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity; we would have immunity, peace, comfort, glory; none would be against his own benefit, but every one would be willing to be freed from the curse of the law, and the flames of hell, and enjoy happiness for evermore. Though we be unwilling to deny the flesh, and renounce the credit, pleasure, and profit of sin, and grow dead to the world, and worldly things, yet never was there a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself. Now, the Lord in his covenant ‘hath brought life and immortality to light,’

settled our happiness and the way to it; he promises that which we desire, to induce us to that which we are against. As we sweeten pills to children, that they may swallow them down the better, they love the sugar though they loathe the aloes. God would invite us to our duty by our interest; he hath told us of a happiness full, sure, and near, that he may draw us off from the false happiness wherewith we are enchanted, and bring us into the way of holiness, that we may look after this blessed hope.

2. The terms he hath required of us. The terms are either for entrance, or making covenant with God; or continuance, or keeping covenant with God; for entrance, faith, and repentance are required.

[1.] Faith in Christ. The world thinks faith quits reason and introduceth fond credulity. No; there is much of the wisdom of God to be seen in it. For faith hath a special aptitude and fitness for this work;—(1.) Partly in respect of God. For he having designed to glorify his mercy and free grace, and to make our salvation from first to last a mere gift, and the fruit of his love to us, hath appointed faith for the acceptance of this gift: Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith, that it might be by grace.' Faith and grace go always together, and it is put in opposition to the merit of works, or the strictness of the old covenant. (2.) As it is fittest to own Christ the Redeemer, the fountain of life and happiness, and our head and husband, whom we receive, and to whom we are united and married by faith. (3.) With respect to the promises of the gospel, which offer to us a happiness and blessedness, spiritual, and for the most part future. Unseen things are properly objects of faith: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' (4.) It is fittest as to our future obedience, that it may be comfortable and willing. Now, we owning Christ in a way of subjection and dependence, and consenting to become his disciples and subjects, other duties come on the more easily, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

[2.] For repentance. This is the most lively and powerful means of bringing men to new life and blessedness. (1.) It is most for the honour of God that we should not be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, and resolution of future obedience. Common reason will tell us that our case is not compassionate while we are impenitent, and hold it out against God. Who will pity those in misery who are unwilling to come out of it? Besides, it

would infringe the honour of God's law and government that one continuing in his sins, and despising both the curse of the law and the grace of the gospel, should be pardoned and saved. Repentance is often called a giving glory to God: Mal. ii. 2, 'Ye will not lay it to heart, and give glory to my name;' Josh. vii. 19, 'My son, give glory to God, and make confession to him;' Rev. xvi. 9, 'They repented not to give glory to God.' Repentance restoreth God's honour to him, as it acknowledges the justice of his laws. The self-condemning sinner acknowledges that God may destroy him, and if he save him it is mere mercy. (2.) The duty of the creature is best secured, and the penitent person more bound to future obedience, by the vow itself, or the bond of the holy oath into which he is entered, and the circumstances accompanying it, which surely induce a hatred of sin and a love of holiness. There will be a hearty consent to live in the love, obedience, and service of our Creator, with a detestation of our former ways. When we feel the smart of sin, such a sense of it will ever stick by us; and when we are in the deepest and freshest sense of his pardoning mercy, when we see at how dear rates he is pleased to have us, and upon what free terms to pardon all our wrongs, we shall love much, Luke vii. 47. Surely they that are brought back from the gibbet and the very gates of hell by such an act of pardoning mercy are most likely to remember the vows of their distress, and are more engaged to love God and please him than others are. (3.) It is most for the comfort of the creature that a stated course of recovering ourselves into the peace and hope of the gospel should be appointed to us, which may leave the greatest sense upon our consciences. Now what is likely to do so much as this apparent change, whereby we renounce and utterly bewail our former folly, and solemnly devote and give up ourselves to God by Christ? Those things that are serious and advised leave a notice and impression upon the soul. This is the most important action of our lives, the settling of our pardon and eternal interest. The heart is hardly brought to this, to renounce what we dearly love; therefore it is usually rewarded with some notable tastes of God's love: Isa. lvii. 15, God delights 'to revive the hearts of his contrite ones.'

For continuance in the new covenant, and delightful obedience unto God. The remedy is not only suited to the disease, but the duty to the reward. Our duty is to know God, and to love him; and our

reward is to see him, and be like him, 1 John iii. 2. There is a marvellous suitableness between the end and means, holiness and happiness, conformity to God, and our communion with him; the holiness required of us now, and the happiness we expect hereafter; perfect conformity and uninterrupted communion; and they differ only but as the bud and the flower, the river and the ocean: here it is begun, hereafter perfected.

III. In the application of his grace to particular believers, he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.

1. In the way God taketh to convert souls to himself, there is a sweet contemperation and mixture of wisdom and power. There is a proposal of truth and good to the understanding and the will, and by the secret power of his grace it is made effectual. We are taught and drawn: John vi. 44, 45, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' In the 45th verse, 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' There is opening of blind eyes, and the turning of a hard heart: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,' &c.; Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of the understanding being opened,' &c.; Col. iii. 10, 'Renewed in knowledge.' Turning the heart: Acts xvi. 14, 'God opened the heart of Lydia;' Acts xi. 21, 'The hand of the Lord was with him; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.' His hand implieth his power. Thus God worketh strongly, like himself; sweetly, with respect to us, that he may not oppress the liberty of our faculties. Christ comes into the heart, not by force, but by consent. We are 'transformed,' but so as we 'prove what the will of God is,' Rom. xii. 2. He draweth, we run, Cant. i. 4. The power of God and liberty of man do sweetly consist together. As God is said to 'create in us a new heart,' he is also said to 'give us a free spirit,' Ps. li. 10, 12. Eph. ii. 10, We are said to be 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' So he 'puts a new heart,' and we are said to 'walk in his ways,' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart will I also 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep

my judgments, and do them.’ Thus God showeth forth the powerful efficacy of his grace, and doth also win the consent and good liking of the sinner; he obtaineth his effect, and yet doth preserve the liberty of man’s nature and the principles thereof. It is not only *voluntas mota*, but *mutata*; the nature is changed and renewed. 2 Cor. iii. 18, ‘But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’

2. In the persuasive and moral way, the wisdom of God is seen as taking the most likely course to gain the heart of man, discovering himself to us as a God of love, kindness, and mercy. Guilty creatures stand aloof from a condemning God; our fear of his justice maketh us run from him: Gen. iii. 7, 10, Adam ‘hid himself from the presence of the Lord.’ So all his posterity forsake God and hate him. But God, though the superior, though the wronged party, maketh offers of peace, and showeth how willing he is to be reconciled to us. Having first laid the foundation in the highest demonstration of goodness that ever could come to the ears of man to hear of, or enter into the heart of man to conceive; namely, in giving his Son to die for a sinful world, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. What more apt to make man relent? And then, because man had fallen from the love of God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, what wisdom doth God show, not only in the offers of pardon, but eternal life and blessedness, infinitely beyond the false happiness which carnal self-love inclineth us to! that it is a shame and disgrace to our reason to think these things are worthy to be compared together. What are all the pleasures, profits, and honours we dote upon, to the pleasures at God’s right hand? the riches of the inheritance of the saints, and the glory which cometh from God. And therefore, what more powerful motive can be produced than this blessed immortality? Indeed, God is invisible, and the glory is to come; and sensual pleasures are at hand, ready to be enjoyed. But faith checketh sense: Heb. xi. 1, ‘Faith is the evidence of things not seen.’ Oh the wisdom of God in the frame of the gospel!

3. In the effect itself, the new creature, which is the wisest creature on this side heaven. To evidence this to you, I shall show you that all wisdom and prudence consisteth in three things;—(1.) In

fixing a right end; (2.) In the choice of apt and proper means; (3.) In a dexterous effectual prosecution of the end by those means.

(1.) In fixing and propounding to ourselves a right end. A wise man doth not mind trifles, but is conversant about things of the greatest reality, necessity, and excellency: such are God and heaven. All other wisdom will prove but folly in the end. Others 'disquiet themselves about a vain show,' Ps. xxxix. 6. Poor, silly creatures cark and labour and turmoil to get together a few poor transitory enjoyments, where there is neither durable possession nor solid satisfaction. The honours, pleasures, and riches of the world are but pictures and shadows of the true honours, the true riches, and fulness of joy at God's right hand. Surely he is a wise man that chooseth God for his portion and heaven for his home: Prov. xv. 24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.' He is wise, and hath chosen the true sort of living, which mindeth the salvation of his soul, and looketh after eternal life. Surely this is above and beyond any wisdom man can pretend unto, to be happy, not for a while, but for ever.

(2.) In the choice of apt and proper means. A man is wise enough if he knows his duty, and the way to happiness. God hath appointed us the way wherein to walk, to fear him, and love him, and keep his commandments: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep these statutes, for this is your wisdom;' Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear of God, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.' There is an excellency in this sort of life, Prov. xii. 26. Those applaud it that do not choose it. All are of this mind at last, and dying are sensible of the excellency of it.

(3.) A dexterous effectual prosecution of the end. This prosecution imports—First, Diligence: He is a fool that hath a price in his hand and hath not a heart to lay it out on a good purchase, Prov. xvii. 16; but he is a wise man that improveth his time and labour to a good purpose: 'A wise man's heart is at his right hand,' Eccles. x. 2. Secondly, This prosecution lies in caution and circumspection to keep himself from sin: Eph. v. 15, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,' Lastly, It consists in self-denial. The wise merchant sold all that he had for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46, 47. A wise man doth not dally with religion, but thoroughly sets himself to it.

Use 1. Be persuaded that serious Christianity is the true wisdom; and the wisdom of the world, which is only conversant about worldly things, from a worldly principle to a worldly end, is foolishness with God. This is wisdom, which acquainteth us more with God, and leadeth us into everlasting happiness.

2. Admire the wisdom of God in dispensing salvation by Christ, who could bring light out of darkness, and so great a demonstration of his glory out of man's sin, and vanquish Satan by the way, whereby he seemed most to prevail, and still attain his end by means seemingly contrary. There is more of divine power and wisdom showed in Christ crucified than in anything men could think of. It was a more glorious act of power to raise Christ from the dead, than in not permitting him to die. He prevaieth more by laying down his life, than by being prosperous in the world and taking the lives of his enemies.

3. If God hath abounded to us in all wisdom, let us not disturb the order of this grace by asking privileges without duties, or minding duties without the help of the Spirit; or placing all in duties, so as to exclude the merit and satisfaction of the Redeemer; or to eye the ransom so as to exclude the example of Christ. All things are well ordered in God's covenant; the confusion arises from our darkness and misapprehensions.

4. There should be wisdom and prudence in us, for the impression must be according to the seal and stamp. Wisdom is a saving knowledge of divine mysteries; and prudence, to regulate and order our actions and practices, to perform our respective duties to God and man. The apostle prays for the Colossians (Col. i. 9), that they might 'be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' All have not the same measure of saving knowledge and prudence, yet the least saint hath what is necessary to salvation. You must every day grow in those graces, for by degrees they are carried on towards perfection.

SERMON IX. - Mat. XXVII. 46.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—Mat. XXVII. 46.

IN the history of the passion you will find that our Lord Jesus was exercised with all kind of temptations; affronted by men, assaulted by the powers of darkness, deserted by his own disciples—one of them denied him, another betrayed him, but all fled. And thus he was not only ‘rejected of men,’ but was stricken, and smitten, and forsaken of God. This was as gall and vinegar to his wounds, the passion of his passion. The world’s cruelty and Satan’s rage had been nothing, if the brightness of the divine presence had not been eclipsed. When the people were set against him—‘His blood be upon us and our children’—he complained not of that. When ‘friend and lover were afar off,’ he doth not complain of that. Judas, why hast thou betrayed me? Peter, why hast thou denied me? Disciples, why have ye forsaken me? But when God was withdrawn, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ This is his bitter complaint now.

The words, then, are Christ’s complaint, not *of* God, but *to* God. In them observe:—

1. The circumstance of time when this complaint was made: *about the ninth hour*.
2. The matter of it: God had *forsaken* him.
3. The manner of it: with vehemency, and yet with faith. There was faith in it, for he saith, *My God*. The vehemency is seen in the extension of his voice: he *cried with a loud voice*; and by the ingemination of the name of God: *my God, my God*.

1. The circumstance of time: *about the ninth hour*. We read in the former verse, that ‘from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.’ At the passion of Christ the earth trembled, the sun seemed to be struck blind with astonishment, and the frame of nature to put itself into a funeral garb and habit, as if the creatures durst not show their glory while God was manifesting his anger for sin, and Christ was suffering. After three hours’ darkness, he complaineth not of that, but of the sad eclipse that was upon his own spirit.

2. The matter complained of: *why hast thou forsaken me?* It is not an expostulation, so much as a representation of the heavy burden that was upon him. Questions among the Hebrews imply earnest assertions; as Ps. x. 1, ‘Why standest thou afar off? Why

hidest thou thyself in the time of trouble?’ that is, Lord! thou hidest thyself from me. So Ps. xliii. 2, ‘Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?’ that is, I do go mourning. The case is represented in such forms of speech.

3. The vehemency.

[1.] In the extension of his voice. Great griefs express themselves by strong cries; for burdened nature would fain have vent and utterance. And the apostle taketh notice of this circumstance, μετὰ κρᾶυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς, Heb. v. 7, ‘He offered prayers and tears, with strong crying.’

[2.] In the ingemination of the name of God: *My God, my God*. These possessive particles are words of faith striving against the temptation. He had great trouble of spirit, but to that he opposeth his interest: *My God, my God*. In the bitterest agonies Christ despaired not, but still had a most firm persuasion of God’s love to him, and necessary support from him. But all showeth the trouble was not light, but heavy and grievous.

Doct. That Christ, as suffering for our sins, was really deserted for a time, in regard of all sensible consolation.

I. What was Christ’s desertion?

II. Why it befell him.

III. What use may we make of it?

I. What was Christ’s desertion? I shall, for more distinctness, handle it negatively and affirmatively.

First, Negatively.

1. It was not a desertion in appearance or conceit only, but real. We often mistake God’s dispensations. God may be out of sight, and yet we not out of mind. When the dam is abroad for meat, the young brood in the nest is not forsaken. The children cry as if the mother were totally gone, when she is employed about necessary business for their welfare. ‘Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me.’ Isa. xlix. 14, 15. In the misgivings of our hearts God seems to have cast off all care and thoughts of us. God’s affectionate answer showeth that all this was but a fond surmise: ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have

compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.’ So we think that we are cut off when God is about to help and deliver us, Ps. xxxi. 22. Many times we think he has quite cast us off, when we are never more in his heart. Surely, when our affections towards God are seen by mourning for his absence, he is not wholly gone; his room is kept warm for him till he come again. We mistake God’s dispensations when we judge that a forsaking which is but an emptying us of all carnal dependence: Ps. xciv. 18, 19, ‘When I said, My foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.’ He is near many times when we think him afar off; as Christ was to his disciples when their eyes were withheld that they knew him not, but thought him yet lying in the grave, Luke xxiv. 16. But this cannot be imagined of Christ, who could not be mistaken. If he complained of a desertion, surely he felt it. It was a real desertion. He could not misinterpret the dispensation of God he was now under, for such misapprehensions are below the perfection of his nature.

2. Though it were real, the desertion must be understood so as may stand with the dignity of his person and offices. Therefore—

[1.] There was no separation of the Father from the Son; this would make a change in the unity of the divine essence: John x. 30, ‘I and my Father are one’—Ἐμπεριχώρησις. This eternal union of the person of the Father with the person of the Son always remained; for the divine nature, though it may be distinguished into Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet it cannot be divided.

[2.] There was no dissolution of the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, for the human nature which was once assumed was never after dismissed or laid aside; Ἀχωρίστως, Christ ever remained Immanuel, God with us, or God in our nature. He was ‘the Lord of glory,’ even then when he was crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. It was the Son of God that was delivered up for us all; not a mere man suffered for our redemption, but God purchased the church ‘with his blood.’ Acts xx. 28. Death, that dissolved the bond and tie between soul and body, did not dissolve the union of the two natures. They resemble it by a man drawing a sword, and holding the sword in one hand and the scabbard in another; the same person holds both, though separated the one from the other.

3. The love of God to him ceased not. We read, ‘The Father loved the Son, and put all things into his hand,’ John iii. 35. Now, he was his dear Son, or the Son of his love, Col. i. 13; ‘In whom his soul delighted.’ Isa. xlii. 1; Eph. i. 6, ‘He hath made us accepted in the beloved’—*primum amabile*; He was ‘the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,’ Heb. i. 3. Therefore he could not but love him in every state; yea, he never more loved him as mediator then when on the cross, that being the most eminent act of his selfdenial and obedience (Phil, ii. 7), and so a new ground of love: John x. 17, ‘Therefore doth nay Father love me, because I lay down my life to take it tap again.’ The Father was well pleased with the reconciliation of lost sinners, he loveth Christ for undertaking and performing it; therefore it is unreasonable to imagine that, now he was about the highest act of obedience, there was any decrease of his love to him. No; his dispensation might be changed, but not his love. As the sun shining through a clear glass, or through a red glass, casts a different reflection, a bloody, or a bright, but the light is the same.

4. His personal holiness was not abated or lessened. The Lord Jesus was ‘full of grace and truth,’ John i. 14. He had the ‘Spirit not by measure,’ John iii. 34; he had in perfection all divine gifts and graces to accomplish him for this office, Col. i. 19; John i. 16, he was anointed by the Holy Ghost, and the oil that was poured on him never failed. Therefore he was always most holy and pure, one that never knew nor did sin. Neither his nature nor his office could permit an abatement of holiness: Heb. vii. 26, ‘Such an high priest became us as was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.’ The Son of God might fall into misery, which is a natural evil, and so become the object of pity, not of blame; but not into sin, which is a moral evil, a blot, and a blemish. When he died, ‘He died, the just for the unjust,’ 1 Peter iii. 18. The death of Christ had profited us nothing if he had been a sinner for a moment; therefore this desertion was not a diminishing of his holiness, but a suspension of his comfort.

5. God’s assistance and sustaining grace was not wholly withdrawn, for the Lord saith of him, Isa. xlii. 1, ‘This is my elect servant, whom I uphold.’ And everywhere the Lord is said to be with him in this work: Ps. cxxi. 5, ‘The Lord is at thy right hand;’

and Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' Which passage is by Peter applied to Christ: Acts ii. 25, 'For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.' The power, presence, and providence of God was ever with him, to sustain him in his difficult enterprise. When his agonies began he told his disciples, John xvi. 32, 'Ye shall leave me alone: yet I am not alone, but the Father is with me.' The Father was with him when his disciples forsook him, and fled every one to his own, to carry him through, and that his arm might work salvation for him, and that he might not sink under the burden.

Secondly, Positively.

1. God's desertion of us, or any creature, may be understood with a respect to his communicating himself to us. We have a twofold apprehension of God, as a holy and happy being; and when he doth communicate himself to any reasonable creature, it is either in a way of holiness or in a way of happiness. He doth now in the kingdom of grace communicate himself more in a way of holiness, but in the kingdom of glory fully in a way of happiness, both as to the body and the soul. These two have such a respect to one another, that he never gives felicity and glory without holiness, Heb. xii. 14. And a holy creature can never be utterly and finally miserable. He may some times give holiness without happiness, as when for a while he leaveth the sanctified, whom he will try and exercise under the cross, or in a state of sorrow and affliction; therefore holiness is the more necessary. In his internal government God doth all by his Spirit; now the Spirit is more necessarily a sanctifier than a comforter. It was by the Spirit that Christ was with God, and God with Christ; therefore his desertion of Christ, or any creature, must be mainly understood with respect to the Spirit working in any, either as to holiness or comfort. When God withdraweth either holiness or happiness, one of them, or both, or any degree of them, from any creature, he is said to desert them. Now apply this to Christ. It is blasphemy to say that Christ lost any degree of his holiness, for he was always pure and holy, and that most exactly and perfectly; therefore he was deserted only as to his felicity, and that but for a short time.

2. The felicity of Christ may be considered, either as to his outward and bodily estate, or else to his inward man, or the estate of his soul.

[1.] Some say his desertion was nothing else but his being left to the will and power of his enemies to crucify him, and that he was then deserted when his divine nature suspended the exercise of its omnipotency so far as to deliver up his body to a reproachful death, so to make way for this oblation and sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. God could many ways have protected Christ, and hindered his passion: Mat. xxvi. 52, 53, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' If the Lord had seen it fit to glorify himself by the deliverance, rather than the sufferings of Christ, he could have found ways and means enough to save him; but how then could our redemption be accomplished? Christ himself by his divine power could have protected his bodily life, for he telleth us: John x. 18, 'No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.' But it pleased God to appoint, and Christ to submit to another course, and therefore was he so far deserted, and left in the hand of his enemies. He telleth them, Luke xxii. 53, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' This, some say, was all Christ's desertion; and that he cried out with a loud voice, in the hearing of all, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' to give notice of the price that was to be paid for our ransom. He complained not of the Jews that had accused him, nor of Pilate that condemned him, nor of Judas that had betrayed him; but of God that had forsaken him, and left him in the hands of his enemies, as if this were the most grievous thing to the Son of God. But certainly this was not all; the desertion was not only in his outward estate, and with respect to bodily death, for these reasons:—

(1.) Why should Christ complain of that so bitterly, which he did so readily and willingly undergo, and might so easily have prevented, and which was most obvious, and so clearly foreseen in his sufferings? He foretold it again and again to his disciples, and spake it to his enemies; and should he now represent it as a strange thing? Surely these strong cries were not extorted from him by the mere

fear and horror of bodily death. I confess he died not insensibly, but showed the reality of all human passions; yet there was no reason why he should so bitterly and lamentably complain, if nothing else but bodily death had been in the case, and that brought upon him by his enemies.

(2.) If we look merely to bodily pains and sufferings, certainly others have endured as much if not more, as the thieves that were crucified with him lived longer in their torments, and the good thief did not complain that he was forsaken of God. Peter was crucified, and that with his head downwards, as ecclesiastical history tells us, which, as it was greater cruelty in the adversaries, so also greater pain to him; and yet he trusted that God would sustain him and support him under it. Therefore, certainly, there was something greater and more grievous to the soul of Christ than these bodily pains, which drew this lamentable and loud cry from him.

(3.) It would follow that every holy man that is persecuted and left to the will of his enemies, might be said to be forsaken of God, which is contrary to Paul's holy boasting: 2 Cor.

iv. 9, 'Persecuted, but not forsaken.' Therefore there was something more than to be left to the will of his enemies.

(4.) This desertion was a punishment, one part or degree of the abasement of the Son of God, and so belongeth to the whole nature that was to be abased, not only to his body but his soul. We read often of his soul-sufferings: Isa. liii. 10, He was to 'make his soul an offering for sin,' and to 'see the travail of his soul,' ver. 11. His soul was deprived of consolation, and some effects of the Spirit as to joy and comfort.

[2.] As to the felicity of his inward estate, the state of his soul. Christ carried about his heaven with him, and never wanted sensible consolation, spiritual suavity, the comfortable effects of the divine presence, till now they were withdrawn, that he might be capable of suffering the whole punishment of sins, and feel not only pains and torments of body, but troubles of soul, such as we have when God hideth his face from us, but without sin. The divinity kept back those irradiations of heavenly light and comfort, or, for a while, suspended that joy and comfort which otherwise he felt in himself, though it gave out that virtue and strength which was necessary to

support and sustain him under so great sufferings. As when the sun is eclipsed, the light of it ceaseth not, but is only hidden from the earth by the interposition of a dark body. So here, Christ had not the participation of that heavenly joy which before his soul felt by dwelling with God in a personal union, though there were no separation of the human nature from the divine; the ground of it was not taken away, but only the sense suspended; no dissolution of the union, but a ceasing of the comfort of it.

In short, I will show how this sort of desertion is—

1. Possible.
2. Grievous.

1. Possible, the union between the two natures remaining; for as the divine nature gave up the body to death, so the soul to desertion. Christ, as God, is ‘the fountain of life,’ Ps.

xxxvi. 9, and yet Christ could die. So the Godhead is the fountain of all joy and comfort, for he is called ‘the God of all comfort,’ 2 Cor. i. 3; and yet Christ’s soul was troubled and heavy unto death, the Godhead suspending its virtue and operation. Both might well consist, for though the presence of the divinity be necessary with the humanity of Christ, yet the effects are voluntary. God worketh not out of necessity, nor not in the human nature of Christ; all kind of communications are given out according to his own pleasure. The divinity remained united to the flesh, and yet the flesh might die; so it remained united to the soul, and yet the soul might want comfort. The bond by which the two natures were united in one person remained firm and indissoluble, but the influx of sweetness and comfort was suspended. Some effect there is of the union, but not that which affords comfort and felicity, and this was suspended but for a time. There is a desertion, indeed, which agreeth not with the dignity of Christ. There is a total and eternal desertion, by which God so deserteth a man, both as to grace and glory, that he is wholly cast out of God’s presence and adjudged to eternal torments, which is the case of the reprobate in the last judgment; this is not compatible to Christ, nor agreeing with the dignity of his person. There is a partial, temporal desertion, when God for a moment hideth his face from his people, Isa. liv. 7. This is so far from being

contrary to the dignity of Christ's nature, that it is necessary to his office for many reasons.

2. That it is very grievous. This was an incomparable loss to Christ,

[1.] Partly because it was more natural to him to enjoy that comfort and solace than it can be to any creature. To put out a candle is no great matter, but to have the sun eclipsed, which is the fountain of light, that sets the world a-wondering. For poor creatures to lose their comforts is no great wonder, who, though they live in God, are so many degrees distant from him; but for Christ, who was God-man in one person, that is a difficulty to our thoughts, and a wonder in deed, for by this means he was so far deprived of some part of himself.

[2.] Partly because he had more to lose than we have. The greater the enjoyment, the greater is the loss or want. It was more for David to be driven from his palace, than a poor Israelite to be driven from his cottage. We lose drops, he an ocean. A poor Christian that hath some heaven upon earth in the fore-enjoyment of God, and the first-fruits and earnest of the Spirit, hath more to lose than another that hath had only some vanishing taste in the offer of eternal life, and receiving the word with joy. Proportionably judge of Christ, who was *comprehensor*, while he was *viator*, had the beatifical vision whiles on earth.

[3.] Partly because he knew how to value the comfort of the union, having a pure understanding and heavenly affections. God's children count one day in his presence better than a thousand, Ps. lxxxiv. 10; one glimpse of his love more than all the world, Ps. iv. 7. If they have anything of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they would not part with it for all the sensual enjoyments which others prize and value so much, and if they lose it they are touched to the quick; they lose that which is the life of their lives, which they account their chief happiness. Now Christ was best able to apprehend the worth and value of communion with God, having such a clear understanding and tender affections, and therefore it must needs be grievous to him to have his wonted consolations suspended.

[4.] Partly because he had so near an interest and relation to God: Prov. viii. 30, 'One bred up with him, and daily his delight;' Col. i. 13—Υἱὸς ὁ ἀγαπῆς. Look, among the children of God if they have any interest in him, how mournfully do they brook his absence. Mary Magdalen, 'Woman, why weepest thou? They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him,' John xx. 13. She sought a Christ, and found a grave. Christ's words, *my God*, do not only express his confidence but affection, when his God and Father hideth his face from him.

[5.] Partly from the nature of Christ's desertion. It was penal. All desertions may be reduced to these three sorts—for trial, for correction, or punishment. For trial; so God left Hezekiah, 'to prove what was in his heart,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. For fatherly correction; so God leaveth his people for a while, to teach them repentance, humility, hatred of sin, more entire dependence on himself, Isa. liv. 7, 'I have left thee for a small moment, but with everlasting mercies will I love thee.' For punishment; so he left Saul: 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, when he answered him 'neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.' So he leaveth the wicked to a reprobate mind. Now Christ's desertion was not for a trial. Fallible creatures may be put upon trial, but the Son of God needs it not. It would not agree with the goodness and wisdom of God to put his beloved Son on such a trial. He was neither unknown to his Father, nor did he vainly presume of his own strength as to need to be confuted by trial. Nor can it properly be called fatherly correction, for there was no sin in Christ that needed to be corrected. Indeed, 'the chastisement of our peace was upon his shoulders.' Isa. liii. 5. Therefore it remains that this desertion was penal and satisfactory, such as came from the vindictive and revenging hand of God. Our sins met in him, and he was forsaken in our stead. There was no cause in Christ himself, wherefore he deserved to be forsaken of God, but we had done the wrong, and he maketh the amends. There was nothing in Christ's person to occasion a desertion, but much in his office; so he was to give body for body and soul for soul; and this was a part of the satisfaction. He was beloved as a Son, forsaken as our mediator and surety.

II. Why was Christ forsaken?

Ans. With respect to the office which he had taken upon him, to expiate our sins, and to recover us from the deserved wrath and punishment into the love and favour of God. This desertion of Christ carrieth a suitableness and respect to our sin, our punishment, and our blessedness.

1. Our sin. Christ is forsaken to satisfy and make amends for our wilful desertion of God. When Adam sinned, we all turned the back upon God who made us. Yea, all actual sins are nothing but a forsaking of God for very trifles, an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature: Jer. ii. 13, 'They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out unto themselves broken cisterns that will hold no water.' Now we that forsook God deserved to be forsaken by God; therefore what we had merited by our sin, Christ endured as our mediator. He himself submitted to desertion. It is strange to consider what small things draw us off from God: 'For handfuls of barley and pieces of bread will that man transgress,' Ezek. xiii. 19; 'for a pair of shoes,' Amos ii. 6; 'for one morsel of meat,' Heb. xii. 16; Isa. lii. 3. This is the great degeneracy and disease of mankind, that a trifle will prompt us to forsake God, as a little thing will make a stone run down hill; it is its natural motion. There is nothing that is so easily exposed and put to hazard as the favour of God. Now this being the great sin of man, and the cause of other sins, it was needful that the odiousness of this sin should be set forth by the bitterness of Christ's sorrow under the want of the love of God. Christ's complaints show how God's favour is to be valued, and that it is a dangerous thing to part with it for carnal satisfactions. The consolations of God are cheap, and small things in the eyes of most men in the world. What is more slighted than God and Christ and our own salvation, and neglected for very trifles? And then what more perfect cure, and better way to instruct the world, than that these sins could not be expiated but by the desertion of the Son of God, and his bitter complaints for the suspension of the effects of the love of God to him?

2. It carries a full respect to the punishment appointed for sin. Certain we are that he 'bore the curse of the law,' Gal. iii. 13. Now the curse of the law, actively taken, is nothing but the sentence of the law, or rather of God the judge, condemning the transgressors of it to such punishment as the law appointed; passively taken, it is the

punishment itself. And the final and great curse is that described, Mat. xxv. 41. To be banished from the presence of the Lord, and cast into extreme torment. There is a double punishment—*poena damni et sensus*, the loss and the pain. The loss consisteth in our separation from God, from the comfortable happy fruition of him in glory: ‘depart, ye cursed.’ The pain in eternal torments is set forth by the worm and by the fire, Mark ix. 44. Now Christ being our surety, Heb. vii. 22, and giving himself ‘a ransom for all,’ 1 Tim. ii. 6—ἀντίλυτρον, the word implies a substitution or surrogation of one person in the room of another; he was to suffer what we were to suffer; if not the idem, every way the same, yet the *tantundem*, that which was sufficient to Christ’s ends, that which was to carry a full resemblance with our punishment. It is one part of the punishment of sin to be forsaken of God, and many say the punishment of loss is greatest; he was therefore to suffer so much of it as his holy person was capable of; some thing that answereth to the *poena damni* in his desertion, and to the *poena sensus* in his agonies and pains: Isa. liii. 4, ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.’

It is true the accidentals of punishment Christ suffered not. As—

[1.] To the place, he was not in hell. It was not necessary that Christ should descend into the hell of the damned. One that is bound as a surety for another needs not go into prison provided that he pay the debt. All that justice requireth is, that he satisfy the debt. In deed, if he doth not, nor cannot satisfy the debt, he must to prison. So here the justice of God must be satisfied, the holiness of God and hatred to sin sufficiently demonstrated, but Christ need not to go into the place of torments.

[2.] For the time of continuance. The damned must bear the wrath of God to all eternity, because they can never satisfy the justice of God, therefore they must lie by it world without end. As one that pays a thousand pounds by a penny a week, is a long time in paying; a rich man lays it down *in cumulo*, in a heap of gold all at once. Christ hath made an infinite satisfaction in a finite time; he bore the wrath of God in a few hours, which would overwhelm the creature. Christ did not suffer the eternity of wrath, but only the extremity of it, *intensivè*, not *extensivè*. The eternity of the punishment ariseth from the weakness of the creature, who cannot overcome this evil, and get out of it.

[3.] There is another thing unavoidably attending the pains of the second death in reprobates, and that is desperation, an utter hopelessness of any good, yea, a certain expectation of continual torment, Heb. x. 27. The gates of hell are made fast on them by an irresistible decree; and the gulf is fixed between the place of the damned, and the place of the blessed, so that there is no coming from the one to the other, Luke xvi. 26. Now this despair is not an essential part of the law's curse, but only a consequent, occasioned by the sinner's view of his remediless and woful condition. But this neither did nor could possibly befall the Lord Jesus, who was able by his divine power both to suffer and satisfy, to undergo and overcome, and therefore expected a good issue in his conflict: Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption,' was spoken as from Christ, Acts ii. 27. A shallow stream would drown a little child, whereas a grown man may hope to escape out of a far deeper place, yea, a skilful swimmer out of the ocean. Christ passed through that sea of wrath which would have drowned all the world, and came safe to shore.

3. With respect to our blessedness, which is to live with God for ever in heaven. Christ was forsaken, that there might be no longer any separation between us and God. He was forsaken for a while, that we might be received for ever. Our separation from God by sin was the meritorious cause, but the final cause was our eternal conjunction with God; so that this desertion, which was so bitter to Christ, is the cause of sweet consolation to us, as it hath procured for all them that obey the gospel that they should be happy for ever in the eternal vision and fruition of God. I observe this, because of the constant use of the scripture, which expresseth our benefits in a direct opposition to Christ's sufferings; as 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21. He was 'made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us.' He was 'made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Gal. iv. 4, 5. He was 'made poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. And 'by his wounds and stripes we are healed,' 1 Peter ii. 24. By his death we have life, by his shame we have glory, and so, by consequence, by his desertion we obtain communion with God, and the everlasting fruition of him. By a wonderful exchange he taketh our

evil things upon himself, that he might bestow his good things upon us, and took from us misery that he might convey to us felicity.

APPLICATION.

First, by way of information.

1. How different are they from the spirit of Christ that can brook God's absence without any remorse or complaint? Christ cried with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These go on securely, never observe God's accesses and recesses; when the comforts of his Spirit, and the communications of his grace are wholly suspended and withholden from them, they never lay it to heart. Stupid and insensible creatures! It is all one to them whether God go or come, whether he manifest himself propitious to them or his face be hidden from them. They take up with the vain delights of the present world. Micah showed more respect to his idols than they do to God: Judges xviii. 24, 'Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? and do you ask, What aileth thee?' When God is gone they are not troubled. The Christians wept when Paul said, 'Ye shall see my face no more,' Acts xx. 25; and will ye not mourn and lament your loss when God hideth his face and shutteth up himself in a veil and cloud of displeasure? Much of serious Christianity lies in an observation of God's coming and going, and a suitable carriage, Mat. ix. 15. A serious Christian will be affected with the loss of comfort and quickening, and lament after a withdrawn God.

2. It informeth us of the grievousness of sin. It is no easy matter to reconcile sinners to God; it cost Christ a life of sorrows, and afterwards a painful and an accursed death, and in that death, loss of actual comfort, and an amazing sense of the wrath of God. We make a mock of sin—jest and sport away our souls, but Christ found it hard work to save them and recover them to God. When you make sin a light matter, you slight the sufferings of Christ; oh, therefore, take heed you do not break with God for every trifle!

3. The greatness of our obligation to Christ, who omitted no kind of sufferings which might conduce to the expiation of sin. He exchanged his heaven for a kind of hell to do you good; the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily, and therefore he had a heaven upon earth. If one could say, *Anima justī coelum est*, because

heaven is begun there in peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. How was it with Christ? This heaven he wanted for a while, felt no comfort, yea, he was amazed at the sense of God's wrath due to sinners; therefore it was said in the type of him, 'The pains of hell got hold upon me,' Ps. cxvi. 3. Oh! let this excite us to love Christ, that you may count nothing too dear for him.

4. The infiniteness of God's mercy, who appointed such a degree of Christ's sufferings, as in it he gives us the greatest ground of hopes to invite us the more to submit to his terms. There is nothing standeth in the way but our own impenitence and unbelief. Now God is so amply satisfied, shall we deprive ourselves of eternal blessedness? This is the worst cruelty and hatred to our own souls.

SERMON X. - Rom. I. 29-30.

Whisperers, backbiters.—Rom. I., part of the 29th and 30th verses.

HE context showeth how corrupt and miserable man's nature is with out Christ. His heart was first withdrawn from God, and then became a sink of loathsome sins and vices; therefore the apostle telleth us how after men were false to God, how little they were true to themselves, whether considered singly and apart, or as to commerce and society: singly and apart, defiling themselves with uncleanness of all sorts; as to commerce and human society, full of malice and contention, which sometimes goeth as far as blood; at other times showeth itself in falseness and baseness of disposition, generally in self-love and detraction from others.

Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest. When God leaveth mankind to its own degeneracy and corruption, and one great branch of this corruption is detraction, which venteth itself either by whispering or backbiting. So it is in the text, 'Whisperers, back biters.' These two words agree that they both wound the fame of our neighbour, and they both do it behind his back or in his absence. But they differ—(1.) In that whispering doth it secretly and closely, but backbiting openly—the one being privy, the other open defamation, and are like theft and rapine; what theft and robbing are to our goods, the same are whispering and backbiting to our good names. (2.) Whispering tendeth to breed strife among our friends, or to disgrace us to some who are well conceited of us; but backbiting to

our general disgrace before all the world, or amongst whomsoever. The one seeketh to 'deprive us of the goodwill of our friends, the other to destroy our service. But however they agree and differ, they are often conjoined in scripture: 2 Cor. xii. 20, 'I fear lest when I come among you I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.' The apostle foresaw it as too probable that neither of them would be much pleased with their meeting together: nor he with the Corinthians, when he should find them corrupted with partialities and divisions; nor the Corinthians with him, when he should be forced to inflict censures upon them for their factions and emulations, too much bewrayed by their backbitings and whisperings against each other. So here in the text they are conjoined, 'whisperers, backbiters,' when the apostle speaketh of the reigning sins among the Gentiles.

Doct. One great sin wherein the corruption of human nature bewrayeth itself is detraction, or depriving others of a good repute.

Here I shall show:—

I. What is detraction.

I.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

I. What it is. (1.) The nature of it. (2.) The kinds of it.

First, The nature of it in general. It is an unjust violation of another's fame, reputation, or that good report which is due to him. God, that hath bidden me to love my neighbour as myself, doth therein bid me to be tender not only of his person and goods, but of his good name. And indeed one precept is a guard and fence to another. I cannot be tender of his person and goods unless I be tender of his fame. For every man liveth by his credit: and therefore certainly this is—(1.) A sin against God; (2.) A wrong to men; (3.) It proceedeth from evil causes.

1. It is a sin against God, who hath forbidden us to bear false witness against our neighbour, and to speak evil of others without a cause: Eph. iv. 31, 'Let all evil-speaking be far from you;' by evil-speaking is meant there disgraceful and

contumelious speeches, whereby we seek to stain the reputation of others.

2. It is a wrong to man, because it robbeth him of his good name, which is so deservedly esteemed by all that would do anything for God in the world: Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.' The meaning is in order to service, and as it more nearly respects both life and livelihood. So Eccles. vii. 1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' Their ointments were reckoned by those Oriental people amongst their most precious riches and treasures, yet a good name is preferred before them; which inferreth this conclusion, that the man himself should prize it so: for he that is lavish of his fame is not usually over-tender of his conscience. Therefore, as he himself should not prostitute his good name, so others should not blast it and blemish it; for it is a greater sin than to steal the best goods which he hath, and it is such an evil as scarce admits any sound restitution; for the imputation even of unjust crimes leaveth a scar though the wound be healed.

3. The causes it proceedeth from. They are these:—

[1.] Malice and ill-will, which prompteth us to speak falsely of others, so to make them odious, or do them wrong or hurt. Now, to hate our brother in our heart is no way consistent with that goodness and charity which the impression of the love of Christ should beget in us. The apostle saith, 1 Peter iv. 8, 'Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' If nothing but love and fervent love will restrain us, surely where hatred is allowed, men care not what they think, or speak, or do against others. Now, as there is a brotherly love due to our fellow-saints, so there is a love due to all men. 2 Peter i. 7, I am to hate no man, but to seek their good. There is a twofold hatred—the hatred of offence and abomination, and the hatred of enmity. The hatred of offence, which is opposite to the love of complacency, may be justified as to the wicked: Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But then we should first and most abominate ourselves for sin; this very hatred and abhorrence should begin at home, and we should be most odious to ourselves for sin, for we know more sin by ourselves than we can do by another. But

for the other hatred, the hatred of enmity, which is opposite to the love of benevolence, that should be quite banished out of the heart of a Christian. And it is not enough for God's people to keep themselves free from hatred and malice against one another, but against all men: Titus iii. 2, 'Put them in mind to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men: for we ourselves were sometimes disobedient,' &c. If this old hatred were gone, a multitude of offences would be covered.

[2.] It comes from uncharitable credulity, whereby men easily believe a false report, and so propagate and convey it to others: Jer. xx. 10, 'I have heard the defaming of many; Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting,' &c. The prophet complaineth—Many, and those no mean ones, have I heard reproaching and taunting me, so that he was a terror to himself and to all his friends. Many had combined by false suggestions and malicious informations against him to work his ruin. If any will raise a report tending to the discredit of another, some will foster it, and it loseth nothing in the carriage, till by additions and misconstructions it groweth to a downright and dangerous infamy.

[3.] It comes through rashness and unruliness of tongue: some men never learned to bridle their tongues, and the apostle James telleth us that 'therefore their religion is vain,' James i. 26. Till we make conscience of these evils, as well as others, we content ourselves with a partial obedience, and therefore cannot be sincere. But many never set themselves to learn this part of their duty, and therefore divulge a report before they try it, or receive any just proof of it. Possibly it may not come from downright malice, but their tongues hang too loose, without the coercion and just restraint of grace, and so they either report false things, or speak truth to an evil end: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.' Whisperers must be talking, and be it true or false, out it comes. Certainly it is a sin as long as you knew it not to be true, or, if you do, when you have no warrantable call to mention it. To reveal secrets which you may conceal without wrong to God, or your own consciences, or the common good, or the good of your neighbour, is loquacity, or the sin of idle and impertinent talkativeness, the disease of a whisperer and tale-bearer.

[4.] It comes from carnal zeal, which is nothing else but passion for our different interests and opinions. The bitter envying which the apostle speaketh of, James iii. 14, hath made mad work in the world as to strifes, and confusions, and quarrels, and bloodsheds, and persecutions. But usually it venteth itself in evil-speaking; for the apostle maketh 'backbitings and whisperings' the fruits of 'swellings and tumults,' 2 Cor. xii. 20. Oh, what false and lying tales are there carried to and fro, that a man knoweth not what or whom to believe! So many lies walk under the disguise of religion, that not to credit them, or countenance the report, seemeth a decay of affection, but surely not to religion, but only the interest of a faction.

But a question ariseth, Is all speaking evil of another unlawful?

Ans. I cannot say so, but yet it is hard to keep it from sin.

1. He that doth it without just cause is plainly a detractor, and so a grievous sinner before God. You may impose and impute false crimes upon others, which is properly called slander, and God thereby convinceth the professor of the true religion to be a hypocrite: Ps. l. 20, 'Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thy own mother's son,' God doth not only reject the liars for hypocrites, but also the backbiters and slanderers. Those that allow themselves in the frequent practice of this sin, what hopes can they have of acceptance with God, since he hath entered his plea against them? For the act to be sure is sinful; there can be no other end in it but the wronging of our brother's fame and reputation, to his loss and hurt. The nature of the thing showeth it.

2. He that doth but speak what he hath heard from others, with out any assertion or asseveration of his own, as not knowing the truth of the report, can hardly be excused from sin. For if without just cause he speaketh those things that may wound the reputation of others, he is in part accessory: for he reporteth those things which may induce the hearers to think ill of another, or at least beget a suspicion in their minds concerning him, and so is a concurring cause to wrong another's name and good report. Now we should be so jealous of sin, that we should not countenance it in others without a just and weighty cause.

3. He that doth speak that which is true, but tendeth to the infamy of another, may be guilty of sin, if he have not a sufficient

call and warrant. As for instance—(1.) If it be a matter we have nothing to do with, but only speak of their faults for talk sake; this is to be ‘busy-bodies and tattlers,’ 1 Tim. v. 13: as we all love to speak of other men’s faults, when we look little at home. This is a sin, when it is not matter of our cognisance. Or (2.) If we aggravate things beyond their just size and proportion; for then we do not exercise Christian lenity and meekness towards those that are fallen, Gal. vi. 1. Or (3.) If we urge their crimes, and deny their graces; this is like flies to pitch on the sore place. Is there no good amongst all this evil? But it may be done, when crimes are public, and men themselves have forfeited all good repute, and God doth as it were hang them up in chains for a warning to the rest of the world; or when their reputation may injure the truth, and seduce the souls of others, or be an injury to the just who are slandered by them. In short, when the glory of God, or love to the public good, or the avoiding some great danger that may befall others by their esteem, then a lesser good is to be neglected to procure a greater, and a growing evil prevented, when men, by dissembling their wickedness, seek a fame to the manifest hurt of others’ souls.

Secondly, The kinds of it are two in the text whispering and backbiting.

1. Whispering, which is privy defamation of our brother, to bring him into disfavour and disrespect with those that formerly had a better opinion of him. Herein whispering differeth from backbiting, because the whisperer stingeth secretly, but the other doth more openly attack our credit. Now this whispering is a great sin:—

[1.] Because it is here reckoned among the sins which reigned among the heathen, and God hath expressly forbidden to his people: Lev. xix. 16, ‘Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.’ You see tale-bearing and crimination is expressly against God’s word; and if your hearts stand in awe of the word of God, how dare you indulge it and allow it in yourselves? It is observed that the Hebrew word *rokel* properly signifieth a merchant or a trafficker up and down with spices and other things; whereupon *rakil*, the word there used, is a tale-bearer, that accuser that makes merchandise of words, and like a pedlar goeth from place to place to open his pack, and utter his wares, to

hear and spread abroad criminations of other men. This is made the property of very wicked men: Jer. xi. 4, 'Every neighbour will walk with slanders.'

2. It is against natural equity, because they do that to others which they would not have done to themselves, Mat. vii. 2; and therefore storm and take great offence when God, by a righteous providence, permitteth others to retaliate with them, and pay them home in their own coin, as usually he doth; for they who are not tender of the credit and reputation of others, their names are cast out of God's protection, and permitted to the strife of tongues.

3. They are a cause of much mischief in the world, as—

[1.] Grief to the party wronged: Prov. xviii. 8, 'The words of a tale-bearer'—we read in the margin 'of a whisperer'—'are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly;' that is, they equally hurt as a sharp sword that is thrust into us, and causes pain and anguish. By 'the chambers of the belly,' is understood the heart. Now whether the heart of the hearer, or the heart of the party injured? Why not both? The hearer; the words pierce into his heart, and breed hatred, or at least suspicion of his friend. The party injured; when he comes to the knowledge of it, they breed his grief and vexation.

[2.] They are a cause of much debate and strife: Prov. xxvi. 20, 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer (or whisperer) strife ceaseth.' Where strife is compared to fire, and the whisperer's informations or criminations, to the wood or matter that feedeth the fire; the extinction, or putting out of the fire, to the ceasing of strife and contention, which is caused by the absence of the whisperer; that is, when he is not admitted by either party: Prov. xvi. 28, 'A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth choice friends.' Husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, princes and subjects, intimate friends. Now 'He that soweth discord between friends or brethren is an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. vi. 19. Therefore, how can one that feareth God, allow himself in speaking evil privily against his neighbour?

[3.] There is a greater mischief than this, and that is, it many times tendeth to the destruction of another's life: Ezek. xxii. 9, 'In thee

are men that carry tales to shed blood.’ Usually the vapours of slander descend in the showers of persecution; and the devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. By whispers men are stirred up to hate others, and then pursue them with all manner of hostility and displeasures. As Doeg the Edomite first accused, and then, by the command of Saul, slew Abimelech the high priest, and all his family, destroying the whole city of the priests called Nob, as you may see 1 Sam. xxii. 9. David, when he professeth the uprightness of his government, would allow no such in his court, but would severely punish them: Ps. ci. 5, ‘Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.’ These ways of whispering and detraction, by which men are wont to gain confidence, favour, and employment from princes, should not only miss of their aims with him, but be severely punished when he met with them.

But here ariseth a question, whether all private complaints and informations against others come under the name of whispering?

I answer—No, with these cautions:—

1. If the party be duly admonished; for before we go any further, the rule is, Mat. xviii. 15, ‘First tell him his fault between him and thee alone.’ Private admonition must always precede crimination to others; therefore if you forbear privately to admonish the offender in love, and seek not to reclaim him from his sinful course, you cannot be excused from sin.

2. If it be made to such as have power to redress the fault, by the most discreet and gentle means, before it break out any further. So it is said, Gen. xxxvii. 2, Joseph ‘brought unto his father their evil report;’ that is, their infamous carriage, which caused evil report of them; which is set down, not to note his ill-will, but his good affection and godliness.

3. If the complainer seeketh nothing but the amendment of the party; otherwise, to vent and divulge the fault, to make the party less respected, or to his hurt, is not love, but closer malice; for true zeal is not for destruction, but for edification.

4. If he grieve that he hath cause to complain, and pray for his conversion; for then it is more likely that all is done in love. Many times the grief is personated, and when whisperers have a mind to wound to the quick, they will say, I am sorry to hear such a

thing, loth to speak of it. But this is like the archer that draweth back his hand that the arrow may fly with the more force. But when we pray to God, there is the greater presumption of sincerity, because we explicitly make him a party, and do what we do as in his sight and presence.

Secondly, Backbiting is a more public speaking evil of our absent brother, to the impairing of his credit. Now, this may be done two ways:—

1. With respect to the good things found in him.
2. With respect to the evil supposed to be committed by him.
 1. With respect to the good things found in him. There are four degrees in this:—

[1.] The first and highest is, when we deny those good things which we know to be in another. This is not only to wrong our neighbour, but to rob God of his own praise; for he expecteth to be glorified for all those gifts and graces which he hath scattered among the sons of men, not only actively by persons themselves, but objectively by the beholders. As for instance, if God hath made any a new creature, he is to be ‘to the praise of his glorious grace,’ not only actively, but objectively, Eph. i. 12; though the man in whom this work was wrought be silent, yet the work should speak for itself, that is, give occasion to beholders to praise God. Now to deny this work, is not only to wrong the party, but wrong God. Thus Job’s friends counted him a hypocrite, when upright; and the people of God are often traduced as ‘dissemblers, when yet true,’ 2 Cor. vi. 8. Jesus Christ himself was counted a winebibber, because of his free and social course of life; for he affected not a monkish austerity. This is the highest degree, when men plainly deny those gifts and graces which are conspicuous in others.

[2.] When they do not deny, but lessen, the gifts and graces of others. To extenuate and clip another’s due praise is envy, but in honour to prefer them above ourselves is charity and humility: Phil, ii. 3, ‘In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.’ Humility is content to sit in the lowest place: Rom. xii. 10, ‘In honour preferring one another.’ Some say this is not to be understood of that opinion we have of others, but the respect we put upon them. We are to honour others, *non sententia mentis, sed*

actionibus et officiis; that is meant of offices of love and outward respect, but not of the sentiments of the mind. Certainly it is just that we should contemn no man, but give every one all agreeable honour and respect. But that a rich man should judge a poor man to be in place and estate before him; a learned man, an ignorant man more knowing; a godly man, a wicked more holy, is impossible and sometimes inconvenient. Therefore they understand it of condescending to mutual offices of love and respect, or, rather detracting from ourselves than others. But though this exposition might fit the latter place, yet not the former. 'Esteeming others better than ourselves,' must relate to the opinions and sentiments of our minds: therefore the meaning is, We should carry all things with that quietness and humility as if every one had a better opinion of others' wisdom and godliness than his own. And this is reasonable enough for every one that is acquainted with himself. Humility will teach him to think meanly of himself or any thing that is his; and his charity will prompt him to give others all that possibly can belong to them, without any retrenchment or defalcation.

[3.] When we own the good done by them, but deprave it by supposing a sinister intention. Thus Satan could not deny but that Job served God, but (Job i. 9) 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' It is usual to count the servants of God hypocrites and self-seekers, and accordingly to persecute them. If one be poor, it is discontent, melancholy, or some fleshly ends set him on work. If mean and simple, it is their folly and ignorance makes them so scrupulous and precise. If ministers be zealous for God, they must do something for their calling; if great men, they only mind their own interest and advantage. Where the action is fair, we are not competent judges of the intention of the heart.

[4.] When neither denying, nor lessening, nor depraving, but when we have just occasion to speak of a man's due commendation, we enviously suppress it. Envy is a natural sin: James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' And it bewrayeth itself by a dislike of other men's just praise. This is a sin of omission at least; therefore it is said, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Charity envieth not.' Nothing is more contrary to the goodness commended to us in the gospel than such a spirit, which cannot bear the good of another whether seen or spoken of. Thus Joseph's virtue was an eyesore to his brethren,

therefore they endeavoured his destruction. Charity rejoiceth in the gifts and graces of others as in our own; but where this hath no place, their praises are our disgrace. And few there be that can say with John the Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' John iii. 30; that is, in splendour and fame, and so confirmed the testimony given to Christ.

2. As to evil supposed to be committed by them.

[1.] When we publish their secret slips, which in charity we ought to conceal: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets.' Certain things should have a veil drawn over them, and not be manifested without sufficient cause. But when a man intrudeth himself into the mention of things faulty, which he might with better manners and more honesty conceal, it is the effect of a base heart.

[2.] When, in relating any evil action of another, we use harder terms than the quality of the fact requireth, and make evils worse than they are, beams of motes, and mountains of mole-hills. We should lessen sins all that we can; I mean, the sins and faults of others: Acts iii. 17, 'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers,' Certainly we should not aggravate things to the height, nor from a simple act determine the state of the person, nor from the failings of a single person conclude the whole party.

[3.] By imposing false crimes: Prov. x. 18, 'He that uttereth a slander is a fool;' that is, a wicked person. As Mephibosheth said of Ziba, 2 Sam. xix. 27, 'He hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king.' The most godly and innocent persons cannot escape the scourge of the tongue, and unjust calumnies.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

1. In general, that is evident from what is said already. I shall urge two arguments more.

[1.] That men shall be called to an account for these sins as well as others; they are not passed by in the judgment: Jude 15, 'God will execute judgment upon all ungodly sinners,' not only for their ungodly deeds, but 'for all their hard speeches.' Now, if injurious and contumelious language come into the judgment, how should all beware of the least accession to this guilt? So 1 Peter iv. 4, 5, 'They

speaking evil of you, who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.’ The mockers as well as persecutors were to give a strict and sad account. It is no slight and light sin to divulge and spread false calumnies to hurt the credit of our brethren. God takes notice of a thought in our heart against them, a word in our mouths, and will exact a strict account thereof.

[2.] It is the property of a citizen of Zion, one that shall be not only accepted with God now, but dwell with God for ever, not to be given to backbiting: Ps. xv. 3, ‘He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour;’ that is, that makes strict conscience of backbiting or calumniating, and abstaineth from doing any kind of wrong or reproach to his neighbour.

2. More particularly, it is the more heinous:—

[1.] Partly from the person against whom it is committed. As suppose the godly and irreprovable for the main, who by their life and conversation have the best right to honour and esteem; to do it against them is most unjust: Ps. lxiv. 3, ‘They whet their tongues as a sword; they shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him and fear not;’ that is, their slanders and calumnies are shot like poisoned darts and arrows secretly or clancularly, without any desert or notice of the party against whom they are intended; or else against persons publicly employed, and in the special service of God, as magistrates: Num. xii. 8, ‘Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?’ So in the ministry: 1 Tim. iii. 7, ‘He must have a good report from them without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.’ Against these it is not only unjust, but noxious and hurtful to God’s service.

[2.] From the persons before whom the slander is brought, as suppose kings and princes; so that they are deprived not only of private friendships, but the favour and countenance of these under whose protection they have their life and service. Thus Hainan whispered against the Jews, Esth. iii. 8, ‘It is not for the king’s profit to suffer them to live;’ Doeg against the priests, Ps. lii. 1, ‘Why boastest thou in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God continueth for ever.’ It is a strange matter of pleasure and joy to some persons in power to be able to mischief those that deserve it least. God is

eminently great and good. This sort of pride is diametrically opposite to his nature. Alas! to trouble a few persons, how irrational is it! But such are our depraved natures. Some are never pleased with those things that alone yield durable pleasure; but to be able with their counsel, as with one poisonous vapour, to blast a multitude of innocent persons.

[3.] From the end of it. If it be done with a direct intention of hurting another's fame, it is worse than if out of a rash levity and loquacity. Some men have no direct intention of mischief, but are given to tattling. It is a great sin in them, and an unprofitable mispense of time; but it is a greater in those that make it their business to disgrace others or sow discord. These are the bane of human society.

[4.] From the effect or great hurt that followeth, be it loss of estate, as in the case of Mephibosheth, or a general trouble and persecution on the people of God. When their good names are buried their persons cannot long subsist afterward with any degree of service. And all this may be the fruit of a deceitful tongue.

The use is, to show how good-natured Christianity is, and befriendeth human societies; it condemneth not only sins against God, but sins against our neighbour. It bindeth its professors to the practice of the apostle: Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' Phil. iv. 8, 'Whatsoever things are honest, just, good, and true; if there be any virtue, or any praise, think of these things.' The world hath taken up this prejudice, that religion makes us ill-natured. Of itself there is nothing more benign; it only condemneth those that are good-natured to others but not to God.

Use 2. Let us not speak evil of others behind their backs, but tell them their faults plainly in love and wisdom, nor encourage others in this sin: Prov. xxv. 23, 'As the north wind drives away the rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.' They that receive tales and delight to hear other men's faults, encourage others in their sin, and are accessory to or partakers of the guilt. It brings an evil habit and custom in our own souls. In short, let us keep up a humble sense of our own faults, and looking at home, it will not

only divert us from slandering of others, but make us compassionate towards them, and breed comfort in our own souls.

SERMON XI. - Gal. V. 16.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.—Gal. V. 16.

N these words observe—(1.) A duty enforced; (2.) The consequent and fruit of it.

1. The duty is *to walk in the Spirit*, which is the sum of all Christian piety.

2. The motive is taken from the consequent and fruit of it: *and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*. Let us fix the sense.

1. For the duty, ‘to walk in the Spirit.’ Walking implieth the tenor and course of our actions, in all which we should follow the direction and inclination of the Spirit. But what is meant by the Spirit? That it may be known, both the contrary principles must be explained together.

[1.] *Flesh* is sometimes taken for the body: as Eph. v. 29, ‘For no man yet ever hated his own flesh;’ it is brought as a reason why husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies, ver. 28, and *spirit* is taken for the soul, Eccles. xii. 7. But this is not the sense here, for every man hath soul and body, not the regenerate only; and a man is not only to look after the welfare of the soul, but his body also, it being the instrument which it useth in its operations.

[2.] The *spirit* is sometimes put for reason, and the *flesh* for sensual appetite: as Eph. iv. 23, ‘And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;’ and 1 John ii. 16, ‘The lusts of the flesh.’ But this will not take in the whole sense of this place, for other faculties are corrupted besides the sensual appetite, and other faculties must be renewed as well as the understanding.

[3.] There is another acceptation of *flesh* and *spirit*; that is, that spirit signifieth the uncreated Spirit, who is the author of grace; as John iii. 5, ‘Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit.’ Where *spirit* is put for the Holy Ghost, who immediately worketh grace in us, called therefore ‘the Spirit of sanctification,’ as that saving

grace which is the effect of his work is called ‘the sanctification of the Spirit.’ And the opposite principle, *flesh*, signifieth the corrupt nature of man, as John iii. 6, ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh;’ corrupt, sinful, inclined to earthly things. Now though this would bear a good sense to interpret flesh and spirit of the Holy Ghost, and concupiscence or natural corruption (for no question he concurrerth to the mortifying of the old man, till sin be wholly expelled, Rom. viii. 23, and still doth quicken and excite the new man to action, Gal. iv. 25), yet here the apostle speaks of two inherent principles.

[4.] Therefore by *flesh* and *spirit* is meant the old man and the new, and so by spirit is meant the renewed part, or the new man of grace in the heart: John iii. 6, ‘That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;’ that is, there is a work of saving grace wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of God, which new nature hath its motions and inclinations which must be obeyed and followed by us. And by *flesh*, is meant inbred corruption, or the old man, which is ‘corrupt, with his deceivable lusts,’ Eph. iv. 22. Now, then, you see what it is to walk after the Spirit, to direct and order our actions according to the inclinations of the new nature.

2. For the consequent fruit of it: ‘and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.’ Here two things must be explained:—

The lust of the flesh. Fulfil.

For ‘the lust of the flesh.’ By it is meant the inordinate motions of corrupt nature. The flesh doth not consider what is right and good, but what is pleasing to the senses, and craveth their satisfaction with much importunity and earnestness, to the wrong of God and our own souls; especially in youth, when the senses are in vigour, and lust and appetite in their strength and fury. And generally, all carnal men are governed by the lusts of the flesh, called by the apostle, ‘The wills of the flesh and the mind,’ Eph. ii. 3. By which the heart is drawn from God to things earthly and carnal. Well, then, by the lusts of the flesh are meant the motions of inbred corruptions.

2. *Ye shall not fulfil*; that is, accomplish and bring into complete act, especially with deliberation and consent. Mark, he doth not say that the lusting of corrupt nature shall be totally suppressed, but it shall not be fulfilled. The best of God’s children

feel the motions of the flesh, but they do not cherish and obey them. The lusts of the flesh may be said to be fulfilled two ways—(1.) When the outward act is accomplished, or ‘when lust hath conceived and brought forth actual sin,’ James i. 15. Which may sometimes come to pass in the children of God, when they walk not in the Spirit, or obey not the motions and directions of the renewed part. This again may be done two ways, either upon surprise or deliberation. By way of surprise, Gal. vi. 1, ἐὰν καὶ προλημφθῆ; upon deliberation, when men plot, and make provision to fulfil their lusts, contrary to the apostle’s advice: Rom. xiii. 14, ‘Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ Thus it was with David in his great sin; and this doth mightily aggravate the offence, and provoke the Lord against us. (2.) When for a continuance we obey the flesh, usually accomplish its motions without let and restraint, and with love, pleasure, and full consent of will; this is proper to the unregenerate. The flesh doth reign over them as its slaves; this is spoken of, Rom. vi. 12, ‘Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.’ Let it not have a power over you as slaves. Well, then, the meaning is, you will not abuse your Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh, or give up yourselves to do that, or seek that which the flesh lusteth after.

Doct. The more Christians set themselves to obey the new nature, the more is the power of inbred corruption mortified and kept under.

To understand this point, let me lay down these propositions:—

I. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian—flesh and spirit.

1. There is a good principle, called *spirit*, because the Spirit is the author of it: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ‘A new heart and a new spirit will I put into you.’ It is called also ‘the divine nature,’ 2 Peter i. 4, because it is made up of those gracious qualities wherein we resemble God; ‘The seed remaining,’ 1 John iii. 9, because it is not a transient operation, but a permanent habit, disposing and inclining the soul to God and heaven; ‘The new man,’ Eph. iv. 24, because we have it not by nature, but by grace, we are new formed to the image of God. Now the use of this principle may be known partly

by the manner how it is wrought in us, and partly by the uses and ends for which it serveth.

[1.] For the manner how it is wrought in us by the Spirit, that is set forth Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts.' The directive and imperial power of the soul is sanctified and seasoned by grace, the mind enlightened, the heart inclined. The mind is enlightened by the knowledge of God's will, and the heart inclined that we may delight to do his will; it is suited thereunto. Therefore, the new creature doth both serve to direct us, and so performeth the office of a guide and leader to the godly in all their actions, so far in religion as God's glory is concerned, and also to move and excite us to that which is good. For 'the spirit is willing, though the flesh is weak,' Mat. xxvi. 41.

[2.] By its uses and ends. None of God's gifts are given in vain. The new nature is the choicest talent that the sons of men are in trusted withal. Therefore, it hath its use and end, which is to fit us for God and heaven.

(1.) It disposeth the soul to a sincere obedience to God, as an inherent principle: Eph. vi. 24, 'It is created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' as suiting us to these things. So the Spirit is promised to enable us to walk in God's ways: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' It helps us to avoid sin: 1 John iii. 9, '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.' They that give back cannot yield to those sins with which others are surprised and captivated.

(2.) It prepares us for heaven; thither is the tendency of the new nature, 2 Peter i. 4; 1 John v. 4, 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:' it moveth us to mind, love, and seek after heavenly things. This grace came from heaven, and there it is perfected.

2. There is another principle of corrupted nature remaining in us, which is sometimes called 'flesh,' as before; sometimes 'the old man,' Eph. iv. 22; 'Sin that dwelleth in us,' Rom.

vii. 17; 'The body of sin,' Rom. vi. 6; 'The law of the members warring against the law of the mind,' Rom. vii. 23.

By this principle they are inclined to that which is evil. This principle also may be known:—

[1.] By the manner how it was derived to us. [2.] By its tendency and operations.

[1.] The manner how it was derived to us, from Adam in his apostasy, and as fallen from his chief good and last end, John iii. 6. When man fell from God, he fell to himself. The temptation was, 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 5. He would set up self as a god. And what was that self which man sought to idolise, but himself rather considered as a body than as a soul? And, therefore, when God sought to reduce man, where lay the difficulty? That text will inform you, Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh;' that is, sunk or lost in flesh, altogether wedded to the interests of the bodily life.

[2.] By its tendency and influence it prompts us to do those things which are most acceptable to sense, or agreeable to our worldly and carnal ends. The flesh operateth several ways, according to men's callings, occasions, or constitutions, Isa. liii. 6; 1 John ii. 16. As every soil beareth such weeds as are most suitable to the nature and quality of the ground, so some are enslaved by this, some by that particular sin, yet all of them alike opposite to God. Differences there are as to the choice of their way wherein they please the flesh, some in a more gross, some in a more cleanly manner, yet they all walk in the lust of the flesh, following inbred corruption as their guide, or obey it either in a way of worldliness, ambition, or sensuality. Some ways are more blameless before the world, because they less dis-serve a worldly interest; some are so prodigiously wicked that they cause a horror even in mankind though degenerated. Now, after conversion some of our former sins cripple us, and we halt of the old maim still; and it is not enough to stop one gap while corruption runneth out at many more, but we must make conscience of not 'fulfilling the lusts of the flesh' in any kind. Well, now, I have showed you the two principles which are in a Christian, that we may have a sense of our imbecility, and that we are but regenerated in part.

II. I will prove to you that there is a liberty in a Christian of walking according to each principle, either the Spirit or the flesh.

1. That the Christian hath liberty of walking according to the Spirit is out of question, 'for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17. Surely the Spirit of Christ can free us, and doth free us, from the bondage of corruption: Rom. viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and death,' otherwise there would be no distinction between nature and grace. If we should be still shackled and manacled by our lusts, and be as unable to pursue our last end as we were before, if there were no inclination to God and heavenly things, what have they gotten by grace? and therefore, though we are still weak, yet we have the gift of the Spirit to free us from sin. The force and efficacy of the new nature appeareth in three things—*scire, velle, posse*; in knowing our duty, and willing, and purposing, and doing our duty, suitable to the three faculties of man—his understanding, will, and vital power. So the spirit received from Christ, 2 Tim. i. 7, is 'a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.'

[1.] For *scire*. The new nature partly consists in the internal light of the mind, by which we understand the things of God revealed in the scriptures concerning our duties and privileges, and so 'the unction' is said to 'teach us all things,' 1 John ii. 20; that is, all things which belong to our necessary duty and happiness. God's children in necessary things have a good understanding, or, as it is said, Isa. xi. 3, they are 'quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord.' By this it doth warn us of our danger, mind us of our duty upon all occasions.

[2.] For *velle*, to be willing. The force of the new creature lieth in the love of God, for we are never converted to God till he hath our hearts, till we love him with all our soul, with all our might and strength, and hate what is contrary to him: Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Now, surely they that love God and hate evil are at liberty more than others to serve and please God and avoid sin. Hate sin once, and it hath little power over you.

[3.] For *posse*, or the active power. The wonder is rather how he can sin deliberately, voluntarily, than how he cannot sin, 1 John iii. 9; and for doing good, $\pi\alpha\acute{\nu}\tau\alpha\ \iota\sigma\chi\acute{\upsilon}\omega$, Phil.

iv. 13, 'I can do all things.' Eph. ii. 10, A spiritual man is 'prepared for every good work.'

The assistant power which accompanieth the new creature in all his actions doth certainly give him a great advantage of liberty to know, will, and do things pleasing unto God. As he doth first convert us unto God, and quicken us when we are dead in trespasses and sins, so after conversion, when the principles of a new life are put into us, he still helpeth us: and as all creatures depend upon God *in esse conservari et operari*, Acts xvii. 2, so doth the new creature depend on the Spirit; he leadeth and guideth all the children of God to their everlasting estate, Rom. viii. 14. He assists the will and the vital power, Phil. ii. 13; otherwise, we may complain with Paul, Rom. vii. 18, 'For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' There may be a will or an inclination, but it can be brought into no effect. He cleareth the mind, which otherwise would be blinded by temptations, excites the will, which otherwise would be blunted with oppositions, assists the vital power, which else would be obstructed and impeded from producing its effects.

2. That a Christian hath a liberty or power of walking according to the flesh. The opposite principle, though it be broken so far that it is not in habitual predominancy, yet doth too often prevail over us; otherwise it were impossible to sin, or to be unjust, unmerciful, unmindful of God and heavenly things, unchaste, intemperate, or licentious in our actions; and all the admonitions and exhortations of the word, to keep the regenerate from yielding to the enticements of the flesh, would be in vain, if they could not possibly yield to them. In heaven, indeed, there need no dissuasions from sin, because the glorified saints are above all possibility of sinning; there is no devil to tempt, nor world to entice, nor flesh to incline them to be seduced by those temptations: but earth is not heaven. Here mortified lusts may awaken, and recover strength by a temptation. But more distinctly these arguments show it:—

[1.] That though the inclination be to God and heaven, which is the fruit of saving grace, yet the acts of it are voluntary. Grace is a real, active, working thing, but it doth network necessarily, as fire burneth; it must be excited and stirred up, both by the Spirit of God, who 'worketh in us, both to will and to do,' Phil. ii. 13, and by ourselves. We must ἀναζωπυρεῖν, 2 Tim. i. 6. We must still be blowing up this holy fire, as the priest did the fire of the altar to keep it burning; and its motions must be hearkened to, cherished,

and complied withal, if we would keep the carnal part under, and prevent it from breaking out into shameful acts. But as we grow remiss or careless in our duty, sin acquireth and prevaileth over us.

[2.] The flesh which remaineth in us is importunate to be pleased; and though it be not superior in the soul, yet it hath a great deal of strength, that still we need, even to the very last, to keep watching and striving, and must resolve to be deaf to its entreaties and solicitations: 1 Peter i. 14, ‘Not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance,’ or accommodating yourselves to please the flesh; that is, they must not cast their conversations into a carnal mould, nor suffer their choice and actions to be directed and governed by the influence of the flesh, or give up themselves to the satisfaction of their sinful desires. In short, former lusts are but in part subdued, our old love to them may be soon kindled, and the bias of corruption gather strength again, and the gates of the senses are always open to let in such objects as take part with the flesh and stir it up. Therefore we must not imagine that there is no need of diligence, or striving and watching. Holy Paul saw a need of ‘beating down his body; lest, after he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway,’ 1 Cor. ix. 27. After so many years’ service in the cause of Christ, this great champion was not secure of the adversary he carried about with him. There is need of caution to the last, that we do not revert into our old slavery. The contrary principle in us still retaineth some life and vigour, though much abated; there is not such a con-naturality and agreement between the heart and sin as there was before; but yet sin still dwelleth and worketh in us, and we are often foiled by it.

3. That since there is a liberty, we must be careful to live according to the operation and influence of the better principle; for it lieth upon us as our duty, though we have the power from above. There is a double argument implied in the text: the one is, *a beneficio*; the other, *a periculo*—the profit, the danger.

[1.] *A beneficio*, from the benefit accruing to us: we shall not ‘fulfil the lusts of the flesh.’ If they yield to the motions and inclinations of the regenerate part, they cannot do the evil which the carnal part would have them; the grace they have will hold them in as a bridle, and turn their minds another way. Surely sin is no such lovely thing that we should be enamoured of it; yea, it is such an hateful thing,

that we should shun and avoid it by all means possible. Now, when you have an help at hand, not only near you, but within you, such as the new nature, which riseth up in rebukes and dislikes against sin, you should take this advantage, otherwise you offer violence not only to the law of God, but that new nature which he hath put into you. There are three reasons which may be urged here:—

(1.) The better principle, the more it is obeyed, the more it is strengthened; for ‘the way of the Lord is strength to the upright,’ Prov. x. 29. The habits of grace increase by exercise: and the more godly and heavenly we are, the more we shall be so; and the more constantly we act grace, the more easily and readily we act it, and with greater pleasure and delight. This is a sure rule, that God rewardeth grace with grace: one duty is an help to another, and the sweetness and pleasure groweth upon us every day. It is at first yoking that the bullock is most unruly; and beginners are burthened with the toil of obedience more than grown Christians. Christ’s yoke groweth more easy every day by the bearing; for the opposition is more broken, and the experience of the sweetness and goodness of this way is more increased, Prov. iv. 18, 19.

(2.) The power of inbred corruption is subdued, and the lusts of the flesh weakened; for, as the better principle groweth, the other loseth strength. Mortification and vivification mutually help one another: the more we are dead unto sin, the more we are alive unto righteousness: so, on the other side, the more we live unto righteousness, the more we are dead to sin; for the carnal life is swallowed up of the spiritual. And therefore to grown Christians temptations either make none or no considerable impression; they are alive to God, and therefore dead unto the flesh and dead unto the world. It cannot be imagined that the flesh should bear sway where there is a strong opposite principle to check it; and when we suffer it not to be idle and unfruitful, it will obtain its effect. Sin cannot be our trade, custom, and delight. No; it is complained of as our heaviest burden, Rom. vii. 24, resisted as the greatest evil, and most opposite, not only to our duty, but to our very nature and temper.

(3.) This walking in the Spirit giveth us an evidence of our interest in the grace of justification: Gal. v. 18, ‘And if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.’ Not to be under the teaching of the

law as a rule of obedience, is impossible for a creature. '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. It must be meant, therefore, either of the irritating or condemning power of the law. If of the former, as the law by the rigid exacting of obedience doth increase sin rather than subdue it, and maketh corrupt nature spurn and rebel against it, so it is the same with the former motives; but that is a more limited sense. 'Not under the law,' may be expounded to be not under the condemning power of it; and so to be under the law is opposed to be under grace: Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' There is a great privilege; but what is the qualification? 'Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' that is, obey the new nature.

[2.] *A periculo*, the danger of not obeying the new nature, or walking after the Spirit. (1.) They lose their advantage, and receive one of God's gifts in vain. To receive objective grace in vain aggravateth our guilt, John iii. 19; but to receive subjective grace in vain doth more provoke God. Objective grace is that which is discovered in the gospel; subjective grace is that which is found in the heart of a believer, the internal grace of the Holy Spirit renewing the heart. Now, to sin away this advantage after we are made partakers of it doth increase our guilt; surely, therefore, 'if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in the Spirit,' Gal. v. 25. We should improve God's best gifts, or else the work of his Spirit is lost. He loseth nothing but corn, wine, and oil bestowed upon others, but he hath bestowed the sanctification of the Spirit upon you; shall he lose the glory of that also?

(2.) The new nature is exceedingly weakened and suffers loss, if it be not cherished and obeyed. The church of Sardis is warned to prevent the dying of gracious habits. David speaketh as if the work were to begin anew, and his restoring were a second conversion: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me.' The principle of grace being not adhered to, loseth much of vigour and power.

(3.) When these motions are not obeyed, and this power is not exercised, God is provoked to withdraw the quickening grace. Though the spirit here spoken of is the new nature, yet the Holy

Ghost is the superintendent of it, and doth move, guide, direct, and quicken by it.

The new nature inclineth, but he giveth strength to its motions. Now the Spirit withdraweth when this work is slighted, and we wilfully run into sin: Ps. li. 11, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.'

(4.) There is another mischief; his sanctifying work is not only obstructed, but his certifying and sealing work is obscured, and so our day is turned into night: Eph. iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.'

Use 1. It showeth what necessity there is that we should look after conversion to God, or a work of grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, for the apostle supposeth they had the Spirit. There is no walking without living, for otherwise our motions are but the motions of puppets, not proceeding from internal life, but acted from springs and engines; no subduing the flesh without setting up an opposite principle. Therefore, we must give up ourselves to the Holy Spirit, first to be sanctified, then governed by him; first renewed, then guided, ordered, and directed by him in all our actions, and the flesh dieth away insensibly.

2. Being renewed by the Holy Ghost, that is having our minds enlightened and hearts inclined, we must obey this inclination; for life is not given us that we may have it, but that we may act by it, and do things suitable to that life which we have. Grace is not a sluggish, idle quality, but is always working and warring on the opposite principle.

3. Though at first we are pestered and encountered with the lusts of the flesh, which divert us from God and heavenly things, yet we should not be discouraged by every difficulty; for difficulties do but inflame a resolved spirit, as stirring doth the fire. And, besides, though we do not wholly subdue the lusts of the flesh, yet we shall not accomplish them and live in subjection to them, but by degrees get power against them.

4. The carnal life is not of one sort. Some wallow in sensual pleasures, others have head and heart altogether taken up with the world and worldly things. Now if God hath put a new bias upon our wills and affections, we must show it forth by a heavenly conversation; for they that mind earthly things are carnal, and the

great inclination of the new nature is to carry us unto God and the things of another world, 2 Cor. v. 5.

5. They are much to blame that complain of sin, and will not take the course to get rid of it by obeying the instincts of the Holy Ghost, or the motions of the new nature. The Lord's spirit is a 'free spirit,' Ps. li. 12, and his 'truth maketh us free,' John viii. 32. And we are interested in this liberty when born of the Spirit. Let us be true to our duty and we shall bless God for our liberty, rather than complain of our bondage. It is laziness and cowardice not to improve grace, which was given us for this use.

6. How much we are concerned in all conflicts, especially in those which allow deliberation, to take part with the Spirit, and obey his motions rather than to fulfil the lusts of the flesh: otherwise, by consent and upon deliberation, you are unfaithful to Christ and your own souls. Your business is not to gratify the flesh, but to crucify it, to overrule sense and appetite, and cherish the life of grace, Gal. v. 24. And surely when conscience hath help to deliberate, it is a greater evil to resist it, than when hurried by our own passions.

7. It is of great use and profit to us to observe which principle decayeth, the flesh or the Spirit; for thereby we judge of our condition, both in order to mortification and comfort.

The increase of the flesh may be known:—

(1.) By your backwardness to God. Grace is clogged when you cannot serve him with sweetness and delight, Rom. vii. 18.

(2.) When the heart groweth careless of heaven, and your life and love is more taken up about things present than to come, Phil. iii. 18, 19. The contrary is found when grace is in vigour, 2 Cor. iv. 18; Col. iii. 1, 2.

Secondly, The prevalency and increase of the Spirit is known:—

(1.) By a humble contentedness and indifferency to plenty, pleasures, and honours: Phil.

iv. 12, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need;' Heb. xiii. 5,

‘Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be ye content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’

(2.) When your delight in God, heaven, and holiness is still kept up: Rom. viii. 5, ‘For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.’

(3.) When the heart is kept in a preparation for the duties of your heavenly calling.

SERMON XII. - Job XIX. 25.

‘*For I know that my Redeemer liveth.*’—Job XIX. 25.

THESE words were spoken by Job, a man for the present miserable, and suspected by his friends as one that neither feared God nor trusted in him. Therefore, to comfort himself in his misery, and to vindicate his innocence, he makes confession of his faith.

In this confession you have the grand and most important articles reckoned up.

1. He doth solemnly declare and believe the promised Messiah to be his Saviour: *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

2. His coming to judgment: *and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.*

3. The resurrection of the dead, with application to himself, for he saith, ver. 26, *And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

4. And lastly, the beatifical vision, ver. 27, *Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.*

We have to do with the first article, his belief of salvation by the promised Messiah: ‘*For I know that my Redeemer liveth.*’

I am not ignorant that this whole context is carried to another sense, not only by the Jewish doctors, but by some Christian interpreters of good account, whose reasons, consisting wholly in grammatications, I list not now to examine. The common and received sense seemeth better.

1. Because these words are ushered in with a solemn preface, containing in them some notable truth: 'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! Oh that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know,' &c. Surely such a passionate preface will become no other matter so well as the great mystical truths of the Christian faith.

2. The word (*Goel*, or kinsman) *redeemer*, will suit with no person so well as Christ.

3. The rest of the passages do not run smoothly unless they be accommodated to this sense, and that I take to be the most obvious sense which the words will best bear.

4. Job, as it is clear by many passages in this book, had often disdained all hopes of being restored to any temporal happiness in this life, affirming that all his hope was gone, that he was worse than a tree cut down. This is the drift and current of all his former discourses.

5. When he saith that he should see God in his flesh, and with the same eyes he now had, I cannot imagine why these passages should be so emphatically spoken if he only intended in this paragraph a hope of being restored to his temporal happiness.

Having premised this, in the words observe:—

1. The causal particle, *for*, giving thereby a reason why he would have his words so marked, because of the excellency of the matter.

2. The article of faith: *my Redeemer liveth*.

3. The manner how this article is asserted and professed by Job.

(1.) With certainty of persuasion: *I know*. (2.) With application and appropriation: *my Redeemer*; for I know *my Redeemer liveth*. All put together will yield this point:—

Doct. That it is a great comfort to the saints in all their afflictions to know that they have a Redeemer living in heaven.

This is the first thing whereby Job comforteth himself.

I. I shall consider the matter of the comfort.

II. Show you how it is applicable to all afflictions.

I. The matter of the comfort consists in four things:—

1. That there is a *Redeemer*.

2. That he is *their* Redeemer.

3. That he *liveth*.

4. That they *know* this upon certain and infallible grounds.

1. That there is a Redeemer; for he doth not say, I know that my Creator liveth, but my Redeemer.

The word is *Goel*. The Septuagint render it ὁ ἐκλύειν με ἔλλων, he that will deliver me. Theodotion, better, ὅτι ὁ ἀγχιστος μου ζῆ, my near kinsman liveth. The word properly signifies such a one as, in regard of propinquity or nearness of kindred, had a right to redeem a mortgage, or the like engagement of land or livelihood: Lev. xxv. 25, 26, ‘If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, than shall he redeem that which his brother sold.’ Or else to prosecute the law against the murderer of his friend or kinsman, Num. xxxv. 19, 24.

It is taken sometimes more largely for any deliverer out of thralldom, or avenger of wrong in general. And so is in the Old Testament applied to God or Christ, to whom the term chiefly belongeth. To God, because of his powerful providence and rescuing his people out of their calamities: Ps. xxv. 22, ‘Redeem Israel, God, out of all his troubles.’ To Christ, to whom it is most proper: Isa. lix. 20, ‘And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;’ which the apostle applieth to Christ, Rom.

xi. 26. He then is the Redeemer, and it implieth—(1.) That he is our kinsman after the flesh, or by incarnation; (2.) That he paid a price to God for us in his passion; (3.) That he pursueth the law against Satan, and rescues us by his power; all which are notable grounds of comfort. For under the law the redemption of the inheritance, or the person of the poor brother sold, was to be made by the next of blood, and that by the male side, not by the mother’s, but by the father’s side, and he also was to be the avenger of blood.

[1.] There is much comfort in this, that Christ is our kinsman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore certainly will not be strange to his own flesh. He did redeem us, not only *jure proprietatis*, by virtue of his interest in us as our Creator, but *jure propinquitatis*, by virtue of his kindred, one of us, of our stock and lineage; the Son of Adam, as well as the Son of God. The apostle tells us, Heb. ii. 11, ‘For he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.’ As the first-fruits offered to God were taken out of the same heap, so he was of the same mass with us. Christ is not only man, but ‘the Son of man.’ He might have been man if God had created him out of nothing, or he had brought his substance from heaven. But he is the Son of man, one descended of the loins of Adam, as we are; even thus ‘he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.’ He is of the same stock with all mankind, but the kindred is reckoned to the sanctified, because there it holdeth of both sides. Christ is born of a woman, and they are born of God, and so he is a kinsman doubly—*ratione incarnationis suae*, and *regenerationis nostrae*; in regard of his own incarnation and our regeneration. He partaketh of the human nature, and we partake of the divine nature. And it followeth, ‘therefore he is not ashamed to call us brethren.’ We are said to be ashamed when we do anything that is filthy, dishonest, or base, or misbecoming our dignity and rank which we sustain in the world. The former consideration is of no place here. For the latter, those that bear any port and rank in the world are ashamed to show too much familiarity towards their inferiors; but such is the love of Jesus Christ towards his people, that though he be infinitely greater and more worthy than these, he is not ashamed to call us brethren. Well, then, here is the first step of our comfort and hope, to see God in our natures. The eternal Son of God became our kinsman that he might have the right of redemption, and recover the inheritance which we had forfeited. We could not have such familiar and confident recourse to an angel, and one who was of another stock and different nature from ours, nor put ourselves into his hands with such trust and assurance. Now he and we are of one nature, we may be the more confident. It is a motive to man: Isa. lviii. 7, ‘Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.’ In Christ all the perfections of man were at the highest. This made Laban, though otherwise a churlish man, kind to Jacob: Gen. xxix.

14, 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.' One of our stock and lineage will pity us more than a stranger.

[2.] This kinsman was to pay the price and ransom of his captivated brother; that also is implied in the notion of a Redeemer: Lev. xxv. 48, 49, 'After that he is sold, his uncle, or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin to him of his family may redeem him.' So when we had sold ourselves, Jesus Christ, who only of the kindred was free and able to do it, paid a price for us: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'We are bought with a price.' And this price was no less than his own precious blood, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. A price was necessary; for God was not an enemy that could be overcome, but must be satisfied, and amends made for the wrong done to his majesty, that the notions which are ingrafted in man's heart concerning God might be kept inviolate. The Lord knows how apt we are to please ourselves with the thoughts of impunity, as if it were nothing to sin against God, and a small matter to break his laws. Now, to prevent this thought in us, before his justice would let go the sinner, he demanded satisfaction, and equivalent satisfaction to the wrong done, to expiate the offence done to an infinite majesty. Therefore no less could be a sufficient ransom for lost sinners than the blood of Christ. This is the price which our kinsman hath paid down for us. In short, the wrong was done to an infinite majesty, the favour to be purchased was the eternal enjoyment of the ever-blessed life, the sentence to be reversed was the sentence of everlasting death; and therefore Christ alone could serve the turn. Here is another ground of comfort. Cyril calls it, *καύχημα τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίᾳς*.

[3.] This kinsman was to revenge the quarrel of his slain kinsman upon the murderer. So he is a Redeemer, and that not only by merit, but by power; not only as a lamb, but as a lion. There needed no price to be paid to Satan: we are redeemed from him, not by satisfaction, but by rescue. The apostle tells us, Col. ii. 15, 'He spoiled principalities and powers.' Luke xi. 21, 'He bindeth the strong man, and taketh away his goods.' Heb. ii. 14, 15, 'That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' The devil had partly a usurped power over man, as the god of this world, or at least as the enemy

of mankind; so Christ rescues us by force: partly a ministerial and permitted power, as the executioner of God's curse and vengeance; so he outlaweth him, and puts him out of office by the merit of his passion. Satan had no power over death as *dominus mortis*, as the supreme lord, that hath power to save and to destroy; but as *minister mortis*, as a hangman and executioner hath power from the law to put the male factor to death. So Christ destroyed him not in regard of essence, as if there were no more a devil to tempt and hurry us to destruction; nor in regard of malice, as if he did no longer seek to devour; but in regard of office and ministry; he is put out of office, and hath no more law-power to destroy those that have fled to Christ for refuge; and so hath freed us from all the fears of death and hell, which our guilt and Satan's temptations subjected us to.

2. That he is *their* Redeemer is the next ground of comfort. Job doth not profess faith only in a Redeemer, but in his Redeemer: 'I know that *my* Redeemer liveth;' not by an uncharitable exclusion shutting out others, and engrossing the Redeemer to himself, but

[1.] By a fiducial application making out his own title and interest. Some things in nature are common benefits, not lessened to any because others enjoy them, as a speech heard, and the sun shining, &c. The saints do not exclude others: 1 John ii. 2, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;' 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing.' This doth not lessen the benefit to us, and our obligations to him. Plato thought himself obliged in kindness to one that paid his fare for his passage over a river, and reckoned it *positum apud Platonem officium*, a courtesy that obliged Plato; but when he saw others partakers of the same benefit, he disclaimed the debt, and only took part of it on himself. Upon which Seneca groundeth this aphorism, that it is not enough for him that will oblige me to him to do me a good turn, unless he do it to myself directly—*non tantum mihi, sed tanquam mihi*; otherwise, *quod debeo cum midtis, solvam cum multis*. I will only pay my portion and share of thanks and respect. But this cannot be applied to this extraordinary kindness of Christ, for every man is indebted for the whole, not every man for a part of redemption. God's love to every one is infinite, and he hath paid an infinite price for thee, purchased

an infinite happiness to thee. His love to thee was without measure and bounds, so must thy thankfulness be to him without stint and limit. Though he died for others as well as thee, yet thou art bound to love him no less than if it had been for thee alone; he shed his whole blood for thee, and every drop was poured out for thy sake.

[2.] By a fiducial owning and appropriation, challenging his right in him. So doth Thomas: John xx. 28, 'My Lord and my God.' Faith appropriates God to our own use and comfort. The devils know that there is a God and a Christ, for they confessed, 'Thou art Jesus, the Son of the living God;' but they can never say with comfort, 'My God and my Christ.' This application is the ground of our love to Christ, and our comfort in Christ.

Our love to Christ. Things that concern us affect us. This is the quickening motive to the spiritual life, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20; and 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he loved us first.' A particular sense and experience of God's love to our own souls doth most quicken and awaken our love to him again, when we see that he hath thought of us, and taken care of our salvation, that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So for our comfort in Christ. It is the propriety a man hath to any good thing that doth increase the comfort of it. It is a misery to a man to see others enjoy a benefit which he hath as much need of as others, and he can enjoy no part of it. I may allude to that, Prov. v. 15, 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.' The greater we know the benefit, the greater will be our trouble to want it. A poor man that sees a large dole given, and multitudes relieved, and he can get nothing, is the more troubled. So here, to see Christ ready to save sinners, and we have no comfort by him, is very afflicting: Eph. i. 13, 'After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' It is not sufficient to know that the gospel is a doctrine of salvation to others; but every one should labour, by a due application of the promises to their own hearts, to find it to be a doctrine of salvation to themselves in particular. The seeing of meat, though never so wholesome, doth not nourish, but the eating of it. The beholding of Christ revealed in the word as a Saviour in general is not sufficient to give full comfort, without applying him to be my Christ, my Saviour, my

Redeemer. We must make sure of our share in this universal good. We read of blood shed and blood sprinkled, atonement made, and atonement received, but no man hath satisfying comfort by the blood of Christ till it be sprinkled upon his heart, and applied to him by the Spirit of God, and thereby assured that it was shed for him.

3. The next ground of comfort is, that our Redeemer *liveth*. This is true of Christ, whether you consider him as God or as man. (1.) As God; so he is co-eternal with the Father, ‘the first and the last,’ the beginning of all things, and the end of them. So he saith not, he hath, or shall live, but he ‘liveth.’ ‘In my flesh shall I see God.’ He speaks of the Redeemer’s life without any distinction of time—past, present, or to come; so that he is altogether, with the Father and the Spirit, from everlasting to everlasting, one living God. (2.) As man after his resurrection: Rev. i. 18, ‘I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death.’ Now in this sense I take it for his life in heaven after his resurrection from the dead; and that is of great comfort to us; for the apostle telleth us, that ‘if we were reconciled by the death of Christ, much more shall we be saved by his life.’ The comfort is great that arises from the life of the Redeemer.

[1.] It is a visible demonstration of the truth of the gospel in general, and in particular of the article of eternal life. The truth of the gospel in general: Acts xvii. 31, ‘Hath given assurance,’ that is, a sufficient evidence to induce a belief of the gospel, ‘in that he hath raised him from the dead.’ Christ came from heaven as a faithful witness to beget faith as well as to give us knowledge, sealing his testimony with unquestionable proofs, to make it the more sure and credible to us, for he hath confirmed it by a life of miracles, and chiefly by rising from the dead himself, and ascending visibly to heaven. His resurrection from the dead is proof enough to justify his doctrine, and to evidence the certainty of his testimony; for God by his divine power would not countenance a deceiver, and raise him from the dead, and receive him into glory with himself. Particularly it proves the state of unseen glory; life and immortality are more fully brought to light in the gospel than by any other means, 2 Tim.

i. 10. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is not only a clear revelation of it, but a full confirmation, because Christ is entered

into the glory that he spake of, and promised to his disciples. He is gone before us into the other world, that he may receive us unto himself, and that we might, with a more steady confidence, wait for it in the midst of fears and uncertainties of the present life.

[2.] His living after death. It was the solemn acquittance of our surety from the sins imputed to him, and a token of the acceptance of his purchase; when Christ rose again from the dead, our surety was let out of prison, Isa. liii. 8. And it is a ground of confidence to us, for when the debtor sees the surety walk abroad, he may be sure the debt is satisfied. Therefore it is said, Rom. iv. 25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' Christ is some times said to rise from the dead, and sometimes to be raised from the dead. His taking up his life again argued his divine power; but as man, he was raised. So it is said, Heb. xiii. 20, 'The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,' God the Father brought him again from the dead, as an evidence of full satisfaction. Our surety did not break prison, but was solemnly brought forth. The disciples said, Acts xvi. 37-39, 'Let them come themselves and fetch us.' An angel was sent from heaven to roll away the stone, to show that Christ had a solemn release and discharge.

[3.] His living implies his capacity to intercede for us, and to relieve us in all our necessities: Heb. vii. 24, 25, 'But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; therefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Christ is there compared with the Levitical priesthood. They were many that succeeded one after another, and being hindered by death, could never bring their work to perfection; but this priest ever liveth to plead the church's cause with God, presenting his human nature in his sight, and appearing continually before his Father's throne, and this for all that come to God by him. They are his clients, and he is their advocate. It is against the rules of that court to plead for others that continue in their unbelief and impenitency. After the beast was slain without the camp, the Levitical high priest did enter into the sanctuary with blood; so Christ after his sacrifice did enter into the heavenly sanctuary with the names of the twelve tribes of all the saints on his breast and shoulders, there to appear before God for us, Heb. ix.

14. He ever liveth to accomplish the fruits of his purchase for those that are reconciled to God by him as a high priest, to answer the accusations of Satan as our advocate, to stop the breaking out of wrath. As Jonathan in Saul's court did mitigate his father's anger against David, so Christ doth interpose night and day to prevent breaches, and to preserve a mutual correspondence between God and us, as our lieger-agent; to sue out grace suitable to our conflicts, difficulties, and temptations, as our friend in court; to procure the acceptance of our prayers, as our mediator and intercessor, Heb. viii. 2.

[4.] His living is the root and cause of our life, for he having purchased eternal life, not only for himself, but for all his members, ever liveth to convey it to them, and maintain it in them: John xiv. 19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also;' John vi. 57, 'As I live by the Father, so he that believeth in me shall live by me.' By reason of the mystical union that is between Christ and believers, they may rest upon it, that as long as the head hath life, the members shall not be utterly without life, for Christ is a pledge and a pattern of that power that shall work in us in order to life spiritual and eternal.

4. The next ground of comfort is the certainty of persuasion: 'I *know* that my Redeemer liveth.' As if he had said, I do not doubt of it, nor suspect it in the least. I know implies:—

[1.] A clear understanding of this mystery. The more fully we understand the grounds of faith, the more efficacy they have upon us to beget confidence and joy of faith in us. The fears that haunt us are the fruits of darkness and ignorance, accompanied with a sense of guilt; but as gospel-knowledge increases, they vanish as mists do before the sun: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee;' if God were better known, he would be better trusted.

[2.] I know, implies certainty of persuasion. This is either certainty of faith, or of spiritual sense.

First, Of faith, which depends on the certainty of God's revelation. That was either the general promise in paradise: Gen. iii. 15, God had said, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.' Now upon this promise Job is as confident of a redeemer, as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes. Thus Abraham is said to have seen Christ's day: John viii. 56, and 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.’ Or his faith was built upon some particular revelation: Heb. i. 1, ‘God, who at sundry times, and by divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets.’ They had a sufficient discovery of the Redeemer to be a ground of faith. Certain it is, the eyes of believers were then upon him. We are told that Christ was ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ Rev. xiii. 8. He is set forth in prophecies and types. ‘Now faith is the evidence of things not seen;’ not seen by sense, but clearly seen in the promise. He was the joy of all ages, even of those that lived before he came in the flesh. The same is true after the coming of Christ, as well as before, for we ‘believe in him whom we have not seen,’ 1 Peter i. 8. We should as heartily love him and rejoice in him as if we had conversed with him bodily. Only we have an advantage: history is not so dark as prophecy, and it is more easy to believe what is past, where we have the suffrage and experience of so many ages to confirm us, than to expect what is to come, where we have only God’s bare word to support us. The mystery is now more clearly revealed to us than before the exhibition of our Saviour; therefore, according to our advantage, so should the increase of our faith be. We should be able to say, 2 Tim. i. 12, ‘I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.’ We should rest upon Christ with more confidence.

Secondly, The certainty of spiritual sense. We know that he is a Redeemer by the discovery of the word; that he is our Redeemer by the application of the Spirit, as he manifests himself to us and in us. This knowledge of spiritual sense is often spoken of 1 Job xiii. 18, ‘I know that I shall be justified;’ Heb. x. 34, ‘Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance;’ Rom. vi. 6, ‘Knowing this, that your old man is crucified,’ that is, *feeling*. Now both these are of great comfort, the certainty of faith and the sweetness of sense; for without the certainty of faith, the soul is only left to blind guesses and loose conjectures, and so can never have solid comfort. Without the knowledge of sense, that is, of our interest in salvation, the soul loses much of its joy and peace. As novices and men that have never before been at sea are troubled at the swelling of every wave and billow though they are safe, yet, because they do not know they are safe, their voyage is a torment to

them. So those that take the assurance of the word of God for the truth of redemption by Christ, and tremblingly build upon it, yet because they know not their own interest, have not the comfort of the Spirit, their journey to heaven is the more troublesome. Therefore it concerneth us to build upon a sure foundation, so to get a clear interest.

II. How this is applicable in all afflictions. That easily appears from these premises:—

1. In public troubles and difficulties. We are amazed and perplexed many times at the events that fall out in the world, and know not whereunto these things will grow. Yet this is some comfort and support to all that are concerned in Zion's affairs, that Christ is alive at his Father's right hand, and will pursue all things that make for the glory of God, and; the advancement of his own kingdom. I say, the glory of God: Rom. vi. 10, 'In that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' His own kingdom: Ps. cx. 1, 'Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool.' He is at the right hand of God, and there shall abide till he return to judge the world. In the meantime, he hath the inspection of all affairs: all judgment is put into his hands, John v. 22. Things are not left to the will of man, nor to their own contingency, but are guided and ordered by him with good advice. However matters go, Christ is governor, who is not, cannot be deposed from his regal office, nor jostled out of the throne. As Luther said upon some loss that befell the friends of the gospel, *Etiamnum vivit et regnat Christus*. When the floods lifted up their voice, and all things seemed to threaten ruin and to overwhelm, then follows, 'The Lord reigneth; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters,' Ps. xciii. 1,4. It is spoken of the kingdom of Christ, for the advancing and preserving of which he gives forth signal testimonies of his regal power.

2. In spiritual distresses; when we want life and quickening, are opposed with troubled thoughts about our sinful infirmities. Your Redeemer hath life in himself, but not for himself alone; he came into the world that we might have a fuller communication of his grace, John x. 10. Now he is gone back again to God, and filled with the Spirit, to communicate it to the members of his mystical body: Eph. iv. 10, 'He is ascended up to fill all things.' When we are dead, our Redeemer liveth as a fountain of life to God's people.

3. In outward calamities. He liveth when other comforts fail or are taken away from us; he will prove the nearest and best friend when all others forsake us; he will not only sympathise with us, but help us, and knoweth how to give a comfortable issue out of the sorest troubles: 2 Cor. iv. 14, 16, 'Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For which cause we faint not.'

4. It is a great comfort in calumnies and slanders, when our names are taken up in the lips of the taunters and cast forth as evil. Job here, when his friends suspected him as fallen from the grace of God, puts his cause into the hands of the great Mediator who was now with God in heaven, making intercession for him, and will one day stand on the earth judging the world. We need not fear any partial judge here below, nor be troubled at their prejudices and misconstructions. Christ is the true judge, 'who will bring to light the hidden things of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God,' 1 Cor. iv. 5, that is, every one that hath done well. Though we have failings, yet those that flee to a Redeemer for pardon and reconciliation with God, and grace to walk uprightly, shall then be acquitted.

5. Chiefly it is a comfort against the fears of death, that you may yield up yourselves into Christ's hands. Thoughts of dwelling with God in eternal life are less comfortable, because death and the grave interpose; we must pass through them before we can enjoy him. But though we die, Christ liveth, who is the resurrection, and those that believe in him shall live though they die, John xi. 25. For our souls, he standeth ready to receive them: Acts vii. 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And our bodies at the last day shall be raised again to immortal life: 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 4.. We need not fear death, for by his dying and rising again the powers of the grave are shaken, and death itself is become mortal. The grave is not a prison, but a place of repose, Isa. lvii. 2; and death not a final extinction, but a passage into glory. It is ours: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All things are yours, life, death, things present, things to come; all are yours.' And it is gain: Phil. i. 21, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Therefore we may go to the grave with comfort and hope. Christ died and yet is alive; so shall we. 'He is risen as the

first-fruits of them that sleep,' 1 Cor. xv. 20. The whole harvest was blessed and sanctified by a handful of the first-fruits dedicated to God. When Christ arose, he virtually drew all the elect out of the grave with him; being renewed and reconciled by his grace, they may be confident of a joyful resurrection, for Christ is their fore-fruits. The first-fruits did not bless the tares, darnel, and cockle that grew amongst the corn; no man that ever offered the first-fruits desired a blessing upon the weeds. No; 'Bind the tares in bundles, and gather the wheat into my barn.' But if he indeed be your Redeemer, and hath redeemed you from all iniquity, that is, from the guilt and power of sin, it is a comfort to you to know that he lives gloriously with God, and will draw all his own after him, that they may live gloriously with him. He is our fore-runner, Heb. vi. 20, who is gone to heaven and hath taken possession for himself, and in our behalf, to make the way more passable for us. When we die, we do but go thither whither he is gone before us; he standeth upon the shore ready to receive us into glory.

Use of Exhortation.

I. Believe it and be persuaded of this truth, that you have a Redeemer living with God in the heavens.

1. This is a matter of mere faith, and therefore it must be soundly believed before it can have any efficacy upon us. Some points of faith are mixed, partly evident by natural reason, partly by divine revelation: as that there is a God; it is matter of sensible experience, Rom.

i. 20, and a matter of faith also; 'whosoever comes to God must believe that God is.' Nature helpeth forward the entertainment of these things, but redemption by Christ is a matter of pure and mere faith, and is received by believing God's testimony, 2 Thes. i. 10. There is no improving these points till we soundly believe them.

2. Because we often think we believe these general truths when in deed we do not believe them at all, or not with such a degree of assent as we imagine. Our Lord, when he speaks of these truths: John xi. 26, 'He that believeth in me shall live though he die; believest thou this?' John xvi. 31, 'Do ye now believe?' We conceit our faith to be much stronger than indeed it is about the main articles of faith.

3. Because among them that profess themselves Christians, there are monstrous defects in their faith. Naturally we look upon the gospel as a well-devised fable, 2 Peter i. 16; and many that dare not speak it out, yet do but speak of Christ in jest and for fashion sake. I am sure most live as if there were no such matter, and the many impostures and cheats of Christendom, and the divisions and scandals amongst us, have weakened the faith of many, that were it not for shame they would turn professed infidels. There could not be such boldness in sinning, such coldness in spiritual and heavenly things, such neglect of Christ and heaven, if men were true and sound believers. Others content themselves with a negative sense; they do not question or contradict these articles of faith, because they do not consider them, but take up the common opinion, hand over head, and were never assaulted with temptations to the contrary; they do not doubt of it, say they; but are they rooted and grounded in the faith? Col. i. 23. Their not doubting comes from their non-attention. Others have a speculative assent; there is a certainty of evidence and a certainty of adherence. The former consisteth in the conviction of the mind, the latter in the bent of the will and affections. An object rightly propounded extorteth the former from the understanding, not expecting the consent of the will; the latter followeth *imperium et consensum voluntatis*. The former arises from the evidence of the thing; the latter from the consideration of the worth, weight, and greatness of it: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' They must not only be apprehended by us as true, but seriously considered as the highest and most important things, so as that we may adhere to them with all our hearts. It is such a belief of the gospel as produces a firm and cordial adherence, otherwise it will not serve the end and purpose of the gospel, which requireth us to crucify our lusts, sacrifice our interests, and perform those things which are displeasing to nature upon the hopes it offereth to us, and with confidence and joyfulness to wait upon God for his salvation, in the midst of all pressures and afflictions. If your adherence were more firm, you would find your comfort more lively, fresh, and constant, your obedience more uniform, you would not be so shaken with temptations and assaults, and the incursion of worldly cares and sorrows. In great temptations the children of God see the need of a firm and cordial

assent to the main gospel truths, Heb. vi. 1, 2. Nay, in ordinary practices, in every prayer you make to God, Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw nigh to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;' 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.'

4. Endeavour to arrive at the highest degree of assent. Faith is or should be strongly persuaded of what it believeth. It is an evidence, not a conjecture; not a surmise, but a firm assurance. We should certainly know what we believe: 'We know thou art a teacher sent from God,' John iii. 2; 'We know, and are sure, that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' John vi. 69; 2 Cor. v. 1, 'We know that we have a building of God;' 1 John iii. 2, 'We know that we shall see him as he is;' 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Invisible things revealed by God should be certainly known, because God hath told us such clear, firm apprehensions become us. Faith is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge; not we think, we hope well, but we know, is the language of faith. It is not a bare possibility we go upon, nor a probable opinion, but a certain, infallible truth. I put you upon this, partly because we have a great argument in the text. If Job could see it so long before it came to pass, should we not now see it? Believers of old make us ashamed who live in the clear sunshine of the gospel. Job lived long before the gospel was revealed; the redemption of souls was at that time a great mystery, being sparingly revealed to a few. But one of a thou sand could bring this message to a condemned sinner, that God had found a ransom, Job xxxiii.

23. Partly to put you upon earnest prayer to God, and other holy means. The Spirit opens our eyes and inclines our hearts: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

II. I exhort you to apply and improve it to your particular comfort. I shall speak:— 1, To the careless.

2. To the sensible.

1. To the careless, who do not give diligence to make their interest clear, that they may be able to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Some are contented so they may be well in the world, and live in peace, credit, and mirth here, but never look after an interest in the Redeemer, or to get a sure hope of a sentence of absolution from him at the last day. They content themselves with a general belief that Christ died for sinners, and only make use of it for the increase of their carnal security and boldness in sinning. We must not only consider what Christ hath done, but what we are to do that we may be partakers of the benefits. The general work of redemption Christ hath performed for us, without any consent on our part. He took our nature, fulfilled the law, satisfied the justice of God, merited grace; but we must thank fully receive him, live in him and to him, before this is applied to us, or we can have the comfort of it, 2 Cor. v. 17; xiii. 5. They content themselves to think and hope well, but do not make it sure upon good grounds. And when questions and scruples are raised in their hearts, there is not a full hearing of the matter, the court is broken up ere things are well determined; and so they run the hazard of uncertainty, and live and die venturing their souls upon the bare possibility of being saved, never put it out of doubt, nor 'assure their hearts before God,' 1 John iii. 19.

2. To the sensible; to live upon this truth in the midst of their calamities, especially that they may enjoy the comfort of it in a dying hour.

Object. You will say, We could take comfort in this, if we knew we had a Redeemer at God's right hand; but alas! after all our profession of the name of Christ, and long waiting upon God, I cannot make this close application, to say, 'My Redeemer liveth,' or 'My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,' Luke i. 47.

Ans. But cannot you bless God for the gospel, and the offers of pardon and life by him? The main foundation of comfort lies in the general truths; your hopes are not built chiefly upon the sense of your own interest, but the ransom which Christ hath paid for you. Is it nothing to you that God should become man, and your judge your kinsman? John i. 14. Surely goodness and mercy is nearer to

us in our own nature than it was in the divine nature. We have an apparent demonstration of it to us, that Christ would come among us to bring home souls to God, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Again, is it nothing that, in this nature of ours, he would pay our ransom, that none should perish for want of a sufficient satisfaction to God's justice, but for want of a willing heart to accept and own his Redeemer? John iii. 16, 17; Rev. iii. 24-26. We are so far onward in our way. Again, is it nothing to us that our Redeemer will rescue us out of the hand of the destroyer? 1 John iii. 8. It is his office. This should prevail with us, not to tie the cord the faster, but to wait upon him with the more hope if you desire his aid to this end and purpose, for it is his office. Again, is it nothing to you that this Redeemer liveth; that Christ, in your nature, rose again, and is now at God's right hand, to manage the causes of poor sinners? Rom. viii. 34. St Paul's triumph hence ariseth. Lastly, is it nothing to you to know this, that God hath sent the gospel to you, and given you faith of these things? 1 John v. 20, 'We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' Is this favour nothing? These are the truths you must live upon.

Secondly, To those that question whether Christ be our Redeemer, whether they may look upon themselves as having an actual interest in the benefits of his death and intercession.

I answer—This is evident: (1.) By their own act; (2.) By God's act.

1. Their own act. General grace must some way be made particular, else it cannot profit us. All are not justified, nor adopted, nor saved. There is the same merciful God, the same all-sufficient Saviour, the same gracious covenant. Some apply this grace, others do not. Christ doth not save us at a distance, but as received into our hearts; as a plaster doth not heal at a distance, but applied to the sore: John i. 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' If you heartily consent and accept of the Redeemer's grace to heal your wounded souls, you shall partake of salvation.

2. There is an act on God's part. What have you to show that God is reconciled to you? This is not evident till we have the pledge of our reconciliation with God, the gift of the Holy Spirit. This affords infallible assurance of God's favour. Other things may be

given in wrath, but the Spirit is the earnest of his eternal love. God loved Christ, and gave him the Spirit without measure, John iii. 34. By the Spirit his love is applied to us, Rom. v. 5. This is the evidence from whence we may conclude our actual communion with God. 'It holdeth good exclusively, Rom. viii. 9; inclusively, 1 John iv. 13. The Spirit first works, and then witnesses; he is first a guide and sanctifier, then a comforter. As a guide, he leadeth us to all truth: John xvi. 13, 'When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth;' Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' As a sanctifier, he breaketh the power of fleshly lusts, Rom. viii. 13; conformeth us to the image of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. Then as a comforter, he witnesseth our present interest and our future hopes: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit beareth witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God;' 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;' Eph. i. 13, 'In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.'

SERMON XIII - 1 Tim. VI. 8.

And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.—1 Tim. VI. 8.

HE apostle hath mentioned some in the 5th verse that counted 'gain was godliness;' that is, suited their godliness with their worldly ends, or made a trade of it to live by. Their religion must bear all their charges, they would be at no cost about it at all. The apostle takes occasion to show that their notion may be right if well interpreted, though extreme wrong in the sense they mean it. It was impious in them to make Christianity a means to secular advantages; but interpret it aright, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain,' much better than all the wealth in the world. By godliness he means the Christian religion, because it prescribeth and delivereth the true way of worshipping and serving God, and they gain fairly that gain Christ. A man that is acquainted with God in Christ is the true rich man; this with contentment is great gain. Our worldly desires make us poor. You have enough if you be contented with the condition wherein God places you. Paul retorts their own notions upon them. He is a rich man that doth not possess much and hath need of little. Anything above a competency is needless to us,

who must shortly pass out of this life into another. Nature is contented with a little, and grace with less; because it is manifest that ‘as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out,’ and all that we have above what we spend or use is lost to us. In the text he inferreth his inference: ‘Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.’ The words are plain, and afford this observation:—

Doct. That one great point of godliness is to be content with what we have, though it be but food and raiment.

In handling this point, I shall inquire:—

I. What contentment is.

II. What considerations are most apt to breed it.

III. That it is a high point of Christianity.

I. What contentment is. It is a quiet temper of mind about outward things; and so it is opposite to three things—murmurings, distracting cares, and covetous desires.

1. Murmurings: Jude 16, ‘Murmurers, complainers.’ The word signifies blamers of their portion; they are always picking quarrels at God’s dispensation, and entertain crosses with anger and blessings with disdain. But now, when our minds are satisfied with the fitness and sufficiency of our present condition, there is no repining against God, no fretting and tearing ourselves; the mind is framed to the estate, be it never so mean.

2. Distrustful and distracting cares. Men are full of troubles, especially when they are in a hazardous strait and low condition; therefore God forbids this: Mat. vi. 25, ‘Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or yet for the body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?’ Men are fearful and anxious for the future, and doubt whether God will allow them the necessaries of life, food, and raiment; therefore it is said, Luke xii. 29, ‘Be not ye of a doubtful mind.’ They distract themselves with these anxious thoughts. The word properly signifies to be carried in the air, as clouds, by an uncertain motion; and so it is applied to them who are tossed about

with out consistency or fixedness of mind, by an impatient suspense or anxious solicitude about God's providence.

3. Covetous desires: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.' The apostle speaks there of times of persecution; and no temper of mind is so fit for us in such times as contentation with whatever God at present allows us. They that are greedy of more forget or dislike what they have already. There is no reason for it; for what use is there of more than what may nourish us within and cover us without? But we punish ourselves with our own wild desires. Well, then, contentation is opposite to all these; it is such a quiet of mind as suiteth our hearts to our condition, and relieth upon God's merciful providence and gracious promises for support and necessities during our service in the world, without being troubled about other things.

II. What considerations are offered and implied in the text as most apt to breed it.

1. That God is a sovereign Lord, and dispenses these outward things at his pleasure. We are not proprietaries; we must only content ourselves with the use, or a transitory fruition: Luke xvi. 12, 'If you have not been faithful in another's, who will give you that which is your own?' That *others* is God, who is the dispenser and disposer of these things. The whole drift of the parable is to show that we are but stewards: God reserves the sovereign right to himself gives us only the use or trust for our own and others' good. No man esteemeth himself to be an owner of that which another besides himself hath power to dispose of, as God hath, of us and of all that belongeth to us. Our possession of anything is but limited and respective. We are but tenants at the will of the Lord; he can take us from our service, or our service from us at his own pleasure: Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he takes away, who can hinder him? Who will say to him, What doest thou?' God hath an absolute power, his right is uncontrollable; so is not ours. Now, this hath a great influence upon contentedness with our condition; for if we and all that we have be God's own, he may do with his own as it pleases him, Mat. xx.

15. If he takes any thing from us, he doth but require his own; and nothing more reason

15.

able but that every one should have liberty to dispose of what is his own according to his will. Every one of you must say, I am God's creature; he may use me for his glory, in what manner and in what rank and degree he pleaseth.

2. It is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, that some should have more and some should have less. He puts ten talents into the hands of some of his servants, and but one into an other's, Mat. xxv. Therefore if your portion be straiter than others, it is what God hath allotted: 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8, 'The Lord makes poor and the Lord makes rich; he bringeth low and he lifteth up: he setteth some among the princes, and to inherit the throne of glory,' whilst others sit on the dunghill or roll in the dust. The world is not governed by chance, nor is it the blind idol fortune that dispenses honours and estates, but every man's portion and the bounds of his habitation are set forth by God. It comes not from second causes, or an uncertain rolling about the sphere of human mutability, but God's ordinance and appointment, who, as he hath cast the world into hills and valleys, hath made the estate of one man differ from another. No estate in this world is universally good for all, as no gale of wind can serve for all passengers on the deep waters. Nor doth the same weather fit every soil; that drought which burneth up the hotter grounds comforteth those which are more chill and cold. If one man had another's blessings he would soon run wild, as another would grow desperate if he had their crosses. Therefore the infinite wisdom of the great Governor of the world allots every one his portion. God knows the reasons of this unequal distribution, though they be hidden from us. Now, this also hath an influence upon contentment, for we ought to submit to the good pleasure of God, and can no more quarrel with his providence for keeping us low and bare than his creation, that he made us men and not angels, or that he will furnish the world with all kind of creatures, worms and beasts as well as men: Isa. xlv. 9, 'Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus?'

3. These earthly things, which are thus variously dispensed, are only useful to us during the present life in the mortal body. In heaven we have no need of these things, and we must leave them all on this side the grave: 1 Cor. vi. 13, 'Meats for the belly, and the

belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.’ Meats are appointed by God and nature for the use of men, and the body of man in this life hath absolute necessity of them; but in the next life, which is a spiritual life, this eating and desiring of meat shall be taken away. It is a mercy to have meat when we are hungry, and garments to cover our nakedness when cold, but it is a greater mercy to be above these necessities. Well, now, this life is but short and uncertain; it is but a coming into the world and a going out again: Job i. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 7, ‘We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.’ Now, we that are ready to step into another world, and are certain within a short time to be stripped for ever of all these things, what great matter is it if God keep us low and bare? All will shortly be as poor as you, and a little time should make but a little difference. That is not our true wealth and riches which we cannot carry away with us; what is left behind is not ours, but other men’s; and therefore, whilst you are alive, you should not be much troubled about that which you cannot enjoy when you are dead. If we have what will serve for our passage, what should we do with more? We cannot carry away our riches along with us, but the sting and guilt of mis-enjoying them and mis-employing them will be sure to stick by us both in death and judgment. It is riot the possession, but the use that will comfort us. Though we cannot carry our estates into the other world, yet the comfort of a good conscience we may carry with us: ‘Their works follow them,’ Rev. xiv. 13. Then they go to enjoy the eternal reward of bliss and peace for their hard and painful service here in the world.

4. The comfort, safety, and happiness of this life lies not in abundance: Luke xii. 15, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life lies not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.’ This consideration is added because some might think, though we can carry nothing out of the world, yet whilst we live we should seek larger supplies. Our Lord answereth this surmise: Though outward things are very useful to sustain life, yet no man is able to prolong his life, or to make it more happy and comfortable to him, by possessing more than he needs or uses. What good will the superfluity of wealth do him? These things are extrinsical to our being and happiness. When you have the world at will, you can get no more from it than bodily food and bodily clothing. The poorest

may attain to that. It is no great matter whether our dung or excrements be of finer matter or coarser; whether a gay show we make in our apparel, so we have for warmth and decency; whether few or more dishes at our table. Too much oil puts out the lamp, and superfluity afflicts and oppreseth that part which it seems to gratify. When men have troubled themselves and the world to make themselves great, what a sorry happiness have they! Their net and their drag, by which they catch men as a fisherman doth fishes in the sea, it all tendeth to this, that their portion may be fat and plenteous. A poor felicity, that they have a little good cheer and a merry life here. They that want such abundance live as well as they, and have as much health and contentment: Ps. xvii. 14, 'They have their portion in this life, and their bellies are filled with hid treasures, and they leave the rest to their babes.' They ransack the storehouses of nature to satisfy their gluttony and excess, but yet all this while they are not the nearer to contentment, nor farther off from the grave. So that it is best to be content with necessaries.

5. Nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary. By food is meant something to nourish u, and by raiment something to cover us. If you indulge wanton appetites, if you make provision for the flesh, or ask meat for your lusts, God will not hear nor regard your desires. Jacob desires but food and raiment of God: Gen. xxviii. 20, 'If God be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then God shall be my God.' But how could he put his owning and acknowledging of God upon these terms? The meaning is, this shall be a new engagement, esteeming it as a great favour. All our desires should be suited, not to our luxury, but the necessity of nature; raiment, not ornament; necessary supports, not delicacies: therefore we should not make lust a wanton, but be content if God will any way enable us to serve and glorify him. We should be content with his allowance; it is enough for the service and honour which he expecteth from us, and to carry us through that little time which we have to spend in the world. It is not abundance that we need, but a contented heart: let a little suffice, if God gives no more. Diseased persons need more attendance than the healthy; the distempers of our souls multiply our necessities, and as we indulge them they gain upon us; therefore every one of us should bring himself to be content with necessaries. Superfluities are an impediment rather than

a help, as a shoe too big for the foot hinders our going, or as David could not go on with Saul's armour, because it was too great for him, 1 Sam. xvii. 39. We are freest from temptations when we have least, though enough for health, strength, and cheerfulness.

6. Food and raiment are not hard to be obtained. I do not mean with respect to our endeavours, but God's blessing; for in these things God will not forsake us. We have a heavenly Father, who knows what we stand in need of, Mat. vi. 32. They that have least from God have ordinarily food and raiment vouchsafed to them; he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties; our condition is tolerable, if not comfortable, 1 Cor. x. 13. He hath wonderful means to help, when all their supplies are removed out of the view of sense. It is notable to observe, the Israelites were not plagued when they murmured out of want, but when they murmured out of wantonness. Heal wants, we may rationally presume, will be supplied, not fancies and carnal appetites. As for instance: Ps. lxxviii. 21, 'Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger came up against Israel.' Therefore—why? When he had taken care to supply their wants by giving them plenty of water out of the rock of Horeb, and by sending manna in the morning and quails in the evening, yet they fell a murmuring and complaining, preferring their condition in Egypt before that which God had brought them into. They must have a table better furnished with bread and flesh; they were clogged with this manna, not contented with a provision for their wants, but required a satisfaction to their appetites. This highly displeased and provoked God, and brought very sharp punishments upon them. So again, Ps. cvi. 14, 15, 'They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.' Their minds ever and anon ran upon the flesh-pots of Egypt; and because they had not that festival plenty in the wilderness, they murmured as if Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die there, and God must show more miracles, not to supply their wants but to pamper their lusts.

7. This life was given us to seek a better, and therefore the felicity of it must not be measured by a more ample portion of food and raiment, but as we are fitted and prepared for the better life, which is the end and scope of life itself. All these things are but your

provision in the way to heaven, therefore not principally to be sought after; your business is to serve God, and seek the salvation of your souls: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' that is, there will be enough to sustain us in our journey to heaven, whilst we are preparing for eternity, and therefore we should be content.

8. Many times the less we have in this life the more fervently is the life to come sought after; a moderate estate is freest from temptations. Abundance of all things without any want inclines us to a forgetfulness of God; as, on the other side, perpetual want, without any cheerful taste of God's goodness, disposes men to atheism. In the two extremes religion is either starved or choked. We see it in countries and persons: in countries. Sodom and Gomorrah, which was as the garden of God, Gen. xiii. 10, was the first instance of unnatural sin, and an example of supernatural judgment. Some in great prosperity have no thoughts of God and the world to come; others that live in sordid poverty never consider the goodness of God, and so live and die miserable creatures. The middle estate is freest from danger, and religion is most secured in it: Prov. xxx. 8, 9, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain.' Pride and insolency are incident to the one, and any base dealing to the other. A great estate, like a rank soil, is more apt to breed weeds; and bitter necessity be trays us to any base shift for our sustenance; therefore if God gives us anything to live upon, we should be content.

9. That God best knows what will do us good or hurt, and therefore we should refer it to him to dispose of us according to his own pleasure. Certainly we should not want if God saw it better for us to abound, for he is no niggard of his blessings, but is good, and doth good. But it is not meet that man should have the disposal of himself, or his own condition and affairs, or that God should accommodate his providence to our carnal interest and will No; God's will must always precede, and ours follow. We have a corrupt will, guided by a dark understanding; and if the blind lead the lame, what can be expected but disorder and ruin? Therefore our wills must not lead and make the first choice, but God's. We must

bring our hearts thoroughly to yield to what God appointeth, and that our present estate is best for us. How unmeet judges are flesh and blood of what condition is fit for us! We would be fed only with the delicacies of prosperity and pleasure, but it is for our profit that we should be chastened, 'that we should be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10, 11. What a strange creature would man be if he were what he would wish himself to be! Vainly proud, stupidly careless, and neglectful of God and heavenly things; therefore our best way is to be what God will have us be: 'Not my will but thine be done,' Mat. xxvi. 39.

10. We must be contented with a competency, but yet we ought to be fitted and prepared for eternity. If God please to give us conveniency, it is his great mercy; but our resolutions must be to be contented with any condition God will put us into: we except not life itself out of our resignation. The people of God are wont to suppose not only some necessity but an extremity: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He saith not, If I have only food, and raiment, and hard fare, it shall suffice me. No; but 'If the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.' In many cases poverty may come upon us like an armed man, and spoil us of all: but when we seem to be starved in the creature, yet then we may feast in God. God's children do not capitulate with him how much they will suffer and no more, but resolve to bear the heaviest burden, to submit to the sharpest affliction. So again, Ps. xlv. 19, 20, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, yet we have not forgotten the name of our God, or proved unfaithful to him.'

III. The reasons why it is a high point of Christianity to get contentation with any estate God shall put us into are:—

1. In the general, it is a mystery only learned in Christ's school: Phil. iv. 11-13, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be therewith content; and I know how to be abased and to abound: I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' This art is not soon learned. What is there in Christianity above other disciplines to teach us this contentation?

The doctrine of God's particular providence, fatherly care, and eternal life,—these, seconded by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Ghost, cause this resolution in us, to encounter all the difficulties of this present life in a humble and quiet mind.

2. More particularly, let us consider—(1.) What is necessary to this contentment; (2.) What effect it produces.

[1.] What is necessary to this contentment.

(1.) Faith, or a sound belief of God's being and gracious promises and eternal recompenses; that there is a God, that he hath a particular care of human affairs, and that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties, but will guide them to eternal life. It is in vain to press people to contentedness till they be thus persuaded. For the first truth, that there is a God: 'He that cometh to God must believe that God is.' For the second truth, that he hath a particular care of human affairs: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.' The third truth, that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' For the fourth truth, a prospect of eternal life: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Now if God be, and be thus engaged to his people, why should we be discontented if he takes his own methods to bring us to everlasting glory? We cannot suffer anything that God is not aware of; every dram of our affliction is weighed out to us by that all-wise, all-merciful Providence; and there is nothing which we suffer that he knoweth not how to turn to our good, looking for nothing from us but our trust and thankfulness.

(2.) It conies from humility, when we are content to be at God's finding, knowing that we have deserved nothing from him: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all thy truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' The humble man is content to be dealt with as the Lord pleases. Prescribing to God always comes from ascribing to ourselves. We

think we have deserved more than he gives us. We, that are worthy of the heaviest judgment, surely should be thankful for the smallest mercy: Eccles. vii. 8, 'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.' Patience is rooted in humility, but discontent in pride.

(3.) It comes from weanedness from the world. They that do not seek great things for themselves will stand to God's allowance. It may be God may bestow great things upon them, as he did upon Abraham and David, but they do not seek them, especially in times when it is a mercy they have life and liberty. That is forbidden, Jer. xlv. 5. In short, grace doth all, both as to poverty and riches, and makes rich and poor stand on the same level. Now this is a high point in religion, to grow dead to the world, to behave ourselves in a manner as unconcerned in poverty or riches; for the world is the great impediment to the heavenly life, as being the bait of the flesh, the snare of Satan, by which he detaineth souls from God. If once we grow indifferent to these things, we would not feel any great power in temptations to pleasure, wealth, and honour, and would soon be thorough Christians; the spiritual life would be more easy and even. Easy, for where men seek no great things for themselves in the world, and a little matter contenteth their desires, and checketh their murmurings, the resistance of the carnal nature to the empire of grace is without much difficulty overcome; they can enjoy plenty or want, renounce their aspiring thoughts, meddle sparingly with fleshly delights, they are seeking a better estate. More evenly; there is no notable blemish on them who are crucified to the world; they do not stain their profession, wound their consciences. Their choices are governed by religion, not by carnal interest; they are kept 'unspotted from the world,' James i. 27.

[2.] The fruits it produces. I shall name but two of many.

(1.) They are not distracted with great worldly business. They esteem that to be the best way that brings them nearest to their great end, which is not to enjoy happiness in this life, but in the world to come. Those whose hearts are all for the present, they must have the world to the full, or they are not contented; they never think of laying up treasure in heaven, Mat. vi. 19, 20. That is not their end and scope, but to live commodiously here, that they and their posterity may flourish in the world: Ps. xvii. 14, 'They which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid

treasures, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.’ But a good man that eyes another happiness, is not much troubled how it is with him here, so he and his may be accepted with God hereafter. Therefore their business is not to lay up treasure to themselves on earth, but to be rich towards God, Luke xii. 21.

(2.) They that can be contented with a little, are most likely to be true to God and conscience. They can better suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, and other troubles for the gospel: Acts xx. 24, ‘None of these things move me;’ that is, made no great opposition and perturbation in his mind. It is no strange thing to them when trials come. They can part with all things under the sun, rather than quit their duty to Christ; for temptations have lost their force when worldly desires and lusts are mortified. They withered in persecution that received the good seed for a time, Mark iv. 17. When religion carries one way, and the world another, then farewell religion for the world’s sake. When Christ had spoken so much of the cross, then Judas turneth apostate. When Demas saw the world went on otherways, he forsook Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. When Christ told the young man of parting with all, he went away sad, Mark x. 22. If heaven cost so dear, it is no pennyworth for him. So men will come into no danger or trouble for Christ, because they are not contented with a little.

Use 1. If the godly ought to be content with food and raiment, it shows the vanity of men’s vast desires; they have much above food and raiment, yet they are not satisfied. A true Christian is contented with necessaries, but worldly men ‘enlarge their desires as hell.’ Hab. ii. 5. They are so far from acquiescing in their portion assigned to them by God, though it be competent and enough to satisfy their wants, yea, and far beyond (so that many are glad of their leavings); yet they are always hunting after more, like death and the grave, which are never satisfied. They are restless, still adding, if they be princes, kingdom to kingdom; if they be churchmen, preferment upon preferment; and if ordinary men, estate upon estate, house to house, field to field. These desires are pettishly solicited, eagerly followed, and many times finally disappointed.

2. It checks our impatency under disappointment. If we have not our will in worldly things, we are troubled, our desires are too

ardent. We must needs have them, cannot be without them, trouble ourselves about them, and so murmur and repine against God; and this breedeth fearful tempests in the soul. As Jonah bitterly contended with God about his gourd, Jonah iv., and Rachel, 'Give me children, or else I die,' Gen. xxx. 1. If we cannot have what we would, all is nothing. Ahab is sick for one poor vineyard. Haman counteth his honour nothing as long as Mordecai sits at the king's gate. As in a carriage, if one pin be wanting all is at a stop.

3. It shows the evil of our distrust, notwithstanding we have God's fatherly providence and promises to rely upon, and so large a covenant interest: 1 Cor. iii. 21-23, 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' All things are yours, ordinances, providences, this world, the next, life, death. Would you have more? All are instrumental for our good, if we resolve to be faithful to Christ.

SERMON XIV. - Eccles. 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.—Eccles. IX. 11.

HE whole book is a search after true happiness. The particular paragraph whereof the text is a branch proveth that it cannot be obtained in this world, because of the various events of God's powerful and unsearchable providence. The discourse beginneth, 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 farther, 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; Ps. xxxvi. 6, xcii. 5. They may be adored, but not searched into.

Now two things in our reflection upon providence perplex us:—

1. 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 showeth 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 Ahithophel. Is Joseph honoured by Pharaoh? so is Doeg by Saul. Had Isaac long life? Gen. xxv. 20, so had Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17.

2. 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, make 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. First, Negatively, in five particulars.

1. *The race is not to the swift.*
2. *Nor the battle to the strong.*
3. *Nor yet bread to the wise.*
4. *Nor riches to men of understanding.*
5. *Nor favour to men of skill.*

Secondly, Positively: *but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

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 show 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 nil the business of the common life: neither swiftness, nor strength, nor wisdom, &c.

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 mischiefed 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 the 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, Judges vii. 7; and we are told, Ps. 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 in the world. 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 place,’ Eccles. x. 6. Paul was ‘in hungerings often and fastings often,’ not voluntary but enforced, 2 Cor. xi. 27. Yea, it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that certain women ministered to him of their substance for his support, Luke viii. 3.

4. *Nor riches to men of understanding.* Experience often verifieth this, that the learned are very poor, when lesser wits and 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 the general, that ‘it is the blessing of the Lord maketh rich,’ Prov. x. 22. He is behindhand 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 populacy 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.* Hence are two things mentioned which do much befriend worldly matters—

1. Time.

2. Chance.

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 of, 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 goeth about.

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 hath foreordained, yet to us it *chanceth* (Qu. ‘seemeth’?—ED.) to be a mere chance and adventure.

In short, that which God hath from all eternity ordained, shall and must come to pass at such a time as God hath ordained it should be, and likewise in such a manner, and by such ways and means, as he hath ordained it shall be done. 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 intend their business, yet the event is in God's hand, who disposeth it according to His own will.

Before we draw the doctrine from hence, we shall remove the false inferences and deductions 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 (as before); 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. 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 a false deduction and inference both in naturals and spirituals.

[1.] In naturals, 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 only 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 their 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 *ad presentiam creaturae*, 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, and used for such an end in vain.

[2.] Nor in spirituals: 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, Mark iv. 24. 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 workman ship: Hosea 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 many endeavours of the creature are often frustrated of their end when there is greatest probability of success.

Here Solomon representeth men:—

1. Under 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 do give the event intended and hoped for, nor doth it depend absolutely and infallibly upon them.

4. That all things intended, desired, expected by us, depend upon time and chance, namely, as they depend upon God's providence, as and when God will order and determine the time and opportunity, the success and event.

Therefore from the whole it appears, that instruments most fitted and furnished, and most diligent in their way, are frustrated of the event which they so earnestly intended and hoped for.

REASONS.

I. The best instruments fail out of their ignorance, oblivion, and inadvertency, from which man cannot altogether free himself in this life, not only in matters spiritual, but secular, whether economical in the disposing of ourselves and relations, or family interests and concernments. Wise men have their errors: James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all of us.' This ignorance showeth 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, but are blinded by our affections; what we know habitually we do not know actually, we do not consider of 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 from within or without to hinder the use of our wisdom, power, and knowledge.

1. Within. He can blast our excellencies in an instant, or obstruct the use of it for the time. As though he did not destroy the property of the fire, yet he suspended the burning, when the three children were in the furnace. So of a sudden can he blast our strength: Ps.

xvi. 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, or any other point of perfection 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 daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night.' Who were 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 do involve and confound themselves; and what by self-conceit and froward self-will, they drive on their designs so precipitantly and furiously that they must needs miscarry. They do not seem to have the judgment of ordinary men. Thus though men be endowed with good gifts and qualities, both of wisdom and strength, God can easily take away their power and will to use them.

2. From without. By casting in some casual 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 fore see and prevent, any of them able to turn the enterprise another way. The most casual fortuitous things are ordered by God, for the great ends of his providence. As for instance, Haman travailed with a design to cut off all the people of 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, Esth. vi. 1, and found the discovery of a treason by Mordecai there recorded, which spoiled all the deep plots of Haman against the Jews. Ahab intended to avenge himself upon

Micaiah, and to escape in the battle, changed his robes and royal apparel, and counselled Jehoshaphat to put on his: 'and a man drew a bow at a venture,' 1 Kings xxii. 34. God directed the arrow to the heart of the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat escapeth, and he is slain. So that notable instance, the sunshine upon the water, 2 Kings iii. 2224. When the Moabites came to distress Jehoshaphat, when they cried 'Moab to the spoil,' it was indeed 'Moab to a sore destruction.'

Now these, and many such like instances, teach us that the most casual and fortuitous things do certainly and infallibly fall out by God's providence and heavenly government. And again, that there is some occurrence which providence casteth in by the way to disappoint the most likely means; and whatever gifts and qualities men are endowed withal, 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 do often provoke God to disappoint them, whilst their abilities of counsel and strength are a means of hardening their hearts in carnal confidence, and often engage in business that proves mischievous to them; I say, in the most lawful businesses they provoke God to disappoint them, because they under take 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 is 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, they seldom carve out to themselves a good portion. In all serious business we must ask his leave, counsel, blessing.

2. But many times men of great abilities, being unsanctified, 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 enterprise upon the confidence of their wisdom and strength, and then they are 'snared by the work of their own hands,' Ps. ix. 16. God delighteth to be seen to put rubs and stumbling-blocks in their way, that they may fall by some miserable disappointment, and 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 and name 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,

&c. 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.

The uses follow. It teaches us:—

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

First, It is a notion which the scripture much delighteth in, to represent God as all and the creature as nothing. At first, when Moses inquired God's distinctive name, God giveth 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 within himself. Secondly, The creature is nothing: Isa. xl. 17, 'All nations before him are nothing; they are accounted 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 our 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 derived and dependent being which they have from God. We must not establish the Pyrrhonian conceit that the whole world is but a fantasy, indeed nothing, and our life but a dream, or sceptically to look upon the being and modes of all things as uncertain. No; nor to imagine that sense is so far fallible that a man of sound sense and understanding may not be sure of the objects conveniently 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. 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, third, &c., yet in the daytime 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 and their differences unobserved. 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;' Isa. xlvii. 10, 'Thy wisdom and understanding hath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thy 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, Mat. 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—this is Caesar, this is Alexander—because of the likeness and representation, so the creatures are but a resemblance when we call them wise, strong, good. To this head may be referred those expressions, ‘the true light,’ John i. 9, ‘the true vine,’ John xv. 1. These terms originally agree to God, and but in a borrowed sense to the creature.

2. By way of exclusion of God. As the sunbeam 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: Ps. civ. 29, 30, ‘Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created; thou takest away thy breath, and they die.’ The creature in comparison with God is in reckoning nothing; but in exclusion of God it is in reality nothing; because all their life, wisdom, strength, and the acting of it is but borrowed and derived 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. And again, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ,’ Gal. ii. 20. If God withdraw his providential influence and supportation, 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, either 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 looketh 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; be 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 of God are of nought, and vain to be gloried in, when our sins are come to a height, and judgments are threatened and near.

Secondly, I will prove to you, that the true apprehension of this is mightily 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; as Rom. iv. 17, 18, What made Abraham to 'believe in hope against hope,' and give God so much credit and glory as he did? By his faith '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. As when the apostles went to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem, in the very face of opposition, whose interest led them to oppose it. When 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, slighted by the people, disputed against by their wise men, persecuted by the powers that then were, had no temporal interest to back it; and this to be promoted in the face of the learned world, by a few poor fisher men, when all civil disciplines were then in their ἀκμῆ and height. What encouraged them to this? The apostle telleth you, 1 Cor. i. 26-28, 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 are mighty, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are.' In short, that though magistracy and populacy were against them, the creature is as nothing, God all in all. Again, 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 would scarce be seen; the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world

would be 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 them, if God will not work by them. Again, to look for a blessing upon all the means: 1 Cor. iii. 7, 'For neither is he that planteth anything, 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, to keep 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.

Thirdly, I shall show you that 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 show 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 overruling power of the highest cause and agent, 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 turning and using them against God, either to oppose his interest, or defeat his judgments? So that I might rest here. But the meanest capacities will require more explicit application.

II. To teach us in this lottery of human affaire 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 did run in one certain tenor, men, that are mightily wrought upon by sense, would look no higher; but there is a nobler pursuit, a better happiness to be found elsewhere.

I.

The race is not always to the swift; but in the spiritual race, we ‘run not as uncertain,’ 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. 27. 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. 6; ‘Fruitful 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, Ps. iv. 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 by an uncertain providence.

III. What need there is God should be seen and sought unto in all our designs and resolutions 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 good 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, Prov. xvi. 13.

IV. The wisest and best of men must not expect always to be happy, but must prepare themselves for sinister chances; for the words are brought in upon this 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 future 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 of fit opportunities, and then the best preparations and sufficiencies will be lost. 'My times are in thy hand,' saith David, Ps. xxxi. 15. 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 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, the uncertainty of your own lives, the mutability of all worldly things. You speak arrogantly when you presume of success, and take more upon you than you are able to perform: 1 Sam. ii. 3, 'Talk no more exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth;' that is, presumptuous conceits of absolute success. And the apostle James, chap. 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. Your life is a vapour; and 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.' 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. 14-16, '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,’ &c.

V. Take heed of carnal confidence, or depending upon the sufficiency of any means, though never so likely to produce their effect. Partly because God delighteth to cross men in their carnal confidences, he blasteth those sufficiencies which we depend upon and rejoice in apart from himself, to maintain his own right. Success is his: ‘The battle is the Lord’s,’ 1 Sam. xvii. 47. He blasts men in the things they boast of. Asahel’s swiftness was his ruin; so was Ahithophel’s policy and Absalom’s hair. God saith to Babylon, thy understanding hath undone thee. Men often by their wit bring themselves into mischief, yea, into hell.

VI. To keep humble men of the best abilities and sufficiencies for any work.

I.

1. Before the event; for many times they meet with more disappointments than those that want them, and their best designs miscarry when meaner persons are carried through their difficulties with less ado.

2. After the event we must look above second causes, not attribute anything to our own strength or gifts, but to God’s assistance and blessing on our labours. ‘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.

VII. To 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.

The issue of all is this: Let us bear all things befalling us from the wise hand and providence of the Lord, and encourage ourselves in his all-sufficiency in all straits and difficulties.

SERMON XV. - Acts XXI. 14.

And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.—Acts XXI. 14.

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 were scattered and driven out of his dwelling by Paul's persecution, Acts viii. 4, 5; 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 some 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. God will be glorified by all manner of tempers and dispositions. 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 showeth thus it should be done with Paul at Jerusalem. This was usual with the prophets; as Isaiah went naked and barefoot to show what should be their usage under the king of Assyria, Isa. xx. 2, 3. Ezekiel was to pack up his stuff and remove, to signify what should be the lot of the people, Ezek.

xii. 3-5; 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 a sign which may be perpetuated in future ages, so the Lord Jesus, having vanquished death, hell, the grave, 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 needs Paul so often to be warned of his bonds? He had been told before, 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, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.' And then again, in this chapter, Acts xxi. 4, 'There were some disciples which 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. The prediction of troubles; so 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 love and affection to him; so that Paul was warned again and again.

Quest. But why was he warned so often?

Ans. 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. If a sudden and unexpected flood of miseries break in upon us, it is not because we want warning, but because we will not take warning. When we are well at ease, we will not think of death and the cross; and therefore, if we be unprovided, we may thank our own security.

II. The carriage of the saints upon this occasion. And there we may take notice of four things:—

1. The entire affection of the disciples to Paul, who had done them good: *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. Their entire affection to Paul: 'Both, we and they of that place be sought 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;' and Acts xix. 31, His friends desired him 'that he would not adventure into the theatre.' They have them in singular love for their worth's sake, and therefore, when they are in danger they weep sore, Acts xx. 37; and when they are dead they make great lamentation: 'Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him,' 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. All desires against God's secret will are not unlawful, when we afterwards 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.' And yet that was against God's secret will; it was in his heart to build God's house, and it was no sin, for there was no command to the contrary. So here they were 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 as well in what they say to us. 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,' Mat. xvi. 22, 23. 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. See Deut. xiii. 6, 7. In our affections to eminent instruments to God's glory, there may be much of carnal infirmity.

2. Here was Paul's firm resolution: 'He would not be persuaded.'

Did Paul do well in this? How doth this agree with that character of heavenly wisdom that it is 'easy to be entreated?' James 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 he was desired to avoid suffering, which was the end of his coming into the world, rejected the motion. It is notable, the Lord Jesus with the same indignation rebuketh Peter dissuading him from suffering, as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry. See Mat. xvi. 23, compared with Mat. iv. 10. 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 ye to break my heart? For I am not only ready to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of Christ' A little to clear the expression by the way.

Is it not a good thing to have a broken heart? And are not they that further it to be commended rather than reproved?

I answer—There is a twofold 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 soft-hearted.' But now the heart which is hard for God, and soft against God, is the heart which is a coward in sin; but like a lion, undaunted in all manner of sufferings. They 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, even 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 as Paul would not thrust himself upon danger without a warrant. It is the disposition of humble spirits not to be peremptory of their own conceits, but to submit to those that are wiser than themselves. Mat. iii. 15, 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.' When he was informed of Christ's mind, then he suffered him. So those

that were so zealous for inclosing of the common salvation, ‘When they heard that God had granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,’ Acts xi. 18. It showeth we should not be too stiff in our private conceits and humours, when a plain evidence appeareth to the contrary,—a lesson that men have great need to learn.

4. Their piety, the ground of their discretion: ‘The will of the Lord be done.’ The scripture speaks:—

[1.] Of God’s determining and decreeing will: Eph. i. 11, ‘He doth all things according to the counsel of his will.’

[2.] Of his approving or liking will: Rom. xii. 2, ‘That ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.’

The text speaks not of his commanded, but of his intended will; not of his will to be done *by* us, but of his will to be done *upon* us. God’s intended will is either—(1.) Secret, before the decree bring forth the issue and event; (2.) or else declared by the event. While it is secret, we pray for the accomplishment of it: Jer. xxix. 11, ‘I know the thoughts that I think towards you.’ &c. 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.

1. To God’s intended will, while it is yet kept secret.

That in every business we should ask his leave and blessing. It is a piece of religious manners to begin with God.

[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 would proceed either to curse or bless. By this means we acknowledge God, our dependence 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, 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 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, and refer it that he shall cast 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 a notable piece of faith. When I trust God absolutely, let him do with me what he pleaseth; but I know he is a good God, and he will do nothing but what is good, and 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; James iv. 15, 'We ought to say, If the Lord will;' 1 Cor. iv. 19, 'But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will.' So in many other places. 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. I confess it is not absolutely necessary in all cases to express ourselves so, but this disposition should be in our minds: 1

Cor. xi. 34, 'And the rest will I set in order when I come.' He doth not say there, 'If God will,' but yet he reserves that. 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, which guides all things in wisdom, power, and goodness. And the event may be against his desires, appetites, conceits, fancies, but he knows God will govern and do better for him than his own choices. He trusts all to God.

3. Our purposes and desires must be so moderated that we may be forearmed 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 show 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 a holy indifferency 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 pettishly solicited put us upon great vexation and disappointment, and that layeth us open to atheism, and distrust of God, 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: 1 Cor. ix. 16, 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel! '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 ducture and 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 secret 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 and

collect for 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 very quietly and contentedly, with hope and encouragement in the Lord. And that is the main point.

Doct. That it is the duty of all God's children to be willing to submit themselves to the dispensation of God's providence, in what ever befalls them or theirs.

In this point there is:—

I. Something implied, that all things come within the guidance of God's providence.

There is nothing so high but God doeth it: Dan. iv. 35, 'He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabit ants 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: Mat. x. 29, 30, 'Not a sparrow lights 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. 21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken,' &c. It is Chrysostom's gloss upon that place: He doth not say the thief, the Sabeian, 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 (chap. 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 are most contrary to us. The will of the Lord is to be seen.

II. That which is expressed is, that we ought to submit to the providence of God. I shall prove it:—

1. By the example of the Lord Jesus Christ: Mat. 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 curdled blood, yet he was willing to drink it, even the dregs, since it was his Father's will. But let me fully vindicate the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Object. You will say, Christ desires it to pass: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' How could Christ make an offer of prayers repugnant to God's will and purpose? He knew it was the will of his Father that he should suffer many things, and be slain, and had rebuked Peter resisting the soldiers. 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' John xviii. 11.

Many answers may be given for the clearing of this matter.

[1.] We must know, contrary to the monothelites, that there was a double will in Christ, as there was a double nature—divine and human. These are not contrary, but yet distinct. The divine nature would, because it was necessary to our redemption. The human nature was to show a reasonable aversion of what was destructive to it; and yet the human nature did not contradict the will of God, because he did it not absolutely, but only conditionally: 'Father, if it be possible.'

[2.] There is a deliberate elective will and a natural velleity. Now mark, the human nature did except against his suffering, not with a deliberate, elective will, but only by a natural velleity. There is a

resolute will which overcometh all impediments, and there is an innocent desire, showing itself in a simple complacency in that which is good, or a displacency to that which is evil, but goes no farther. Apply this to the business in hand. When Christ would have the cup pass, it is not meant of his resolute and effective will, but only of his will expressing a simple displacency of the human nature to what is destructive to it.

Aquinas gives us another distinction. There is a will natural and indeliberate, and a will deliberate and elective. The one showeth the sudden inclination of nature to what is good for us as we are living creatures; the other is an act of reason as we are reasonable creatures. The natural inclination of all creatures is to preserve themselves; but the deliberate will chooseth what the understanding judgeth to be good, all circumstances considered. The inclination of nature flees death and torments, but reason submitteth to it. As for instance, a bitter potion is against the inclination of nature, for, as we are living creatures we would be put to no pain; but the reasonable creature, by an elective will, takes that bitter potion for health. Cutting off a gangrened member is against the first inclination of man, as a living creature; we submit to it as a reasonable creature, lest it corrupt the whole body. So in the martyrs, the flesh could not but be against sufferings, being contrary to their well-being as living creatures; but the spirit, that is their reason, guided by grace, submitted to the greatest torments for the glory of God. Thus the Lord Christ saith, 'Let this cup pass.' There was the inclination of an innocent nature declining so dreadful an evil; but yet it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will; therefore, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'

Others to the same purpose. There were two things willed by Christ; one was *bonum naturae*, the good of nature; the other was the glory of God with our salvation; and the first was desired but subordinately to the second. So that the Lord Christ is a notable pattern that our appetites and desires are not to be according to the interests of the flesh, but for the glory and honour of God, and the good of others.

The next pattern we have is David, a man after God's own heart, in 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 good unto him.'

So Abraham, the father of the faithful, how contentedly doth he speak; and 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?' and 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 life his glory seems to depend, we have the same answer, 'God will provide.'

The next shall be of Eli: 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord; let him do whatsoever he pleaseth.' When the sentence was passed, he humbly submitteth. He doth not murmuringly say, Must I bear the punishment of my sons' iniquity? their will is not in my power; if they be 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 the great doctor of the Gentiles, St Paul: 2 Cor. xii. 7-9, 'And for this I besought the Lord thrice;' he knocked thrice at the throne of grace, as Christ prayed thrice, and Elijah prayed thrice for rain. Well, 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 infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions for Christ's sake.' He doth entertain it with some kind of 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.

Negatively, 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,' &c. 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 rod of God, the strokes of his correcting hand upon us.

But affirmatively, there is in it:—

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 smart and dreadful correction, but the Lord is righteous. And to the goodness of it, Isa. 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. The act of the will is accepting of it: Lev. xxvi. 41, 'If they shall accept of the punishment of their sin.' There is a consent and choice of the will; such a perfect correspondence between the temper of a gracious heart and the will of God, they take it well and kindly from God that it is no worse, as a patient takes bitter pills for his good. There are some kind of 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 no; 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 by a patience perforce, but there is a willing submission to what the Lord ordereth concerning us.

3. There is a command reached out over the affections of anger and sorrow. (1.) Anger, that we may not fret against the Lord: Ps. 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. So though it may be words do not break out, yet the heart boils, riseth, and dislikes God's dealing: Ps. lxii. 1, 'My soul, keep silence to God;' not only my tongue, but my soul. Thoughts are as audible with God as words; therefore there is a command upon our anger and indignation, that it may not swell and rise up against God's providence. (2.) Upon our sorrow, that it may not run into excess, causing disorder. We are allowed to grieve, but with temper and moderation. To be horny, flinty, dead, and sense less, 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 his tears, sorrows, and groans; therefore, 1 Cor. vii. 31, mourn we should, but as 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,' Ps. xlii. 5. The upper part of the soul checks the excesses of the lower part when its commands are slighted.

4; The tongue is bridled, lest discontent plash over; 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 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, and is resolved to be silent before God, and to give over his plea, 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. What are the grounds of this submission? For patience is wise and considerate, and proceeds upon solid reasons, as impatience is rash and unreasonable.

1. They see God in his providence: Ps. 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 in 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 yourselves 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 the 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 bid 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 impostume 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. That 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 hand 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 doest thou?' He hath an absolute dominion, and is not account able to any. A man may do with his own as he pleaseth. Why should we not allow him the common privilege of all proprietors? A man may cut out his own cloth as he pleases. 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 to be made 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 show 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 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 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 to obey and submit in all things.

3. This sovereignty of God is modified and mitigated 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, 'less than our iniquities deserve,' Ezra ix. 13. As the restored Israelites acknowledge, when they were in Babylon, they might have been in hell. Job xxxiv. 10, 'Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, or 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, 'He will not lay upon man more than right,' that he should 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; they look on all afflictions as federal dispensations, as appendages of the covenant of grace: Ps. 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, and charge him with want of love and tenderness towards his people; they are dearer to him than they are to you. Chrysostom shows 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 fleece, 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 church's sake. This providence seems to tend altogether to evince; but God knows 'how by these and these means to provide for his people; and you must not prescribe to him. It was blasphemy in Alphonsus to say, *Si Deo a consiliis adfuisset, 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. He would not have placed the horns of the beasts above their eyes, but under their eyes.' Such blasphemy do we secretly lisp out in our murmurings and discourses about providence, when we are questioning how this, that, and 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 showed 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.' And as 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 their troubles with many gracious experiences. The Lord doth things which seem very bitter to the carnal sense and gust, but when he hath defecated and refined our taste, then he sheds abroad his love into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 3, 5. Their adoption is cleared up, and the loss of outward comfort is accompanied with a greater increase of spiritual comfort. Again, he shows his love in ordering all things for their good, Rom. viii. 28. Out of what corner soever the wind blows, it blows good to the saints. 'Arise, north wind, and blow thou south,' &c. 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 good of the elect. So all that falleth out is either good or will tend to good.

Use. This teacheth us upon what grounds there should be such a submission to all personal and *domestical* calamities which may befall any of us, and to all that befall the church. It is the will of God; and 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 what ever 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: Deut. xxxiii. 3, 'Surely he loved his people; all the saints are in his hands.' When the disciples were sore troubled and affrighted, John vi. 20, 'Jesus comes to them and said, Be not afraid, it is I' that order this. 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 appears. 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 to them. We are very

tender of ourselves, and soon think we are low and tried enough, therefore would fain be delivered; but our wise Lord seeth we need more. When Christ came, then their 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 everything they see and hear. The very way of our mercies may be matter of terror to us. At length he discovereth 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.

In our darkest condition God seeth us, when we do not see him: Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23, and Job xxiii. 9, 10, 'I looked on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold!'

SERMON XVI. - John III. 16.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—John III. 16.

N these words you have the sum and substance of the gospel. In them observe:—

1. The fountain and original of all that grace and salvation which is brought unto us, God's unspeakable love to mankind: *God so loved the world.*
2. The way which God took to recover our lapsed condition, or the effect and fruit which flows from this fountain: *that he gave his only-begotten Son.*
3. The end of it: *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*; where take notice of—

[1.] The qualification, or the free and easy condition put upon men in the gospel: *that whosoever believeth in him.*

[2.] The benefit that resulteth to us, expressed negatively and affirmatively: *should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

First, The rise and beginning of all is God's inconceivable love: 'God so loved the world.' Where observe:—

1. The object: *the world.*
2. The act: *loved.*
3. The degree: *so loved.*

1. The word by which the object is expressed is 'the world,' which noteth mankind in its corrupt and miserable state: 1 John v. 19, 'The whole world lies in sin.' The world is a heap of men who had broken God's law, forfeited his love and favour; they neither loved nor feared God, but were unthankful and unholy; yet this world God loved.

2. The act: 'he loved.' The love of God is twofold—the love of benevolence and the love of complacence.

[1.] The love of benevolence is the pity and compassion of God towards man lying in sin and misery. This is understood in this place, as also in Titus iii. 4, 'The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.'

[2.] The love of complacence. So he loveth us when he hath made us lovely. In which sense it is said, Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness;' John xvi. 27, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye loved me.' This belongeth not to this place.

3. The degree: 'so loved.' He doth not tell you how much, but leaveth it to your most solemn, raised thoughts. It is rather to be conceived than spoken of, and admired rather than conceived.

Observe from the words:—

That the beginning and first cause of our salvation is the mere love of God. The outward occasion was our misery, the inward moving cause was God's love.

[1.] Love is at the bottom of all. We may give a reason of other things, but we cannot give a reason of his love. God showed his wisdom, power, justice, and holiness in our redemption by Christ. If you ask, Why he made so much ado about a worthless creature,

raised out of the dust of the ground at first, and had now disordered himself, and could be of no use to him? We have an answer at hand, Because he loved us. If you continue to ask, But why did he love us? We have no other answer but because he loved us; for beyond the first rise of things we cannot go. And the same reason is given by Moses, Deut. vii. 7, 8, 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you;' that is, in short, he loved you because he loved you. The same reason is given by our Lord Jesus Christ, Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' All came from his free and undeserved mercy; higher we cannot go in seeking after the causes of what is done for our salvation.

[2.] The most remarkable thing that is visible in the progress and perfection of our salvation by Christ is love. And it is meet that the beginning, middle, and end should suit. Nay, if love be so conspicuous in the whole design and carrying on of this blessed work, it is much more in the rise and fountain. God's great end in our redemption was the demonstration of his love and mercy to mankind; yea, not only the demonstration, but the commendation of it. That is the apostle's word, Rom. v. 8, 'God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' A thing may be demonstrated as real that is not commended or set forth as great. God's design was that we should not only believe the reality, but admire the greatness of his love. Now, from first to last love is so conspicuous that we cannot overlook it. Light is not more conspicuous in the sun than the love of God in our redemption; by Christ.

[3.] If there were any other cause, it must be either the merit of Christ, or some worthiness on our part.

(1.) The merit of Christ was not the first cause of God's love, but the manifestation, fruit, and effect of it. The text telleth, he first 'loved the world,' and then 'gave his only-begotten Son.' It is said, 1 John iii. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' Look, as we perceive and find out causes by their proper effects, so we perceive the love of God by the death of Christ. Christ is the principal means whereby God carrieth on the

purposes of his grace, and therefore is represented in scripture as the servant of his decrees.

(2.) No worthiness in us; for when his love moved him to give Christ for us, he had all mankind in his prospect and view, as lying in the polluted mass, or in a state of sin and misery, and then provided a Redeemer for them. God at first made a perfect law, which forbade all sin upon pain of death. Man did break this law, and still we break it day by day in every sin. Now when men lived, and went on in sin and hostility against God, he was pleased then to send his Son to assume our nature, and die for our transgressions. Therefore the giving of a Redeemer was the work of his free mercy. Man loved not God, yea, was an enemy to God, when Christ came to make the atonement: 1 John iv. 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' Col. i. 21, 'And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.' We were senseless of our misery, careless of our remedy; so far from deserving, that we desired no such matter. God's love was at the beginning, not ours.

Use 1. Is to confute all misapprehensions of God. It is the grand design of Satan to lessen our opinion of God's goodness. So he assaulted our first parents, as if God (notwithstanding all his goodness in their creation) was envious of man's felicity and happiness. And he hath not left off his old wont. He seeketh to hide God's goodness, and to represent him as a God that delighteth in our destruction and damnation, rather than in our salvation; as if he were inexorable, and hardly entreated to do us good. And why? That we may stand aloof from God, and apprehend him as unlovely. Or if he cannot prevail so far, he tempteth us to poor, unworthy, mean thoughts of his goodness and mercy. Now we cannot obviate the temptation better than by due reflections on his love in giving his Son for the world. This showeth that he is fuller of mercy and goodness than the sun is of light or the sea of water. So great an effect shows the greatness of the cause. Wherefore did he express his love in such a wonderful, astonishing way, but that we might have higher and larger thoughts of his goodness and mercy? By other effects we easily collect the perfection of his attributes; that his power is omnipotent, Rom. i. 20; that his knowledge is omniscient,

Heb. iv. 12, 13. And by this effect it is easy to conceive that his love is infinite, or that 'God is love.'

Use 2. Is to quicken us to admire the love of God in Christ.

There are three things which commend any favour done unto us;—
(1.) The good will of him that giveth; (2.) The greatness of the gift;
(3.) The unworthiness of him that receiveth. All concur here.

1. The good will of him that giveth. Nothing moved God to do this but his own love. It was from the free motion of his own heart, without our thought and asking. No other reason is given or can be given. We made no suit for any such thing; it could not enter into our minds and hearts; into our minds to conceive, or into our hearts to desire, such a remedy to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. Not into our minds, for it is a great mystery: 1 Tim.

iii. 16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness,' &c. Not into our hearts to ask or desire; for it would have seemed a strange request that we should ask that the eternal Son of God should assume our flesh, and be made sin and a curse for us. But grace hath wrought 'exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20; above what we can imagine, and above what we can pray for to him.

2. The greatness of the gift. Great things do even force their way into our minds, whether we will or no. The gift of Jesus Christ is so great, that the love of God is gone to the uttermost in it. He hath not a better Christ, nor a more worthy Redeemer, nor another Son to die for us; nor could the Son of God suffer greater indignities than he hath suffered for our sakes. God said to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12, 'Now I know that thou fearest God, since thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me,' God was not ignorant before, but the meaning is, this is an apparent proof and instance of it. So now we may know God loveth us; here is the manifest token and sign of it.

3. The unworthiness of him that receiveth; this is also in the case. We were altogether unworthy that the Son of God should be incarnate, and die for our sakes. This is notably improved by the apostle, Rom. v. 7, 8, 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man some would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us.' The apostle alludeth to the distinction familiar among the Jews: they had their good men, or bountiful; their righteous men, zealous for the law; and their wicked men, obnoxious to judgment. Peradventure one would venture his life for a very merciful person, but you shall hardly find any to be so liberal and friendly as to venture his life for a righteous and just man, or a man of rigid innocence. But mark, there are abating terms—*scarcely* and *perhaps*. The case is rare that one should die for another, be he never so good and righteous. But God's expression of mercy was infinitely above the proportion of any the most friendly man ever showed. There was nothing in the object to move him to it, when we were neither good nor just, but wicked. Without respect to any worth in us, for we were all in a damnable estate, he sent his Son to die for us, to rescue and free us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of eternal life. God so loved the world, when we had so sinned, and wilfully plunged ourselves into an estate of damnation.

But you will say, If this mercy be so great, why are men no more affected with it? I answer:—

1. Because of their stupid carelessness; they do not see the need of this mercy, and therefore do not prize the worth of it. If they were sensible that there is an avenger of blood at their heels, or God's wrath making inquisition for sinners, they would more earnestly run into the city of refuge, Heb. vi. 18.

2. They do not truly believe this mystery of grace, but speak of it by rote and hearsay, after others. All affections follow faith: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.'

3. They do not seriously consider the importance of it, therefore the weightiest objects do not stir us; our minds are taken up about toys and trifles.

4. They have not the lively light of the Spirit: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' It is not our dry thoughts and doctrinal knowledge that will affect and change our heart, till the Spirit turneth our light into love and our knowledge into taste.

Use 3. Is to exhort us:—

1. To improve this love. It is an invitation to seek after God; for see what preparations his love hath made to recover you to himself and will not you be recovered? God doth not hate you, and therefore you need not flee from him as a revenging God: He ‘so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.’ In that capacious expression you are not excluded, therefore exclude not yourselves. And such a broad foundation of his mercy being laid, what may you not expect from it? 2 Cor. v. 19. He hath procured a remedy and ransom; as soon as you repent and believe, you shall have the comfort of it.

2. It exhorteth us also to answer it with a fervent love to him that hath given such a signal demonstration of his love to us: 1 John iv. 19, ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ Men always expect to be loved there where they love, and think it hard dealing if it be not so.

3. Let your love to God be like his love to you. Love was at the bottom of all this grace; let it be at the bottom of all your duties: ‘Let all your things be done in love,’ 1 Cor. xvi. 14. Let your carriage apparently be a life of love: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ‘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 which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.’

II. I come now to the second branch of the text—the way God took to express his love to us: He ‘gave his only-begotten Son,’ Jesus Christ is so called to distinguish him from the adopted children, and to show his personal subsistence, which is by way of filiation, or being eternally begotten in the divine essence. So great was our misery, that no less remedy would serve the turn; and so great God’s mercy, that he withheld him not from us.

Doct. The greatest manifestation of God’s love to the sons of men is the giving his onlybegotten Son to be their Redeemer and Saviour.

There is a twofold giving of Christ:—

1. He is given *for* us.
2. He is given *to* us.

1. He was given for us when he was sent into the world to be come bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and to die for our sins. This is spoken of, Rom. viii. 32, 'God spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all.'

2. He is given to us, when we have a special interest in him, and a participation of his benefits: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'Christ Jesus is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'

He is given for us, as he took our nature; he is given to us, as he dwelleth in our hearts by faith. He is given for us, as he undertook the work of our redemption; he is given to us, as he accomplished! and brings about our conversion to God, and applying to us the benefits of his purchase. I shall speak of both.

I. As he is given for us, it mightily bespeaketh the love of God, and his care of our salvation. In creation, God made us after his own image and likeness; in redemption, his Son came in the similitude and likeness of sinful flesh. In creation, the angels were dignified above us, but not in redemption, Heb. ii. 16. He did not redeem the apostate angels. In short, this was the most convenient way for God to bring about the purposes of his grace towards man, for these reasons:—

1. That our faith might be more certain, by the appearing of the Son of God in our nature, by his dying, rising again from the dead, and ascending into heaven, and so giving a sensible proof of our whole religion.

[1.] By appearing in human nature he had opportunity of conversing with men, to convince them of the gracious will of God, and teach them obedience to him, not only by his doctrine, but his example, and securing the truth of both by the many miracles which he wrought in the days of his flesh: John vi. 27, 'Him hath the Father sealed;' that is, owned, acknowledged, demonstrated, that whatever he did or said was the will and good pleasure of God.

[2.] By his dying he satisfied the justice of God, and so maketh a way for the course of his mercy to us, that we might obtain release and pardon of all our sins and transgressions against the law of God: Rom. iii. 25, 26, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,

for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,' &c.

[3.] His rising again from the dead was a visible satisfaction to the world that his sacrifice was accepted: Rom. iv. 25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' The unbelieving world by that supreme act of power have no reason to stand out against his faith and doctrine.

[4.] By his ascending into heaven, the truth of eternal life was more confirmed, for thereby he gave us a real demonstration of that glory which he spoke of and promised to his disciples and followers: 1 Peter i. 21, 'God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.' He himself is entered into that happiness, and we shall follow him.

2. That our hope might be more strong and lively, being built upon the example of Christ and his promises to us. The example of Christ is of great support to us in all our troubles, for if we fare as he fared in this world, we shall fare as he fareth in the world to come. Therefore we are said to be 'begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' 1 Peter i. 3; that is, have a ground of hope and cheerful assurance, as he by his sufferings came to his reward and crown, so shall we obtain the matter of his promises: 1 John ii. 25, 'And this is the promise which he hath promised, even eternal life;' John xii. 26, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.'

3. That our love to God may be more fervent. If God had saved us some other way, the salvation had been something less; for according to the degrees of the gift, so is our obligation. Now God would oblige us at the highest rate, and therefore he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us. It is said, he 'spared not his own Son,' Rom. viii. 32. There is a twofold not sparing—either in a way of impartial justice, or in a way of transcendent bounty; the last is chiefly intended in that place, though the other is not altogether excluded. He delivered him up to die for our sakes. Now surely this should gain much upon us, when God thought nothing too good to part with for our salvation.

4. It makes our obedience more ready, for Jesus Christ came to live by the same law that we were bound to: Gal. iv. 4, 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' Yea, to obey God at the dearest rates: Heb. v. 8, 9, 'Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' He submitted unto and performed the whole law: his obedience cost him dear, since an ignominious and shameful death was a part of it.

II. God, that gave Christ for us, giveth him also to us, and with him the benefits of pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and right to eternal life, if we be duly qualified. The offer is made in the gospel: on our part there is required only a thankful acceptance of Christ on his own terms. This also is the greatest gift, for the other is in order to this, and this is the completing of it, and applying it for our comfort. I shall prove it by three reasons:—

1. Without Christ there is no recovery of what we lost.
2. No removal of that misery we incurred.
3. No obtaining of what we should desire and pursue after as our proper happiness.

1. No recovery of what we lost. What did we lose by the fall?—the image and favour of God, and fellowship with God.

[1.] The image of God was defaced by sin. Man abode not in the honour of his creation, but became as the beasts that perish. Now the restitution of this great gift we only have by Christ, who is the pattern and author of it. The pattern: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The author: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which ye have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' Till we are in him, and be one with him, we have not this great benefit: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' We are destitute of that image of God wherein we were created, and better we had never been born, unless new born.

[2.] The favour of God, which is an immediate consequent of his image. God delighted in man as innocent, but man sinful is the object of God's wrath, loathing, and aversion. Therefore Christ died to recover man to the love and favour of God: 2 Cor. v. 14, To make peace between the offended sovereign and subject offending; to interpose between God angry and man guilty. Now this breach continueth till we are reconciled by Christ, till we love God, and are beloved by him. And better we had been in a lower rank of creatures, than to continue under God's displeasure; for the misery of the beast dies with them, death puts an end to all their pains at once; but the wrath of God, not appeased by Christ, continues on the sinner for ever.

[3.] Fellowship with God was lost by the fall. Man was driven out of paradise, and shut out of God's presence by a flaming sword (Gen. iii. 24), the emblem of his wrath, and all intercourse was broken off; but Christ came to open the way, 'by whom we have access unto God with boldness and confidence,' Eph. iii. 12. Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.' We need daily access to God, we cannot live without him. How can we look him in the face with any comfort when we have no mediator? we cannot have any serious thoughts of him without trembling.

2. There is removal of that misery which we have incurred, which is the death and curse wherein we are involved by sin. As long as the curses of the law stand in full force against us, we can have no firm confidence; if we look to time past, there is a huge heap of sins, the least of which is enough to sink us into hell; if we look to time present, our nature being not yet healed, our hearts swarm with divers lusts, and we are ready to sin again; if to time to come, death, hell, and judgment affright us. Christ findeth us where Adam left us, in the highway to hell and damnation: John iii. 18, 'Condemned already;' and to hope for any release, unless it be upon God's terms, is to make him untrue and unjust. Certainly God will not break his word, and disturb the order of his covenant for your sakes. Therefore how will you escape the curse and condemnation of the law if Christ be not given to you?

3. There is no obtaining of what we should desire and pursue after as our proper happiness, but only by Christ. Man was made for

God, and cannot be happy without him, and he is most completely happy in the full enjoyment of him. Now there is no coming to that blessed state but by Christ: John xiv. 6, He is the way to the Father. The most eminent sense is with respect to our final blessedness, when we come into his immediate presence: so 1 John v. 11, 'This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' It is Christ alone that can put us in the way, and bring us home to eternal bliss.

Use 1. Is to confute the world's opinion, who measure God's love by outward things or worldly felicity. Alas! the love or hatred of God is not known by these things, Eccles. ix. 1, 2, neither can the heart of man be satisfied with them; these things can give us a bellyful, but not a heartful, Ps. xvii. 14, 15. Those that take up with the creature, never felt the weight of sin, are not serious in matters of eternal concernments. The only true happiness is in having God for our God, Christ for our Redeemer, the Spirit for our sanctifier and comforter.

Use 2. Is to excite us to bless God for Jesus Christ. The apostle doth frequently in all his groans and afflictions: Rom. vii. 25, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' &c.; 'Blessed be God for the grace of Jesus Christ,' whereby we have pardon for what is past, and grace for the future to perform what God will accept. So 1 Cor. xv. 57, 'Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' God by Christ hath given us the victory over sin, death, and hell. So should you, especially in the Lord's Supper—it is an Eucharist be thankful that God hath given Christ for us, which is an unspeakable gift. And now he cometh to give him to you, afford him a hearty welcome into your souls as you take him, and apply him by faith, and give up yourselves to him as his redeemed ones. You come to look upon Christ, who made his soul an offering for sin; he is here represented as crucified before your eyes, and is by God specially offered to your acceptance, and with him pardon and life. You must be joyful and thankful for these great gifts and benefits, so dearly bought, so surely sealed, so freely offered, and in the sense of all this devote yourselves to God.

Use 3. Make it your main care to see if Christ be given to us. Without him you cannot have any true remedy against evil, nor any solid hope of good. Certain it is that in our natural estate we were

without him. Is there a change? The two great ends for which Christ came were, to appease God, and to be the principle of a new life. Is Christ given for these ends? Have you received him? Do not think Christ fell from heaven into your bosom whether you would or no. Did you ever feel your misery without him, and cry mightily to God, Give me Christ, or else I die, and perish for ever? I confess, conversion is not always evident in feeling, but it is in the effect and fruit. What fruits have you then abiding in you? The great fruit of Christ being given to you is the Spirit's dwelling in you: Rom. viii. 1, 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.' The great work of the Spirit is to sanctify the soul to the service of him that redeemed us: Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Clear this, and the cause is decided.

III. I come now to the third part of the text, which is the end of this love, 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting;' where I observe—

1. The connection of our duty and privilege. Christ died to procure a covenant wherein pardon and life is offered to us upon gracious terms. In the gospel we must observe what God hath promised, and what we must do; both must be alike acceptable to us, the duty as well as the benefit, or else we consent not to the whole tenor of the covenant.

2. The universality of the proposal, that *whosoever* believeth on him; no sorts of men are excluded from the remedy but those that exclude themselves by their impenitency and unbelief.

3. The nature of this act and duty which giveth a right and title to the benefits offered, and that is believing: no more is mentioned here. But none truly believe but those that carry themselves accordingly, or perform the duties which that belief calleth for. If it be such a lively operative faith, it will secure our title to these benefits.

4. The benefits are negatively and positively expressed; negatively, they 'shall not perish; positively, but 'have everlasting life.'

[1.] The negative expression is mentioned, partly because of our former deserts; we incurred the sentence of eternal death, which is taken off from penitent believers; they shall not be condemned with the unbelieving world: partly because of our present fears; guilt presents destruction before our eyes, but the cause of that is taken away as sin is remitted and weakened: and partly to support us in our troubles: they may be afflicted, but not perish for ever; chastened, but not destroyed; not for perdition, but amendment.

[2.] The positive part is expressed partly to show our heavenly Father's love, who cannot be satisfied till he hath brought us into his immediate presence; and partly to answer the desire of the faithful, who long for everlasting communion with him; we cannot be satisfied till we be for ever with the Lord, in a perfect state of subjection to him, and fruition of him.

Doct. That faith is the way which God hath appointed whereby to receive benefits by Christ.

I. What faith is.

II. How this is to be understood.

III. Why the gospel covenant layeth so much weight on it.

What is faith? Surely it concerns us to know it, since the scriptures speak so much of it everywhere. There are in it three things;—(1.) Assent; (2.) consent; (3.) trust.

1. A firm and cordial assent to this truth, that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of mankind, who came down from heaven and suffered for our sins, and became the foundation of that new covenant which offereth pardon and hopes of bliss to all those who, feeling the burden of their sins, will trust their souls upon Christ's redemption and ransom, and forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take him for their only Lord and Saviour, that by him they may return to God. This assent is a part of faith, but this is not all. The reason able soul in man hath life, sense, appetite, and motion, as the souls of the beasts have; but this is not the difference between us and them: besides sense, life, and appetite, we have reason and discourse. So here, knowledge and assent are implied in faith, but more is required to make it justifying and saving. Assent is good as it is inductive of other things, or leadeth on other things, to wit,

choice and trust; and it is not only good, but necessary, lest we build without a foundation. It was of great weight heretofore, when Christ's person and doctrine was more questioned and contradicted: John viii. 24, 'Unless ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;' lose all the benefit of his coming. It is said, 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.' It was a mighty thing then to believe and profess Christ to be the Messiah, and to cleave to that profession, whatever temptations they had to the contrary. But I dare not leave the decision of men's spiritual estate upon that trial only; the bleak winds that blew then in their faces, blow now on our backs; and it is as dangerous now to deny Christ to be the Messiah, as it was for them to profess it. However, assent is still necessary, to put the greater life and power into our faith; for if the fire were well kindled, it would of itself break out into a flame. The stronger our assent is, the more powerful to beget love and dependence on God's promises, obedience to his commands, and perseverance notwithstanding temptations. This assent, to do its work, must be firm and cordial.

[1.] Firm. You must believe unfeignedly that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer of the world: Acts ii. 36, 'Let the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' The word signifies *safely*, they may venture their all upon it: John xvii. 8, 'They have known.' There is a common customary superficial belief, that men take up upon the credit of their forefathers, and the consent of the country where they live, and there is a sound persuasion of the truth of the gospel wrought in us by the Spirit of God. And though human credulity doth little, yet this last serveth to renew the soul: Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven;' when Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This makes us victorious over the devil, the world, and the flesh: 1 John v. 5, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' If this important supreme truth were well believed, it would doubtless prevail against the allurements of the world and the flesh, and make men see that they have something else than this deceitful world to look after. Truths go to the quick when soundly believed.

[2.] Cordial. Many seem verily to be persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God, but are no way affected with this mystery of grace, nor changed. The devils may give a bare assent to this great gospel truth. Compare Mark v. 7 with Mat. xvi. 16, the confession of the devil with the profession of Peter. The devil owned Jesus to be the Son of the most high God, as well as Peter, the Son of the living God. Austin's observation is very good: *Hoc dicebat Petrus, hoc dicebant daemones, Petrus ut Christum amplecteretur, daemones ut Christum ab iis recederet*—Peter said the same thing, and the devil the same thing; Peter said it that he might embrace Christ, the devils that he might depart from them. It is one thing to be of this opinion that Christ is the Saviour of the world, another to accept and receive him into our hearts.

2. The next thing which I shall observe in faith is a consent to receive Christ as God offereth him to us in the gospel: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him,' &c. He gave power to become the sons of God to as many as believed on his name.

[1.] It is not a rash consent, but such as is deliberate, serious, and advised. When we assure men that God in the gospel calls them to accept of Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and that they shall be pardoned and saved, they are ready to say with all their heart; but they do not consider what it is to receive Christ, and therefore retract their consent almost as soon as it is given. Therefore Christ directeth us to sit down and count the charges, that we may allow for opposition and temptations, Luke xiv. 28-33. When you have considered his strict laws, made a full allowance for incident difficulties and temptations, and can resolve, forsaking all others, to cleave to him alone for salvation.

[2.] It must not be a forced and involuntary consent, such as a person maketh when he is frighted into a little religiousness for the present, but would never mind it, nor yield to it, if he were in a state of full liberty. It may be in a distress or pang of conscience; by all means they must have Christ; or when sick are afraid to die, or under some great judgments; as the Israelites when they heard the thundering on Mount Sinai: 'All that thou hast commanded us, we will do.' Deut. v. 27. No; this will not serve the turn: the will must be effectually inclined to Christ, and to God the Father by him, as our utmost felicity and end. All Christ's people are a willing people, Ps. cx. 3.

[3.] It must be a resolved consent, a fixed, not an ambulatory will, which we take up for a purpose, or at some certain times for a solemn duty or so. No; you must 'cleave to him with full purpose of heart,' Acts xi. 23. Trample upon everything that would separate you from him, Phil. iii. 8, 9; Rom. viii. 36, to the end. It must not be a feeble consent, such as is contradicted by every foolish and hurtful lust, but a prevalent consent, such as can maintain itself against difficulties and temptations, and the oppositions of the flesh, and control all other desires and delights.

[4.] It must not be partial, but a total, universal consent; not only a consent of dependence or trust, to accept of Christ as our Saviour, but a consent of subjection to him as our Lord: Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Many would have Christ and his benefits, but they would not yield that he should reign over them: Luke xix. 27, 'Those mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.' But the true believing implieth a taking of Christ and his yoke: Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you,' &c. Christ and his cross, Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' It is accompanied with a resolution to obey his laws and keep his commandments, that we may abide in his love.

3. The third thing in faith is trust, spoken of Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Trust is a dependence upon Christ for the blessings which he hath procured for us, and promised to us; and is represented by the metaphors of staying the mind on God: 'Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' By the staying of the mind is intended its fixedness and stability, when, being satisfied with the promises, we can comfortably wait for the event and issue. The other metaphor is, committing ourselves to God: 2 Tim.

i. 12, 'For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' When we can trust our all in Christ's hands, knowing that he can give us that righteousness whereby we may stand before God, and have comfortable access to him, and at length give us that eternal life which is our supreme happiness. When you can trust him

for deliverance from the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and for the beginning, strengthening, and preserving of grace in us to everlasting life, you have obtained a good degree of faith. Only for the further opening of this trust, I must observe to you:—

[1.] That this trust respects all Christ's offices, which are, prophet, priest, and king. You trust him as a prophet when you give up yourselves as his disciples to the conduct of his word and Spirit, being persuaded that he will infallibly teach you the way to true happiness: John vi. 68, 69, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This trust is our remedy against all false religions; for what should draw us from the true and chief doctor of the church? You trust him as a priest, when you believe the value of his merit and sacrifice, and comfort yourselves with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with more boldness and hope of mercy upon the account of his intercession, especially in your great extremities, Heb. iv. 14-16. Therefore we may pray confidently, and make an open and free discovery of our wants and requests to God, who will relieve us, and do what is best for us in a fit season, when we most want it and least expect it. We must trust him as a king, when we become his subjects, and are persuaded that he will govern us in truth and righteousness, in order to our salvation, and defend us by his mighty power till he hath brought us to glory and blessedness: 2 Tim. iv. 18, 'The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.'

[2.] That this trust is practical, and is not to be determined by our confidence so much as obedience and resolution to take the way which God hath prescribed, that we may obtain the blessings which he hath promised to us. This consideration is necessary, partly because God or Christ will be trusted no farther than he hath obliged himself, and so far we may depend upon him. Now Christ hath only obliged himself to be 'the author of eternal salvation to those that obey him,' Heb. v. 9. Partly because this obedience is difficult, self-denial is required, Mat. xvi. 24, 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself,' &c. A surer note of our faith than a confidence or a presumption that we shall fare well enough though we indulge the ease and desires of the flesh, and gratify

our interest in the world; and therefore, faith being an obediencial confidence, doth confute these vain conceits. Many think they may the more boldly venture on sin, the more they believe, or seem to believe, the grace of God in Christ. Others think all their business is to get a victory over their consciences, and though they do not deny their lusts, yet if they can be strongly persuaded that God will be merciful to them in Christ, they shall not perish but obtain everlasting life. No; we must obey, we must deny ourselves, or else we do not trust Christ to bring us to heaven in his own ways and methods, but trust to some vain conceits of our own.

II. How this is to be understood, 'that whosoever *believeth*,' since many other things are required of us, as repentance, mortification of sin, self-denial, new obedience or holiness? Luke xiii. 5, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Mortification: 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.' Self-denial: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' New obedience or holiness: Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' I answer All truths are not delivered in one place, and therefore a solitary faith will not bring us to heaven, but that which is seconded with other things. But more distinctly:—

1. Faith is not required to exclude other things that are connexed with it by the ordination of God. For every one that believeth Christ, believeth the whole gospel to be true. Except against one part and you may except against all the rest. Now it is evident in the gospel that without regeneration, repentance, and holiness, no man can be saved and see God; therefore every one that believeth in Christ must trust him to obtain it in the way that he hath appointed and promised to give it.

2. Faith is not required to exclude other things that are included in the nature of it, or flow as genuine effects from such a cause. A purpose of obedience is included in the nature of faith, and actual obedience is the fruit of it. Every one that believeth Christ receiveth him in all his offices; therefore a purpose of obedience is included in the nature of it; and if faith be sincere, universal obedience in self-denial, mortification, and our duty to God and men, will naturally be

derived from it. Therefore, as he that is to entertain a king makes reckoning of his train, and that he will not come alone, so every one of whom faith in Jesus Christ is required must reckon that his faith must be evidenced to be sincere by the fruits of it.

III. Why is faith required, that we may receive benefit by Christ?

II.

For these reasons;—(1.) In respect of God; (2.) In respect of Christ; (3.) In respect of the creature; (4.) In respect of our comforts.

1. In respect of God, that our hearts may be possessed with a full apprehension of his grace, who in the new covenant appeareth not as a revenging and condemning God, but as a pardoning God. This reason is rendered by the apostle, Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith, that it might be of grace.' The law brought in the terror of God, by being the instrument of revealing sin, and the punishment due thereunto: ver. 15, 'The law worketh wrath, for where there is no law there is no transgression,' no such stinging sense of it; but the gospel brought in grace. The law stated the breach, but the gospel showed the way of our recovery. And therefore faith doth more agree with grace, as it makes God more amiable and lovely to us, and beloved by us, by the discovery of his goodness and grace. The saving of man by Christ, that is, by his incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, do all tend to possess our hearts with his abundant grace. To the same tend also his merciful covenant, gracious promises, and all the benefits given to us; his Spirit, pardon, and communion with God in glory, all is to fill our hearts with a sense of the love of God. And all this is no more than necessary; for a guilty conscience is not easily settled, and brought to look for all kind of happiness from one whom we have so much wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God, Gen. iii. 30; and sin still makes us hang from him. Guilt is suspicious, and if we have not one to lead us by the hand, and bring us to God, we cannot abide his presence. For this end serveth faith; that sinners, being possessed of the goodness and grace of God, may be recovered and return to him by a fit means. In the new covenant, repentance more distinctly respects God, and faith respecteth Christ: Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Repentance respects God, because from God we fell, and to God we

must return. We fell from him, as we withdrew our allegiance, and sought our happiness elsewhere; to him we return, as our rightful and proper happiness; but faith respects the Mediator, who is the only remedy of our misery, and the means of our eternal blessedness. He opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and actually bringeth us into this way by his renewing and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity both to please and enjoy God; and that is the reason why faith in Christ is so much insisted on, as our title and claim to the blessedness of the new covenant. It hath a special aptitude and fitness for our recovery from sin to God, because it peculiarly respects the Mediator by whom we come to him.

2. With respect to Christ.

[1.] Because the whole dispensation of grace by Christ cannot well be apprehended by anything but faith; partly because the way of our recovery is so supernatural, strange, and wonderful, that unless we believe God's testimony, how can we be persuaded of it? That the carpenter's son should be the Son of that great architect and builder who framed heaven and earth; that life should come to us by the death of another; that God should be made man, and the judge a party, and he that knew no sin be condemned as a criminal person; that one crucified should procure the salvation of the whole world, and be Lord of life and death, and have such power over all flesh as to give eternal life to whom he will;—reason is puzzled at these things; faith can only unravel them. Partly because the comfort of the promises is so rich and glorious, and the persons upon whom it is bestowed so unworthy, that it cannot easily enter into the heart of a man that God will be so good and gracious to us: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared for them that love him.' Therefore, sense and reason could look for no such thing. Faith is necessary, and a strong faith, that it may work upon us. These are things which we could neither imagine nor hope for. Partly because the chief of our blessings lie in another world, and nature cannot see so far off, 2 Peter i. 9. Partly because Christ's most sincere people are afflicted with so many difficulties, and so seemingly forsaken; and temptations to unbelief are many and pressing, that it is hard to maintain any life in ourselves unless we have faith, that is, a strong assent and invincible trust. Well, now,

consider for what good reason God requireth faith. Sense only looks to things seen and felt; reason seeth effects in their causes, and yet but probably; but faith is a believing such things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them; and surely this only can sustain us in the expectation of God's grace and mercy unto eternal life. Whilst we are employed in duties so opposite to the bent of the carnal heart, and have so many temptations to the contrary, what can support us but a strong and lively faith?

[2.] Till we believe in Christ, we can have no comfort or use of all his offices. How can we learn of him the way of salvation, till we believe him to be the prophet sent of God to teach the world the way to true happiness? Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' How can we obey him, unless we believe in him that he is our Lord, who hath power over all flesh, at whose judgment we must stand or fall? Acts xvii. 30, 31, 'Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.' How can we depend upon the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and be comforted with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with boldness and hope of mercy in his name, and be confident that he will justify, sanctify, and save us, unless we believe that he is a priest, who once made an atonement, and continually makes intercession for us? Heb. ix. 25. In the days of his flesh, when any came for any benefit to him, he put him upon his trial, 'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' Mark ix. 23, 'Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' 'Believest thou that I am able?' to Martha, John xi. 26. Thus they were not capable of any benefit till they believed.

3. With respect to that holiness and obedience which God expected from the creature. Christ came to restore us to God, which he doth both as a Saviour and lawgiver to his church; and till we believe in, him, both these qualities and functions miss of their effect.

[1.] As a Saviour, he came to take away the curse of the law, and to put us into a capacity to. serve and please God, by giving us his Spirit to renew our natures and heal our souls: Isa. liii. 5, 'The

chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed;’ 1 Peter ii. 24,. ‘Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.’ We shall never mind our duty, nor be capable to, perform it, unless we believe that he is such a Saviour.

[2.] As a lawgiver, obliging us by his authority to live in obedience unto God. The kingdom of the Mediator is clearly subordinate to the kingdom of God; for he came not to vacate our duty, but to establish it; he came to restore the lost groat to the owner, the lost sheep to the possessor, the lost son to the father. As the grace of Christ doth not vacate the mercy of God, so the authority of Christ, that *novum jus imperii*, doth not free us from the authority of God. Now, who will submit to an authority that is not convinced of it, or doth not believe it? But when once we believe; then we bow heart and knee.

4. With respect to our comfort. Often in scripture faith is represented as a quieting grace. The comfort, quietness, and peace of the soul dependeth much upon faith in Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, which banishes our fears, and makes us in our greatest hardships to trust Christ with all our happiness, and to feast the soul with a constant peace and everlasting joy. Whether this world be turned upside down and be dissolved; whether we be in poverty and sickness, or in health or wealth; whether we be under evil repute or good; whether persecution or prosperity befall us, how little are we concerned in all these if we ‘know in whom we have believed’? 2 Tim. i. 12. Heaven is where it was before, and Christ is at the right hand of God; how little then should all these things disturb the peace and comfort of that soul that shall live with God for ever? Ps. cxii. 7. But sin is our greatest trouble. If sin be your trouble, I answer, Is it your infirmity or iniquity? If infirmity, ‘There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,’ &c., Rom. viii. 1. If iniquity, break off your sin by repentance, and then there may be comfort for you; for ‘Christ came to save us from our sins.

Use 1. Is to confute men’s presumptions of their eternal good estate, whereby many damnably delude their own souls.

1. Some, when they hear that whosoever believeth shall be saved, have a carnal notion of Christ, that if he were alive they would own him, and receive him into their houses, and use him more friendly than the Jews did. This is but a knowing Christ ‘after the flesh,’ 2 Cor. v. 16. He is not to be received into your houses, but into your hearts. Besides, we do not know our own hearts, or what we should have done if we had lived then; a person of such contemptible appearance as Christ was, and so free in his reproofs of the sins of the times, would not have been for our turn no more than theirs. The Jews said, Mat. xxiii. 30, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been guilty of the blood of the prophets.’ The memory of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was as detestable to the carnal Jews as that of Judas and Pontius Pilate to Christians; but they were not a whit the better men, no more are we.

2. They do great reverence to his name and memory, profess themselves Christians, and abhor Turks and infidels. No; this will not do neither. Many prize Christ’s name that neglect his office; honouring the physician without taking his remedies never brought health. They have learned to speak well of Christ by rote after others, but they do not savingly and sincerely believe in him to cure and heal their souls, and suffer him to do the work of a mediator there. The other respect is to be ascribed to the chance of their birth: they have the happiness to be born there where Christ is the God of the country; that which makes others Turks and infidels makes them Christians: but though they stand upon the higher ground, they are not the taller men.

3. They are very willing to be forgiven by Christ, and to obtain eternal life; but this is what mere necessity requires them. They will not suffer him to do his whole work, to sanctify them, and fit them to live to God, nor part with their nearest and dearest lusts, and come into the obedience of the gospel; or at least, if Christ will do it for them, without their improving this grace, or using his holy means, they are contented. But ‘having such precious promises,’ and such a blessed Redeemer, we are to ‘cleanse ourselves,’ 2 Cor. vii. 1. The work is ours, though the grace be from him. So Gal. v. 24, ‘They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.’

4. Some have a strong conceit that they shall be saved and have benefit by Christ. This, which they call their faith, may be the greatest unbelief in the world; that men living in their sins shall yet do well enough is to believe the flat contrary of what God had spoken in his word: 1 Cor. vi. 9, ‘Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor drunkards, nor effeminate persons,

&c., shall inherit the kingdom of God.’ It is not strength of conceit, but the sure foundation of our hope, that will support us; nor are they the most happy who have the least trouble, but who have the least cause.

Use 2. Do we believe in the Son of God? Here will be the great case of conscience for settling our eternal interest.

1. If we believe, Christ will be precious to us: 1 Peter ii. 7, ‘Unto them which believe, he is precious.’ Christ cannot be accepted where he is not valued when other things come in competition; with him, and God will not be prodigal of his grace.

2. Where there is true faith, the heart will be purified: Acts xv. 9, ‘Purifying their hearts by faith.’

3. If you do believe in Christ, the heart will be weaned from the world: 1 John v. 4, ‘For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’

4. If you have the true faith, it works by love: Gal. v. 6, ‘For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love.’

By these things will the case be determined. Then the comfort and sweetness of this truth falls upon your hearts, that ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

SERMON XVII. - Deut. XXX. 15.

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.—
Deut. XXX. 15.

OSSES, the man of God, having acquainted the people with the tenor of God's commandments, both concerning worship and civil conversation, doth enforce all by a pregnant exhortation, laying before their eyes the blessings of obedience, and the plagues and curses that should overtake them in case they should decline from the ways of the Lord thus recommended to them; in all which he showeth himself not only as an ordinary preacher speaking by way of exhortation and doctrinal threatening, but as a special prophet speaking by way of prediction, and that with such clearness and certainty that these few chapters may be looked upon as an exact calendar and prognostication, wherein the good or bad days of this people are expressly calculated and fore told; yea, comparing events with the prediction, you would rather conceive Moses his speech to be an authentic register and chronicle of what is past than an infallible prophecy of what was to come: nothing good or bad hath befallen this people from the beginning to this day but what is here foretold. What is more largely declared upon in this exhortation is contracted into a narrow room and summary here in the text: 'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.'

In the words observe:—

1. The matter propounded, in two pairs, that have a mutual connection one with another:

life and good, death and evil.

2. The manner of proposal: *I have set before thee.*

3. A duty inferred or attention excited: *see.*

1. The matter propounded, a double pair or conjugation: 'Life and good, death and evil.' Life as the end, good as the means leading to life; or else, life, that is, the enjoyment of God; and good, the felicity following it. The Septuagint changeth the order, τῆν ζωὴν καὶ τὸν θάνατον, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν.

2. The manner of proposing: 'I have set before thee.' Septuagint, δὴ δεκά προ προσώπου σου σήμερον; that is, in a lively manner laid forth and offered for choice. We have a saying, ἀντικείμενα παράλληλα μάλιστα φαίνεται, that contraries put together do mutually illustrate each other. Here is good and evil, life and death, put together, that we may embrace the one and eschew

the other. As the poets feign of Hercules when he was young, virtue and vice came to woo and make court to him; virtue, like a sober chaste virgin, offering him labours with praise and renown; vice, like a painted harlot, wooing him with the blandishments of pleasure. So, in the 9th of Proverbs, wisdom and folly are represented both pleading to draw in the hearts of men to them: ver. 4, compared with the 16th, ‘Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith, Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mingled;’ the one hath her pleasures and the other hath her pleasures, only the pleasures of folly are ‘stolen waters’ and ‘bread eaten in secret,’ comforts we get by stealth, jollity, and mirth, when conscience is asleep. So here Moses layeth before them the fruit of obedience—and disobedience life and death.

3. The word exciting attention: ἰδοῦ, ‘See;’ I have done this in order to choice; for so it is ver. 19, ‘Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.’

Doct. It is the duty of the faithful servants of the Lord in a lively manner to set before the people life and death as the fruit of good and evil.

Moses was God’s minister to instruct this people, and what doth he propose and confirm in his doctrine, but life and death, good and evil? and this was a part of his faithfulness. Witness that vehement obtestation used ver. 19. He calls heaven and earth to record that he had faith fully discharged his duty herein. This was the course that God himself took with Adam in innocency. He set before him life and death, a blessing and a curse, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, Gen. ii. 9, that he might live by the one and not perish by the other. God had respect to the mutability of his nature, and therefore restrained him by the threatening of death as a curse not to eat of the one, as he enjoined him to eat of the other as a pledge of life and blessing. This same course did Christ take in his sermons, by telling them of the wide gate and the strait gate, the broad and narrow way, much company and little, the one tending to destruction, the other to life, Mat. vii. 13, 14. So wisdom speaks by Solomon, Prov. viii. 35, 36, ‘Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me

wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.' So that you see this is an excellent way to gain men to the holy life.

I. Let us consider our work.

II. The reasons why we must do so.

I. Our work, the matter of it, and the manner in which we are to propound it to you.

1. The matter: we must set before the people:— [1.] Life and good.

[2.] Death and evil.

This I shall open in these propositions:—

First, That there is a distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue. He that doth not acknowledge it is unworthy the name, not only of a Christian, but of a man. Certainly he is unworthy the name of a Christian, for the whole word of God doth mete out the bounds between both these, and show what is forbidden and what is commanded; and therefore it is a defiance of Christianity to doubt of it. But he is also unworthy the name of a man. Nature apprehendeth that some things are worthy of praise, and others worthy of blame and reproof; else why should wicked men be offended to be taken for such as they are, and desire as much as possibly they can to seem better, and to cover their dishonest actions with a plausible appearance?

Secondly, The matching these two, death and evil, life and good. And here I shall speak—(1.) Of the suitableness of the connection between them; (2.) The greatness of both; (3.) The certainty of both these, life and death, as the fruit of good and evil.

1. The suitableness or correspondency there is between holiness and beatitude, sin and misery. It must needs be so, if we consider the wisdom, justice, holiness of God.

[1.] The wisdom of God, which doth all things according to weight, measure, and number, cannot permit the disjunction of these two things, so closely united together as sin and punishment, grace and happiness, but there will be appearance of deformity and irregularity. For if there be such a thing as good and evil, as *bonum* and *malum morale*, as reason will tell us there is; and again,

if there be such a thing as pleasure and pain, as joy and sorrow, or that which we call *bonum* and *malum naturale*, as sense will tell us there is; then it is very agreeable to the wisdom of God that these things should be rightly placed and sorted; that moral evil, which is sin, should be punished with natural evil, which is pain and misery; that the inordinate love of pleasure, which is the root of sin, should be checked by a forethought of pain; and that moral good, which is virtue and grace, should end in joy and pleasure. For God is naturally inclined, as the creator of mankind, to make his creatures good and happy, if nothing hinder him from it. Well, then, we see how incongruous it is to the wisdom of God, who permits no dissonancy or disproportion in any of his administrations, to admit a separation of these natural relatives. If there were no other testimony of this, yet the dispositions of our own hearts would know it; for they are some obscure shadows of the properties which are in God. We have compassion on a miserable man, whom we esteem not deserving his misery; we are also moved with indignation and displeasure against one that is fortunate and successful, but unworthy the happiness that he enjoys. Which is an apparent testimony and proof that we are sensible of an excellent harmony and natural order between these two things, virtue and felicity, sin and misery; and to see them so suited doth exceedingly please us.

[2.] The justice of God, as he is judge of the world, and so must and will do right, doth require *ut bonis bene sit, et malis male*—that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil. God is naturally inclined to provide for the happiness of man, as he is his creator; and if there were no sin to stop the course of God's bounty, there would be nothing but happiness in the world. But since the entrance of sin into the world, men are of different sorts; some recover out of their estate of sin, and live holy; others wallow in their filthiness still. Now it is agreeable to God's general justice, as he is the judge of the world, to execute vengeance on the one and reward the other; that happiness should accompany virtue by a natural and inseparable dependence, and misery incessantly attend vice, Rom. ii. 6-8. It is true, the bond which joineth happiness and virtue together is not so strong, and so every way naturally evident, as that which joineth vice and punishment. If a person in sovereignty and honour does not will that moral evils be punished, it is in some sort to consent to them; but the condition of the creature is such that

he ought to be holy and virtuous, though God had not positively commanded him; and God having so commanded, we are bound to obey his command, though he had not proposed the hope of a reward, inasmuch as we owe all to God, both because of the infinite eminence of his majesty, as because we hold our beings and all from him. And therefore there is a distinction: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The one is wages, the other a gift. The promise which God maketh of remuneration, and the actual retribution which he performeth of the same, ought to be imputed only to his goodness and gratuitous liberality. Men cannot pretend any other right before him, from whom we hold all things, yea, our very being. Now, that which proceedeth of goodness seemeth not to be of so strait an obligation, but that he is at liberty to do, or not to do, especially when the transaction is between two persons, the dignity and authority of one of which is infinitely above the condition of the other, as the majesty of God is above his creature. Therefore as to such a reward God is free, and therefore might have enjoined holiness without the promise of such a recompense. But the general relation that is between punishment and sin, holiness and happiness, as to the consequence of one upon another, is agreeable to the general justice of God, which is a perfection necessary to him, as he is the supreme governor and ruler of the world.

[3.] The holiness and purity of God, which inclineth him to hate evil and love that which is good. God, excelling in holiness himself, loveth the virtue and holiness of his creature, Prov. xi. 20; for how can he be imagined but to love his own image? And as goodness and holiness are loved by him, so he 'hateth the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5, and abhorreth those that despise that which is most glorious in himself, his holiness. And then, if God loveth the good and hateth the evil, he will express this in answerable effects, good with life, and evil with death.

In short, the difference between good and evil is not more naturally known, than it is naturally known that the one is to be punished, the other rewarded: whether we consider the wisdom of God, which sorteth and joins all things according to their natural order,—and therefore sin, which is a moral evil, is joined with sufferings, a

natural evil, that is, a feeling of something painful to nature, and afflictive to it; or the justice of God, which dealeth differently with men that differ in themselves; or the holiness of God, who therefore will express his love to the good in making them happy, and his detestation of the wicked in the misery of their punishment.

2. The greatness of both these,—life and death; they are both eternal. Punishment in one scale holdeth conformity with the reward in the other. The full reward is an ‘eternal and far more exceeding weight of glory,’ called everlasting life; so is the full punishment, the eternal abode of body and soul under torments, expressed by everlasting fire. If we did only deal with you upon slight and cheap motives, you might refuse to hearken; but when we tell you of life and death eternal, you ought most seriously to consider:—Whatever can be hoped or feared from man is comparatively of little moment, because his power of doing good or evil is limited; but on the one side, ‘It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,’ Heb. x. 31; on the other side, Rom. v. 2, ‘We rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God,’ God will act like himself, infinitely gloriously, especially when he is ‘all in all,’ when he doth not act by the mediation of the creatures, but immediately punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. The vessel can convey no more than it receiveth. When the creature is an instrument of vengeance, God acteth according to the proportion and rate of that creature; as if a giant should strike one with a straw. If God doth us good by an ordinance, the water runneth but as the pipe will contain; he cannot manifest himself in that latitude, but then God is all himself immediately. Consider:—

[1.] The greatness of the death that accompanieth evil. The afflictions and sorrows of this life are a part of this death. When Moses here had insisted on many temporal plagues which should befall his people, he saith, ‘I have set life and death before you.’ There are many miseries in this life which are the fruit of sin, which would make ‘your hearts ache and your ears tingle to hear of. And then death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, is the king of terrors. But we speak of the second death, which is far more terrible, which consists in an eternal separation from the blessed and glorious presence of the Lord; no death like this. In all creatures that have sense, death is accompanied with pain;

but this is a perpetual living to deadly pain and torment, from whence there can be no release. In the first death, the pain may lie in one place, but in the second it extends all over. The first death, the more it prevaieth the more we are past feeling; but in this death the sufferer has a greater vivacity than ever, the capacity of every sense is enlarged, and made more receptive of pain. While we are in the body, *vehemens sensibile corrumpit sensum*—the more vehemently and violently any thing strikes upon the senses, the more doth it dead the sense; as the inhabitants about the fall of Nilus are deaf with the continual noise. Too much light puts out the eyes; taste is dulled by custom. But here the capacity is improved by feeling. The power of God sustains the sinner, whilst his wrath torments him. As the saints are prepared for the blessedness of heaven, we cannot bear the least glimpse of that happiness which they enjoy above; so the wicked are fitted to endure those inconceivable pains. When the first death approaches, there is struggling for life, men would not die; but in the second death they desire a final destruction, they would not live.

[2.] The greatness and excellency of that life that ensueth good. All manner of blessings in this life is the lowest step of it. At death, when the spirit returneth to God that gave it, then it beginneth to be discovered, but it is consummated when body and soul shall be translated to heaven. This is life indeed. *Nescio an ista vita, mortalis vita, an vitalis mors, dicenda sit*—the present life is a kind of death, always *in fluxu*; like a stream, it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: Job xiv. 2, ‘He fleeth away as a shadow, and continueth not.’ We die as fast as we live, like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. This life is annoyed with a thousand sorrows and calamities; but there is a freedom from all sin and misery, and a full fruition of pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11, and our capacities are strong to bear them. This life is patched up with supplies from the creatures, there is a full fruition of God himself, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And in this life such ‘days may come wherein we have no pleasure,’ Eccles. xii. 1. Life itself becomes a burthen; but that life, as it lasteth for ever, so we are never weary of it. The enjoyment of God is new and fresh to us every moment. As the angels for thousands of years are beholding the face of God, but never weary of so doing, so shall we always delight ourselves in seeing God as he is.

3. The certainty of both these, life and death, hell and heaven, as the fruits of good and evil.

[1.] Reason showeth it certainly that there is eternal life and death, or a state of torment and bliss after this life. All men are persuaded that there is a God, and very few have doubted but that he is a rewarder of virtue and a punisher of vice. Now, neither the one nor the other is fully accomplished in this world, even in the judgment of those that have no great knowledge of the nature of sin, nor what punishment is competent thereto. Therefore there must be after the sojourning in the body a time in which retributive justice shall be executed, and punishments and rewards that here are dispensed so disproportionably, even to what natural reason would expect from the hand of God, shall most equally be dispensed to persons. If any say virtue is a reward to itself, as in some sense it is, yet the full reward lieth in another world, and the main encouragements must be fetched from thence. There is an opposite principle against it in the heart, which must always be curbed and suppressed, and it meeteth with many temptations from the reproaches and oppositions of those who like not this sort of life. The sensual and ungodly will use all ways and means to brand the holy and heavenly as an humorous sort of men; and if their hands be tied by the restraint of laws and government, so that we are not exposed to sufferings by their violence, yet we cannot but expect slanderous abuses from them. Now, the case being so, the motives must be sufficient to resist all the temptations of this life, to keep us in the love and obedience of God to the end, which the bare sense of our duty would hardly do in the midst of so many temptations. We are in a state of imperfection, and sense is very strong in us all, and the sufferings of the obedient are very great, that if we had not an eye to the recompense of the reward, we could not so well deny ourselves. Let every man consult his own soul, what would support him when all the world is against him, and he is hooted by the clamours of the wicked rabble, and pursued with sharp laws, and exposed to great difficulties and hardships; if he had no life to live but this, what would he do? Besides, it will not stand with the goodness of God, if you can suppose one that loves goodness for goodness' sake, and is so hardy as to condemn all his natural interests, that such a man should be a loser by his faithfulness and obedience to God, and be made altogether miserable by his duty

without recompense, 1 Cor. xv. 19. And upon another account his goodness is engaged to take his servants into his own blessed presence; for the prevailing inclination of holiness, that is planted by his own hand in their breath, to love, serve, and see him, is an earnest that we shall not always be thus imperfect; for our reward consisteth, as of complete felicity, so exact holiness, seeing God, and being like unto him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' But suppose this were true, that virtue were a reward to itself, then what provision is there made for the punishment of vice? Cannot it be said, that they that addict themselves to that course of life are punished enough by doing so? Alas! wicked men profess great contentment in that course of life which they lead, and would be glad of the news that they should have no other punishment than to wallow in their lusts. Nature teacheth us, and the practice of all nations confirmeth it, that evils which consist in a breach of duty must be punished with afflictive evils painful to nature. Never such a lawgiver was heard of that would punish a man for robbery by causing him to commit adultery. And for virtue, though it hath a beauty to draw our love, yet it cannot itself be its own price and recompense, for man is of such a nature as he is still drawn on with the hope of some further good, till he come to the enjoyment of the chiefest good. And so many are the trials of the righteous in this world, that the apostle telleth us 'We were of all men most miserable, if our hopes were only in this life,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. The calamities of the good are as great a discouragement and offence as the prosperity of the wicked, therefore there is an estate of life and death to come. Besides, if man be God's subject, employed by him in a course of duty and service, when his work is ended then must he look to receive his wages, accordingly as he performed his duty or faulted in it. Now our work is not ended till this life be over; then God dealeth with us by way of recompense either in pains or joys. Add further, reason will tell us that these pains and joys after death should be everlasting, that the recompense should last as long as man lasts. For man as to his soul is immortal, and there is no change of estate in the other world after our trial is over, and things of religion become mere matter of sense. Certainly one that hath lived holily, and is translated to glory, there is no reason that he should afterwards be made miserable; and the punishment holdeth

conformity to the reward: Luke xvi. 26, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.' There is no changing of estates or places in the other world, the blessedness and misery is eternal. Things to come would not considerably counterbalance things present, if there were not eternity in the case.

[2.] Conscience hath a sense of it, and on the one hand standeth in dread of eternal death, and on the other is cheered with the hopes of eternal life. The first is proved Rom. i. 32, Heb. ii. 14, and 1 Cor. xv. 56. Men are afraid of death, not only as a natural evil, as it puts an end to present comforts, but as it is an entrance to an unknown country. What is the reason of the stings of conscience, which are never so sensible and quick as when men approach near death, or behold themselves in some near danger? What are these but presaging fears that anticipate miseries after this life? If the soul were extinguished with the body, then troubles should in reason vanish; but we find that this is the time when these alarms are redoubled, and these tempests increase with violence. On the other side, there are joys of the Spirit which are a taste and earnest of eternal life: Eph. i. 13, 'He hath given us the earnest of the inheritance,' Good men have so much of heaven upon earth as may assure them they may look for more; this hath supported them in all their difficulties and labour. Now if there was no such thing, the wise and best men that ever the world saw would be liars or fools; liars in pretending comfort which they had not, or fools in being deceived by their own vain imagination, and in taking such pains in subduing the flesh, hazarding their interests, and performing their duty upon the hopes of another world.

[3.] Scripture, if we will take God's word for it, is express, Rom. viii. 13, Rom. vi. 21, 22, and Gal. vi. 8. The present world is comprised in two ranks—either sowing with the flesh, that is, such who employ their labour to make provision to gratify the carnal appetite, or sowing to the Spirit, such as employ their time and study in advancing the work of the Spirit; and they issue themselves into two states in the other world—the state of everlasting perdition or everlasting life. Thus do the scriptures propound good and life, evil and death.

Secondly, The manner how this is to be done. It must be set forth with all evidence and conviction as to the reason of men, with all earnestness and affectionate importunity to awaken their affections. In short:—

1. So as will become the belief of these things. We must not speak of them as a thing spoken in jest and by rote, but as firmly persuaded of the truth of things as if heaven and hell were before our eyes, and as evident to sense, Heb. xi. 1. We look upon these things naturally as at a distance, and so have but a cold apprehension of them; but we should by faith see them as near at hand; as you would pull a man out of the fire, Jude 23, or as falling into a deep pit or bottomless gulf; as one in the greatest earnest. Belief puts a life into truths which otherwise are but dead and weak in their operation: ‘I believed, and therefore did I speak;’ as if we had a deep sense of these things upon our own hearts.

2. As will become experience: 2 Cor. v. 11, ‘Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.’ A man that knoweth the terrors of the Lord, that hath been scorched himself, will set them before men as if they were at hand, ready to surprise them. Others that talk of these things but as cold opinions, they will not be so careful to rouse up men to mind the case of their souls: ‘If one went unto them from the dead, then will they repent,’ Luke xvi. 30.

3. So as will become zeal for the glory of God, which is much promoted by the subjection and obedience of his creatures, and his interest in them; therefore we should be diligent and industrious in drawing souls to Christ: Col. i. 27, 28, ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.’ 2 Cor. xi. 13, They have blind, unbelieving hearts, therefore need to be taught; cold careless affections, and need to be warmed; and this with the greatest wisdom that can be used, that all may be presented to Christ at the last day. This is that which sets all agoing. When we are wooing for Christ we should not do it coldly and triflingly, but as those that would prevail for their master, that he may be glorified in their being gained to him.

4. So as will become compassioners of precious and immortal souls, for whom Christ died, souls that must live for ever in heaven

or hell. Oh, mind them of their duty, warn them of their danger; they are ready to tumble into the flames of hell every moment, therefore with all earnestness set life and death before them. We should use the more compassion to souls, because God himself, who hath employed us, hath expressed so much of his compassion. He doth not only tell them they will die, but expostulated with them, ‘Why will you die, house of Israel?’ Ezek. xxxiii. 11; and Ezek. xviii. 23, ‘Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not return from his ways and live?’ The greatest quarrel Christ hath with sinners is because they will not come to him for life: John v. 40, ‘Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.’

Two reasons make this more evident:—

1. This is God’s will.
2. This is of great profit to the souls of men.

First, This is God’s will, that his law should be propounded with the sanction of it; that is, with penalties and rewards. God might rule us with a rod of iron, require duty out of mere sovereignty; but he will ‘draw us with the cords of a man.’ Hosea. xi. 4, with such arguments as are fitted to man’s temper, as he is a reasonable creature; that is, by promises and threatenings. We are best moved and induced to any thing by those two affections of fear and hope; the one affection serveth for aversion and flight, the other for choice and pursuit. Therefore he that knoweth the wards of the lock accordingly suiteth the keys, and doth not only require an exact duty, but also promiseth good and threateneth evil. Sovereigns, in their public edicts, do not argue with their subjects, but only interpose their authority; but God condescendeth to reason with his creatures. He doth not say, as some times, Thus shall ye do, I am the Lord; but, If you do thus, this will be your ruin; and ‘Obey these statutes for your good,’ Deut. vi. 24; and so doth persuade as well as command.

Secondly, It is of great profit to the souls of men.

1. It is of profit that they should often be minded of the issues of things. Israel’s want of wisdom cometh from this: Deut. xxxii. 29, ‘Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end;’ that is, how obedience and disobedience will succeed with them, Lam. i. 9. David’s trouble at the prosperity of the wicked arose from want of this: Ps. lxxiii. 17,

‘Then I understood their end.’ Rom. vi. 21, ‘The end of these things is death.’ *Fugientes respice*, what will they leave in their farewell and departure?—Jer.

xvii. 11, ‘At his latter end he shall be a fool.’ The first addresses of sin smile upon us, but ‘the sting is in the tail.’ So the beginning of godliness is bitter, but afterward it yieldeth everlasting peace and comfort.

2. That they may reflect on both combined: either of them single is of great force, but both joined together come in upon the heart with greater power. We need a bridle and a spur; a bridle because of our proneness to evil, and a spur because of our backwardness to good. We have both, we are compassed and hedged in with our duty on every side. If we look back, there is death to affright us; if forward, heaven to allure us. There is eternal life to draw us, there is eternal death to drive us. If God had only terrified us from sin by inexpressible pains and horrors, and made no promise of unspeakable joys, this were enough to engage us to live without blame and blemish, that we might not be cast into the prison of hell; or, if only to quicken our diligence, he had propounded hopes and happiness as the privilege of those that live virtuously and holily, and evil men did utterly perish when they die, this were enough to draw us. If God had only promised heaven and no hell, there would not be so strong a motive; but can we be cold and dead when both life and death are laid before us, and both for ever? This is very unreasonable. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xv. 24, ‘That the way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.’ Every step they tread is a going from eternal death, and an approach to eternal life. Therefore, as we would escape the torments of hell, and possess the joys of heaven, we should be serious. We are undone for ever if we be not blessed for ever; and the nearer we draw to the one, the more we avoid the other; so that we have a double reason not to go back, and much to engage us to go forward.

APPLICATION.

Use of exhortation.

1. Suffer us to discharge our duty in, this kind:, Heb. xiii. 22, ‘I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.’ It is but a

small request we have to you, that you will but suffer us to take pains to save your souls. It is irksome to carnal men to have their sluggishness stirred up; but what is there that should make it grievous and distasteful? Many can endure us when we treat of the joys of heaven, but when we come to flash hell terrors in the face of obstinate sinners, and tell them of damnation and wrath to come, they think us harsh and severe, and say, as Ahab of Micaiah, 'He prophesieth nothing but evil to me.' Ay! but we must set both before you both life and death; and it is better to hear of hell than to feel it. That is a cowardly confidence that can not endure the mention of our danger. There are others that like the offer of heaven, but would sever those things that are so aptly joined, life and good, death and evil; that cannot endure this doctrine in this sense. They say, with those carnal hearers, 'Evermore give us the bread of life,' John vi. 34. But they mistake the terms upon which it may be had. Oh! but we are not in the place of God, and cannot make the way to heaven easier than it is; but we propound God's covenant as we find it, life and good, the conditions as well as the offer. Would you have us compound with you, and deceive your souls with a false hope, which will leave you ashamed when you most need the comfort of it? Men would live with the carnal, die with the sincere; therefore suffer us to be earnest with you.

2. The next thing that we exhort you to is to believe the certainty, consider the weight and importance of these truths, that there is a difference between good and evil, that the fruit of the one is death, of the other life; and consider how irrational it is for a man to love death and refuse life. No man in his right wits can make a doubt which to choose: 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird,' Prov. i. 17. You cannot drive a dull ass into the fire that is kindled before his eyes. It is true you hate death, and yet it is proper to say you choose it: Prov. viii. 36, 'All they that hate me, love death.' Why, refusing the good, do you so eagerly pursue the evil? How can ye hate the wages, and yet love the work by which the wages is to be earned, and in requital of which it will be certainly paid? If you detest hell, why not sin? If you love heaven, why do you not do good? There is an inseparable connection between these. Who can pity the torment of that man that thrusts his hand into the fire? What should be the cause of this but incredulity and inconsideration?

[1.] Unbelief and atheism; they do not think God will recompense men according to their works. Now, till men believe it, tell them of hell or heaven never so much, it will not work upon them. Who would lose that which is certain and present, for the hope or fear of that which is to come and doubtful, when they suspect or believe it not fully? No wonder they go on still in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, and are prejudiced against the ways of life. But why are men such infidels as to future things?

(1.) You cannot disprove what is declared in scripture, or by any sound argument evince that there is no heaven or hell; for all you say or know, there are both really existing; and if there were no more but that, it were good to take the surer side, especially when you part with nothing but a few base pleasures and carnal satisfactions. Reason should make us very careful. In a lottery, where there is but a possibility of gaining, men will venture a shilling or a small matter for a prize. If there be either no hell or heaven, you part with no more than the vain pleasures of a fading, perishing life; but if this doctrine prove true, you run the hazard of eternal torments, and lose the comfort of eternal joys; therefore it is better to trust this doctrine than try it. It is prudence to make provision for the worst.

(2.) But doth not natural reason and conscience, and the presages of our hearts, shrewdly evince that there is a world to come, as before was proved a heaven for the good, and a hell for the wicked? At present the wicked flourish, and the good many times suffer; what shall we conclude thence? Mal. ii. 17, 'Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in him; or where is the God of judgment?'

(3.) If nature be not so clear, scripture is full and positive. If we do indeed believe the scripture, as we profess to do, certainly we can not so grossly go against the whole current and drift of it. That scripture which you profess to be the book of God, and take for the rule of your lives and expectations; that scripture which your consciences dread as owning the voice of God therein; that scripture which is confirmed by God's providence and frequent experiments; that scripture which hath such a rational evidence in itself,—it is that assureth us of a world to come, and bringeth it to light in the word. The very thought of such a hell and heaven as were invented by the

ancient heathens, was enough to make them virtuous; though as to the manner and circumstances of it, the more understanding knew it to be a very fable and supposition: yet the thing itself, being bottomed and founded upon those natural apprehensions of the immortality of the soul, and the attributes of the deity, had powerful effects upon them. Now shall we talk of Christianity, pretend a reverence for the scriptures, and shall we tremble no more at the certainty of a hell than Gentiles at the possibility of it? Shall their suspicion work more than our faith? If they were so pliable to poets' discipline, how should we be moulded and framed by the doctrine of Christ? What awe and holy trembling should it breed in our hearts!

[2.] Inconsideration. We are so taken up with the cares and pleasures of the present life, that we are not at leisure to think of death and life, hell and heaven, or upon what terms we stand with God: Jer. viii. 6; Ecces. xi. 9, 'Remember that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' The young man in the heat of his lusts forgetteth that a time of reckoning will come. Oh, think of your ways, and whither you are a-going. It is foolish to busy ourselves about many things, and neglect the main: Luke x. 41, 42. You think it will bring a damp on your hearts. But if you cannot endure to think of hell, how much less will you endure one day to suffer it? Is it such a trouble to consider it?—what is it to feel it? Timely consideration is the way to prevent and escape these torments; it will help to preserve you from coming thither, and cause it to work upon you. Oh, then, 'Set your hearts unto all these words which I testify among you this day,' Deut. xxxii. 46. Consideration will awaken the soul that was formerly laid asleep. Will heaven or hell entice or deter the man that thinketh not of it? Shall we not, therefore, have a little patience while we deeply ponder and weigh these things in our minds? See, life and death is set before you; and will you not allow a few serious thoughts about them, nor ask your souls what shall become of you to all eternity? God's great complaint of Israel is: Isa, i. 3, 'My people will not consider;' and the same complaint may be made of us. Things are evident and clear to faith, reason, and conscience; but we will not consider, and so wander out of the way.

3. The next thing we exhort you to do, is to make choice for your own souls. That is the use Moses makes of it: Deut. xxx. 19, 'Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.' Hearing, believing, considering, are all in order to choice; and without choice, and a determined, fixed, bent of heart, you will never walk evenly in heaven's ways. Determine not only that you must, but you will, walk in the way which God hath set forth for you. God's ways must be chosen: Ps. cxix. 30, 'I have chosen the way of truth;' and ver. 173, 'I have chosen thy precepts;' Josh. xxiv. 15, 'If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve.' Not as if it were indifferent, but to set an edge upon their appetite. There is much strength in the bond, when a man bindeth himself freely, and makes him the more inexcusable if he doth not observe it. All will choose life before death, but they are out in the means; they do not choose good before evil, the good of holiness before the evil of sin. Every man desireth some good. It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy, as it is for the fire to burn; but we do not make a right choice of the means that may bring us to that happiness that we desire. They would be happy, but they choose means quite contrary to happiness. Oh, then, choose the ways of God; let life be your motive, and holiness your choice. This is the way to live for ever, to avoid hell beneath. As soon as we come to years of discretion, we should make our choice to go on in the ways of life. To this we are obliged by the most weighty reasons, urged by the enforcements of the word, and by the sad and numerous examples of young people, who make an ill choice in the beginning, and go on, and are hardened therein, and perish for ever.

SERMON XVIII. - Mat. VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—
Mat. VII. 12.

It is a general complaint of the world that Christians are defective in the duties of the second table. Some hypocrites may be so, to mask over a dishonest life with a pretense of worship and godliness; but we are not to judge of the rest of the people of God by these, no more than we would judge of the glory of a street by the filthiness

of the sink or canal, or of the sound grapes in the cluster by the rotten ones. For certainly all that have truly submitted to Christianity do find that religion doth influence their relations, and run out and issue itself in all the duties which they owe to man as well as unto God. And 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.' This was the glory of religion then, and it should not fall in our hands. Or possibly this may be the cause of it, unrenewed men which allow one another in their excesses, and glory in some kind of mutual civilities, may equal or overpass the godly therein. Look, as dogs excel men in the acuteness of smell, and the eagle in sharpness of sight, and many other beasts in other senses, because it is their excellency, so there are certain lower respects which the men of the world mutually pay one towards another, and they may excel in these as their peculiar worth.

But, however, 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 need to press moralities upon Christians, and that from the true root, the love of God; for that is the great mistake of this age, to set up a sort of false morality, and forget the true one that is built on faith in Christ and love to God.

Now, 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; and therefore to have a sure rule, and a short one, would be a very great advantage to us in this matter.

And this one direction which I have read to you out of the word of God 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* enough for our purpose, for here is the substance and quintessence of the law and prophets, all drawn into one compendious rule and abridgment of our duty, the best epitome that ever was. A sentence this is of such weight, that the Emperor Severus (as Lactantius reporteth out of Lampridius) was so taken with it, that, having heard it from some Jew or Christian, he 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 circumstances.

I. Here is the rule of life. This general precept may be considered in the affirmative or in the negative (for negatives are included in their affirmatives). 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 them. The one, the negative, conduceth to restrain injury; but the other, 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 either of these things be wronged ourselves; therefore Christ, passing that, layeth down the affirmative, of which nature is less sensible, of doing good to them, as we desire they should do to us in our extremities.

But because one cannot well be handled without the other, I shall begin with the negative consideration, which concerns right and 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 bargain^ how will we discourse of equity, and plead for right upon these occasions? Why, the like tender respect, the like sense, should we have in our dealing with others; as you would not others should defame, oppress, or overreach you, so should not you do to them. In other men’s dealings 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, fairly used, have others tender of our credit; and if we be abused' in, person, disgraced in speech, endamaged in goods or good name, 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 the rule upon, you, I shall give four 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, Mat. 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 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 measure and rule of that respect we owe to our neighbours. This principle of self-love would show 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 be free from passion and from 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 to be treated by them.

2. The breach of this rule is more evil in him which hath experimented the bitterness of wrongs or misery than in another; because experience giveth us a truer knowledge of things than a naked idea and conception of them. He that knoweth things by mere contemplation, doth but know them at a distance, and as it were afar off; but he that knoweth things by experience, knows them at hand,

and feels the smart of them. Therefore conscience should work more in them by way of restraint, because they know what it is to be oppressed and disgraced, and remember how grievous it was when they did lie under any wrong. Look, as it is made an argument of confidence in Christ's pity, because his heart was made tender by experience: he was tempted, he was despitefully used, he experimented all our sorrows; therefore 'he is able'—that is, has a greater fitness—'to succour those which are tempted,' Heb. ii. 18. And in another place we read, that 'He learned obedience by the things which he suffered,' Heb. v. 8. Did Christ learn anything better, or improve his knowledge, which had 'the Spirit without measure'? Yes, he might have an experimental learning and feeling. Thus, when he suffered things so regretful and contrary to that life he had assumed, he knew what it was to overrule the natural inclinations of life, and subordinate them to the will of God, and learn obedience by the things which he suffered, and will more compassionate when poor creatures are put upon duties against flesh and blood. And it is used as an argument why we should come to the throne of grace 1 with boldness: Heb. iv. 15, Because 'we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with our infirmities,' &c. He hath experimented them in his own person, he knows these things himself. And so Exod. xxii. 21, 'Thou shalt not vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' The people of Israel knew what it was to be exposed to the envy of the natives, where they had few friends and many enemies. But especially observe that Lev. xix. 33, 34, for there you have this great law repeated: 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself,' Mark, what thou wouldst have done to thyself, do to the stranger. Why?' For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' They knew how burdensome it was to their souls to be under the yoke, how grievous a thing oppression was. Now suitably it concerneth all those which have lain under defamation, slander, and oppression, they should be mighty tender and careful how they speak of others, and what they do to others. They which have been servants themselves, and have felt the burden of heavy tasks and short allowance, hard and unmerciful usage from their masters, they should not exact all their labours, nor deal cruelly unto servants

when they are masters themselves; for not only the law of God, but their own experience, will rise up in judgment against them, and increase the sting of their conscience. So the drift of that parable would do well to be considered in these times: Mat. xviii. 33, ‘That servant which had his own debt forgiven him, yet he plucked his fellow-servant by the throat. Shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee?’ When we are under restraint, and groan for our liberty, we would fain have an opportunity of glorifying God. If God should hear us in these kinds, should not we be like affected to our fellow-servants, and not seek to hunt every one, that do a little dissent from us, as vermin to death, and as unworthy to be allowed among us? A man which is in debt, how grievous is it when others deal rigorously with him? Now, for him to deal so with others is a double crime, as being a sin against a law and against experience. You complain to God in the bitterness of your soul, when ye are under these oppressions; so will they complain against you: therefore it is more evil in you. The—

3. Observation is this: That this rule is spiritual, and concerneth the inward man as well as the outward; not only actions, words, and practices (though it be said, whatsoever men *do* unto you), but the thoughts. The whole law of God is spiritual: Ps. 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, Mat. 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 would think and purpose to do to others, is comprehended in it. Christ therefore speaks of adultery committed in the heart, by impure and wanton thoughts and desires. This rule, which concerns the whole second table, not only concerns the actions, but your dispositions and inclinations; and not only provides against hard speeches, and outward behaviour, but the secret grudgings in your hearts against others, that your affections may not be alienated from them. For mark, what is here, What ye would men should do to you, do the same to them. 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 tempered and 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. As 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'If I give all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it signifieth nothing.' You will think that is excessive charity, to give all my goods; yea, but 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 the principle of love which is in the heart.

4. Proposition: That all which, 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, out 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 to make it an act of obedience, so it is accepted of God. It is a common rule, all moral duties must be done as in and to the Lord; out of the love of God, 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, but conscience. There must be a right principle of motion, as well as a just action, if we will do exactly and according to the law of Christ. Therefore here is the great difference between a Christian and another man in the duties of the second table in his moralities; 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; sacrifice is a duty of the first table, but alms is clearly a duty of the second table. So all his commerce (I do but instance in one for all); what he doth to men must be done in and to the Lord. So here in this very case, love to man, it is but a stream which comes from a higher fountain, and that is 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: 1 John iv. 21, 'This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.' 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.' So much for the negative part.

Secondly, Now let us come to the affirmative part, which established 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. 35. Why a more blessed thing? Because this comes nearest to the nature of God, who gives 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; his election should make us choose him and his ways; his love, to love him; his giving should make us to give. 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 do not come behind in this also,' 2 Cor. viii.

7. And the rule of Christ here is that which doth enforce this ('As ye would,' &c.), do you afford to others that comfort, that succour, that relief in all their distresses, which you would desire they should afford to you if you were in the same case, and in the same distress? Alas! you will say, pity should be showed to a man by his friend; and will you be merciless, and shut tip your bowels, and not show this pity to others? If you were pined with hunger, and your children cry for bread, and you have none to give them, would you not complain of the hardness of their hearts which have this world's goods, and shut up their bowels against them, and not dispense anything 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 mete 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 you. For instance, in a time of sickness, when all outward helps fail: Ps. xli. 1, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will consider him in time of trouble.' Why, he that is affected with another's condition as his own, when it is a time of trouble and distress with him, and it may be his brother cannot help him, then the Lord will help him, either in sickness or trouble of conscience; when all outward comforts are as the white of an egg, when the poor perplexed sinner cries, Mercy! mercy! the Lord will show him mercy as he did to others: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Those that only seek to enrich themselves, and solace themselves with mirth and pleasure in the good things they have, must not expect the like promises. But those which have been merciful, bountiful, and ready to help others, God delights to show them 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 weaknesses and offences, and we need mutually to forgive, and to take pardon. It is said, 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.' See the same, Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Mark, he proceeds upon this principle that Christ layeth down: ' whatsoever ye would,' &c. 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. We need pardon in this kind, for we give offence: Eccles. vii. 21, 22, 'Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for oftentimes also thine heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.' The meaning is, we should not be over-affected with others speaking ill of us, because we know we have spoken ill of others, and should pass it by with meekness and neglect; therefore the consideration of our passions and of our infirmities should move us to pardon. We have been, or may be as bad as they; we have been once, Titus iii. 3, 'foolish and disobedient,' led by our unruly appetites and desires, therefore we should show meekness to them. Ay, and we may be surprised again: James iii. 1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, for in many things we offend all.' Be not many masters, that is, severe, masterly, or

supercilious, if another be fallen and hath offended us, for we shall receive the greater condemnation.

The apostle argueth from, another argument, Col. iii. 13; and 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. The scripture urgeth this. Oh, when we consider Christ's example, how Christ hath forgiven us; when we consider the greatness of the wrongs which he pardons, sins that are of a scarlet and crimson dye, Isa. i. 18; when we consider our own baseness in comparison of him, Isa. 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; what is that? 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 and pass by the sins of others.

Christians, shall I urge another argument in this case, what need there is of forgiveness? Hereby a man overcometh himself, hereby he shames the party that did him wrong, and hereby he takes God's course to get the victory over the person which hath done him the wrong. Hereby he overcometh himself, his own nature, which thirsteth after revenge: 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.' He is able to rule himself, so it is his glory; he doth overcome that revengeful and froward disposition which is in his own nature. And hereby he overcomes and shames the party that did him wrong; there is no such way to do this as by forgiveness. Thus David did overcome Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, when David had him at an advantage and spared him, Saul said to David, 'Thou art more righteous than I.' Oh, what a victory was this, to overcome that fierce man's heart and reconcile him. And you keep God's way in overcoming him; it is

God's prescribed course that you should thus overcome him by kindness and meekness: Rom. xii. 21, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'

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 sometimes against public laws, or as it is an offence against us. So far as it is an offence against God or the public laws, here we have not power to forgive, and punishment is due to the common good, *Poena debetur*. 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, that is our duty, James iv. 15; and in some cases we may intercede with the magistrate to take off the penalty, and are so bound.

This forgiveness implieth two things—a removal of an inward grudge, and a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to them.

1. A removal of an inward grudge and endeavours after private revenge: Lev. xix. 17-18, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in anywise 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 you hate him in your heart.

2. There must be a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to him who hath done the wrong, as God 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 burthen, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him;' Luke vi. 27, 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you.' Now, so far are we bound to remit the private grudge because of the offence done to us, and also to take all occasions to do them good.

Object. But whether may not we have recourse to the magistrate for the recovery of our right, and reparation of our wrongs?

Ans. Certainly we may, provided we go not to law for trifles; for when we go to law for small matters, and that before infidels, the apostle reproveth it, 1 Cor. vi. 2; and when after all lawful means and courses are used before, for taking away the occasion, as ver. 5, 'Is there not a wise man among you to take up the difference?' And when it is not with a spirit of revenge and rigour, for a Christian should show his moderation in all things, Phil. iv. 5, and his lenity, gentleness, and readiness to forgive. But if it be out of a spirit of revenge, not the conscience of justice, we abuse God's ordinance to our private passions, Rom. xiii. 3.

Having thus explained the law, let me vindicate this rule.

1. It seems not to be so perfect a rule. Because many desire and wish much evil to themselves, should they desire evil to others? As he that would be drunk, should he make another drunk? and he that commits filthiness, should he entice others? *Ans.* The meaning is not what we do in a passion, which works not the righteousness of God, but it is meant of a regular will; not that we do with evil desires, as that we do in right reason, that which you do well informed, well advised, free from discomposed passion; what is according to the law of nature engraven upon your 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. It is not meant of inordinate sinful desires.

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, and of that poor man. You should put yourselves 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 you if you were in their condition you should cheerfully do to them. For instance, if I were a servant, and did obey, would not I judge such exaction burthensome and unreasonable? If I were poor, and driven to seek relief, would not I

judge a denial harsh? If I were a master, should not I judge such an offence injurious to my authority?

3. Doth not this establish revenge and retaliation of injuries to do to him as he hath done to me? *Ans.* No, rather much to 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 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. To think to do the same would certainly break this rule of Christ, and make us be burthensome to others by such actions, and burthensome to ourselves, and so sin not only against our own conscience but against sense and feeling of the thing committed. Injury and revenge differ only in order. He that returns injury for injury doth but imitate the ad-

xxiii.

versary; and he that imitates that which is evil in another sins twice, both against the law and his own conscience.

4. If all the world were contented to observe this rule, then we should have a quiet world; but others are very oppressive, unjust, and very hard to me, this is to live by the loss, and to bring a restraint upon myself from which others are free. *Ans.* 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. What ever 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 show you the grounds and the equity of it. What are the intrinsic grounds and reasons why Christ hath given such a rule to us? No question it is founded not in his bare authority, but in great equity. 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. n. 10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?' Were we not all created by the same God? Ay! and mark the equality goes further; we were all 'made of one blood,' Acts xvii. 26, all descended from Adam. Unequal 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 teachers, and some obey; but we are all made of one blood. So Neh. 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 is one flesh, and by nature hath an equal right with you; therefore it is said, Isa. lviii. 7, 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.' Thy poor, pined, 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 an one with a spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Rigid censurers may fall into like sins or worse themselves. Alas! the devil is very assiduous in tempting, and the Lord permits him to surprise those that are severe to others. Therefore you should show pity and compassion to the fallen. And then as to possibility of 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.' There is a twofold interpretation of that place. Some understand it of the mystical body of Christ; but I think rather it is meant of the body of flesh, while we are here in the present life. Strange changes may come before we go out of the body; they that are highest may be lowest. In 2 Kings iv. 13, we read of the Shunammite that had given harbour and entertainment to the prophet, and the prophet said, 'What is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? and she answered, I dwell among mine own

people.’ She was well, and needed nothing; she was able to dwell at home, and to maintain herself well enough, and needed not the prophet to speak to the king for her; but afterwards there comes a great famine, and her inheritance was invaded, and she that would not be beholden to the prophet was beholden to Gehazi, the prophet’s man. Compare 2 Kings iv. 13, with 2 Kings viii. 3.

There may be great changes here 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. We have opened the rule, the first part of the text.

II. The second part 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 only then in force, and therefore the phrase is used proverbially in many places: Mat. xi. 13, ‘For all the prophets and the law prophesied till John;’ Luke xvi. 31, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;’ Acts xxiv. 14, ‘I believe all the law and the prophets have spoken.’ The law and the prophets were all the Bible they had for that time. Now, saith Christ, 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.

But you will say, Is this the whole sum of the law and the prophets? Are there not doctrines delivered there insisted upon concerning our respects to God and all the institutions of his worship; are they not contained in the law and prophets?

I answer—The proposition must be understood according to the matter in hand. This is the law and the prophets as to all they say concerning our converse with men. You may have many rules in the law and the prophets, where they are more copiously delivered, but they all issue themselves into this general rule. 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, Mat. 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 comprised in this sentence. All that part of religion which is *inferioris hemispherii*, of the lower hemisphere of duty, is distilled into this quintessential 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 spirits, the extract of law and prophets, are all distilled as to moral matters into this one saying, ‘Whatsoever you would,’ &c.

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 audience in prayer: ‘If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father know how to give good things to them that ask him? Therefore, whatsoever ye would,’

&c. Christ makes many notable arguments, and shows that God is ready to give good things to us: ‘Ask, and ye shall have,’ &c. He proves it from the kindness of earthly parents to their children. And, now, therefore, to intimate this, that if men have their prayers granted, they must observe this rule; they must perform all duties of civil righteousness, as well as be earnest in acts of piety. Upon this limiting it to the audience of prayer, it plainly implies three things:—

1. That God is the judge of human actions; he will take cognisance of this, whether you do to others as they 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 shows this to bridle the excesses of those that are in power. There are a sort of men that think they may do anything if they can do it safely: Micah 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

everything they are able to effect, and will do anything as far as their power will reach, remember you must come before God, and God can requite it, though they 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 own brethren, hate and pursue them with all that is evil. It is hard to avoid this snare when we are in power. Men forget God and abuse their power, and many times, by a strange providence, they are brought to suffer the like hardness 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 (Qu., "upon whom"?—ED.) all persons depend every moment, these will be more authentic witnesses than any matters of fact can be produced in a lower court.

2. It implieth this, and it enlargeth the rule, that whatsoever usage we expect to meet with at God's hands, the same in some measure we should dispense and 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, that must sway our practice and conversation with men. Whatever need others have of us, the same need have we 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 withal by men, but with God himself for Christ's sake, which carrieth the precept far beyond the heathen latitude, and mightily enlargeth the rule. Alas! from God we have nothing but undeserved mercy, pardon of sins, &c. So we are to practise this rule, not only to those that love us, but to our enemies; we must show mercy to the worst for Christ's sake. Strict justice, by the light of nature, requires the injurious should suffer according to the wrong is done to me. Ay! but what do I expect from God? Therefore, I am to consider how God will deal with me if I am rigid, severe, exact, and stand upon all things to the uttermost.

3. Another consideration which mightily enforceth the rule is, that if you do such things to others as you would not have them do

to you, God will do that to you which you have done to others; for vengeance is his. They are not to do the same to you again, nor exact nor desire it, but God will. It is good to consider God's judgment, of counterpassion or 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,' Mat. vii. 1, 2; Gen. ix. 6, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' It is not only a law what is to be done, but a rule of providence, what God will do. What more usual than malefactors to be dealt withal according to their own wickedness? There are many instances of this judgment of counter-passion, God doing to them what they have done to others.

Adonibezek, when the people caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, said, 'Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.' Usually this is the dealing of God. The Israelites had their children drowned in the water by Pharaoh. What then? Pharaoh and all his host, within a little while, all his nobility and men of war, were all drowned in the water. Ahab's blood was lapped up by dogs in the place where they 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, therefore he was buried with honour; but Jezebel was entombed 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 the Third of France, in that very chamber where the massacre was contrived against the Protestants, there he was slain; and his brother before him, Charles the Ninth, was found flowing in blood in his bed, who had shed so much of the blood of God's saints. Judges ix. 18. 19, compared with ver. 23, 24. When the men of Shechem had done great injury to the house of Jerubbaal, 'Ye are risen up against my father's house, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons upon one stone.' What then? ver. 23, 'Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the cruelty done to the

threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them.' So also the observation of Austin is not to be passed by, upon the parable of the rich man; he that denied a crumb, could not find a drop to cool his tongue.

But you will say, Is it so with good men also, the children of God, 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 and take it off, yet here in this world, as to temporals, 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. Asa, which put the prophet into the stocks, we read of him that he was diseased in his feet. Nay; I shall give you greater instances than that. Joseph's brethren they were not flexible to their brother, and did not hear his 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.' What was the matter? How comes this to work? In a storm, things at bottom we see come up to the top; so ever sins in trouble will bubble up, and we shall see that we saw not before. How come they to remember the trouble of their brother, for they knew not Joseph, and twenty years were past since they sold him? They found the man as inexorable as they had been to their brother. God's judgment of counter-passion sets their conscience a-work. A greater instance we have of Paul, that consented to the stoning of Stephen, and was present too at his execution; and it is said, 'They laid down their garments at Paul's feet;' and he himself takes notice of it with great remorse afterwards, Acts xxii. 20. Well, what then? after his conversion how doth God deal with Paul? 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, they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas, who was equal with him in preaching, God ordered it so he was not stoned; but Paul, that had consented to Stephen's

stoning, was stoned himself 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.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. To 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 humane respects in favourable 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 to them all the good possibly we can, and to seek out objects to whom we may do good, and 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 by this rule. If this were practised:—

1. How securely and safely might we live one by another! Whence come all the oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth, but for want of love to 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.

2. Consider how beneficial and mutually helpful men would be to each other, seeking others' good as their own, and rejoicing in an other'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, one interest, it would render it very 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 is 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 we not be as conscionable for 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?

Use 2. Exhortation. As that emperor wrote it on the doors of his palace and courts of justice, so the exhortation is to press you to get this rule deeply graven and written upon your hearts. In all matters of dealing towards others, be exact; for God, that 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 more prevail with you.

1. It is a short rule; and yet if it were well learned and kept, 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,' so 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.

[1.] If you break this rule you offer violence to an inbred principle of conscience. There are many talk of being Christians, yea, but get to be good heathens first. Never speak of higher mysteries of believing in Christ, and communion with Christ, while you live so contrary to the light of nature. What the apostle discourseth concerning the natural branches and the branches contrary to nature is applicable in this case, Rom. xi. 24; what he speaks of persons is true of doctrines: 'For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good

olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?' The meaning is, if the Gentiles were taken into a covenant stock, how much more shall the Jews be grafted into their own stock? So it is true of doctrines. If the doctrines contrary to or above nature have brought in souls to believe in Christ and the higher mysteries of Christianity, certainly much more should those doctrines which are agreeable to our nature have a greater respect and regard by you.

[2.] It is also prescribed by Christ. Now our Lord reasons, Luke vi. 46, 'If you call me Lord and Master, why do ye not the things I say?' It is a mockage 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 do to you, do ye the same to them;' for he hath told you and confirmed it, 'This is the law and the prophets.'

SERMON XIX. - Eph. II. 10.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—Eph. II. 10.

THE apostle in the context asserteth that our whole salvation is of grace, not of works; he now proveth it. That which is the effect of salvation cannot be the cause of it. But our well-doing is the effect of salvation, if you take it for our first recovery to God; but if you take it for full salvation, or our final deliverance from all evil, works go before it indeed, but in a way of order, not meritorious influence. To think them altogether unnecessary, would too much depreciate and lessen their presence or concurrence; to think they deserve it would as much exalt them, and advance them beyond the line of their due worth and value. The apostle steereth a middle course between both extremes. They are necessary, not meritorious. They go before eternal life, not as a cause but a way; for they are wrought in us by God, and are effects of the begun salvation; so that the good that we do is a part of the grace that we have received, a fruit of regeneration: 'For we are his workmanship,' &c.

In the words are two things:—

I. The state of believers: *for we, are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.*

II. The end why we are brought into this estate: *unto good works, which, &c.* I begin with the former, and there note:—

1. God's efficiency: *ποίημα αὐτοῦ, his workmanship.*

2. The manner of his efficiency: *κτισθεντες, created;* all proceedeth from the infinite creating power of God.

3. The meritorious cause: *ἐν Χριστῷ, created in Christ Jesus.* From the whole observe:—

Doct. That those that are renewed and recovered out of the apostasy of mankind, are, as it were, created anew through the power of God and grace of the Redeemer.

I. Let us explain the words of the text

II. Prove it.

I. For explication of what is here asserted, three things must be explained:—

1. Our relation to God.

2. His way of concurrence to establish this relation.

3. How far the mediation of Christ is concerned in this effect.

First, Our relation to God: 'We are his workmanship.' We are so two ways;—(1.) By natural creation; (2.) By supernatural renovation.

1. By natural creation, which giveth us some kind of interest in him, and hope of grace from him. As Ps. cxix. 73. 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments,' God is our Creator, and the end of our creation is to serve God; therefore he gives some kind of encouragement to ask the grace whereby we may serve him. But the apostle speaketh here not of the first creation, but

2. Of regeneration or renovation, which is called a second or new creation. As 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,' *καὶ νη κτίσις*; a new creation hath passed upon him. By the first creation we are made men; by the second, holy men.

Holiness is a thing of God's making; we are regenerated and sanctified by his grace, and made capable of doing good by his Spirit. Now this new workmanship bestowed on us implieth:—

[1.] A change wrought in us, so that we are other persons than we were before, as if another kind of soul came to dwell in our bodies. This change is represented in scripture in such terms as do imply a broad and sensible difference between the two states—that wherein we were before, and that into which we are translated; such a difference as is between light and darkness, Eph. v. 8; life and death, 1 John iii. 14; the new man and the old, Eph. iv. 22,

24. We seem to be, as it were, creatures transformed out of beasts into men. Instead of being governed by sense and appetite, we are led by reason; and reason is not only put into dominion, but grace, which is reason sanctified, directing and inclining us to live unto God.

[2.] This change is such as must amount to a new creation. There are some changes which go not so far, as—

(1.) A moral change, from profaneness and gross sins to a more sober course of life; for there are some sins which nature discovereth, and may be prevented by such reasons and arguments as nature suggesteth, Rom. ii. 14. This may be done by ordinary discretion and advisement. But the new creature signifies such a change, whereby not only of vicious we become virtuous, but of carnal we become spiritual, John iii. 6. Man naturally inclineth to things pleasing to the flesh, and only seeketh, savoureth, and affecteth these things; but in this change the Spirit interposeth and maketh him spirit. Before, man only lived as a nobler and better-natured animal or living creature, and pleased himself, that is, his flesh, either in a grosser or more cleanly manner, being ignorant, mindless of God and another world; but new creatures become spirit, have a spiritual inclination, cannot content themselves with a happiness on this side God and heaven. Mere human nature can never bring men to this, but only the power of God.

(2.) A temporary change, as to fall into a sudden religious frame, which is soon worn off; as Ahab's humiliation, 1 Kings xxi. 27; or those that howled on their beds, &c., Hosea vii. 14, frighted into a little religiousness in their straits and deep necessities, like ice in

thawing weather, soft at top and hard at bottom; or those the prophet speaketh of, Jer. xxxiv. 15, 'Ye were turned to-day and had done right, but ye returned again and polluted my name.' They seemed to be changed awhile from evil to good, and then they change again from good to evil This will not amount to the new creature, for that is a durable thing: 1 John iii. 9, Σπέρμα μένει, 'His seed remains.'

(3.) A change of outward form, without a change of heart; as when a man changeth parties in religion, and from an oppressor becomes a professor of a stricter way. No; the scripture opposeth this to the new creature, Gal. vi. 15. The new creature lieth more in a new mind, new will and affection, than in a new form of religion. Lead is lead still, whatever stamp it beareth.

(4.) A partial change. Men are altered in some things, but the old nature still remaineth; their religion is but like a new piece in an old garment; the heart is not new moulded, so as to leave an impression upon all our actions. The renewed are 'holy in all manner of conversation,' ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ, 1 Peter i. 15; 2 Peter iii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 17. They drive a new trade for another world, and set upon another work to which they were strangers before; must have new solaces, new comforts, new motives. The new creature is entire, not half new half old; but with many the heart is like 'a cake not turned.'

[3.] When thus new framed and fashioned, it belongeth to God, it hath special relation to him, James i. 18. It must needs be so; they have God's nature and life. (1.) Nature, 2 Peter i. 4. They are made like God, bear his image and superscription; it is a curious piece of workmanship, in which God hath showed his wisdom, goodness, and power; and so they are sealed and marked out for his peculiar ones. (2.) The life of God, that came from him, and tendeth to him. Others are 'alienated from the life of God,' Eph, iv. 18. They recover it, 1 Pet. iv. 6. His spirit is a principle of life in them, so that they are really alive to God, and dead to sin and the world.

[4.] This workmanship on us as new creatures far surpasseth that which maketh us creatures only. That came from his general goodness, this from his peculiar love; there it is goodness, here it is grace: 2 Tim. i. 9, 'He hath called us with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace.' Creatures are sustained by his

common providence, but new creatures by his special care and covenant: 'He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,' Ps. cxlv, 16. But he especially preserveth and supplieth believers, 1 Tim. iv. 10. He giveth others bodily comforts; but these, soul-refreshings and spiritual graces, Eph. i. 3. There is *vestigium*, a tract or footprint of God in all the creation; these have his image restored in them: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God.' Well, then, this is that we should look after, that we may be his workmanship made again. It is a woful thing to be God's workmanship by creation and not by renovation. It is better never to have been God's creature in the first making, if not his creature in the second making. Better thou hadst been a beast, yea, a toad or serpent, than a man; for when the beasts die, death puts an end to their pains and pleasures at once, but all thy comforts end with death, and then thy pains begin: the beasts have no remorse to sour their pleasures, but man hath conscience, and therefore can have no rest till he return to God.

Secondly, God's way of concurrence to establish this relation. It is a creation. The phrase is often used: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God.' No other hand could finish this piece of workman ship. God often sets it forth by this term: Isa. xliii. 7, 'I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him.' So ver. 21, 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' So in other places. Now, creation is a work of omnipotency, and proper to God. There is a twofold creation. In the beginning God made some things out of nothing, and some things *ex inhabili materia*, out of foregoing matter, but such as was wholly unfit for such things as were made of it; as when God made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and Eve out of the rib of man. Take the notion in the former or latter sense, and it will suit with the matter in hand. (1.) We are formed anew of God, as it were out of a state of nothing, and get a new being and a new life. To this there are frequent allusions in scripture; as Rom. iv. 17, 'He calleth the things that are not as though they were;' 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'Who speaketh (ὁ ἐ'ρνη) light out of darkness,' he bringeth. life out of death, something out of nothing. Now there is such a distance between these two terms that the work can only be accomplished by a divine power. (2.) Creation out of unfit matter. We were wholly indisposed, averse from good, perverse resisters of it. Now, to bring

us to love God and holiness, to restore God's lost image to us, it is a new forming or making of us, and must be looked upon, not as a low, natural, or common thing, but as the work of him who gave us his image at first: Col. iii. 10, 'The new man is renewed after the image of him that created him.' To turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, God challengeth it to himself, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This creation showeth two things:—

1. The greatness of the disease; that is clearly seen in the difficulty of the remedy. Nothing doth make a man so sensible of the corruptness of his nature, as when we hear by what terms our recovery or restitution by grace is set forth. It is a second creation, a new birth, a resurrection, a raising up of stones to be children to Abraham; yea, in a sort, beasts are turned into angels. From these things we may a little conceive of the greatness of that disease which all mankind were sick of. Every faculty of our souls was both weakened and corrupted, and God only by his divine power can restore us; for to be cured we must be wholly new made, and who can make or create but God? Surely we contributed nothing to it. What enemies were we to our own mercies! It is no small matter for darkness to become light in the Lord; for a rugged, stubborn creature to be mollified, and submissive to the Spirit's discipline; for a slave of the devil to become the subject of Christ; that a heap of rubbish should be erected into a temple of God, and a dunghill turned into a bed of spices.

2. It teaches us to magnify this renewing work. If you think the cure is no great matter, it will necessarily follow that it deserveth no great praise, and so God will be robbed of the honour of our recovery. But why then is this work so magnified in the scriptures, and such high expressions used about it? Why is it called an opening of our blind eyes; a turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; a 'quickening them that were dead,' and making us 'new creatures'? Why must the Holy Ghost be shed so abundantly upon us for our renovation? Surely it is some great thing which all these expressions do intend, and should be more magnified in our thoughts, that we may give God his due praise and honour. And they sin greatly that have contemptuous thoughts or a low esteem of it, or see not the absolute necessity of it; and by extenuating this great change, gave shrewd suspicion

they were never acquainted with it. Surely all that have felt what God hath done for their souls, they know how little they have contributed to it, they dare not make light of it, and ascribe it to their own wit or will, or entertain undervaluing thoughts of this grace. Alas I there is an enmity in every carnal heart against holiness, till God remove it and subdue it, Rom. viii. 7; Col. i. 21. And what shall conquer this enmity but his invincible power? Surely this is the gracious and powerful work of the ever-blessed God, and to be ascribed to him alone. Can a stony heart of itself become tender? or a dead heart quicken itself? or a creature wholly led by sense, and addicted to the pleasures of sin, be brought of itself to seek its happiness in an unseen world, and of its own accord deny present things, and lay up all its hopes in heaven? No; it is God must take away the heart of stone, quicken those that are dead in trespasses and sins.

Thirdly, How far the mediation of Christ is concerned in this effect We are renewed by God's creating power, but through the intervening mediation of Christ.

1. This creating power is set forth with respect to his merit. The life of grace is purchased by his death: 1 John iv. 9, 'God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him;' here spiritually, hereafter eternally; life opposite to the death incurred by sin. And how by him? By his being a propitiation; that he speaks of there, ver. 10. We were in a state of death when the doors of mercy were first opened to us, under the guilt and power of sin; for while the guilt and tyranny of sin remaineth, we are said to be dead, and strangers to the life of God; and we begin to live when first regenerated by the Spirit of Christ. Now this we have not without Christ being a propitiation for our sins, that is, without doing some thing whereby God, without any impeachment of his honour, might show himself placable and propitious to mankind; his justice, holiness, and hatred of sin being sufficiently demonstrated in the sufferings of Christ. Now the honour of his governing justice being kept up, his pardoning mercy is the more freely exercised. God may be propitious to mankind, and yet still be acknowledged as a sin-hating God.

2. In regard of efficacy. Christ is a quickening head, or a life-making Spirit, 1 Cor. xv.

45. Whatever grace we have comes from God, through Christ as Mediator; and from him we have it by virtue of our union with him: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' As soon as joined to him as our head, his grace is applied to us by his Spirit. It is first applied by converting grace, and then continually supplied by the confirming grace of the Spirit; and so we are fitted to every good work. Christ first applieth it in conversion, when he giveth us repentance and a new nature, Acts v. 31; and supplieth it by continual influence, John xv. 5. We live on him as the branch doth on the root. Now from hence we learn what a great benefit renewing grace is; it is a fruit of reconciling grace: 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ,' God giveth grace only as the God of peace, that is, as pacified by Christ's death. The Holy Spirit is the gift of his love, and the fruit of this peace and reconciliation which Christ made for us. First, our Lord Jesus Christ merited this grace by the value of this sacrifice and bloody sufferings, and then doth apply it by the almighty power of his Spirit; and Christ is first our ransom, and then the fountain of life unto our souls; and so the honour of our whole and entire recovery is to be ascribed to our Redeemer. When he satisfied God's justice for our sins, he purchased a power to change the heart of man; and he purchased this power into his own hands, not into another's, and therefore doth accomplish it by his Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 18. We should often think what a foundation God hath laid for the dispensation of his grace, and how he would demonstrate his infinite love in giving his Son to be a propitiation. for us. When he would show forth his infinite power in determining and changing the heart of man, all the persons concurred: the Father purposing, the Son by way of redemption and purchase, the Holy Ghost by effective power; and all to bring back our souls to God, and to make us capable of serving and pleasing him. It is surely a workmanship of much cost.

Two reasons why they are as it were created anew:—

1. Because of the badness of our former estate. Ruinous and decayed buildings are only to be thrown down, to make way for a new structure and house to stand in the same place. Man naturally is a creature in a state of apostasy and defection, under a loss of original righteousness, averse from God, yea, an enemy to him,

prone to all evil, weak, yea, dead to all spiritual good. And what must be done with such a creature to bring him out of his misery, but wholly to new mould him and make him, that he may have a new being and life? The scripture represents man as blind in his mind, 2 Peter i. 9; perverse in his will, Zech. vii. 12; rebellious in his affections, Eph. ii. 3, 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' What sound part is there left in us to mend the rest? If we will be brought home to God, we must of sinful and polluted become clean and holy; and 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,' Job xiv. 4. We must of carnal become spiritual, and therefore we must be new born, new made, John iii. 6. That instead of minding the things of the flesh we may mind the things of the Spirit, we must of worldly become heavenly. 'Now, he that formeth us for this very thing is God,' 2 Cor. v. 5. Ὁ καταργαζόμενος, he that frameth and createth us for this heavenly state, is God. He that is the framer and maker of all things, of infinite wisdom, power, and love, he createth us anew in Christ, that we may look after eternal life. The heavenly disposition wrought in us is a pledge of it.

2. From the nature of God's work, which is not merely by helping the will, but by giving us the will itself, or the act of volition of it; not by curing the weakness of it, but by sanctifying it, and taking away the sinfulness of it, and inclining it to himself. If the will were only in a swoon and languishment, a little moral persuasion and excitation, outward or inward, by the word and Spirit, would serve the turn; but. we cannot say of it, as Christ of the damsel, 'She is not dead, but sleepeth.' No; the scripture saith, We are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. God's grace is not only necessary for facilitation, that we may more easily pursue and choose that which is good; as a horse is necessary that a man may pass on his journey more easily, which otherwise he might perform on foot with difficulties. No; it is impossible as well as difficult to escape; the carnal life without God, Mat. xix. 26. He doth work such a change on a carnal man's heart that he contemns the world and seeks after heavenly things. Nay, he doth not only give us a remote power to will if we please, or a remote power to do if we please, but he giveth 'to will and to do,' Phil. ii. 13; the will itself and the deed itself. Thus is God's operation set forth; he reneweth the faculties and exciteth the act of willing and doing by his powerful and

victorious influence, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Otherwise, if grace did only give us an indifferency, so that a man may or may not, then man would be ‘the principal cause of his own conversion, and God lose the glory of his grace, and the honour of it be ascribed to the liberty of man’s own will. God doth not give a power to repent and believe, and leave it to the determination of man’s will to make it effectual; but he giveth faith itself, and repentance itself. Faith is his gift: Eph. ii. 8, ‘To you it is given to believe;’ Phil. i. 29. The Redeemer was raised ‘to give repentance.’ Acts v. 31. This is the grace which the saints pray for, faith itself, repentance itself: Ps. li. 10, ‘Create in me a clean heart;’ Heb.

xiii. 21, ‘The Lord make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.’ We pray not only for a grace that gives the possibility, but the effect; not only for such as doth invite and solicit us to good, but such as doth incline and determine us to good. And this is the grace we give thanks for; not a power to repent and believe if we please, but for repentance and faith wrought in us. If God did only give a power to will if we please, to do if we please, man would difference himself, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

3. With respect to Christ: ‘We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,’ who is the head of the new world, or renewed estate. All things are new in the kingdom of Christ; there is a change of everything from what it was before. There is a new Adam, which is Jesus Christ; a new covenant, which is the gospel; a new paradise, not that where Adam enjoyed God among the beasts, but where the blessed enjoy God among the angels; a new ministry, not the posterity of Aaron or tribe of Levi, but a ministry of reconciliation, put into their hands whom God hath qualified and fitted to be dispensers of these holy mysteries; new ordinances, ‘We serve God not in the oldness of the letter, but the newness of the spirit;’ therefore, if we be in Christ, we must be new creatures. We are both obliged and fitted by this new estate to be so. Some are in Christ externally by baptism and profession; they are visibly in covenant with him, and *de jure*, of right, are bound to be new creatures. Others are in Christ by real internal union. These not only ought to be, but *de facto* are, new creatures; they are made partakers of his Spirit, Rom. viii. 9, and by that Spirit they are renewed and sanctified. Well, then, since there is a new Lord and a new law, all is

new; there must be a new creation; for as the general state of the church is renewed by Christ, so is every particular believer.

4. With respect to the use for which this new creation serveth. One is mentioned in the text: 'Created unto good works;' but other things must be taken in.

[1.] In order to our present communion with God. Till we are created anew, we are not fit to converse with a holy and invisible God earnestly, frequently, reverently, and delightfully, which is our daily work and business. The effects of the new creature are life and likeness; those that do not live the life of God are estranged from him, Eph. iv. 18. Trees cannot converse with beasts, because they do not live their life; nor beasts with men, for they have sense only, but no reason; nor men with God, till they have somewhat of the same nature and life. If one had power to put the spirit of man into a brute beast, that beast would discourse reasonably. God hath power to put a divine Spirit into his people, to sanctify their souls, that fits them for converse with God. Look, as in innocency Adam was alone, though compassed about with a multitude of creatures, beasts, birds, and plants, yet there was none, till Eve was made, fit to converse with him, because they did not live his life; therefore the Lord God said, Gen. ii. 18, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' The man was alone, because he had none like himself that he might converse withal as a man in the exercise of speech and reason; the beasts of the field and fowls of the air were no fit companions for him; they wanted the means of converse, reason and speech: so without grace we are not meet for communion with God, till we have faith and love to admire, reverence, and delight in him. So for likeness. Conformity is the ground of communion: Amos iii. 3, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' Our state of sin is a state of enmity, and our state of holiness a state of love. Our old course made the breach between us and God, Isa. lix. 2; but the new life and likeness qualifies us for communion with him: 1 John i. 6, 7, 'An holy creature may sweetly come and converse with the holy God.'

[2.] In order to our service and obedience to God. Man is unfit for God's use till he be new moulded and framed again: In the text, we must be 'created in Christ Jesus to good works.' Every creature hath faculties suitable to the operations that belong to that creature;

so man must be new created, new formed, that he may be prepared and made ready for the Lord. You cannot expect new operations till there be a new nature and life. When a man is turned from sin, he is 'made meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Tim. ii. 21. Our first care must be to get the heart renewed. Many are troubled about this or that duty, or particular branches of the spiritual life; first get life itself. There must be principles before there can be operations. In vain do we expect strengthening grace before we have received renewing grace. This is like little children, who attempt to run before they can go or stand. Many complain of this or that corruption, but they do not groan under the burden of a corrupt nature; as suppose wandering thoughts in prayer, when at the same time the heart is habitually averse and estranged from God: as if a man should complain of an aching tooth when a mortal disease hath seized upon his vitals, or of a cut finger when at the same time he is wounded at the heart,—of deadness in duty and want of quickening grace when they want converting grace. This is like blowing to a dead coal, to complain of infirmities and incident weakness when our habitual aversion from and enmity to God is not yet cured, and of unfitness for service, when we are not come out of the carnal state.

[3.] In order to our future enjoyment of God, and that glory and blessedness which we expect in his heavenly kingdom; none but new creatures can enter into the new Jerusalem. It is said, John iii. 3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' *Seeing* is put for *enjoying*; yet the expression is emphatical, as if he should not be suffered so much as to peep or look within the veil; therefore the mere carnal man neither knoweth his true happiness, nor careth for it, but followeth after his own lusts, till he be new moulded and framed. By nature men are opposite to the kingdom of God, it being invisible, future, spiritual, mostly for the soul; and by nature men are for things seen, present, and bodily. The interest of the flesh governeth all their choices and inclinations; and how unmeet are these for heaven! In short, our frail bodies must be changed before they can be brought to heaven: 'We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed,' saith the apostle. If the body must be changed, how much more the soul? if that which is frail, much more that which is filthy; if flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven till it be freed from its corruptible qualities, certainly a guilty,

corrupted soul cannot enter into heaven till it be freed from its sinful qualities.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. Of information.

1. That there is such a thing as the new nature, regeneration, or the new birth, and the new creature. It is one thing to make us men, another to make us saints or Christians. We have understanding, and will, and affections, and sense as men, but we have these sanctified as Christians. The carnal world thinks Christianity puts strange names upon ordinary things; but is it an ordinary thing to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and to raise men above those inclinations and affections by which the generality of the world are mastered and captivated? For a man to be another kind of creature than the rest of men are, surely proceeds from a new nature put into him, 1 Peter iv. 4. The world wondereth at believers in their contemning the pleasant, powerful attractives of sensible things.

2. That by this new nature a man is distinguished from himself as carnal; he hath somewhat which he had not before, something that may be called a new life and nature; a new heart that is created, Ps. li. 10; and may be increased, 2 Peter iii. 18. In the first conversion we are mere objects of grace, but afterwards instruments of grace. First God worketh upon us, then by us. On the unregenerate the Spirit worketh while they do nothing that is good, sometimes the contrary; the regenerate he helpeth whilst they are working, striving, labouring; he quickeneth and exciteth their inclination to God. They have some principles of operation, there is life in them; and where there is life there is some power to act, or else God's most precious gifts would be in vain; therefore it is their duty to bestir themselves, 2 Peter i. 3-5. We have understanding and memory sanctified and planted with a stock of divine knowledge, and can retain things on the conscience, which if we do not, we are highly culpable before God: Mat. xxv. 25, 26, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant,' &c. We have an inclination to God and heavenly things, and we must blow it up: Isa. lxiv. 7, 4 There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;' 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Stir up the gift of God that is in thee.'

3. How little they can make out their recovery to God, and interest in Christ, who are not sensible of any change wrought in them. They have their old thoughts, their old discourses, their old passions, and their old affections, and their old conversations still; the old darkness and blindness which was upon their minds, the old stupidity, dullness, deadness, carelessness that was upon their hearts, knowing little or nothing, or regarding nothing of God; the old end and scope governeth them, to which they formerly referred all things. If there were a change, there would be some hope the Redeemer had been at work in their hearts. You can remember how little savour you had once of the things of the Spirit, how little mind to Christ or holiness, how wholly you were given up to the pleasures of the flesh, or the profits of the world; what a mastery your lusts had then over you, and a hard servitude you were in. Is the case altered with you now? Is your taste of fleshly delights deadened, your souls taken up more with the affairs of another world? Is the drift, aim, and bent of your lives now for God and your salvation, and the great business you attend upon the pleasing of God and the saving of your souls? Are ye not servants to your senses and fleshly appetites, and things here below, but can ye govern yourselves, and master these desires? This is a change in deed, but in many that profess Christ, and pretend to an interest in him, there is no such change to be sensibly seen; their old sins, and their old lusts, and the old things of ungodliness are not yet cast off. Surely so much old rubbish and rotten building should not be left standing with the new. Old leaves in autumn fall off in the spring, if they continue so long; so old things should pass away, and all become new.

4. It informeth us in what manner we should check sin, by remembering it is an old thing to be done away, and ill becoming our new estate by Christ: 2 Peter i. 9, 'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins,' Former sins ought to be esteemed as old rags that are cast off, and as vomit never to be licked up again. If we are, and do esteem ourselves to be pardoned, we should never build again what we have destroyed, nor tear open old wounds—so 1 Peter i. 14, 'Not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance'—nor cast ourselves into the old mould and shape, and return to our old bondage and slavery. So 1 Cor. v. 7, 'Purge out the old leaven, that you may be wholly a new lump;' so ver. 8,

‘Therefore keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,’ The unsuitableness of sin to our present state should stir up our indignation: Hosea xiv. 8, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’ Worldly things are pleasing to the old man, therefore we should not over-much esteem them; they are not new creatures that have not put off the lusts of the old man.

Use 2. To put us upon self-reflection; are we the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus? that is, are we made new creatures? It will be known by these things,—a new mind, a new heart, and a new life.

1. Have we a new mind? A new creature hath a new sight of things, looketh upon all things with a new eye. He seeth more odiousness in sin, more excellency in Christ, more beauty in holiness, more vanity in the world, than ever he saw before. Before they did φρονεῖν κατὰ σάρκα they knew all things after the flesh, A new value and esteem of things doth much discover the temper of the heart: Heb. xi. 26, ‘Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.’ They esteem the decay of the outward man to be abundantly recompensed with the increase of the inward, 2 Cor. iv. 16. A new creature is not only changed himself, but all things seem to be changed with him. Heaven is another thing, and earth is another thing than it was before, so is sin and righteousness; yea, he looketh on his body and soul with another eye.

2. As he hath a new mind and judgment, so the heart is new moulded. The great blessing of the new covenant is a new heart. Now the heart is new when we are inclined to the ways of God, and enabled to walk in them.

[1.] There is a new inclination, poise, and weight upon the soul, bending it to holy and heavenly things. The inclination to holiness David prayeth for: Ps. cxix. 36, ‘Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’ To heavenly things: Paul asserteth, 2 Cor.

iv. 18, ‘We look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but

the things which are not seen are eternal;’ when we always live in delightful foresight and expectation of blessedness to come.

[2.] The heart is enabled also: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, ‘I will put a new spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my ways.’ Where there is a new heart, there is new strength or grace given to ‘serve God acceptably, and with reverence and godly fear,’ Heb. xii. 28. Indeed God assists this power, or else we fail and wax faint; but a power there is in some measure to will and do; for ‘the kingdom of God stands not in word, but in power.’ There is a power to overcome fleshly lusts; the heavenly mind is not given us in vain: 1 Peter ii. 11, ‘Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’ A power to overcome worldly lusts, Phil. iv. 13. When we seek no great things for ourselves here in this world, we can the better bear all conditions. I do confess (as I said before), God must assist this power both in willing and doing, purposing and performing. We may have assistance in one kind and not in another, Paul saith, *το θελεῖν*, &c., Rom. vii. 18, ‘To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I have no power.’ To will is more than to think, to exert our will into action is more than both. In all we need God’s help. Some may have the power to will, when no power to do; so Peter *se posse putabat quod se velle sentiebat*. But yet I describe a Christian, or a new creature, by his power; because God’s children are never so deserted but that there is some help from God. There are *auxilia necessaria*, helps of grace simply and absolutely necessary, which are not denied, when liberal and plentiful aids of grace are suspended; and therefore a Christian is to be described by his power, though still in a dependence upon God.

3. A new life, or a new conversation, called walking ‘in newness of life,’ Rom. vi. 4. Surely he that hath a new principle, the Spirit, and not the flesh; a new rule, the law of God, and not the course of this world; a new scope, the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of God, and not the pleasing of men and his own fleshly mind, must needs walk in a different course both from other carnal men, and from what he himself carried on before. But all these are true of the new creature; he is influenced by another principle, Rom. viii. 12, Gal. v. 16; looketh upon himself as having another rule, Gal. vi. 16, Ps. i. 2; and pouppoundeth to himself another design

and scope, Phil. iii. 20, 2 Cor. v. 9; and therefore must needs live another life. Well, then, by these things you may judge of your estate.

Use 3. To exhort you to look after this, that you be the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus. You will say, What can we do? This is God's work, in which we are merely passive.

I answer—It is certainly an abuse of this doctrine if it lull us asleep in the lap of idleness; and we think that because God doth all in framing us for the new life, we must do nothing. The Spirit of God reasoneth otherwise: Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.' This principle can neither be a ground of looseness nor laziness. You are under an obligation both to return to God, and to use the means whereby you may return. Your impotency doth not dissolve your obligation. A drunken servant is a servant, and bound to do his work; his master loseth not his right by his default. An insolvent debtor is a debtor, and if he cannot pay all, he is bound to pay as much as he can. Besides, you are creatures in misery; if you be sensible of it, your interest will teach you to do what you can to come out of it; and God's doing all is an engagement to wait upon him in the use of means, that we may meet with God in his way, and he may meet with us in our way. I say, in his way; for God hath appointed certain duties to convey and apply this grace. Now we are to lie at the pool till the waters be stirred, to continue our attendance till God giveth grace, Mark iv. 24. And I say, that God may meet with us in our way; for God influenceth all things according to their natural inclination. God, that enlighteneth the world by and with the sun, burneth with fire, reasoneth with man, acteth necessarily with necessary causes, and freely with free causes,—he doth not oppress the liberty of the new creature, but preserveth the nature and interest of his own workmanship; draweth men 'with the cords of a man,' Hosea xi. 4. He propoundeth reasons and motives, which we must consider, and so betake ourselves to a godly course. The object of regeneration is a reasonable creature, upon whom God worketh, not as on a stock or stone, but maketh use of the faculties which we have, showing us our lost estate, and the possibility of salvation by Christ, sweetly inviting us to accept of this grace, that he may pardon our sins,

sanctify and heal our natures, and lead us in a way of holiness unto eternal life. Now these means we are to attend upon; and it is some advantage when you own your duty, and are sensible of a necessity of changing your estate, who would otherwise be altogether careless and mindless of such a thing. But when you look on it as a duty, that must be speedily and earnestly gone about if you mean to be saved, you are in a fair way of cure. By exhortation we demand God's right, and make the creature sensible of his own obligation, that he may go about this work as well as he can, at least that he may acknowledge the debt, confess his impotency, and beg grace. Besides, there are some things to be done before this renovation in order thereunto, as wood is dried before it is kindled. There are some preparations before conversion, and we are to be active about them. As, for instance, that we should rouse up ourselves, and consider our case: Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Man is very inconsiderate; his soul is asleep till consideration awaken it again. We are to search and try our estate whether it be good or bad, Lam. iii. 40. Let us 'search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.' We are to observe God's rebukes: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn ye at my reproof;' to set ourselves to seek after God in the best fashion we can: Hosea v. 4, 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God,' that is, think of recovering themselves and bending their course to him. Chiefly we are to take heed that we do not hinder God's work, and obstruct our own mercies: Prov. i. 25, 'They set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof.' Sometimes conscience is startled, either as being excited by the word, Acts xxiv. 25, or some notable affliction and strait, Gen. xlii. 21; by one means or another the waters are stirred, great helps are vouchsafed to us; observe these seasons. However, check despair. He that did turn water into wine, can turn sinners into saints, lions into lambs; he hath not excluded you from his grace, therefore do not exclude yourselves. When did he ever forsake the anxious and waiting souls that would not give over seeking till they did obtain the sanctifying Spirit?

SERMON XX. - Eph. II. 10.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
—Eph. II. 10.

WE come now to the end why we are brought into this estate, created unto good works, &c. The end is not to live idly or walk loosely, but holily, according to the will of God.

In this latter clause, ‘Created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,’ observe:—

1. The object: good works; that is, works becoming the new creature: in short, we should live Christianly.

2. God’s act about it: οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ Θεός, *which God hath before ordained*. The word signifies both *prepared* and *ordained*.

(1.) God hath prepared these works for us.

(2.) God hath prepared us for them. He hath prepared them for us either by his decree or precept. If you understand it in the first sense, God, that hath ordained the end, hath also appointed means, as Acts xxvii. 31, compared with 24; or else appointed by his precept and express will, Micah vi. 8; and he hath prepared us for them by his Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, Heb. viii. 10, enlightening the mind, inclining the will. The first showeth the necessity of them, the second the easiness of them. God hath accommodated all things to that end, enabling us to know our duty and to do it.

3. Our duty: *that we should walk in them*. Walking noteth both a way and an action.

[1.] It implieth a way, that good works are the way to obtain salvation, purchased and granted to us by Jesus Christ. Unless we walk in the path of good works we cannot come to eternal life.

[2.] An action. Walking notes:— (1.) Spontaneity in the principle: not drawn or driven, but *walk*, set ourselves a-going. (2.) Progress in the motion. He that walketh sets himself forward and gets ground; he doth not stand still or lie down, but goeth on still.

Doct. That new creatures are both obliged and fitted, or prepared for good works.

I. What is meant by good works?

II. What obligation lieth on the new creature to make conscience of them?

III. How they are fitted and prepared by that new nature which is bestowed upon them by and through Christ?

I. What is meant by good works?

1. The kinds.

2. The requisites.

First, The kinds—all acts of obedience: more particularly they are divided and distributed into five sorts or ranks.

1. *Opera cultus*: acts of God's immediate worship, both internal and external. The internal acts are faith and love, trust, delight, reverence. The children of God are often described by these—by believing in his name, John i. 12; love to God and delight in him; Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;' Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord;' trust: Ps. lxxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people;' fear or reverence: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.' External, as to pray, read, hear, to be much in communion with God in all the parts of his worship. Without works of piety we are practical atheists, Ps. xxxvi. 1, and Ps. xiv. 1, 2, 4. God's people do certainly make conscience of these: the internal acts are the life of their souls; the external are their solace, strength, and support, their songs in the house of their pilgrimage, their refreshing by the way. Cornelius, Acts x. 2, feared and prayed to God alway; Daniel would not omit prayer one day though in danger of death, Dan. vi. 10, 11. There is little zeal in them that are not frequent with God, but forget him days without number, Jer. ii. 32.

2. *Opera vocationis*: every man must labour in the work to which he is called. God is pleased to appoint and accept the duties of our callings as a good work. Are they never so mean, yet servants may honour God by diligence in their duties: Titus ii. 9, 10, 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, &c., that they may adorn the

doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.’ To be profitable to human society in your place is good; the new nature helpeth us so to be: Philem. 11, Onesimus ‘in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me.’ All have their work, from the Mediator to the poorest creature in the world; John xvii. 4, ‘I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’ So Titus iii. 14, ‘Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.’ When John’s hearers came to know what they should do, he referreth every one to their callings, Luke iii. 10-12; walk conscionably therein, glorify God, soldiers, publicans, &c. Without these good works we are drones in the common hive, yea, burdens upon the earth.

3. *Opera justitiae*: works of righteousness and justice, to hurt none, to give every one his due, to use fidelity in our relations, Acts xxiv. 16. The credit of religion is much concerned in the just dealing of them that profess it. God will have the world to know that religion is a good friend to human society: Neh. v. 9, ‘Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen, our enemies?’ This was the primitive glory of Christianity, *Dent exercitum talem, tales exactores fisci*, &c. Some carry it so that they deal with God’s commandments as Hanun with David’s messengers, as if they had cut off the whole second table, and so prove a stain and blot to religion. In short, they that do not make conscience of paying their debts, and using justice, equity, and honesty in all their dealings, are robbers, thieves, and enemies to human society.

4. *Opera charitatis et misericordiae*: as to relieve the poor, to be good to all, to help others by our counsel or admonition. We are often called upon for these; thus, Acts ix. 36, Dorcas is said to be ‘full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.’ So 1 Tim. vi. 18, ‘Charge them to be rich in good works.’ It is not left arbitrary to you. but laid upon you as part of your charge and duty, a debt we owe to God. Now, if you do not mind this kind of good works, you are unfaithful stewards in the good things committed to your trust. You must not deny God his own when he or any of his have need of it.

5. I think there is another sort of good works which concern ourselves, and that is, sobriety, watchfulness, mortification, self-

denial. A man oweth duty to himself: Titus ii. 12, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,' &c. These conduce to our safety: 1 Peter v. 8, 'Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;' and belong to our fidelity to Christ: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.' Therefore take in these also, and call them *opera militiae Christianae*, the works of our spiritual warfare, by which we guard ourselves from the enemies of our salvation, that our hands be not weakened and enfeebled in God's work, that we may carry it on with out unevenness and interruption.

Secondly, The requisites to a good work are:—

1. That the person be in a good state: Mat. vii. 17, 'A good tree bringeth forth good fruit,' Married to Christ: Rom. vii. 4, 'Where fore ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' A believer: Titus iii. 8, 'Let them which believe in God be careful to maintain good works,' A carnal, unregenerate man may do that which is for the matter good; but till he be changed in his heart and state, his works are not acceptable to God.

2. The principles of operation must be faith, love, and obedience. Faith, owning God's authority: Ps. cxix. 66, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandment.' Love, inclining the heart: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth me.' Obedience, swaying the conscience: 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'This is the will of God, your sanctification;' 1 Tim. i. 5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' There we have the pedigree of good works; faith unfeigned begets a good conscience, and that a pure heart, and that love to God, and then all particular duties succeed.

3. A due regard of circumstances, that it may be not only good, but done well, Luke viii. 15,—with that diligence, reverence, seriousness, alacrity, which the nature of the work doth require.

4. The end, that it be for God's glory: Phil. i. 11, 'Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God.'

II. How new creatures are obliged to these good works.

1. With respect to God, *he hath ordained that we should walk in them*. If you refer to his decree, he will have his elect people distinguished from others by the good they do in the world, that they may be known to be followers of a good God, as the children of the devil are by their mischief. His eternal decree is made evident to us by our making conscience of good works, and so we 'make our calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. If you take it for his precept and command, surely we should make conscience of what our father giveth us in charge. He hath appointed us to do so, sent us into the vineyard to work, and shall we say, I will not? Mat. xxi. 29, 30; or loiter and neglect when we have given our consent? or pretend to go, and never set about it? To a gracious heart the signification of God's will is instead of all reasons: 1 Thes. v. 18, 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you;' 1 Peter ii. 15, 'For this is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'

2. With respect to Christ, who died to restore us to a capacity and ability to perform these good works: Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' not only to do them, but do them with alacrity and zeal. As Christ came to raise the comfort of the creature to the highest, so also the duty of the creature to the highest, that his people might be eminent in holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, above all others.

3. With respect to the Spirit, who reneweth us for this end; we are new made, that we may look upon doing good as our calling and only business. All other things are valuable according to the use for which they serve; the sun was made to give light and heat to inferior creatures, and we are enlightened by grace, and inclined by grace, that our light may shine before men, Mat. v. 16.

4. With respect to heaven and eternal happiness, they are the way to heaven. We discontinue or break off our walk when we cease to do good; but the more we mind good works the more we

proceed in our way: Phil. iii. 14, 'Pressing onward' to our final reward, and at length our entrance is more full, and with greater peace, 2 Peter i. 11.

III. How are they fitted and prepared by this new nature that is put into them for good works?

Ans. There is a remote preparation, and a near preparation.

1. The remote preparation is an inclination and propensity to all the acts of the holy and heavenly life. All creatures have an inclination to their proper operations, so the new creature. As the sparks fly up and the stones downward by an inclination of nature, so are their hearts bent to please and serve God. The inclination is natural, the acts are voluntary, because it is an inclination of a free agent: 'The law of God is in their hearts,' Ps. xl. 8; Ps.

xxxvii. 31. Others force themselves, but here there is an affinity between the work and the vital principle which is in us, so that we need not much enforcement: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'As touching brotherly love, I need not write unto you, for you are taught of God to love one another.' Now, God's teaching is not by expression, but by impression; he hath inclined, suited our hearts to it: as there need not many arguments to move the mother to give suck to her tender infant; nature hath taught her, left such an instinct and inclination upon her, which doth sufficiently excite her to do it.

2. The near preparation is called promptitude and readiness for every good work, or a 'ready obedience to every good work.' Titus iii. 1. So 1 Tim. vi. 18, 'Ready to distribute;' Heb. xiii. 16, 'Ready to communicate.' So Paul, ἑτοίμως ἔχω, Acts xxi. 13. This is beyond inclination. The fire hath an inclination to ascend upwards, yet something may violently keep it down; so a Christian may have a will to good, a strong, not a remiss will, but yet there are some impediments, Rom. vii. 18. Inclination implieth a remote power, but readiness the next and immediate power; therefore a Christian ought to keep himself in a readiness or fitness of disposition for his duty, whether it concerneth God, ourselves, or others. This is seen in zeal, that beareth down all impediments. All graces are operative, and zeal is that earnest impulsion and activity of every grace where it is in strength and vigour. Faith worketh, Gal. v. 6. Love constraineth, 2 Cor. v. 14. Hope quickeneth, 1 Peter i. 3, 'a lively

hope.' This proceedeth from the new nature when it is in right frame and strength. We need not only make conscience of our duty, or have some mind to it, but our hearts will not let us have any quiet and rest without it: 2 Peter i. 8, 'They make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Christians must be 'zealous of good works.' Titus ii. 14. Paul was 'pressed in spirit.' Acts xvii. 16; Acts xviii. 5.

The benefits that come by it are:—

1. We do good works more easily, as being inclined thereunto: Exod. xxxv. 29, 'The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord;' Ps. cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the clay of thy power.' There is a great deal of difference between doing things by compulsion and doing things from an inclination; between Israel's making brick in Egypt and building the wall in Nehemiah's time, Neh. iv. 6.

2. With more delight and alacrity: 1 John v. 3, 'His commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' It is a pleasure to them to do a good work; to others, a toil.

3. With constancy. That which is forced lasts not long; upon the first occasion we break out, cast off the burden which pincheth and galleth us. A man is never constant to his duty till he be held to it by his heart; and the bias of the heart is not fear, but love. You cannot easily persuade him against his love and inclination, though you may overcome his fears: Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'Set me as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

The uses are:—

1. For reproof of many professing Christians, who are not more prepared for the Lord, and made ready for every good work. Alas! some are 'to every good work reprobate,' Titus i.16, unfit for any Christian practice. In others, all their holiness standeth in being less vicious or wicked than others. If they avoid the greater crimes, though they freely practise the less, they are accounted good men. Some talk, but do nothing, like cypress trees, tall and beautiful, but

unfruitful; or the carbuncle, afar off seeming all on fire, but the touch discovers it to be key-cold: their zeal is more in their tongues than their actions. Others are very unready, arguing for a mediocrity, disputing every inch with God, beating down the price of religion as low as they can, as little worship and charity as may be, and will do no more than needeth, and it is well if they do that. True goodness, like live honey, droppeth of its own accord, 2 Cor. viii. 2; and is always desirous to do more for God: Ps. lxxi. 14, 'I will praise thee more and more;' Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;' 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'Furthermore, we exhort you, brethren, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.' But little of this temper is to be found.

The second use, of information.

First, Observe the deduction of good works from their proper causes, viz., the will of God requiring, our regeneration fitting: the one determineth our duty, the other maketh us ready to perform it. While carnal, that which we do is but the image of a good work, not really and spiritually good.

Secondly, The necessity of good works.

1. *Necessitate consequentis*, as the fruit and end of regeneration. All things are valued by their use. What doth the new creature serve for but that we may walk in newness of life? otherwise it is but a notion. It is not given us to lie hid in the heart, as a sluggish, idle quality, but that we may act by it, and improve it for God. The Lord made no creature in vain. Indeed, all that we have from God, both in nature and grace, was that we might be fruitful in holiness. In nature we have life, health, and parts for nothing else, but that by our present duty we may prepare ourselves for everlasting joys. All God's mercies bind us to diligence, all his ordinances are means to help us, all his graces are power to enable us; and there is, over and above, the Holy Spirit to excite and quicken that power, John iv. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

2. *Necessitate praecepti*. God hath required them at our hands. Now we must make conscience of what God hath required, especially when all 'his commandments are holy, just, and good' If some greater thing were required, ought we not to have done it? 2

Kings v. 13. But when he hath required such noble work, shall we refuse? There is nothing in his law but what becometh his nature, preserveth and makes happy ours.

3. *Necessitate medii*, as the way to heaven. Good works are indispensably required of grown persons if they mean to be saved: Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God.' A Christian shall be judged at the last day by what he hath done: Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which was the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works;' 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his work,' Profession will not carry it, but our works come into the judgment. So Rev. xiv. 13, 'Their works follow them;' that is, they have the fruit and comfort of them in another world, and without them we cannot be saved.

4. *Necessitate signi*, as evidences of our right to salvation, both to others and ourselves. Works or external acts are more sensible and visible, and also liable to the notice of our own consciences; and it is more hard to judge of the internal grace than the external fruits.

[1.] As to others. God seeth what is in our hearts, but men see it not until the effects manifest it. When John suspected the pharisees, he said to them, Mat. iii. 8, 'Bring ye forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.' The fear of God is more known by the external act than by the internal habit; therefore that description is given, Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate;' and Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear, of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' The current of a man's life and actions doth best expound and interpret his heart. Thus the psalmist discovered the wicked: Ps. xxxvi. 1, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.'

[2.] To ourselves, holy conversation and godliness is the surest note of our regeneration. We judge others by external works alone, 'For the tree is known by its fruit,' Mat. vii. 16. Charity forbids us to pry

any further; but we judge ourselves by internal and external works together. If within we have faith in Christ, a love to God, and hatred of evil, a delight in holiness, a deep sense of the world to come, all which graces make up the new nature, then these things issue out into a holy conversation. This breedeth joy and, peace of conscience: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world;' 1 John iii. 18, 19, 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

[3.] That good works must not be opposed to God's mercy and free grace, or Christ's satisfaction, merit, and righteousness, either in the matter of justification or salvation, but kept in a due subordination to God's grace and Christ's merits. This is the business of this context, to reconcile the grace of God with the necessity of good works, et e contra; and very well it may be, for they are part of the grace obtained. He is most beholden to God, and indebted to grace, who is enabled to do most good, for all is from him: Phil. ii. 13, 'He worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure;' so that our very doing is receiving. But because there are a sort of men that may be called justiciaries, who trust, and teach others to trust, to their own virtues and works, without a Saviour, or ascribe the part of a Saviour to them; and on the other side, the libertines, who teach men not to look at anything in themselves at all, not as an evidence, condition, or means, but to trust to Christ's blood to be instead of faith, repentance, and obedience, which is their duty to be performed by them, therefore it will be necessary to be well acquainted with what is truly the part and office of Christ, what is truly the office of faith and repentance, what of works, that you may be sure to give everything its due, and may wholly trust Christ for his part, and not join faith, or any of your works and duties, in the least degree, of that trust and honour which belongeth to our Saviour, but regard them according to that use for which they are commanded in the gospel.

First, Our works, whatever they are, either duties to God or man, are not the first moving cause or inducement to incline God to show us favour, or to bring about our salvation. No; this honour must be

reserved for the grace of God, which moveth and stirreth all in the business of our salvation. It was his grace to provide us a Saviour: John iii. 16, 'God so loveth the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And the giving of faith or converting grace to some before others, is the mere effect of his mercy and good pleasure: Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace ye are saved.' Then the benefits consequent upon conversion are from God's love and mercy. As justification: Rom. iii. 24, 'Justified freely by his grace;' not only *by his grace*, but *freely*; that is, not excited by our works, but acting freely of its own accord. Then for eternal life, we have it from the grace of God and the mercy of our Redeemer: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' So that grace is the first mover and principle in the whole business of our salvation; it is originally from grace, and all along by grace.

Secondly, Our works before or after conversion are not that righteousness, not any part of that meritorious righteousness, by virtue of which sins are expiated, the wrath of God appeased, all blessings of heaven purchased, and we reconciled to God. For this is only to be ascribed to the merit and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, and are saved by his' life,' Rom. v. 10. He is our propitiation; we live by him: 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' It is Christ's office and honour to be a sacrifice for sin and a propitiation for us, and a perfect Saviour and intercessor; to obtain the Spirit, to fit us for our present duty and future happiness. We are his workmanship in Christ.

Thirdly, Our works or duties which we perform in obedience to God, are not the first means to apply the grace of the Redeemer, or the condition of our first entrance into the evangelical estate. No; that is proper to repentance and faith: Rom. iii. 22, 'The righteousness of God is by faith unto all and upon all them that

believe.’ And repentance is frequently required also to receive pardon and the gift of the Holy Ghost: Acts ii. 38, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;’ Acts iii. 19, ‘Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.’ It is the penitent believing sinner that is qualified for these privileges; or he that thankfully and humbly accepts of the offered Saviour, and consents to the covenant made with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; he is washed from his sins in the blood of Christ, reconciled, adopted into God’s family, and made ‘an heir according to the hope of eternal life,’ Titus iii. 7. This first faith, by which we believe and consent to the covenant, implieth both a dependence on God’s mercy and Christ’s merits, and also a consent of obedience or hearty subjection to God.

Fourthly, When we have consented to accept Christ and his benefits, and do give ourselves to him, then works or new obedience follow, as necessary to continue our right to pardon and life. For none have benefit by God’s covenant but those that keep his covenant as well as make it; and without this we cannot have communion with God: 1 John i. 7, ‘If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;’—nor evidence the reality of our faith and repentance. St Paul was sent to preach to the Gentiles, ‘That they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,’ Acts xxvi. 20. Besides, we cannot preserve our claim and right, if we do not still go on to do good: 1 Tim. vi. 18; Ezek. xviii. 24, ‘When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, shall he live? all his righteousness shall not be mentioned; in his trespasses that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.’ It is true of the hypocrite without scruple, and of the real righteous man; if you suppose the one you may suppose the other. Well, these things must not be confounded or opposed: not confounded, but we must distinctly consider what is proper to the grace of God, proper to the merit of Christ, proper to faith, proper to works; not opposed, so as to make the one exclude the other: as the grace of God to exclude the merit of Christ, or serve instead of it; nor the merit of Christ, his blood and righteousness, to exclude faith and repentance, or be instead of them; nor faith to exclude good works,

Fifthly, All the applying grace is from first to last wrought in us by the Spirit. He doth renew and heal our natures, as coming to us from the grace of God and merits of Christ: Titus iii. 5, 6, ‘According to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.’ By the Holy Spirit working in us habitual grace and exciting it, we believe, repent, obey, do whatever is necessary to be done to obtain eternal life; therefore this must not be omitted, but acknowledged as a great part of this grace.

Third use. To exhort us, if we would show ourselves to be new creatures indeed, to be full of good works. The arguments to move us are:—

1. It is a necessary fruit of inward grace, and so doth plainly show that you are partakers of heavenly wisdom: James iii. 17, ‘The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.’ The carnal worldling, all his wisdom is to grow rich to himself, which indeed is but folly, Luke xii. 21. His business is to live to the flesh, Gal. vi. 8. He layeth out all his strength, time, and care, and wealth for the feeding his own carnal desires; but the other soweth to the Spirit, layeth out himself in works of piety and charity.

2. External acts, which flow from an internal principle, increase the habit; the more you do good, the more you are enabled to do good, as bodily strength is increased by exercise. Why is the right hand more agile, stronger, and bigger than the left? It is oftener exercised, and so fuller of blood and spirits. So in grace, the more you act faith, the more is faith increased. Love groweth more fervent, being kept in a constant exercise, and hope more lively and effective. Always actions increase the principles which did produce them: partly of their own nature: 1 John ii. 5, ‘Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.’ The more acts of love he puts forth towards God, the more doth his love increase in him: partly by divine reward: Heb. vi. 10, ‘He is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister,’ God rewards them temporally: 2 Cor. ix. 8, ‘God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, always having all sufficiency in

all things, may abound to every good work;’ that is, to give you to be liberal at all times. And when he saith God is able, it not only implieth that God is the fountain of all plenty, and sovereign disposer of it, and so hath power to make you the richer rather than the poorer by your liberality, to make every alms you give like the oil in the cruse, to multiply as you pour it out, that there shall be enough for every object and every occasion, but also he is sure to make it good, for he quotes it again in the next verse, ‘As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever.’ It is taken out of Psalm cxii., where there are signal promises of wealth and riches in the house of the liberal almsgiver. God rewards them eternally: 2 Cor. ix. 6, ‘He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.’ Now is the seed-time, hereafter is our harvest and crop; we shall have a liberal reward from God in the general resurrection. God also rewards his obedient servants spiritually, internally; and that not only with more comfort and peace, but by increasing the grace itself; for God, that punishes sin with sin, doth reward grace with grace. Wells are sweeter for draining; on the other side, a key that is seldom turned rusts in the lock. An intermission of good works makes us more unable and unready for them.

3. It is a greater honour to God: John xv. 8, ‘Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit;’ Phil. i. 11, ‘Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God;’ 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, ‘Wherefore we pray for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him.’ Christ’s religion is not a barren religion, but full of good works. It is a mighty credit to religion in you that profess it, when goodness is the constitution of your hearts, to do good the business of your lives.

4. It edifieth others, and provoketh an holy emulation: Heb. x. 24, ‘Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.’ We provoke them most by our example when they are cold, negligent, and backward to works of piety and mercy. In all things we should be an instance of divine virtues.

5. This is the fruit which God expecteth from us, that the trees of righteousness should bear the fruits of righteousness. If we frustrate his expectation, he will hew us down and cast us into the fire, Mat. iii. 10. Therefore good works are not needless things.

The means to enable us are:—

1. Be sure that you are renewed. The dead cannot do the works of the living, ‘Neither do men gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles,’ Mat. vii. 16. Our first business is to look to our conversion to God. All outward duties begin in the heart; they are valued no farther than they come from it sanctified.

2. Keep your hearts under a sense of God’s authority, that you may feel something in your own bosoms that may tell you you are bound to obey him, and may plead God’s right with you. This is done by a frequent meditation upon your creation and redemption: your creation giveth God a full right to you, and redemption maketh it comfortable; by both you see you are his: Acts xxvii. 23, ‘There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.’

3. You are intrusted with his talents, and of their improvement you must give an account: Mat. xxv. 14, A lord called his servants, and delivered to them his goods, in order to improvement.

4. What encouragement we have from a gracious God and covenant, which takes not advantage of involuntary weaknesses, but accepteth their endeavours who sincerely do their best: Mal. iii. 17, ‘I will spare him, as a man spareth his son that serveth him.’

5. Remember often your great obligation to God; you can never do so much for him as he deserveth of you: Ps. cxvi. 12, ‘What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?’

6. Do all as in God’s eye, and with a constant dependence upon him: Ps. xvi. 8, ‘I have set the Lord always before me.’ Make him your paymaster, governor, and judge, and it will not only keep you sincere, but diligent in good works. The work is not sincerely done when you look to man, nor thoroughly done. Such have their reward only here, Mat. vi.

7. Love your work. A little thing will stop him that doth it unwillingly: Ps. cxix. 47, 48, ‘I will delight myself in thy

commandments, which I have loved;’ and ‘I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments, which I have loved.’

8. Account yourselves much beholden to God, that he will employ you in any service for his glory.