

THE COMPLETE  
WORKS OF RICHARD SIBBES, D.D.  
VOL VII.

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OF  
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# Volume 7

## Balaam's Wish

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*—  
Numb. XXIII. 10.

The false prophet Balaam goes about to curse, where God had blessed. But God reveals his wonders in his saints by delivering of them, and keeping them from dangers, when they never think of them. They never thought they had such an enemy as Balaam. The church of God is a glorious company, and the great God doth great things for it. So long as they keep close to him, their state is impregnable, as we may read here. Neither Balak nor Balaam, that was hired to curse them, could prevail, but the curse returns upon their own head.

These words I have read to you, they are Balaam's desire, Balaam's acclamation. Divers questions might be moved concerning Balaam, which I will not stand upon, but come directly to the words, wherein are considerable these things.

First, That the righteous men die, and have an end as well as others. Secondly, That the state of the soul continues after death. It was in vain for him to desire 'to die the death of the righteous,' but in regard of the subsistence of the soul.

Thirdly, That the estate of righteous men in their end is a blessed estate, because here it was the desire of Balaam, 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous!'

Fourthly, There is an excellent estate of God's people, and they desire that portion: 'Oh let me die the death of the righteous.' These are the four things I shall unfold, which discover the intendment of Balaam in these words.

For the first I will touch it briefly, and so go on.

Obs. 1. The righteous die, and in the same manner outwardly as the wicked do.

For Christ, in his first coming, came not to redeem our bodies from death, but our souls from damnation. His second coming shall be to redeem

our bodies from corruption into a 'glorious liberty.' Therefore wise men die as well as fools. Those whose eyes and hands have been lift up to God in prayer, and whose feet have carried them to the holy place, as well as those whose eyes are full of adultery, and whose hands are full of blood, they die all alike, in manner alike. Ofttimes it is the same in the eye of the world. Death comes upon good and had, but to the good for their greater glory; for the shell must be broken before they come to the pearl. Death it fits them for the blessed life after the body lying a while in the grave, the soul being in the hands of God. And death now it makes an end of sin, that brought in death; and it makes us conformable to the Son of God, our Elder Brother, that died for us. The point is pregnant, and full of gracious and serious meditations.

Use 1. It should enforce this excellent duty, that considering we have no long continuance here, therefore, while we are here, to do that wherefore we come into the world. As a factor, that is sent into a place to provide such goods beforehand, let us consider that here we are sent to get into a state of salvation, to get out of the state of nature into the state of grace, to furnish our souls with grace, to fit us for our dissolution to come. Let us not forget the main end of our living here. Considering we cannot be here long, let us do the work that God hath put into our hands quickly and faithfully, with all our might.

Use 2. And let it enforce moderation to all earthly things. 'The time is short, therefore let those that use the world be as if they used it not,' &c., 1 Cor. vii. 29. Those friends that have been joined together will part. Therefore let us use our bodies and souls so, that we may present them both comfortably to God. Let us beg of God to make a right use of this fading condition. But I hasten. The second point is this, that, Obs. 2. The estate of the soul continues after death.

For here he wisheth to die the death of the righteous, not for any excellency in death, but in regard of the subsistence and continuance of the soul after death.

Scripture and reason and nature enforceth this, that the soul hath a subsistence of itself, distinct from the life it communicates to the body. There is a double life, a life proper to the soul, and the life it communicates to the body. Now when the life it communicates to the body is gone to dissolution, itself hath a life in heaven. And indeed it is in a manner the whole man; for Abraham was Abraham when he was dead, when his soul was in heaven, and his body in the grave. It is the whole man.

Reas. 1. And it discovers, indeed, that it hath a distinct life and excellency in itself, by reason that it thwarts the desires of the body when it is in the body. Reason, if there be no grace in the soul, that crosseth the inclination of the body, grace much more.

Reas. 2. And we see oftentimes, when the outward man is weak, as in sickness, then the understanding, will, and affections, the inward man, is most sublime, and rapt unto heaven, and is most wise. Take a man that hath been besotted all his lifetime, that hath been drunk with the pleasures of a life, that hath been a covetous wretch, an earth-worm, that enjoys not heaven but lives as his wealth and lusts carry him in slavery, yet at the hour of death, when he considers that he hath scraped together, and considers the way that his lusts have led him, and that all must leave him, now he begins to be wise, and speaks more discreetly. He can speak of the vanity of these things, and how little good they can do. Indeed many, nay the most men, are not wise until that time. Therefore the soul of itself hath a distinct being, because, when the body is lowest, it is most refined and strong in its operations.

Reas. 3 Likewise it appears by the projects that it hath of the time to come. The soul, especially of men that are of more elevated and refined spirits, it projects for the time to come what shall become of the church and commonwealth, what shall become of posterity and of reputation and credit in the world. Certainly, unless there were a subsistence of itself, it would never look so much beforehand, and lay the grounds of the prosperity of the church and commonwealth for the time to come. I will not stand further on it, but rather make some use of it.

Use. Let us know which is our best part, namely, the soul, that hath a being after death, that we do not employ it to base uses, for which it was not made nor given us. Do we think that these souls of ours were made and given us to scrape wealth? to travel in our affections to base things worse than our souls? Are they not capable of supernatural and excellent things? Are they not capable of grace and glory, of communion with God, of the blessed stamp of the image of God? Let us use them, therefore, to the end that God gave them. And let us not deserve so ill of our souls as to betray them, to cast them in the dirt, to lay our crown in the dust. This is our excellency. What can keep our bodies from being a deformed, loath some thing, if the soul be taken away? Yet so we abase this excellent part! Oftentimes we abase it to serve the base lusts of the body, which is condemned to rottenness. What is the life of most men but a purveying and prowling for

the body? The lusts of the body set the wit and affections on work to prowl for itself. What a base thing is this! Were our souls given us for this end? And especially considering this, that our souls are immortal, that they shall never die, but be for ever. Let us not altogether spend this precious time that is given us to save our souls, and to get the image of God stamped upon them, I say let us not spend this precious time in things that will leave us when our souls shall live still; let us not carry the matter so, that our souls shall outlive our happiness. All worldlings and base creatures, they outlive their happiness. For where do they plant it? In the base things of this life. All their life long they are prowling for those things that they must leave when they die, whereas their souls shall not die, but everlastingly subsist.

What a misery is this, that these souls of ours shall have a being when the things wherein we placed our happiness, and abused our souls to gain them, they shall have an end! The souls of such men that seek the things of this life shall have a being in eternal misery. Indeed, so it is; for these souls of ours, the same degree they have in excellency if they be used as they should, if we do not abase them, the same degree they shall have in baseness and misery if we abuse them, and make them slaves to earthly things. For as the devils, the same degree they had of excellency when they were angels, the same degree they have in misery now they be devils. The more excellent the creature is when it keeps its excellency, the more vile it is when it degenerates. So these souls of ours that next to angels are the most excellent creatures of God, the more excellent it is if it get the image of God stamped upon it, and the new creature, and have the life of grace, the more cursed is the state of the soul if it subsist to ever lasting misery.

It were happy if the souls of such creatures were mortal that labour for a happiness in this life. Oh that we would think of this! Most men in the bosom of the church, which is lamentable to think, they live as if they had no souls. They overturn the order that God hath set, and hath given us our bodies to serve our souls. They use all the strength and marrow of their wits, all the excellencies in their souls, for the base satisfaction of the lusts of the body. So much for that point.

he third is that,

Obs. 3. There is a wide, broad difference between the death of the godly and of the wicked.

The godly are happy in their death, for here we see it is a matter desirable. This caitiff, this wretched man Balaam, Oh, saith he, 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' It being the object of his desire, it is therefore certainly precious, 'the death of the righteous.' And indeed so it is; holy and gracious men, they are happy in their life. While they live they are the sons of God, the heirs of heaven; they are set at liberty, all things are theirs; they have access to the throne of grace; all things work for their good; they are the care of angels, the temples of the Holy Ghost. Glorious things are spoken of these glorious creatures even while they live.

But they are more happy in their death, and most happy and blessed after death.

In their death they are happy in their disposition, and happy in condition.

(1.) Happy in their disposition. What is the disposition of a holy and blessed man at his end? His disposition is by faith to give himself to God, by which faith he dies in obedience; he carries himself fruitfully and comfortably in his end. And oftentimes the nearer he is to happiness, the more he lays about him to be fruitful.

(2.) Besides his disposition, he is happy in condition; for death is a sweet close. God and he meet; grace and glory meet; he is in heaven, as it were, before his time. What is death to him? The end of all misery, of all sin of body and soul. It is the beginning of all true happiness in both. This I might show at large, but I have spoken somewhat of this point out of another text. They are happy in their death, for 'their death is precious in God's sight.' The angels are ready to do their attendance, to carry their souls to the place of happiness. They are happy in their death, because they are 'in the Lord.' When death severs soul and body, yet notwithstanding neither soul nor body are severed from Christ. 'They die in the Lord,' therefore still they are happy. Much might be said to this purpose, and to good purpose, but that the point is ordinary, and I hasten to press things that I think will a little more confirm it. They are blessed in death.

(3.) And blessed after death especially; for then we know they are in heaven, waiting for the resurrection of the body. There is a blessed change of all; for after death we have a better place, better company, better employment; all is for the better.

There are three degrees of life: The life in the womb, this world, heaven.

The life in the womb is a kind of imprisonment; there the child lives for a time. The life in this world, it is a kind of enlargement; but, alas! it is as much inferior to the blessed and glorious life in heaven, as the life in the womb is narrower and straiter and more base than this life wherein we behold the blessed light and enjoy all the sweet comforts of this life. They are happy after death; then the image of God is perfect in the soul. All graces are perfected, all wants supplied, all corruptions wrought out, all enemies subdued, all promises accomplished, waiting their time for the resurrection of the body; and then body and soul shall sit as judges upon the wretches that have judged them on earth, and they shall be both together 'for ever with the Lord.' I might enlarge the point much. It is a comfortable meditation; and before I pass it, let us make some use of it.

If godly men be blessed and happy, not only before death, in the right and title they have to heaven, but in death, because then they are invested into possession of that that makes them every way happy, Use 1. Therefore this may teach us who are truly wise. A wise man is he that hath a better end than another, and works to that end. A true Christian man, he hath a better end than any worldling. His end is to be safe in another world, and he works and carries his forces to that end. 'Let my last end be like his,' saith Balaam, insinuating that there was a better end in regard of condition and state than he had aimed at. A gracious man, his end is not to be happy here; his end is to enjoy everlasting communion with God in the heavens, and he frames all his courses in this world to accomplish that end, and he is never satisfied in the things that make to that end. A worldling he hath no such end. He hath a natural desire to be saved,—as we shall see afterwards,—but a man may know that is not his end, for he works not to it. He is not satisfied in prowling for this world; he is not weary of getting wealth; he is not satisfied with pleasure. So that his end is the things of this life. Therefore let him be never so wise, he is but a fool, for he hath not the true end, nor works to it. Wicked men are very fools in the manner of their reasoning; for they will grant that there is a happy estate of godly men in death, and after death better. If it be so, why do they not work and frame their lives to it? Herein they are fools, because they grant one thing and not another which must needs follow. They do believe there is such a happiness to God's children, and yet seek not after it.

Use 2. If there be such a blessed estate of God's children in death and after death, I beseech you let us carry ourselves so as that we may be partakers of that happiness: let us labour to be righteous men, labour to be in Christ, to have the righteousness of Christ to be ours, to be out of ourselves, in Christ; in Christ in life, in Christ in death, and at the day of judgment in Christ, 'not having our own righteousness,' as the apostle saith, 'but his righteousness,' Philip iii. 9, and then the righteousness of grace and of a good conscience will alway go with the other. For this makes a righteous man to be in Christ, and to have his righteousness, and to have his Spirit, and the beginnings of the new creature in us. Let us labour to be such as may live and die happily and blessedly, and be for ever happy. So much for that third point.

That which I intend mainly to dwell on is the last, and that is this, that Even a wicked man, a wretched worldling, may see this; he may know this happiness of God's people in death, and for ever, and yet notwithstanding may continue a cursed wretch.

Balaam here wishes, 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his.' It was a strange speech of such a man as this was, that his soul should be rapt up in this manner; but indeed Balaam was scarce himself, he scarce understood what he said, no more than the beast that carried him.

But God will sometimes even stir up the hearts of wicked men to a sight and admiration of the excellent estate of God's children. Why? For diverse reasons. Among the rest for this, that he may convince them the more of their own rebellion, when they see a more excellent estate than they are in, if they will not take the course to partake of it. Therefore at the day of judgment it will justify the sentence of damnation upon such wretches, and they may pronounce self-condemnation upon themselves. Oh what a terror will it be when they shall think, I had a better estate discovered; I heard of it in the ministry of the word, and God's Spirit revealed an excellent estate, and I might have gotten it if I had improved the blessed means that God made me partaker of, and now I am shut out for ever and ever from communion in that estate. To convince wretched men, I say, and to justify the just sentence of damnation upon them, that their hearts may go with the sentence, at the day of judgment, God thus enlightens them oftentimes, that they see better courses if they had grace to take them.

What a thing is this, that a wicked man should see such an estate and not take it! And what serves that knowledge for but to damn them the more! This is the estate of many men that live in the bosom of the church, and partake of the means of salvation, and yet live in sins against conscience. They get knowledge by the ministry, and by good books and acquaintance, and such like. They have a savour in the use of good things. Something they have, some little apprehension of the estate of a better life.

Again, for another end God reveals to them the excellent estate of his children sometimes, to keep them in better order, to awe them, that they be not open enemies to the church, but may do good service; for conceiting that there is such a happiness, and that perhaps they may partake of it, they will not carry themselves malignantly against those that are true professors.

There are several degrees of wicked men. Some are well-willers to good things, though they never come far enough. Some are open, malicious persecutors. Some again are better than so. They have a hatred to goodness, but they do not openly show themselves; as hypocrites, &c. God reveals these good things to wicked men to keep them in awe. The net draws bad fish as well as good; so the net of the word, it draws wicked men, it keeps them from violence and open malice. Besides, even the majesty of the word, and the conviction of that excellent estate that belongs to God's children, it keeps them from open malice and persecution. This is another end that God aims at. What may we learn hence?

Use 1. Seeing this is so, it should teach us that we refuse not all that ill men say; they may have good apprehensions, and give good counsel. It had been good for Josiah to have followed the counsel of wicked Pharaoh, a heathen. God often enlightens men that otherwise are reprobates. Refuse not gold from a dirty hand; do not refuse directions from wicked men. Because they are so and so, refuse not a pardon from a man, a base creature. We ought not therefore to have such respect of persons as to refuse excellent things because the person is wicked. But that which I intend to press is this: If this be so, that wicked men may have illumination whereby they discover an excellency, and likewise may have desires raised up to wish and desire that excellency, Use 2. It should stir us up to go beyond wicked men. Shall we not go so far as those go that shall never come to heaven? We see here Balaam pronounceth the end of the righteous to be happy. This should therefore stir us up to labour to be in a different estate from wicked men. Let us therefore consider a little wherein the difference of these desires is, the desires that a

Balaam may have, and the desires of a sound Christian, wherein the desires of a wicked man are failing.

(1.) These desires, first of all, they were but flashes: for we never read that he had them long. They were mere flashes; as a sudden light, that rather blinds a man than shows him the way. So these enlightenings they are not constant. Wicked men oftentimes have sudden motions and flashes and desires. 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous.' Oh that I were in such a man's estate. But it is but a sudden flash and lightning. They are like a torrent, a strong sudden stream, that comes suddenly and makes a noise, but it hath no spring to feed it. The desires of God's children they are fed with a spring, they are constant; they are streams, and not flashes.

(2.) Again, this desire of this wretched man, it was not from an inward principle, an inward taste that he had of the good estate of God's children, but from an objective delight and admiration of somewhat that was offered to his conceit by the Holy Ghost at this time. It was not from any inward taste or relish in himself that he speaks, but from somewhat outward, as a man that saw and heard excellent things, that ravished him with admiration, though he had not interest in them himself.

(3.) Again in the third place, this desire of the happiness of the estate of God's children, it was not working and operative, but an uneffectual desire. It had only a complacency and pleasing in the thing desired; but there was not a desire to work anything to that end. This wretch therefore would be at his journey's end, before he had set one step forward to the journey. It was a desire of the end without the means. It was not an operative effectual, but a weak transient desire. Where true desires are, they are not only constant, and proceed from an inward interest and taste of the thing desired, but they are effectual and operative. They set the soul and body, the whole man on work, partly to use the means to attain the thing desired, and partly to remove the impediments; for where desire is, there will be a removing of the impediments to the thing desired; as he that intends a journey, he will consider what may hinder him, and what may help him in it. He that sets not about these things, he never means it, for a man cannot come to his journey's end with wishing; we can attain nothing in this life with wishing. There is a working, I say, that tends to remove impediments so far as we may, and tending to use all means to effect and bring the thing to pass. We see, then, there is a main difference between the desires of this wretched man Balaam

and the desires of the true church of God. To go on and follow the point a little further.

(4.) Where desires are in truth, the party that cherisheth those desires, will be willing to have all help from others to have his desire accomplished. If a man desire to demolish a place, if any will come and help him down with it, or if any man desire to weed his ground, he that will help him, he will thank him for his pains. Where there is a true desire, there is a willing closing with all that offer themselves, that the thing desired may be brought to pass. Where there is a desire of the happy estate of God's children, there will be a willing entertainment of any help. Let a man come to a man that desires grace and glory, and discover his especial sins that hinder him, you must weed out this, and you must pull down this, he will thankfully embrace all admonitions, because he truly desires the end; therefore he desires the means that tend to the end. He desires the removing of the hindrances; he will be thankful, therefore, for any help that he may have, and especially that of the ministry, that it may powerfully enter into his soul, and rip him up. Why? Because he desires to please God in all things, and he would not cherish a motion or desire contrary to the Spirit of God. Therefore the more corruption is presented and made odious to him, the more the 'inward man' is discovered, the more he blesseth God, and blesseth the blessed instruments; and of all means he is willing to attend upon such.

Where there is swelling and rising against the blessed means, either in private admonition or public teaching, let men pretend what they will, there is no true desire of grace and to be in the estate of God's people; for then they would not be contrary to the means. This wretched man Balaam, when the angel stood in his way, with his sword drawn, to stop his way, yet notwithstanding he goes on still. He was so carried with covetousness, and so blinded, that neither the miracle of the beast speaking, nor of the angel in his way, nor God in the way, could stop him. Alas! where was this desire then? No, no! The glory of earthly things dazzled the glory of the estate of God's people. Therefore we see he goes against all means that was used to stop him in his journey.

If a man desire to be good, and to leave his sins, he will not stand against the means.

Have we not many that stand against the ministry of God's ministers who are God's angels? They stand in the way, and tell people, if you live in this course you shall not inherit heaven; if you live in oppression and base

lusts, unless you be changed, you shall all perish. They come to particular reproofs, and hold forth the sword of God's Spirit, yet men break through all and wreak their malice upon God's messengers. Is here a true desire when they are not willing to have the hindrances removed? when there is not respect of the means that should be used?

(5.) Again, true desires of grace, they are growing desires. Though they be little in the beginning, as springs are, yet as the springs grow, so do the waters that come from them. So these desires, they grow more and more still. They grow sometimes in God's children, that they will have no stop till they come to have their full desire, to have perfect union and communion with God in heaven. The desires of a blessed soul, they are never satisfied till it come to heaven. 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,' saith the church, Cant. i. 2. Oh, let me have nearer communion with Christ! It desires in the word and sacraments to come nearer and closer to God, and in death then, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20. And when the soul is in heaven there is yet nearer union, a desire of the body's resurrection, that both may be for ever with the Lord. Till a Christian be perfect in body and soul, there is desire upon desire, till all desires be accomplished. They are growing desires, as St Peter saith: 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' 1 Peter ii. 2. It is a desire that is never satisfied, because there is always somewhat to be desired till we be perfectly happy.

(6.) And then they are desires that will not be stilled. A child, if it have not strong desires, it will be stilled with an apple; but if the desires be strong, nothing will still it but the dug. So God's children, if their desires be strong, it is no bauble they desire, nothing but grace and inward comfort will quiet the inward man. It is a desire that is growing and strong. It will not be stayed with anything in this world, but will break through all impediments; as a strong stream, it will never rest till it have communion with God. And therefore the desires that men think are good and earnest enough, that go on plodding in a constant course, and never labour to grow, they are no desires at all, no sanctified desires from a supernatural principle of grace. The desires of a Christian grow, and are never satisfied till he have perfect happiness.

The three worthies of David brake through the host, and got the water of Bethel for David: 'Oh that I had of the water of Bethel,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 15. So where there are strong desires they are like David's worthies, they carry the soul through all impediments, they grow stronger and stronger, and are

never satisfied till they come to the water of life. Let us consider these things, whether we have this desire or no. If we have but sometimes flashes, inconstant, ineffectual desires, desires that grow not, that are soon satisfied, and are stilled with anything, alas! these desires the Spirit of God never kindled and bred in the heart; they are ordinary flashes, that shall serve for our deeper damnation. Therefore let us take heed, and not rest in a castaway's estate; let us not rest in Balaam's state, but labour that the desires of our souls may be as they should.

Desires, I confess, are the best character to know a Christian; for works may be hypocritical, desires are natural. Therefore we ought to consider our desires, what they are, whether true or no; for the first thing that issues from the soul are desires and thoughts. Thoughts stir up desires. This inward immediate stirring of the soul discovers the truth of the soul better than outward things. Let us oft therefore examine our desires. And let me add this one thing to the other, let us examine our desires by this, besides the rest,(7.) Whether we desire holiness, and the restoration) of the image of God, the new creature, and to have victory against our corruptions; to be in a state that we may not sin against God, to have the Spirit, to be 'new born,' as well as we desire happiness, and exemption from misery. Balaam desired happiness, but he desired not the image of God upon his soul; for then he would not have been carried with a covetous devil against all means. No; his desire was after a glimpse of God's children's glory only.

A wicked man can never desire to be in heaven as he should be; for how should we desire to be in heaven? to be freed from sin, that we may praise God and love God; that there may be no combat between the flesh and the spirit. Can he wish this? No. His happiness is as a swine to wallow in the mire, and he desires to enjoy sensible delights. As for spiritual things, especially the image of God, and the vision of God, they are not fit objects for him, as far as it is a freedom from sin, but as he hath a conceit, oh they are goodly things to be seen, &c. So it corresponds with his disposition, but to be free from sin, and from the conflict of the flesh and spirit, and to be set at liberty to serve God alway, he cannot desire it so. Tell him of heaven, he loves it not. There is no gold, there is not that that he affects, therefore he cares not for it, he cannot relish it, he is not changed. Therefore it is a notable character of a true Christian to desire heaven, to be freed from sin, to have communion with God in holiness. Other prerogatives will follow this.

Let us therefore consider what our desires are, how they are carried, for desires discover what the soul is. As a spring is discovered by the vapours that are about it, so is this hidden state of the soul discovered by the breaking out of desires. They are the breath and vapour of the soul. Let us consider what is set highest in our souls, what we desire most of all. Oh, a Christian soul that hath 'tasted of the loving-kindness of the Lord,' accounts it 'better than life itself,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. It is not corn, and wine, and oil' he desires, 'but, Lord, show me the light of thy countenance,' Ps. iv. 6. 'The desires of his heart are large to serve God, and to do good, more than for the things of the world. He desires earthly things, but as instruments for better things, and this is the desire of every sanctified soul in some measure.

Let us hence make a use of conviction of the folly of base men, that live in the church, and yet come not so far as Balaam, that come not so far as those that shall go to hell. They turn over all religion to a 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' and 'Christ died for us,' and 'we hope we have souls to God-ward,' as good as the best, and to a few short broken things. They turn religion to compendiums, to a narrow compass, and make the way to it wide and broad, and complain of preachers that they straiten the way to heaven.

This is the disposition of worldlings; whereas, alas! there must be a righteousness that must 'exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' Mat. v. 20; there must be a righteousness from an inward principle; there must be a strong, constant desire of righteousness, more than of any thing in the world, before we can be assured of our interest and part with God's people. Let us take heed that we delude not ourselves this way.

But to come to an use of direction. How may we so carry ourselves, as we may have a spring of blessed desires, a spring of holy desires, that may comfort us, that we may have our interest and portion in the state of God's people?

That we may have these desires, let us desire of God the spirit of revelation. Desires follow discovery, for desires are the vent of the soul upon the discovery of some excellency it believes. Therefore let us beg of God the spirit of revelation, to discover the excellent estate of God's people. And because this is given in the use of means, let us present ourselves with all diligence under such means, as where we may have somewhat of the kingdom of God, that the riches of Christ being unfolded, our desires may be carried to such things; for there is never any discovery of holy and good and gracious things to a Christian soul, but there are new desires stirred up. Our

souls are like a mill that grinds what is put into it; so the soul it works upon the things that are put into it. If it have good desires and good thoughts put into it, by good means used, and by prayer, it feeds upon them. Let us always, therefore, be under some good means, that good thoughts may be ministered unto us, that may stir up gracious desires for the soul to work upon. Let us be in good company. 1 Sam. x. 12, 'Saul among the prophets,' we see he prophesied; and the heart is kindled and enflamed when we are among those that are better than ourselves, especially if their hearts be enlarged to speak of good things. But to come nearer.

2. That we may have holy and gracious and constant desires, let us take notice and make trial continually of the state and frame of our souls, which way for the present they are carried, in what current our desires run. If they run the right way, to heavenly things, it is well; if not, take notice what draws and diverts and turns the streams of our desires the false way. Let us think what the things be, and the condition of those things that draws our desires down, and make us earthly and worldly, whether the pleasures or profits or honours of this life. The way to have better desires is to wean ourselves from these things, by a constant holy meditation of the vanity of these things that the soul is carried after. Solomon, to wean his heart from these desires, from placing too much happiness in these things, he sets them before him and saith, 'they were vanity and vexation of spirit,' Eccles. i. 14. Let us set them before us as nothing, as they will be ere long. 'Heaven and earth will pass away,' Mat. xxvi. 35; the world will pass away, and the concupiscence and lust of it. Let us consider the baseness, fickleness, and uncertainty of things that our souls are carried after, and this will be a means to wean them from them. And the soul being weaned from earthly things, -it will run again another way. Let us study, therefore, to mortify our base affections, and study it to purpose, to cut off the right hand and to pull out the right eye; spare nothing, that God may spare all. That God may have mercy upon us and spare us, let us spare nothing. These 'lusts they fight against our souls,' 1 Peter ii. 11.

And, as I said before, feed our souls; minister unto them better thoughts continually. Those that are governors of those that are young, season them while they be young with good things; for while the soul is not filled with the world, and while covetousness and ill lusts have not wrought themselves into the soul, good things and good desires are easily rooted and planted, and grow up in the soul. As letters graven in the body of a tree, they grow up with the tree, and the fruit of the tree grows up with the tree, and therefore the twigs break not with the greatness of the weight of it, because they grow

up together. So plant good things in those that are young, inure them to know good things, to hate ill ways, plant in them blessed desires, and inure them to holy exercises and good duties, that good exercises may grow up with them, as the fruit with the tree. We see what a hard matter it is to convert an old man, to draw the desires of a carnal worldly man to heaven. When we speak of good things to him, his soul is full of the world. What is in his brain? The world. What is in his heart? The world. So he is dry, and exhausted of all good things, and that that is in him is eaten up with the world. It is a great improvidence in those that govern youth, that they labour not that their desires may be strong to the best things.

And let us all, both young and old, labour for heavenly wisdom, that when good things are ministered to us from without, or good motions stirred up by the Spirit of God, to close with them, and not to quench those motions and resist the Spirit, but to embrace those motions, and cherish them, till they come to resolutions, and purposes, and actions. If we have a motion stirring us up to repentance, let us ripen it -till it come to perfect repentance, till we repent indeed, and have turned from all our evil ways, and turn to God with full purpose of heart, that it may be a motion to purpose. If it be a motion to faith, let us never leave cherishing of it by the promise till our hearts be 'rooted in faith.' If it be a motion to any other good thing, let us cherish and follow them to purpose, and embrace every motion, as an angel sent from heaven from God to a good end, to put us in mind, to invite us to good, and to drive us from ill.

And because desires are fickle and fading of themselves unless there be some art in helping of them, therefore let us add to these things a daily course of renewing of our covenant with God, that this day, as God shall enable me, I have a constant purpose against all sin, I will regard no iniquity in my heart, I will have respect to all good ways discovered. Renew our covenants and resolutions of old. Saith David, 'I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 106. And as we determine and resolve, so make particular vows sometimes against particular hindrances, to abstain from such things.

Quest. What needs all this ado? saith the wicked atheist. Will not less serve the turn, but there must be these vows, and purposes, and resolutions?

Ans. No; God values us by our resolutions and purposes, and not by ineffectual glances and wishes. Will wishing help us take a journey, or to do anything in this world? And can we not do anything in this world with

wishing, and can we for heaven? No; certainly there must be resolutions, and covenants, and purposes, &c. What is the difference between a Christian and another man? A Christian unlooseth his heart from base desires. Nothing shall tie him to the base world. But his conscience tells him that he is free from living in sins against conscience, and as for infirmities, he labours and resolves against them. Therefore he is fit to die and to resign his soul. Whensoever God shall take him, he is in a good way, in good purposes and resolutions. God values us according to our purposes and resolutions. David did not build the temple, Abraham did not offer Isaac, but they resolved upon it, and it was accounted as done. This is our comfort, that God takes the resolution for the deed; and the perfection of a Christian is, that God accepts of these resolutions when he determines on the best things, till he bring his heart in some measure to that estate.

Quest. What is the reason that many men at the hour of death will admit no comfort?

Ans. The reason is, their hearts were naught. They respected some iniquity in their hearts. They were in bad ways, and allowed some reigning sin; and till these be mortified, we can minister no comfort. It is only the resolved Christian that is a fit subject for comfort.

But to answer an ordinary let or two that the devil casts in men's ways in these things.

Obj. But doth not God accept the will for the deed? Put the case I have a good will to do a thing; though I do it not, God accepts that.

Ans. I answer, God accepts the will for the deed, only where the impediments and hindrances are impossible to be removed; as, put the case a poor man would be liberal if he had it, God accepts the will for the deed, because he wants opportunity. But it never holds when a man can do it. God accepts not the will for the deed when a man hath a price in his hand to get wisdom, and yet is a barren plant and not a tree of righteousness. It is a sign of a naughty heart.

Obj. Oh, saith another, 'God quencheth not the smoking flax,' Mat. xii. 20, therefore, though I have weak desires, all shall be well.

Ans. It is true God doth not quench the smoking flax, but he doth not leave it smoking, but blows the spark, that in time it comes to a flame. Where

there are beginnings of goodness embraced, it will grow from smoking flax to a flame. They are growing desires, as I said before. Therefore flatter not thyself that Christ will not quench the smoking flax. It is true, if there be a desire of growth, for then I must speak comfort to a poor Christian that cannot be so good as he would, but desires it, and complains, Oh 'that my ways were so direct, that I might keep thy statutes!' Ps. cxix. 5. With his desires, he complains that he cannot do it, and useth the means to grow. It is a good sign; God will not quench the smoking flax till he have brought corruption into subjection in us. Let every good soul comfort itself with this, if thou have these blessed desires, God meets with thee, for he desires thy salvation, and Christ desires thy reconciliation, and it is the desire of thy heart, and thou usest the means.

Thou wilt not live in sins against conscience. Be of good comfort. We that are the ministers of God, and I at this time, bring the news of pardon; Christ's desire and thine meet in one.

Let us enlarge these things in our own deep and serious meditation. Alas! for want of serious meditation in our hearts of such like truths as these, men perish and sink suddenly to hell. There is but a step between ordinary profane persons and hell, and yet they never think of renewing their covenants with God, and entering into the state of grace, but content themselves with that which comes short of thousands that are now in hell, that have had more wishes and desires. Men put all upon empty things, 'God is merciful,' &c. No; God will not be merciful to such as bless themselves in ill courses; his wrath shall smoke against such, as I said; for in thus reasoning, they make a covenant with hell and death as much as they can. They that do thus forget God and good courses, and God will forget them; they treasure up wrath, and God treasures up wrath against them. Let us take heed of Balaam's wishing, and labour to have such desires as may be accepted of God and comfortable to us.

## The Unprosperous Builder

*Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and builds this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up the gates thereof.*—Joshua VI. 26.

The words are a terrible denunciation of a curse of the man of God Joshua; wherein you have the curse generally set down—‘Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth to build this city Jericho’—and then a specification in particular, wherein the curse stands. The two branches of the curse are these, ‘He shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up the gates thereof.’ It shall be with the raising out of his posterity. So that the text is nothing else but a terrible denunciation, under a curse, of the destruction of the family of that person that should labour to build up Jericho again. I will not speak much of cursing or blessing, being not pertinent to my purpose, only to give a touch of it. As in blessing there are three things considerable, that come near one another,—there is a blessing, a prayer, and a prophecy: the prayer is for a blessing to come; the prophecy is of the certainty of it, that it shall be; the blessing is an efficacious application of the thing to the person; I mean those three, because the one gives light to the other,— so is it likewise in cursing: there is a prayer that God would pour forth his vengeance upon the enemies of the church, and a prophetic prediction that God will do it; and a cursing, when it comes from a qualified person, that is led by a better spirit than his own; for every one is not fit to cast these bolts. Cursing is an efficacious application of the curse to the person; when a man is, as it were, the declarative instrument whereby God works and brings the curse upon the person. So that we must account a curse to be a wondrous deep thing. The persons qualified for cursing or blessing, they are parents, either politic, as magistrates, or parents natural, to curse or bless their children, as we see in Noah,— ‘Cursed be Ham,’ &c., Gen. ix. 25, —or else parents spiritual, whose office it is indeed especially to bless or curse. It is a greater matter than the world takes it for, a blessing or a curse, especially from a spiritual father. The apostles, that were spiritual fathers of the church, they began their epistles with blessings; and so the prophets and patriarchs.

Therefore we should regard the blessing that God gives by his ministers. Some are ready to run out before the blessing, as not esteeming either blessing or curse. Luther, a man of great parts and grace, saith of himself,

‘That if a man of God should speak anything terrible to him, and denounce anything against him, he knew not how to bear it, it would be so terrible’. The Jesuits themselves, amongst the rest one De Lapide, he saith, ‘The priest cannot sooner come into the pulpit, but if there be a nobleman there, down he falls, and all look for the blessing of the priest’. The devil is always in extremes, either to drive people to superstition, or else to profaneness and atheism; either to regard the blessing of those whom they should not regard, or not to regard any blessing at all; not to regard that good men should pray for them or their children. If the devil can bring men to hell by either extremes, he hath his will. As for the blessing of Rome, we expect it not; and for their curse, we need care no more for it than an armed man needs to care for a headless arrow or for a child’s pop-gun. But those men that come in the name of God, and are qualified with callings to pray and to bless, their prayers and blessings are highly to be esteemed; and so likewise their curses. I would it were more esteemed; it would be a means to convey God’s blessing more than it is.

‘Cursed be the man before the Lord.’

Take this caution by the way: though Joshua were a man of God, he was a mixed person; he was both a magistrate and, in some sort, a minister. As we say of kings, they are mixed persons, they are keepers of both tables: *custodes utriusque tabula*. There is more in the supreme magistrate than is common. Every one must not take upon him to curse upon every motion of the flesh; for here it is not, as one of the ancients saith well, ‘the wrath of a man in commotion and fury, but the sentence of a man in a peaceable temper, who is the conveyer of God’s curse’. It is passive here as well as active.

In the New Testament we are commanded to bless and not to curse. It is a common fault upon every distemper to fall a cursing; and ofttimes it lights, as an arrow shot upwards, upon the head of the curser. We are people of God’s blessing, all true believers; and we should delight in blessing. Having felt the blessing of God ourselves upon our souls, we should be moved to blessing, both by way of gratitude to those that are our superiors and have done us good, that God would bless them, and by way of amity and friendship to those that are under us or about us, and by way of mercy to our very enemies. We should pray for and bless our very enemies themselves, as our blessed Saviour prayed for them that cursed him. This should be our ordinary disposition, we should be all for blessing. As for curses, we must

take heed that we direct them not against any particular person; we have no such warrant, though the primitive church pronounced a curse against Julian, a notable enemy; and St Paul, he cursed Alexander the coppersmith, 2 Tim. iv. 14. But for us this time, the safest way is to pronounce all those curses in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture upon the implacable and incorrigible enemies of the church, the whole body of the malignant church, and so we should not err. I will not dwell longer upon this argument, only I thought good to remember you to regard the blessing of those that have the Spirit of God to bless, especially that have a calling to do it; and to take heed of cursing. But to come to the particulars.

‘Cursed be the man before the Lord.’

That is, let him be cursed indeed. That that is done before the Lord is truly and solemnly done. This was a solemn curse, a heavy curse, and it did truly light upon him. And let him be cursed before the Lord, however the world bless him; as a man cannot do such a thing as to build a city, but the world will commend a man for doing such a thing, but it is no matter for the world’s commendation, if a man set upon a cursed cause. So much for the phrase, ‘Cursed be the man before the Lord;’ that is, he is truly and solemnly cursed, and cursed before the Lord, though men bless him.

‘That riseth and builds this city Jericho.’

That is the cause why he should be cursed, because he would build that city that God would have to be a perpetual monument of his justice. Why would not God have Jericho built again?

1. God would not have it built up, partly because he would have it a perpetual remembrance of his goodness and merciful dealing with his people, passing over Jordan, and coming freshly into Canaan; for we are all subject to forget. Therefore it is good to have days set apart for remembrance and somewhat to put us in mind, as they had many things in old time to help memory. If this city had been built again, the memory of it would have been forgotten; but lying all waste and desolate, the passengers by would ask the cause—as God speaks of his own people,—What is the reason that this city lies thus?—and then it would give them occasion of speaking of the mercy of God to his people. And likewise it would give occasion to speak of the justice of God against the idolatrous inhabitants, whose sins were grown ripe. God foretold in Genesis that the sins of the Amorites was not yet ripe; but now their sins were ripe, they were idolaters.

2. And likewise it was dedicated to God as the first-fruits. Being one of the chief mother cities of the land, it was dedicate and consecrated to God as a thing severed; it was to be for ever severed from common use. There are two ways of severing things from common use: one by way of destruction, as here the city of Jericho; another by way of dedication, as the gold of Jericho. God would have this city severed from common use, as a perpetual monument and remembrance of his mercy and justice.

3. And likewise he would have it never built up again, for terror to the rest of the inhabitants; for usually great conquerors set up some terrible example of justice to terrify others. Now, this being one of the first cities after their passing over Jordan, God would have the destruction of it to strike terror, together with this sentence of a curse, upon all that should build it again for ever.

4. And then that this terrible sentence might be a means to draw others to come in to God's people to join with them, and submit, and prevent their destruction, seeing how terribly God had dealt with Jericho. Many such reasons may be probably alleged; but the main reason of reasons, that must settle our consciences, God would have it so. Joshua he was but God's trumpet and God's instrument to denounce this curse, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord that shall build up this city Jericho.' We must rest in that. I will go over the words, and then make application afterwards to the occasion.

I come to the specification of the curse, wherein it stands: 'He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born.'

If any man will be so venturous to build it up again, as one Hiel did, in 1 Kings xvi. 34, if any man will be so audacious, he shall do it with the peril of the life of his first-begotten; and if he will not desist then, he shall finish the gates of it, he shall make an end of it, with the death of his younger son. It is God's custom to denounce a threatening of a curse before he execute it. It is a part of God's mercy and of his blessing, that he will curse only in the threatening; for therefore he curseth, that he might not execute it; and therefore he threateneth, that he might not smite; and when he smites, he smites that he might not destroy; and when he kills the body, it is that he might not destroy the soul; as 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'Therefore some of on are weak, and sick, and some sleep, that you might not be condemned with the world.' Thus God is merciful, even till it comes to the last upshot, that men by their rebellions provoke him. God's mercy strives with the sins of men. Mark here the degrees of it: first, God threatens the curse, 'Cursed be the man;' and

then in the particulars, he begins with the eldest son. First, there is a threatening; and when the execution comes, he takes not all his sons away at once, but begins with the eldest; and if that will not do, he goes to the youngest.

This carriage of God, even in his threatenings, it should put us in mind of God's mercy, and likewise it should move us to meet God presently, before any peremptory decree be come forth, as we shall see afterward; for if we leave not sinning, God will never leave punishing. He might have desisted in the death of his first son; but if that will not be, God will strike him in his youngest son, and sweep away all between; for so we must understand it, that both elder, and younger, and all should die.

Now for the judgment itself.

'He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born.'

There is some proportion between the judgment and the sin. The sin was to raise up a building, a cursed city, contrary to God's will. The punishment is in pulling down a man's own building; for children, according to the Hebrew word, are the building, the pillars of the house; and since he would raise up a foundation and building contrary to God's mind, God would pull up his foundation. Cities are said to have life, and to grow, and to have their pitch, and then to die like men; and, indeed, they do: observing only a proportion of time, they are of longer continuance, but otherwise cities live and grow and die and have their period as men have. Now he that would give life to a city, that God would have buried in its own ruins, God would have his sons die; he would have his sons as it were buried under the ruins of that city that he would build in spite of God, that would give life to that city that was cursed. Ofttimes we may read our very sins in our punishments, there is some proportion. But to go on to the particulars.

'He shall lay the foundation in his first-born.'

A heavy judgment, because the first-born, as you know he saith of Reuben, he was his strength; and he was king and priest in the family. The first-born had a double portion, he was redeemed with a greater price, as we see in Moses's law, than other sons. It was a heavy judgment to have his first-born smitten in this fashion, to be taken away.

If any ask why God was so severe, that he did not punish Hiel in himself, but take away his children, it may seem against reason.

But we must not dispute with God, for we must know that God hath the supreme power of life and death.

Then we must know again that children are part of their parents; God punisheth the parents in their children, and it is a heavier punishment oft-times in their esteem than in themselves, for they think to live and continue in their children. Now when they see their children took away it is worse than death. Men oft-times live to see things worse than death, as those that see their children killed before them, as Zedekiah and Mauritius, the emperor, for indeed it is a death oft; a man dies in every child. This man he died in his eldest son, and he died in his youngest son; he died in regard of the apprehension of death. It was more sharp in apprehension than when he died himself. So it is a heavy judgment to be stricken in our children. God, when he will punish, he punisheth oft-times in posterity; as we see it was the most terrible judgment of all upon Pharaoh, that in his first-born; God drew them all to let Israel go out, when 'he smote their first-born.' It is a heavy judgment for a man to be stricken in his firstborn, either when they are dissolute, and debauched, and lawless, for God hath judgments for the soul as well as for the body, or else when they are taken out of the world.

But, thirdly, which is very likely another reason that moved God,—that we may justify God in all our sentence that we give of him,—he took them away, because they imitated their father in ill; and God hath a liberty to strike when he will, when there is cause; and whom he will, he will spare for so many generations.

Quest. You will say, Why doth he light on such a generation? and why not on such a place?

Ans. It is his liberty and prerogative, when all deserve it; and he lights upon one and not upon another. We must not quarrel with God, but leave him to his liberty. It is a part of his prerogative, 'Who art thou, O man, that disputest?' Rom. ix. 20. Why God, when all are equally sinners, strikes one and not another; why he executes judgments in one age and not in another; there may be reasons given of it; but it is a mystery that must not be disputed. But I cannot stand on these things.

This terrible sentence we see executed in 1 Kings xvi. 34. In Ahab's time, there was one so venturous as to build Jericho again. There is an accent to be set upon that, that it was in Ahab's time. Hiel would needs build Jericho again; and why should he build it? Hiel no doubt saw it a wondrous commodious place to found a city, being near to Jordan. And then he saw and considered that it was accounted a famous thing to be founder of a city. And then no doubt he thought that Ahab would not only permit him to do it, but it would gratify him: wicked Ahab, which had sold himself to work wickedness; that was an abominable idolater himself, and countenanced idolatry, and had set up the false worship of Baal. It was likely enough in his time that Jericho should be built; and therefore, no doubt but he did it partly to insinuate himself with Ahab. And to show how little he cared for Joshua's or Jehovah's threatening, as usually such impudent persons that are grown up with greatness, that have sold themselves to be naught, that have put off all humanity and modesty, they are fittest to carry wicked and desperate causes, being agreeable to them. So this wicked person was a fit man to do this, and he thought to please Ahab by it.

Man is a strange creature, especially in greatness of riches or place, &c.

A piece of earth that will be puffed up, if he have flatterers and sycophants about him, and a proud heart withal, he will forget, and dare the God of heaven, and trample under foot all threatenings and menaces whatsoever. As this wicked Hiel, rather than he will miss of his will, he will break through thick and thin, and redeem the fulfilling of his will with the loss of his own soul, and of his children, his first-born, and his last and all. Mens mild pro regno; let a man be happy in his will, he cares not for all the world. If he may have his will, let all go upon heaps. This is the nature of man. One would think that this threatening might have scared a man that had loved himself, or his posterity. But nothing would keep him, he would venture upon it, as we see in that place, 1 Kings xvi. 34. Thus we have passed over the words.

To come to handle the words by way of analogy, how they may agree to other things by way of proportion, and in a spiritual mystical sense.

There are divers degrees of men that venture upon curses, and thereupon grow to be cursed themselves. Even as this man ventured upon the building of Jericho, so there be many that do the like in a proportionable kind. I shall name some few.

God did determine that the Jewish ceremonies should determine and have an end and period. Now, in St Paul's time, there were many that would put life into them, and join them with the gospel. St Paul tells them, 'Christ shall profit you nothing,' Gal. v. 2. Those are they that build Jericho again, that revive and put life into that that God hath determined should never revive again. When the Jewish ceremonies were honourably interred, and laid in their graves, these men would raise them out of their graves again, and so venture upon God's curse, and be excluded from Christ. These are one sort of men that raise Jericho again; and so afterwards in the church, there were those that would build up Jericho, that would still retain Jewish ceremonies, and heathenish in the church, and some at the first with no ill minds. But then afterwards, as Augustine complains, they so pestered the church with Jewish and heathenish ceremonies, that the Jews' condition was better than theirs, for these things should have been buried. Gerson, that had many good things in him, though he lived in ill times, 'Oh,' saith he, 'good Augustine, dost thou complain of those times? what wouldst thou have said if thou hadst lived now?' What is popery but a mass of Jewish and heathenish ceremonies, besides some blasphemies that they have? I speak concerning what they differ from ours, which are decent and orderly. What a mass of ceremonies and fooleries have they, to mislead men that are taken away with fancies to distaste the truth of God, and to have respect to fancies, to outward pomp and gorgeous things, rather than the gospel? These men build up Jericho again, and bury the gospel as much as they can.

There are another sort of men that raise up Jericho, that revive all the heresies that were damned to hell by the ancient Councils. The heresy of Pelagius was damned to hell by the ancient councils. The African councils, divers of them, divers synods, wherein Augustine himself was a party, they condemned Pelagius's heresy. Are there not men now abroad that will revive these heresies? And there must be expected nothing but a curse where this prevails; for they are opinions cursed by the church of God, that have been led by the Spirit of God heretofore; such opinions, I mean, as speak meanly of the grace of God, as if it were a weak thing, and advance the strength of free-will, and make an idol of that; and so, under the commendation, and setting up of nature, are enemies of grace. These are those that build up Jericho.

3. There are a company that build up Jericho likewise, persons that will venture upon the curse of founders of colleges, &c., those that have left statutes, and testaments, and wills, established and sealed them with a curse,

as it were, against the breakers of them; yet some make no more bones of breaking these, either statutes or wills, than Samson did of breaking his cords; as if they would venture upon the curse of former times, and persons that very likely were led by the Spirit of God, and could say amen to their curses, as if they were nothing like Hiel, that would venture upon the terrible curse of Joshua; come what would, he would break through all.

4. But the Jericho especially that a world of people go about to build again, is popery. How many have ye to build up the walls of Jericho again in this kind? But to make this a little clearer, because the occasion leads to this something, I will be the larger in it.

Quest. How came they to build these walls of Jericho? By what means came this religion that is so opposite to the religion of the Scripture; this religion, that was gathered by the Council of Trent into one sea, as it were, that whosoever drinks of it dies, as it is in the Revelation, xx. 14. How comes this religion? How crept it into the world?

Ans. I could be long to show that it came by degrees. While the husbandmen slept, then the devil sowed his tares by heretics and such like. It grew by degrees. And then the world was scared and terrified with shows and fancies; as with the succession of Peter, that is a mere fancy; and then they were frighted with excommunications, the terrible sentence of the church. And then again it is a kingdom of darkness, popery is. By little and little they brought in ignorance, not only of the Scriptures, but of other things. They had their prayers in an unknown tongue, forbidding the Scriptures and the like. In the night they might do what they would, when they had put out the candle. When they had buried the knowledge of the word of God they might bring in any heresy; many ways they came in.

Now the preaching of the gospel is the means to pull down these walls of Jericho, it is the going about the walls of Jericho. By the preaching of Luther and others, the walls have fallen, though not utterly; yet notwithstanding, in the last hundred years there hath been a great ruin of popery.

Quest. What means have they now to build the walls again? How they bestir themselves! There is a new sect of Jesuits, that are the spirit of the devil for knowledge and industry. It is a strange project they have now to build up the walls of Jericho again; and three things they have in their project, and these are to set up the pope again, and a catholic king under him, as he is

the catholic head of the church, and to set up the Council of Trent in the full vigour. These are the main projects they labour to set up, and so to build Jericho again this way; and what course do they take?

Ans. The devil hath a thousand wiles. I cannot reckon all the instruments of Satan. Who can tell all his wiles? They go about to build the walls of Jericho again among other ways.

By shutting out of all light by their terrible inquisition, a most cruel thing. By the tyranny of this inquisition, they shut out all light of God's truth in all places where popery is established.

Then again they have all Satan's arts to build up Jericho, by slanders and lies. They labour to estrange the hearts of people what they can against the truth of religion, and therefore they raise all the lies and slanders they can; nay, and they will not suffer so much as a Protestant writer to be named, but the name of such a one, say they, be blotted out. Then they have their Index Purgatorius, to purge all that savour of truth that favour our cause. And then they have their dispensations. And, to cut off other things, for where should I end? indeed their policy is almost endless in this kind; they have the quintessence of their own wit and of Satan's to sharpen them in this kind.

They deal as the magicians of Egypt. When Moses came to do wonders, they imitated him in all the rest, except in one. So they strengthen themselves much in imitating the Protestants. We labour to build the walls of Jerusalem, they imitate us in building the walls of Jericho. We preach to shake off drowsiness, and they fall a preaching. We print, and they print. We publish books of devotion; they go beyond us. We set out books of martyrology, to show the cruelty of them, and they have lost much by that. Hereupon they do so too, and aggravate things, and add their own lies. So by imitating our proceedings, wherein we have gained upon them, they, like the Egyptian magicians, do the like, and God hardens their hearts, as he did Pharaoh's, by the magicians.

Again, by labouring to make divisions between kings and their subjects, what they can in those places where their religion hath not obtained ground. That they may get a party they cherish division like the devil; they divide and rule.

It was Julian's policy to provide that no Christian should bear any office in the wars, to be captain, &c. So if the Jesuits and papists may have their

will, no man that is opposite to them shall have any place. Those that shall have the place to manage offices, and such like, shall be those that incline to them. This they bring to pass if they can, and so for captains in the wars, &c. As Julian the apostate, he cared not for Judaism, but did what he did out of spite to the Christians; so in the most of their plots thus they work one way or other. I say there is no end of their plots, only it is good to know them; for so we may the better prevent them.

Quest. How shall the building up of Jericho be stopped, seeing they go about it so? And indeed they have built much of late years, and have raised up their walls very high, and labour what they can to stop the building of Jerusalem!

Ans. 1. The way to stop this Jericho, that it never go up again, is the judicious knowledge of popery; that it is a religion contrary to the blessed truth of God. God hath left us his testament, his will, wherein he hath bequeathed us all the good that we can challenge from him. Now this religion is contrary to our Father's will, and they know it well enough, and therefore they build their courses upon men's devices, and not upon divine truth. They know if people come to know the Testament, that they should lose, and therefore they labour to suppress knowledge, and extinguish it; we should labour to know the controversial truths between us and them, and to have the knowledge of the Scriptures; for knowledge is a notable means to strengthen us; there are none that know popery that will be deceived by it.

2. And then, together with the knowledge of their tenets, to know their courses, and practices, and policy. In 2 Tim. iii. 9, 'They shall prevail no longer,' saith Saint Paul, 'for their madness shall be made manifest.' Why shall they not prevail any longer? Their madness shall be manifest. So that the manifesting of the madness of men is the cause why they shall prevail no longer. It were good to know all their undermining tricks, and all the policy of the Jesuits and papists, that lay their trains afar off, that they may be the less seen. As the spider gets into a corner, that she appear not, so themselves will not appear, but they draw women, and other licentious persons, and they have greater than them too. So they lay their trains afar off, that they may have their will. It is good to know their devilish practices, that so their diabolical madness may be manifest, that so they may prevail no longer; for undoubtedly, if their courses were laid open, there is no man that loves his own safety, and the safety of the kingdom, but would hate them.

3. Another way to stop the building of Jericho is to have young ones instructed. I would parents would have more care of catechising, and others in their places would have more care of grounding young ones in the grounds of religion. Popery labours to overthrow that. For the worshipping of images it is directly against the second commandment, and they are so guilty of it that they take it away in some of their books. The younger sort, that are the hope of the succeeding church, should be well grounded in religion. That that is right will discover that that is crooked. It would make them impregnable against all popish solicitations.

The neglect of this is the cause why many gentlemen, and of the nobility apostatize. The neglect of their education by those that should overlook them hath made them fit for Jesuits and priests to work on, having ripe wits otherwise. And all because of the atheism of those that have neglected their breeding, and filled their heads with other vanities; it hath been the ruin of many families in this kingdom. Therefore it is good to season younger years with the knowledge of the grounds of religion.

4. And in all the dark corners of the land to set up lights that may shine; for these owls fly in the dark. They cannot endure the light of the gospel by any means. They see the breath of God's mouth is too hot for them; and they must be consumed at length by that, by the preaching of the gospel. Not with the sword, but with the sword of Christ's mouth, Antichrist must especially be consumed. And they know this by experience. Therefore they labour underhand. They will not be seen in it, but oft-times others are instruments more than they are aware, to stop the preaching of the gospel by all the policy they can.

5. Again, as I said before, popery is a kingdom of darkness, and nothing will undo it but light; therefore we should labour to cherish all good learning. It is a notable means to assist against popery. Julian knew that well enough. Therefore he would not suffer parents to send their children to school, but to be brought up in ignorance. And so papists would have a neglect of learning that might help this way.

6. And because they labour to reign in division, let us labour to unite ourselves, and not break upon small matters, but to join together with one shoulder, as one man, against that malignant generation, and mark those among us that are the causes of division; as the apostle saith, 'Mark them, they serve not Christ, but their own bellies,' Philip, iii. 19; they serve their own turns that reign in division. Let us labour as much as may be if we will

join strongly against the enemies of God and his church, to unite our forces together, and not to entertain slight matters of breach one from another.

7. And with these let us join our prayers to God, and our thanksgiving. We are not thankful enough that God hath brought us out of the kingdom of darkness; not only out of the darkness of sin and Satan, but from the darkness of popery. We have not been thankful to God for that deliverance in Queen Elizabeth's time, out of the Egyptian darkness, and the deliverance in our late king's time, and deliverances in later times, we are not thankful enough. And we begin to show it in not making much of religion, and growing in further and further obedience of religion. Is this our thankfulness to God? What, doth religion hurt us? Are we not beholden to God for our religion, and to religion for our peace and deliverance? Hath not God witnessed the truth of our religion from heaven by deliverances? Hath not God been with us strangely by the confusion of the plots of others. And how do we requite it? By growing to a lukewarm temper. A lukewarm temper is odious in the sight of God. 'I would thou wert hot or cold,' saith Christ, Rev. iii. 15. The best religion in the world is odious if it be cold. God will not endure us to join the ark and Dagon, Christ and Belial. Certainly, if we do, God will spue us all out. It will be the confusion of the church and state, and yet this is the thankfulness that we give to God for the gospel of peace, that we have been so much beholden to him for.

Therefore it is good to take occasions, as we have one' ministered this day, to call to mind the former dealing of God to us, in the gunpowder treason and other deliverances, which we have had several occasions upon this day to speak of. And, to come nearer ourselves, let us stir up our hearts to thankfulness, which is the main end of this day, and among the rest for our gracious prince, that God hath delivered him as the three children in the fiery furnace. They were kept and preserved untouched of the fire; so God hath preserved him in the fiery furnace. The not being thankful for these things will be a means for God to lay us open to his and our enemies. Therefore let us make use of this day especially to stir us up to thankfulness. To go on.

8. For the building of the walls of Jericho what should I speak of popery and the like? We should labour to overthrow that Jericho. All of us have vowed in baptism to fight against the world, and the devil, and the main enemy of all that is within us, that is, our flesh. We could not be hurt by them. We betray ourselves, as Samson betrayed himself to Delilah. Those

that are baptized, and especially that have renewed their vows by solemn fasting, and renewed their covenant in taking the communion, as there are none of us all but have vowed against our corruptions and sins in baptism, and have renewed their solemn vows in the communion and in public fasting. Well, when we go about to strengthen our corruptions, and the corruptions of the times in the places where we live, what do we go about? To build the walls of Jericho again. What do we go about, but to strengthen that that God hath cursed? There is nothing under heaven so cursed as this corruption of ours, that is the cause of all the curses of the creatures, of all the curses that ever were, or shall be, even to the last curse: 'Go, ye cursed, to eternal destruction,' Mat. xxv. 41. This pride, and sensuality, and secret atheism and infidelity that we cherish, and love more than our own souls, this is that that many go about to build, and oppose all the ways that are used to pull down Jericho, and hate nothing so heartily as the motions of God's Spirit, and the means that God's Spirit hath sanctified to pull down these walls of Jericho.

Must not this be a cursed endeavour, when we go about to build that that we ourselves have vowed to pull down? when we go about to raise that that we have formerly destroyed by our own vows? As Saint Paul saith, Gal. ii. 18, 'If I again build the things I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' Indeed, when we go about to build the things that we have vowed their destruction, we make ourselves transgressors.

Let us take notice of the wondrous poison and rebellion of the corruption of our hearts in this kind. Hath not the Lord threatened curse upon curse against many particular sins? 'Cursed is the man that calls evil good, and good evil,' Isa. v. 20. Have we not many that do so? In Deuteronomy there is curse upon curse to those that mislead others, xxvii. 16, et alibi. And in the New Testament there is curse upon curse; St Paul threateneth that such and such shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Yet, notwithstanding the curse, we go about to build Jericho again, to set up that that God hath pronounced a curse upon.

We cry out against popery, and well we may, when the Scripture directs curses against their particular opinions, as where it saith, 'If an angel from heaven shall teach other doctrine, let him be accursed,' Gal. i. 8. The Council of Trent hath cursed those that say traditions are not of equal authority with the Scriptures, and so they set curse against curse. We wonder at them that they are not afraid of the curse of God, nay, to counter-curse God as it were;

when he curseth disobedience, to curse the practice of obedience to him. And then there is a curse to those that shall add or take away from the Scripture. St John seals the whole Scripture with a curse: 'Cursed is he that adds, or takes away,' &c., Rev. xxii. 18. Now they add to the Scripture that that is no scripture; and they take away what they list, as the second commandment and the cup in the sacrament. I say we wonder at them, that they will run upon the curses, that they will be stricken through with so many curses, more than Absalom with javelins, or Achan with stones: 'Cursed is he that worshipped graven images,' Deut. xxvii. 15; besides particular things that are cursed in Scripture. We wonder at them that they are so desperately blind to run on. But are not we as ill? Are there not many curses in the Scripture, and denunciations of being excluded from the kingdom of God, against the courses that are taken by many men? And yet we venture on it. Will a negative religion bring any man to heaven, to say he is no papist, nor no schismatic? No. Certainly therefore profane persons that maintain corruptions, and abuses, and abominations, against the light of conscience, and nature, and Scriptures, they raise up Jericho again and they are under a curse.

Let me ask any one why Christ came? The apostle saith, and they will be ready to say, 'To dissolve the cursed works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8. It should seem by many, notwithstanding, especially at these times, that he came to establish the works of the devil; for what good we do in the ministry, in three quarters of a year, it is almost undone in one quarter. At the time when we pretend great honour to Christ, we live as if he came to build up the cursed wall of hell; to break loose all. Whereas he came to destroy the works of the devil: 'He came to redeem us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life,' Luke i. 75. He came to redeem us from our vain conversation. Nay, many live as if he came to give liberty to all conversation. Is not this to raise Jericho? to raise a fort for Satan to enter into our souls and keep possession in us? to beat out God and his Spirit? to fight against our known salvation, when we rear up courses contrary to Christ's coming in the flesh, and to the end of Christ's dying for us, which was to free us from our vain conversation, and to redeem us from the world, that we should not be led as slaves to the customs of the world?

Therefore let us consider what we do, what our course of life is. If it be a proceeding, and edification, and building up ourselves more and more to heaven, a growing in knowledge and in holy obedience to the divine truths

we know; if it be a pulling down of sin more and more, a going further and further out of the kingdom of darkness, and a setting ourselves at a gracious liberty to serve God; oh it is a happy thing if it be so! If our life be a taking part with Christ, and his Spirit, and his ministry, to grow in grace and piety, oh it is an excellent thing when we grow better the longer we live in the world, and this cursed Jericho, the corruption of nature, which, if we cherish, will be the cause of an eternal curse after, if it go down, and we ruin it more and more, and we suffer the word to beat down the forts of Satan, those strong imaginations, &c. But if our life be nothing else but a living answerable to our lusts; that as we are dead and cursed by nature, so we make ourselves twice dead, a hundred times dead by sin, and bring curse upon curse by our sinful conversation, we are then under God's broad seal cursed. We are all born accursed, till we get out of the state of nature; to free us from which Christ became a curse. If we get not out of this, but go on and feed our vanity and corruption, what will be the end of it but an eternal curse afterwards? Therefore let us consider what we do, when we maintain and cherish corruptions and abuses in ourselves and others. We build that that God hath cursed; we build that that we have vowed against ourselves.

And how will God take this at the hour of death? Thou that art a careless, drowsy hearer of the word of God, and a liver contrary to the word of God, how will God take this at thee, at the hour of death, when thy conscience will tell thee that thy life hath been a practice of sin, a strengthening of corruption? The 'old Adam' that thou hast cherished, it will stare and look on thee with so hideous a look that it will drive you to despair; for conscience will tell thee that thy life hath been a strengthening of pride, of vanity, of covetousness, and of other sins. Thy whole life hath been such; and now when thou shouldst look for comfort, then thy corruptions, which thou shouldst have subdued, they are grown to that pitch that they will bring thee to despair, without the extraordinary mercy of God to awaken thy heart by repentance. Why therefore should we strengthen that that is a curse and will make us cursed too? and will make the time to come terrible to us, the hour of death and the day of judgment? How shall men think to hold up their faces and heads at the day of judgment, whose lives have been nothing else but a yielding to their own corruption of nature, and the corruptions and vanities of the times and places they have lived in? that have never had the courage to plead for God; that have been fierce against God: 'Who ever was fierce against God, and prospered?' Job ix. 4. When men make their whole life fierce against God, against the admonitions of his word and Spirit, and

their whole life is nothing but a practice of sin, how can they think of death and judgment without terror!

Now, it were wisdom for us to carry ourselves so in our lives and conversations, that the time to come may not be terrible, but comfortable to think of; that we may lift up our heads with joy when we think of death and judgment. But when we do nothing but build Jericho, when we raise up sin, that we should ruin more and more, what will the end of this be, but despair here and destruction in the world to come?

You may shake off the menaces and threatenings of the ministers, as Hiel shook off Joshua's. He was an austere, singular man, and it is a long time since Jericho was cast down, and God hath forgotten. Hath he so? He found that God had not forgotten; so there are many that think that words are but wind of men, opposite to such and such things. But, though our words may be shaken off now, and the word of God now in the preaching may be shook off, yet it will not when it comes to execution. When we propound the curse of God against sinful courses, you may shake off that curse; but when Christ from heaven shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and say, 'Go, ye cursed,' that were born cursed, that have lived cursed, that have maintained a cursed opposition to blessed courses, that have not built up your own salvation, but your corruptions, you that loved cursing, 'Go, ye cursed, to hell-fire, with the devil and his angels for ever,' Mat. xxv. 41. Will you shake off that? No, no! Howsoever our ministerial entreaties may be shaken off, yet when God shall come to judge the quick and the dead, that eternal threatening shall not be shaken off. Therefore, I beseech you, consider not so much what we say now, but what God will make good then. 'What we bind on earth,' out of the warrant of God's book, 'shall be bound in heaven,' Mat. xvi. 19, and God will say Amen to that we say agreeable to his word.

Think not light of that we speak, for God will make good every word. He is Jehovah, he will give being to every word. He is not only mercy but justice. We make an idol of him else. And we must fear him in his justice. 'He loves to dwell with such as are of a contrite spirit, that tremble at his word,' Isa. lvii. 15.

It is said of David, that when Uzzah was stricken, 'he trembled, 2 Sam. vi. 6. Hiel, and such kind of persons, regard not the threatenings of God, but go on and treasure up wrath. It is a sign of a wicked man to hear the menaces and threatenings, and not to tremble. To end all with two places of scripture:

Saith Moses, 'He that hears these things, and blesseth himself, my wrath shall smoke against him,' Deut. xxix. 20. God's wrath shall smoke and burn to hell against such a one as blesseth himself, that knows he is cursed under the seal of God, that doth ill, and yet he blesseth himself in doing ill. Therefore, take heed of that, add not that to the rest. God's wrath will smoke against such a one. And you know what St Paul saith: Rom. ii. 5, 'If thou go on and treasure up wrath,' thou buildest Jericho, that thou hast vowed the destruction of. Every time thou takest the communion, thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath. For there will be a day of the manifestation of the just wrath of God, and then these things will be laid to thy charge.

Let us every one labour to get out of the state of nature, to break off our wicked lives, and to get into Christ the blessed seed, and then we shall be blessed, we shall be made free, free from the curse of nature and of sin. Let us renew our covenants against all sin, and make conscience to be led by the Spirit of Christ, that we may gather sound evidence every day, that we are in Christ, and so out of the curse.

## The Vanity of the Creature

*And Barzillai said to the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, &c.— 2 Samuel XIX. 34-38.*

I have read, beloved, a large text. In the handling of it, we will do as the traveller doth that is belated; we will cast how we may post the next way to an end. The oration, you see, is very plain. We shall not need to spend much time in explicating the terms.

The words are part of a conference, you see; a passage between king David and Barzillai of Rogelim, in the county of Gilead. This Barzillai had been wondrous kind to David in the time of his distress. David being now restored from danger, remembers the kindness of his old friend, and, in way of requital, tenders him this offer, that in case he would go with him to the court of Jerusalem, he should be very welcome thither, and he should have such entertainment as the court would afford. This invitement of the king foregoes our text.

The old man Barzillai is now upon his answer in the words read, who doth,

1. First, very modestly and mannerly put off the king's motion to him.

2. And then next he tenders and prefers a suit of his own. For the king's motion, that he should turn courtier, Barzillai puts off very finely, as you may see in the text. He gives sundry reasons for his so doing.

1. The first is, because that he was no fit man for the court.

First, He was smitten in age, and therefore, in case he should go up, he could but only salute it; for, saith he, 'how many are the days of my years?' My years are brought to days; my days may quickly be numbered. I should die by that time I were warm there, and therefore what should I do at the court? Secondly, put the case he did draw breath there a while, that was all; for, saith he, 'Am I able now to discern between good and evil?' There is nothing that offers itself to my eye, to my ear, to my taste, to any of my senses, that will give me any great content, and therefore there is no great

reason why I should be drawn thither. This is his first reason, from the unfitness of the thing.

Second, Afterward he proceeds to other reasons in the text, that is first thus much: if he should live there, it must be to do the king some service, at the least to yield him some contentment. But so it was that he was under age's command, and was able for neither. He was neither fit for work nor fit for play. He found no great contentment in himself, and he could yield little to others, and therefore why should he be a burden to the king's court?

Third, The third reason is this, that he had done what he had done for the king, but in duty. It was his duty to do what he did, and it was but a little. All that he could do for the king was only to bring him a mile or two on his way; and why should the king trouble his thoughts about a recompense for this, saith he? Thus he puts off the king's motion; he craves leave that he may forbear the court, and be excused thence.

Fourth, This done, he comes in the next place, because he would give no offence, to tender a suit of his own, and that is double.

1. In regard of himself.
2. And then in regard of his son Chimham.

For himself he craves leave to go back again to his own dwelling; and here he doth finely set his petition by the king's motion.

1. He desires the king's leave, that he would give him leave to go home and die.
2. And next, that the king would be pleased so far to gratify him, that he may die in his own dwelling, where his habitation was.

Fain he would die as the have doth in her own form, and as other creatures willingly do in their own nests. Then, in the next place, he adds another reason why he would be dismissed; because he would die where his father and his mother were buried. There he was bred, there he was born, there he drew his first breath, and there he would gladly resign himself again, and his breath, and be laid and gathered in mercy to his fathers. This is his suit for himself.

In the behalf of his son, he tenders him to the king's grace, as if he should say, Your motion is very gracious, far beyond my desert, and such as I should be very happy in the enjoying of, in case age did not hinder me. For proof whereof, I leave my son as a pledge and pawn. This staff of my age, this stay of my comfort, I commend him to your grace; deal with him as shall seem best in your eyes. And thus Barzillai he hath commended his suit to the king.

Now this being thus delivered, it is further amplified and set forth from the effect that this wrought in the king.

1. First, King David he accepts of his excuse. He gives him to understand, if he will go, he shall be kindly welcome; if he stay behind, there is no offence shall be taken, but further, the king will be ready in any other kind to gratify him as occasion shall serve.

2. And next for his son, the king accepts of him, and promiseth to do for him that which should seem good in the eyes of his father.

These be the parts of this conference, and the effects of it; so that in sum you see here is a dialogue, A conference between David and Barzillai.

We are now upon Barzillai's answer, which is set forth,

1. From the parts.
2. From the effects of it, as before we inferred.

Now from all these generals, sundry particular instructions might be raised. But I perceive the time hath prevented me; therefore we will briefly handle a point or two, and so for this time cease.

1. First of all, in the first place, we see that Barzillai hath no mind to the court; and he draws his argument and his reason from his state and from his age. 'How many,' saith the original, 'are the days of my years?' The motion was very gracious on the king's part, and such as man's nature is ready enough to entertain. Naturally, we desire honour and preferment; at least an old man might take some contentment in the dainties and delicates of a court. Further than this, let a man be never so religious, in David's court a man might find much contentment, and might take much comfort and solace in the presence and company of such a prince. Notwithstanding all this, saith

old Barzillai, my days are almost spent, my glass is almost run, and therefore what should I talk of a court? I will go home and die.

Doct. 1. In him we learn thus much, how that no company, no comforts, no motions in the earth, should put off thoughts of death when death begins to creep upon us. I say wheresoever we live, what offers soever are made us, whatsoever the motion be, for ease, for profit, for promotion, for any outward contentments, we must not lay down, we must not lay aside the thoughts of our mortality. No dream must put us out of these thoughts while we travel in this main roadway of all flesh. We must never be so busy in discourse, in contrivements, as to forget our way, to forget which way we are going, but still our thoughts must be homewards; that as we deal with other journeys here upon earth; for these momentary homes that we have here, wheresoever we be, in company that we like wondrous well, where our entertainment is full of kindness, where our welcome is of the best, and all content is given; yet notwithstanding, thoughts eftsoons will offer themselves of home, night will come, and it will grow late, I must home for all this, and leave all this company. So, my brethren, should it be concerning our long homes, which is that surest dwelling; wheresoever we be, howsoever for the present we be tempted or taken up, still, still our eye must be home; we must remember our latter end, remember whither we are going. This Barzillai teacheth us in his practice. A motion is made for the court. Tush! court me no courts, saith Barzillai; I am an aged man; I have one foot in the grave; let me go home and die. Here is an offer made him of comfort and contentment. No; I will go home and he by my fathers. Death possesseth his thoughts; he minds nothing else now but dying. This Barzillai did, and thus the apostle would have us do in 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Our time, saith he, it is abbreviated. Now our time is nothing in comparison of that it was in the time of the patriarchs. A great part of our time is already run out, and there is but a little of it left behind. Our time being thus short, saith the apostle, 'Let him that is married, be as if he were not married; let him that weeps, be as if he wept not; let him that rejoiceth, be as if he did not rejoice; he that is in the world, as if he were not in the world.' Let us so carry ourselves, that we may be very indifferent towards all matters in this life. Let us so order the matter, that no occasion of grief, of sorrow, of comfort, of joy, of company, of one thing or another, public or private, may divert our thoughts, and turn them aside from thinking upon death. This is that which David and others press in sundry psalms. He calls upon rich and poor, upon high and low, one and another, in the 82d Psalm. He calls upon judges and magistrates, though they be in place gods, yet in nature men, and must die as men. This is that which

Solomon presseth too. But what needs particulars? We will not trouble you with particular instances of Scripture, much less with instances of other stories. Every man almost knows what some heathen princes have done this way. They had some to call upon them in their beds, some at their boards, to remember them that they were mortal, that they must die, to mind them of this in the midst of their greatest security, and in the midst of all their jollity. And indeed there is great reason why it should be thus, why it is good still to hold on the thoughts of our mortality and of our death, whatsoever occasion be offered.

1. It is needful for the preventing of evil.
2. And it is useful for the obtaining of good.

Reason 1. These evils will be hereby prevented. (1.) The constant thoughts of death and mortality will tie us to our good behaviour, that we shall not offer any injustice, any hard measure, to any man. Whereas let death be once out of the sight of the thoughts of a man, he grows wild, he grows unruly, he grows masterless. You see in the parable of the servant, when he thought his master was gone afar off, that he would not come a great while, that his reckoning, his account would not be soon, it would not be sudden, he lays about him like a Nimrod, he smites and beats his fellow-servants, he makes no conscience of his dealing to his poor brethren. Whereas, on the other side, when Job presented to himself the thoughts of death and mortality, how that there was a Lord and a Judge that would call him to an account for all, he dares not lift up his hand, he dares not lift up his tongue, against any underling or inferior.

(2.) Again, as this will prevent injustice towards men, so it will prevent impenitency towards God. The heart of man secures itself like the harlot, Prov. vii. 10, et seq. When she conceives her husband is gone afar off, and hath taken a great journey, she is secure. So the heart, the impenitent heart of man, when a man puts far from him the thoughts of death, and will not conceive that the Judge stands at the door, then he doth obstinate himself in sinful courses, and doth what he can to stiffen himself against all the admonitions and rebukes of God's mouth.

(3.) Further, this is another evil that is prevented; the thoughts of mortality will prevent dotage, as it were, about these worldly things. The world will grow upon us and bewitch us, if we suffer the thoughts of death to fall once. If we do not see death stand at the end of all our earthly profits, of

all our worldly pleasures and advantages, we shall be even almost mad after them, and we shall be too too glad of them when we have them, and too too much surfeit upon them; whereas, on the other side, the thoughts of this, that we must shortly leave them, and depart hence, this will cool our appetite to earthly things, it will make us have them as if we had them not, as you heard from the apostle.

(4.) Yea, these thoughts of our mortality in all estates and conditions, it is that which will prevent the danger of death. It will take away the sting of it, it will take away the terror of it. Death is a most terrible thing in its own nature you know, and the heathen could speak so of it. Death is most terrible, especially to him that doth not die in his thoughts daily. When as a man in his meditations doth daily present death to himself, and looks upon it, then death is like the prevented basilisk, death hath lost the sting. It can do us no hurt; it proves like the brazen serpent looked upon. The beholding of that death puts an end to all other miseries, to all other maladies, to all other deaths whatsoever, so that there is much good gotten, at the least there is much evil prevented, in case we do constantly entertain in us thoughts of mortality and of death, as Barzillai did.

Reason 2. Secondly, As this thought of mortality is profitable for us in that respect, in preventing evil, so in a second regard proposed, that it doth even help us to much goodness. Thoughts of mortality, what will they do?

(1.) First, They will make a man painful in his place, to dwell upon his own vocation, upon his own business; as Paul saith, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we exhort and admonish,' 2 Cor. v. 11. We being apostles, we do the duty of apostles. Upon this ground Barzillai, remembering his mortality, that he must shortly go hence, he betakes himself home, that death might find him in his own place.

(2.) Again, the thoughts of mortality, as they will make a man painful in his place, so they will make him profitable consequently to men; as the apostle Peter speaks, 2 Peter i. 13, he stirs up himself to put the people of God in remembrance of those things they had learned, because he considered that 'shortly he was to lay down his tabernacle,' to make an end of his life.

(3.) And further, the thoughts of death and mortality, they will make a man patient in the midst of all the hard measure that is offered to him; in the midst of all preserves us, as the apostles speak, both James and Paul, that we

shall be patient: 'Let your patience be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand, because the time is short, because the Judge stands at the door,' &c., Philip, iv. 5, James v. 10. This is that which will make one quiet in all provocations; this is that will comfort him in all discouragements: I shall shortly be sent for, I shall be called from hence; then I shall be righted where I am wronged, I shall be cleared where I am accused, I shall have rest where I have trouble, all shall be well, and therefore why should I not be quiet?

(4.) Yea, this thought of mortality is that that will make one prepare for death. A man that resolves he must die, he goes about to set his house in order, to set his heart in order, to set all in order, and prepare now for that guest that is so near approaching.

So that whether we look to the evils that are prevented, or to the good things that are obtained and acquired, it will be a profitable course for every man to be of Barzillai's mind, to set aside all motions, and all solicitations, all other respects, and to take to himself thoughts of death and mortality. We will stand no longer in proving and clearing this plain point unto you, we will be as brief as we may in applying it, and that with all plainness.

Use 1. First, then, is this our duty? Here we must shame and blame ourselves that we forget our home, and that we remember no better our latter end. This is a matter of humbling to us, that we do not remember that which should be always in our thoughts. The end of a man's days should be at the end of all his thoughts. Still, as the goal is in the eye of the runner, as the bulls-eye is in the eye of the archer, so still a man's latter end should be in the eye of him whilst he is running his race and his course here in this world.

A man should be still bound for home, as it were, as you see all creatures be. Let a stone be removed from home, from the centre, let it be put out of its place, it will never be quiet till it be home again. Let a bird be far from the nest, and it grows towards night, she will home even upon the wings of the wind. Let every poor beast, and every creature, though the entertainment be but slender at home, yet if you let it slip loose it will home as fast as it can. Everything tends to its place; there is its safety, there is its rest, there it is preserved, there it is quiet. Now, since it is so with every creature, why should it not be so with us? Why should not we be for our home? This, my brethren, is not our home, here is not our rest. That is our home where our chief friends be, where our Father God is, where our husband Christ is, where our chief kindred and acquaintance be, all the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs of God departed are, that is our home, and thither should we go.

Again, that is our home where our chief work, where our chief business lies. And where is chiefly a Christian's business but in heaven? His conversation must be there, his affection is there. He himself while he is on earth must be out of the earth, and raise, himself from earth to heaven every day.

More than this, that is our home where our rest and peace is. Here we have no abiding city; there is our home, as our Saviour speaks, our mansion. We have no abiding place till we come to heaven. While we are here, we are tossed to and fro from place to place; but when we are there, there we rest. We rest from our labours, we rest from sin, we rest from corruption, from all fears, from all tears, from all griefs, from all temptations; that is our home. Why do we not go home, then, my brethren? Why are we like a silly child, that when his father sends him forth, and bids him be him home again, every flower that he meets with in the field, every sign he sees in the street, every companion that meets him in the way, stops him, and hinders him from repairing to his father? So it is with us for the most part; every trifle, every profit, every bauble, every matter of pleasure, every delight, is enough to divert and turn aside our thoughts from death, from home, from heaven, from our God, and we are taken up, and lose ourselves I know not where. This shows that either we conceive not heaven as our home, and earth as a pilgrimage and tabernacle, or else it shows we are too, too childish, like children in this behalf.

Use 2. But, secondly, here is another word of instruction for us, and that is thus much, that every one of us now should labour after the example of this good man, even to remember his latter end, to remember whither he is going, to remember his home.

Quest. What need this? will some say; how is it possible for a man to forget this point?

Ans. 1. Yes, my beloved, it is very possible. It is a very easy matter to speak of death, but it is an hard matter to think of it, and to think of it seriously, for a man to take it home to his own thoughts. It is a very difficult thing for a man to apprehend privations, those things that are so far from eternity and being. It is the hardest thing in the world to do this in the greatest privation of all, in matter of death. A man is utterly unwilling, utterly unable. This argues he hath no mind to see death, nor no will to salute it.

Ans. 2. Besides, many men, upon many occasions, will labour to turn aside a man's thoughts this way. Hence it is, that though we say we are mortal, yet we scarce believe ourselves to be mortal; but we carry immortal hopes and immortal conceits in mortal breasts. Hence it comes to pass, that though we look into the graves of others, yet we little think that ourselves shall shortly be closed in the grave. Though we see others fall at our right hand and at our left, yet we hardly believe that those eyes of ours must shortly be closed up and stopped, and all our members must be forsaken, and left lifeless as a carcass. These things are far from our thoughts, and therefore it is needful for us to press this oft and oft upon our thoughts, namely, that we are mortal, and that we must away.

Obj. Why, will some man say, how can a man choose but think so, when he hath so many instances of mortality every day before his eyes? He sees rich and poor, young and old, one and another die, and therefore he cannot conceive but that he must die too.

Ans. But yet all this will not do, except a man be assisted by the divine Spirit. This Moses intimates, Ps. xc. 12. They fell in the wilderness by hundreds, nay, by thousands, and yet saith Moses, 'Lord teach us to number our days, &c., and give us wisdom to apply our hearts unto wisdom;' and to that sense and effect Moses prays. Moses, though he had instances enough of mortality, notwithstanding that he was an excellent man himself, and had to do with the best people that were then in the world, yet he sees reason to pray to God that God would teach them their mortality, and that God would make them wise, and that they might know how to number their days, and to remember their own estate. If Moses saw reason to put up this petition to God, certainly there is great need for us to do it. We had need pray Moses' prayer, and we had need to practise Moses' practice too.

(1.) First, let us labour to take the sum of our life, what; it is in the gross, as he saith in that psalm, 'Our days are threescore years and ten, it may be one may come to fourscore;' he may arrive to such a number, or thereabouts; this is the life of man, Ps. xc. 10. And then,

(2.) Secondly, in the next place, let us consider how much of this time is run out already, how that the fourth part, or the third part, or the half of our days is already expired and run out. Let us do in this case as an apprentice doth reckon how many years he was bound for, how many he hath served already, and what is behind. Let us do as a traveller would do: So many miles I must go this day, so many are measured already, the remainder must be

passed before night. So let us do in this apprenticeship, in this journey of death. Account what it is, how much of it is spent, how the time slides away in an insensible manner, how it steals away.

(8.) Nay, let us in the third place consider how others fall on every hand before us. Present this to thy own thoughts, and say, There dwelt such a gentleman the other day, now he is dead; there dwelt such a woman, such a neighbour of late, she is now departed; not long since there dwelt so many in that family, and there are few now left. Thus let us reckon, consider how death seizeth upon other men, and then reflect upon thyself. Who knows whose turn may be next?

(4.) Yea, let us in the last place consider, how death steals on its too by degrees, how it takes possession of us. It is with us as it is with an house. There falls down a window, and then conies down a piece of a wall, and then a door, &c.; so it is with a man, death seizeth upon his feet, and then upon his hands. Let us take notice how death steals on us, and say, Death is already in mine eye, I begin to be dim-sighted: death is already in mine ear, I begin to be thick of hearing; death is in my limbs and joints, they begin to be lazy, and stiff, and cold, I begin to feel the symptoms of death upon me already. Let us look oft upon ourselves to this purpose, take notice how nature begins to wither and decay. Let the whiteness of our hairs, the weakness of our joints, the wrinkles in our faces, be so many witnesses against us, as he speaks in that place in Job xvi. 8. Thus we must do, my brethren, to come to settle this in our thoughts, that we are mortal, and when we have once persuaded ourselves of this, then let us make preparation for death. Oh think of it by thyself alone, think what it is to die, think what is concluded in that short word, think what is thy preparation to it, think what business is about it, think what treads on the heels of it when thou art gone. 'It is appointed to men to die once, and after that comes the judgment,' Heb. ix. 27. Consider, I say, by thyself, what it is to die, consider with other folk, with other people. Be ready to speak of it, as Barzillai doth, to mind thyself and others of mortality: and more than this, make preparation, set thy house in order, set thy heart in order.

Preparation to death. For thy house, for thy persons, goods, or children, look thou set them in order.

First, For thy persons, dispose of thy children as Barzillai doth here. Dispose of thy family, of thy kindred, place them in callings, dispose of them for thy habitation. As Isaac and Jehoshaphat, and others in Scripture, give

them good instructions, leave them precepts that shall stick by them when thou art dead and gone.

Second, For thy goods, dispose of them; what is evil gotten restore, what is well gotten dispose to pious and merciful uses, to thy family, to those that may challenge right in thee. And it is good to set these things in order before such time as death cometh. Oh, my brethren, it is a miserable madness among the sons of men. They defer these weighty and important businesses to the last hour. When the powers of nature are shaken, when their wits and memories fail, when their speech and understanding leaves them, then, then they go about the most important business of all others. Do this in time; have thy will ready about thee, dispose of thy family, of thy estate, whilst thou art in memory and understanding.

Third, As thy house must be disposed of, so much more thy heart must be disposed of. Repent of thy sins, pluck out the sting of death, which is sin; 'the sting of death is sin.' Death cannot hurt where there is repentance of sin. Sin unrepented will bring a sting in the time of death. It will fill the heart with sorrow, and the soul with amazement, and the conscience with terror. Pull out the sting, and then thou shalt triumph over death, and over the grave, and say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 1 Cor. xv. 55. O hell, where is thy triumph? O Satan, where is thy malice and power? Nothing is able to do thee harm.

Fourth, In the next place, labour to take possession of heaven now. Make entrance into it while thou art here, by getting the life of Christ, and the life of faith in thee, by getting the saving graces of the Spirit in thee. If these things be in thee and be not unfruitful, then thou shalt have entrance, as Peter speaks, 'into the inheritance and kingdom,' 2 Pet i. 11. This then is somewhat, that we should have said more largely, if we had had more time and fitness to have spoken to the first point; and therefore we will but name to you some other particulars that we should have spoken to.

In the next place, you see his second reason why he would not be a courtier, is, that now his natural parts, his outward senses begin to fail, that he found his sight to decay, that he could not discern colours; his taste wasted, he could not distinguish between sweet and sour; his ears were not serviceable; now the mirth, and music, and melody of the court was nothing to him. Herein then we see in the next place how it fares with us.

Doct. 2. That natural parts and powers will decay with age. Age will decay and wear out our nature. All parts, and powers, and faculties whatsoever they be, time and age will wear out. The clothing both of the body and of the mind, age wears out the clothing of the body, and the garment of the mind, as it were. The mind and the soul is clothed with flesh. This body of ours, our flesh, is clothed with other raiment. Time wears out the one as well as the other. The heaven and the earth, which are more durable than man, yea, than a generation of men, as Solomon saith: Eccles. i. 4, 'Man dieth, a generation of men pass away, but the earth stands,' and much more the heavens continue; yet the heavens and the earth, they are as a garment, they wax old and are soon changed, as the Holy Ghost tells us, Isa. l. 9, much more the sons of men. Yea, the water by drops wastes the stones, nay, a rock of stones, nay, a mountain of stones, as it is in Job xvi. 19, and therefore it will consume in time flesh and blood. To stand to prove this is needless; I will give you some instances for the enlightening of the point, and so end.

1. First, Isaac, when he was an old man, when he waxed old, his sight was thick and dim, as in Gen. xxvii. 1. David in 2 Kings i., when he was stricken in age, when he was passed on in years, then saith the text, David's natural heat began to decay, and they were fain to apply means to help him; so Solomon in Eccles. xii. 1, a place known, tells us that evil days will come, and cloud will follow upon cloud, and then the keepers of the house, the hands, will wax feeble; the pillars of the house, the legs and thighs, will wax faint and weak; those that look out at the windows, the eyes, will be dark and duskish; then all the daughters of music, the ears, they will begin to wax thick too and heavy, and so of the rest, as we see there. We cannot stand on particulars.

Obj. If any man object, and say, How can this be, since the soul of a man is no material thing, and it is the soul that sees, and the soul that hears, and not the body; and, therefore, why should the seeing, and hearing, and these senses decay?

Ans. The answer is very easy. The soul doth these things, but it useth the body as an instrument and organ, and so it must work according to the nature of the instrument. Let a man be never so good a horseman, and never so cunning in the way, he must travel as his horse will give him leave. So in this case, let the soul be never so active and full of life, it must perform its

actions as the organ and instrument, the members of the body are disposed. Now the body is frail and mortal in a double regard.

First, In regard of the curse and sentence of God passed upon man, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death,' Gen. iii. 3.

Secondly, In regard of the matter whereof man's body is compounded and made. If you make an house of weak and rotten timber, it will decay; if you make a coat of that which is not very sound and durable, it will not last. Man's body is made of such matter, of such metal, of such timber, of such stuff, it will not hold out; therefore in time it wastes and rots in pieces.

Use 1. For the use of this, thus much in brief. Since these bodies, the natural faculties and powers, will decay and wear out in time, let us improve them while we have them; let us make use of them, as we do of other instruments while they are fit for use. Memory will decay, therefore let us labour to treasure up good things in our memories, lay up things worthy to come into a treasury, and not bad things. That is Solomon's use that he makes: 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' saith he, Eccles. xii. 1. Long before the evil days come, and before the decay of thy natural powers, employ thyself well, redeem the time. So say I to you; use memory whiles it lasteth, use wit whiles it lasteth, for the truth:

'Do nothing against the truth,' as Paul speaks of himself, 2 Cor. xiii. 8; so for thine eyes, let them be casements to let in fresh air, and not to let in corruption; use thy ears for wholesome instructions; use thy feet for good purposes, to follow the ways to the house of God; use thy hands, employ them in profitable business while you can work. This providence men have for their outward estate, and for the body. When we are young we provide for age, we provide somewhat to keep us when we are old. Let us do somewhat for our spiritual estate. You that have young and fresh wits, fresh memories, and eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, all the parts of your bodies and powers of your souls, ready to do service, improve your time, lay hold on the opportunity. Now is the time of reading, now is the time of learning, now is the time of gathering, now is the time of your harvest; provide for winter; there will evil days come, cloud will follow cloud, as Solomon speaks.

Use 2. Secondly, here is another point of instruction: since this is so, that the natural powers and faculties will fail, let us therefore strive to get more than this which is natural. Since this will away, let us provide some more

durable substance. You know when an old suit fails, we think of getting a new suit of apparel; when the old lease is expired, we think where to get another habitation; we begin to take a new state, and a new lease. As we do thus in matters of this life, so we should do much more for matters of the soul. When we see the natural life will not hold out, and that it cannot continue long, oh, labour, labour, my brethren, for a better life, for another life, a life that is heavenly, a life that is supernatural; get the life of God in you, and then you shall never die. To this end, get the fountain of life, Christ, to be yours, receive him into your understandings by knowledge, into your hearts by love and affection; receive him, and clasp him, and take him to yourselves by faith, and he that believes in him shall never die; yea, though he die, he shall live; he shall live in death, and shall outlive death,, as Christ tells us in that place of the Gospel, John xv. 26. And when you have this fountain of life, that Christ lives in you, that you live not your own life, that you live not the life of Adam, the life of nature, First, Labour to act to this life. Life is made up of many actions, so is the life of God too.

Secondly, If we live the life of Christ, and act it when he puts life into us, we shall labour to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and of the old man. So much corruption, so much death; so far as sin lives, so far the man dies.

Thirdly, Labour to exercise and to stir up those graces of the Spirit that Christ hath bestowed on us; and so much as faith lives, and as patience lives, and as charity lives, and the graces of God's Spirit live in us, so much we live, and live that life that shall never be determined and take end. That is another thing briefly.

Yet we add one thing more.

Use 3. In the third place, so this may serve to show who is the wisest man in the world, who makes the wisest choice; for wisdom is most seen in comparative actions. When things are compared together, and a choice is made of things that excel each other, lay the comparison. Who is the wisest man? Some men are for outward things; no man is admired of them but for his natural parts. We look who hath the finest hand, who hath the finest eye, who hath the finest wit, and the best memory for natural regards. This man regards this man, and commends this. This man applauds a child, chooseth a wife, respects men for these things, and for these only. But now spiritual things, heavenly endowments, these things commend a man; they make the man in truth, they are the whole man, as in Eccles. xii. 13. You know that Christ saith, when he comes to determine the question between two sisters,

‘Martha, Martha, Mary hath chosen the better part,’ Luke x. 42. And why the better part She hath chosen that which ‘shall not be taken from her.’ So he makes the best choice then, that prefers those things that are most durable, those things that will last, those things that death cannot kill, those things that sickness cannot make sick, those things that weakness cannot weaken, that no outward thing can deprive us of, those supernatural, spiritual, heavenly graces. A wise man prefers these before all natural parts whatsoever. That is the second thing.

Doct. 3. There is a third thing that we should have spoken to, and that is this, that not only natural parts, but natural comforts and delights, wear away.

So Barzillai tells us, he takes no comfort in that he sees, in that he tasted, in that he heard. All matter of delights in nature were taken from him. So that natural delights and comforts they wear out, that as it is said of Sarah, ‘it was not with her after the former manner;’ so we may say of all natural delights and comforts, in time it will be with the eye, it will be with the ear, it will be with the taste, that nature will be so, that it will not be with them after the manner of the eye, after the manner of the taste, after the manner of the ear; they shall be as if a man had no eyes, as if he had no taste, as if he had no hearing at all. This we might show in many instances, but this shall suffice, because we would pass to the grounds; and the reason it is clear. ‘Reason 1. First, All natural objects from whence natural delights and contentments arise, they fail in time.

Reason 2. Secondly, The natural senses and means whereby men apprehend these, they wax dim, and slow, and heavy, and so they perform their actions and their functions with tediousness, because they do it not with alacrity, therefore it is not done with delight.

Reason 3. Further, again, because these very things in themselves in time will work a satiety of all natural delights, a man shall be filled with them, not only with the world, but with the lusts of the world. The desire of earthly things will vanish too, 1 John ii. 16, 17. So the eye is never satisfied with seeing, or the ear with hearing; these things cannot quiet the appetite, they cannot fill the mouth of the desire, these things cannot give contentment. All natural things are so short and finite, that in time they wear out, that a man shall be dulled and tired with them.

Use. The use we should make of this should have been thus much: first of all it serves to teach us this lesson, that therefore we should not rest, we

should not lean too much upon natural comforts and delights, trust not to natural cheerfulness, to natural courage, as if these would bear us through all perils, and dangers, and fears, and as if these would carry us through all griefs and heart-breakings. No; nature is a little finite thing; it hath its latitude and its extent as a bow hath, which, drawn beyond the compass, breaks in pieces; or as an instrument, the string of an instrument, strain it to an higher pitch, it snaps asunder; so it is with nature too, draw it beyond the pitch, it breaks. You cannot lay much upon the back of nature, but it crusheth it, and breaks it, it falls asunder; and therefore rest not too much in natural parts, for wit and cheerfulness, all these shall fail in time.

Obj. Ay, but nature is propped up with art.

Ans. It may be so for a time, but that is patchery. It may be for a time. If natural delights fail, much more will artificial; if true fire cannot warm a man, and give him relief, painted fire cannot do it. But so it is that natural and artificial things fail in time. Let a man's eye be made of glass in spectacles, and that which is made of flesh as the natural eye, both the natural and artificial eyes, both turn to dust at length. Let a man have a leg, a crutch of wood, or a leg of flesh, as the natural leg, yet both come to dust and ashes in time. All natural and artificial things decay at the last.

Obj. Ay, but carnal delights will help a man.

Ans. Least of all: if wine will not comfort a man, poison will not. Now all carnal pleasures and delights are poison. Where shall we go then for comfort and delight? Yet above all the creatures, there be joys I confess to be had, that will drink up all tears, all sorrows; there be comforts to be had, that will carry a man over all discouragements and grievances; there be everlasting joys, unutterable comforts, inconceivable hopes, and peace of conscience, that will carry a man through sickness, and through pain, and through poverty and shame, through death and all, and win never give him over; a peace that will be with a man in his bed, that will run with him when he flies before the enemy; a peace that will follow him to his grave, and beyond the grave; a peace that will live with him when he dies, that will follow him to the throne and tribunal of Christ, and will set a crown of glory and grace upon him at the last. These joys and comforts be to be had. Oh make out for them, my brethren; seek the joys that are spiritual, seek the comforts of the Scriptures, rejoice in this, 'that your names are written in heaven,' Luke x. 20; rejoice in this, that God is your Father; rejoice that Christ dwells in you; rejoice that heaven is yours, that Christ is yours, that God is yours, that the

promises and the covenant is yours; and these be the joys that no man can take from you, that nothing can take from you. These will make you rejoice in sorrow, these will make you live in death. As I said before, labour for these that may carry you over all troubles, and miseries, and terrors whatsoever. That is another point. There are divers others I was thinking to have said something to, for I intended no more but only to give you some general heads, some words of instruction in general out of this large text; but I know not how the time hath overslipped us in speaking this little that we have; and therefore we will go no further at this time.

## Discouragement's Recovery

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.—Ps. XLIII. 5.*

This psalm was penned by David, which shows the passions of his soul; for God's children know the estate of their own souls for the strengthening of their trust and bettering their obedience. Now this is the difference between psalms and other places of Scripture. Other scriptures speak mostly from God to us; but in the Psalms, this holy man doth speak mostly to God and his own soul; so that this psalm is an expostulation of David with his own soul in a troubled estate, when being banished from the house of God, he expostulates the matter with his soul: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' The words contain, 1, David's perplexed estate; and, 2, His recovery out of it.

His perplexity is laid down in these words: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' &c. His recovery out of it is first by questioning with himself: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' and then by a charge laid upon his soul: 'Trust in God;' and this trust is amplified from the matter, for what his soul should trust in God: 'I shall yet praise him, and give him thanks that is, I shall be delivered, for which delivery my heart will be enlarged to give him thanks. Because this is my God, my salvation, and my help, there is the ground of my faith and trust.

1. For the first, which is his perplexity, consider the way, how he comes to be thus perplexed.

(1.) He was in great troubles and afflictions. So that it is seen, God suffers his children to fall into extremities, many and long and great afflictions and troubles, ere deliverance come. They are most sensible of spiritual crosses by reason of the life of grace that is in them; and therefore it is that these do cast them down more than all other things. The want of spiritual means makes them thirst more than any want else; yea, than the hart which brayeth after rivers of water, Ps. xlii. 1. Spiritual wants grieve much, spiritual thirst is strong, and the life of grace must be kept. Now to want the means which must do it, this toucheth him more than all the rest.

A soul that is lively in grace cannot endure to live under small means of salvation, much less to endure blasphemous reproaches. Therefore such persons who can content themselves with small or any means, with small comforts, without labouring and striving after more sweet and near communion with God, they have cause to fear their own estates. A child, so soon as it is born, if it be not still-born, cries and seeks for the breast, which puts it out of all question there is life in it, though never so weak. So the life of grace begun in us is known by our spiritual appetites and desire after the means of grace.

(2.) The second thing that troubled this holy man, was the blasphemous words of wicked men. Therefore if we would try our state to be good, see how we take to heart everything that is done against religion. Can a child be patient when he sees his father abused? When a man sees the gospel of God trodden down, for a man now to be quiet, that shows his heart is dead. It is better to rage than to be quiet in such a case; for that shows life, though with much distemper. God will set light by his salvation that sets light by his honour. The enemy said, 'Where is now thy God?' Ps. xlii. 10. This went to David's heart. What doth the enemy say now at this day? Where is now your God? your reformed religion? your Christ? where is your God? Well, they that are not affected with this are in an evil and in a dangerous state, let them judge of themselves what they will. God's children are sensible of such things; they are men, and not stones, flesh, and not iron. Therefore it is no wonder that -they are so sensible of our times, and take them to heart as they do; forget their wounds, and mingle their passion with their afflictions, that so perplexity their minds. Thus David was troubled, and over-troubled and grieved, and that too much, for he checks himself: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' Indeed, by nature we have no bounds in our affections; if we joy, we joy too much; if we sorrow, we sorrow too much. Grace only doth qualify all our actions and affections, and where there is no grace there is either all joy or all sorrow. Nabal, when he did begin to joy, he joys over much, and when he did begin to sorrow, he exceeded in that, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37. A wicked man hath nothing to uphold him, and therefore he is over head and ears in all that he doth. The child of God is kept upright by that which is wrought in his heart, whereby his sorrow and joy is mixed together.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The point is this, Obs. 1. That it is a sin for a child of God to be too much discouraged and cast down in afflictions, nay, I add more, though the cause be good, as it was here, to be

banished and want means of comfort; in this case, to be too much cast down and disquieted, it argues a distempered heart.

Quest. But how shall we know when a man is cast down too much? for it is a sinful thing in a man not to be sensible of that which lies upon him.

Ans. The soul is cast down too much, to name this one for many, when our mourning and sorrow brings us not to God, but drives us from God. Grief, sorrow, and humility are good; but discouragement is evil. That which brings a man from delighting, from trusting in God, which hinders a man in his calling, either as he is a Christian, or in his particular calling, by this he may know he is in excess. As the children of Israel were in great trouble under Pharaoh, and heeded not therefore unto that which Moses spake unto them for anguish of spirit, *Exod. vi. 9.* The husband and wife must not live at odds, lest their prayers be interrupted, *1 Pet. iii. 7.* No; though the cause be never so good, they must not be over much troubled; therefore, when Christians exceed in anything, they do it not as Christians, but as they are men overcome of their passions.

Quest. What is the ground why casting down and disquieting is a sin?

Ans. 1. Because it doth turn to the reproach of religion and God himself, as if there were not strength in the promises of God to uphold a soul in the time of trouble and disquietment.

2. Because their so sinking under afflictions never yields any good fruit. Yea, the devil himself, in such a case, will say, God neglecteth thee,—thus joining his temptations with thy corruptions,—then where art thou? And, therefore, I beseech you consider. What! Shall a father neglect his own children so much that they should be cast down, whereas he only knoweth what they want, and hath in his own power to give all that is good?

3. Because it hinders us both from and in holy duties. For where the soul is cast down, either we do not perform holy duties at all, or otherwise they are done but weakly; for as the troubled eye cannot see well, so the troubled soul cannot do good, nor receive good. It is the quiet soul that both receiveth and doeth good as it ought to be done; for quietness is the stay of the soul, either to do or receive. Holy things are not accepted of God by the stuff of them, but by the willingness and cheerfulness in doing of them. Thus, when the soul is too much cast down, God accepts not so well of the actions, because they want life. Then it plainly appears, to be a sin thus to be

cast down. Therefore, holy David takes up his soul and chides himself downright: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so unquiet within me?' If this be so, that it is a sin to be too much cast down, what shall we say of those who disquiet themselves in and for a vain shadow? Ps. xxxix. 6. They trouble themselves so much about vain things that they are discouraged from doing good. The holy man doth in this case raise up his soul; for the Spirit of God saith, 'This is the way, walk in it; and this you should have done, but herein you fail, and here is your wants,' Isa. xxx. 21. Thus I thought good to enlarge this point.

Obs. 2. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The word in the original shows it is the nature of sorrow Jo bring the soul downwards. Sorrow and sin agree both in this, for as they come from below, so they bring the soul downwards to the earth. The devil, ever since he was cast down himself, labours to cast all down. His voice is, Down, down to the ground. He would have no man stay in going down in afflictions or desperation. The new creature created by the Spirit of God is clean contrary; for that is all upward. Where the hope is, there the soul loves to be in thought and meditation, and all that it doth or can do is to go upwards.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted?' Here are two words used, 'Why art thou cast down? why art thou so disquieted?'

Quest. What is meant by casting down? and why doth he find fault with himself for it?

Ans. Because it breeds disquieting. I say casting down, when it is not with humility, but discouragement, breeds disquieting; but when it is joined with humility, that raiseth the soul to see mercy, in which sort, if God doth cast us down to humble us, it is to raise us up with so much the sweeter consolation; for so much as the soul is cast down by God, so much it is raised up by God. But the soul that is cast down by Satan rests not in God, but is troubled, as Ps. xxxvii. 1, it is said, 'Fret not thyself,' &c.

So a man may know when his soul murmurs, and his fretting is against God himself, or against the instrument of the sinful discouragement of his soul, being over much cast down. Here is no true humiliation, but abundance of corruption, which brings vexation and disquietments. But I hasten to that which I have further to deliver, 'Why art thou so cast down, O my soul?' He doth check himself because he was thus cast down and disquieted. Here,

then, you see, 1, David's perplexity; and, 2, the particular branches thereof, casting down, and disquieting.

Quest. What was the reason why he was thus cast down?

Ans. The reason is in the words,—a reason from the contrary. He reproves his soul for being thus cast down; he doth check and command himself to wait and trust in God; he checks his soul; which shows he had no good reason why he was thus cast down. Wherefore should he ask this reason, but that there was no just cause, but sophistical reasoning, which bred this? As Jonah iv. 9, God demands, 'Dost thou well to be angry, Jonah?' As if he had said, There is no good cause. You may see, by this manner of asking, the cause was ignorance and false reasoning, false trust and want of trusting in God. There is no discouragement in any affliction or trouble whatsoever, but it is for the want of knowing the ground wherefore God doth it. First, sometimes for the exercise of our graces, as well as for our sins. Again, forgetfulness of God's dealing, as Heb. xii. 5, 'You have forgotten the consolation which speaks unto you,' &c. And sometimes we are troubled in affliction because we do not examine the cause rightly with our own souls. Many go to the highest step of the ladder, to their election, before they come to the fruits thereof, Rom. v. 1. I beseech you, let us be more wise. There be some people who do trouble themselves by seeking their comfort only in their sanctification, when it should be looked for in their justification; and some others who trouble themselves about the issue of things for time to come, when we are commanded not to care for to-morrow, Mat. vi. 84, and in the mean time neglect their duty in using lawful means, and trusting in God. Again, want of trusting in God; for when we trust not in God, then we have false trusts in the creature, or in something else. Then this follows: vanity will bring vexation of spirit.

Thus, when vanity goes before, there will come vexation after. Therefore when men do set upon doing any good, or suffering for good, by their own strength, and trust not in God for a constant supply, this moves God to take away his support, and then they fall most shamefully. Nay, when a man trusts in himself, and in his present grace, more than in God, he shall be sure to fall; for we must trust in God for time to come for fresh grace, and pray that God would renew his graces, to strengthen us in every trouble and affliction. The cause why God's children do so miscarry in times of trouble is, because they trouble themselves, and do not trust in God for a new supply of grace. We cannot perform new duties, and undergo new sufferings, with old graces.

So now you have some causes why men are thus cast down and disquieted; false trust, or else not trusting in God, as if the prophet had said, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The reason is this, thou dost not trust in God as thou shouldst do; therefore it was our Saviour reproved Peter when he feared, saying, 'O thou of little faith,' Mat. xvi. 31. It was not the greatness of the waves, but the weakness of his faith, which made him faint. In truth, the cause of our trouble and disquieting is either for want of faith or want in faith, whereby we cannot rely upon God in our troubles and afflictions; for the soul being weak of itself, it hath need of something to rely upon, as a weak plant had need of a supporter. Now that which gives answerable strength is our relying upon God. When we omit this, then comes disquieting and troubles in our souls. And so I end the point of perplexity, and come to the charge that he lays upon his own soul, saying, Trust in God. His remedy is double.

1. First, A reflecting action upon his soul, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul?'

2. Secondly, A command laid upon his soul, 'Trust in God.'

Before I come to particulars, observe in general this point, Doct. 8. That God's children, in their greatest troubles, recover themselves. For here was the trouble, and his disquietness for the trouble. He was in temptation, afflictions, and discouragements. Here was Satan tempting, and the corruptions boiling, and God withdrawing the sense of his love, leaving David for a while to himself; and yet, notwithstanding, at length he breaks through all, and expostulates the matter with himself. So God's children, when they are in troubles, though never so great, they can recover and comfort themselves. And in truth the holy Scripture shows this; for this trusting and relying on God in extremities is a difference betwixt the child of God and an hypocrite. A little cross will not try men's graces so as great ones. As in Saul, it brings him to great trouble, and then he goes to the witch, and then see what becomes of him, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. But the child of God, in his greatest troubles, he having the Spirit of God to strengthen him, he rests upon God, as is showed, Rom. viii. 26. In the greatest troubles, the Spirit doth help our infirmities; and in the lowest depth of trouble, there is the Spirit of comfort. Now this Spirit works faith, that enables us to send out strong prayers and cries, which cry loud in God's ear. The child of God can mourn, and cry, and chatter, striving against deadness, and against his infidelity, and strives for comfort as for life; so, when they are at the lowest,

they can recover themselves. God's children, at the beginning of trouble, do labour to recover themselves presently: 'Why art thou disquieted within me?' He stops himself at the first. Jonah was to blame this way; he did feed and flatter himself, and would not stand to expostulate with his heart, Jonah iv. 9; but David doth not so here, but saith, 'Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted?' There is a contrary spirit in them who are not God's children; for they do feed upon mischief, wickedness, and dark conceits, according to which apprehensions they make their conclusions; but God's children, knowing their own estates, they reprove themselves, and say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou so troubled?'

Doct. 4. Again, see the excellent estate of the soul. It is an atheistical conceit that the soul doth arise out of the temper of the body; for that cannot be, because we see the soul doth cross our nature, and cross itself; much more the body. How can this be, if it rise of the body, that it should cross itself, and the very inclinations to evil? For though the soul be ready to run to excess of melancholy and excess of joy, yet there is resistance in the soul, and striving against these things in some measure; for in every Christian there are three men.

(1.) First, The natural man, the good creature of God, having understanding, will, and affection.

(2.) There is nature under the 'spirit of bondage,' which we call 'the old man.'

(3.) There is the 'new man,' framed by the 'Spirit of God,' which doth strive against the corruption of his nature; for nature cannot but be troubled in afflictions. This we see in Adam in his innocency; yea, in Christ himself. Grace doth stay us in this state, then much more doth grace stop nature. In the excellent state of the soul, having the Spirit of God in him, whereby a man is raised up above himself, and humbles himself, this is the excellency of the spiritual nature of the soul, and especially the excellency of the Spirit in the soul. The soul can check the body, and the Spirit can check both soul and body. Well, this I speak but in a word; for I will not stand upon it, but only to show the nature of the soul.

Quest. It may be asked, How shall we know in these things, when anything comes from the Spirit, and not from the natural soul? for here is nature, flesh, and the Spirit.

Ans. I answer, when there is the Spirit in a man, that doth cross the natural constitution of the body, and checks the constitution of his soul being in affliction and discouraged in it, that thereby a man recovers himself again.

Afflictions of the soul are the greatest and worst of all, yet in this estate his soul doth carry him upward; and therefore there must be something in him that is better and above nature, which enables him to check and reprove himself. Now, this must needs be an excellent thing. Why? Because this is the Spirit of God, which enables us to strive, as Job did:

‘Though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee,’ Job xiii. 15. And our blessed Saviour in his depths of afflictions cries, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Mat. xxvii. 46. The sense of his present state caused him to cry out as if God had forsaken him; yet herein the blessed Spirit doth raise him up, for he cries, ‘My God.’ Thus we see when there is a crossing of ourselves in that state which we are in, this is a sign that it comes from the Spirit of God, and not from nature: ‘Why art thou so cast down, why art thou so disquieted within me, O my soul?’

Another thing that I observe is this, Doct. 5. That the prerogative of a Christian in these disquietings, and in all estates, is, he hath God and himself to speak unto, whereby he can remove solitariness. Put him into a dungeon, yet he may speak unto God there, and speak unto himself.

This is an excellent state. He who hath laid up store of grace beforehand, he can reprove and cross himself, and in his depths cry out unto God. Therefore take a Christian in the worst estate of all others, yet he can improve his estate to the best before God, whereby, even then, he hath an happy communion with God. This is a comfort to a Christian, when he hath nothing to comfort himself withal; as David here had neither goods, nor comforts, nor prophets, nor the tabernacle with him, yet he had his good God to go unto, who was the only thing he had; and when he speaks comfortably unto him, then David speaks as comfortably unto his soul: ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul?’

Let all the tyrants in the world do their worst to a Christian, if God be with him, he is cheerful still. This is plentifully seen in David. He was vexed outwardly, punished, persecuted, and banished from God’s house, yet he goes unto God; and though he were vexed in his soul in particular, yet he cries out, ‘Why art thou so vexed within me, why art thou so unquiet?’

The point from hence is this, Doct. 6. The best way to establish the soul is to deal with our own souls, and to begin with them first, and proceed in a judicial manner, as this holy prophet of the Lord did. When we are in any troubles and afflictions, do not go to the trouble, but go to the soul; for if the soul be not set in right frame, and quieted, we cannot endure anything. But if we can set and frame ourselves to God, all the tyrants in the world, and all the devils in hell, cannot hurt us. The devil comes to our Saviour, but he could do him no harm, because there was nothing within him for him to fasten upon, John xvi. 30. Therefore this is the way, if we be in trouble, let all other things go, and lay the foundation of our quiet in God, and deal with our own souls. And the way to do this is to cite our souls before ourselves, hereby to make ourselves offenders and judges, teachers and scholars, as the prophet doth here: 'Why art thou so unquiet, O my soul?' God hath erected a court in a man, that he may cite and condemn himself. God hath set up this court, and given us this liberty, to prevent another examination, and condemnation for ever in the world to come. Therefore, 1 Cor. xi. 31, it is said, 'If we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord.' The way to do this is to call our own souls to a reckoning. This is to be strongly endeavoured for many reasons, that I will not stand upon, but only name some one of them.

As, namely, because it is an hard thing. For there is an affection of nature, and an affection of rebellion, and strong motions, that keep the soul in such a thralldom that it cannot fully know itself; and for a man to know all things, and not to know himself, what a miserable thing is it! What! to look altogether abroad, and never to look at home, that is a misery of all miseries. Well, if ever we would be saved, we must do this. If we would begin with ourselves, we might put the devil and our tormenting conscience out of office; for the time will come when it will be objected, This and that have been our sins, and this is the state of your souls, will Satan say. Well, says the soul thus prepared, 'I know all this, I have accused myself before God for this, and I have made my peace with God.' But when we go on in sin, and leave all to God, then comes the devil and accuseth us, and our consciences take God's part; thus we go down to hell for ever. Therefore take warning of this betimes, and call thy soul to a reckoning. But I will not spend too much time to enforce this holy action. The way to bring our souls to this is, to furnish them with holy thoughts, to sanctify and season our judgments with holy touches, to know what is good, and to bring our souls to love and delight in it. But if we have not a judicature in us, we can never do this, for we must not go blindly about this work, but know what evil we have

committed, and which is done against this law, and which against that commandment. Thus a Christian must and will examine himself. But an ignorant person goes and never lays up anything in his soul; and therefore though he hath power in his soul to do this, yet he doth it not, because he is an ignorant and blind man.

Use. Well, let this serve to stir us up to be careful in this holy duty.

Obj. But the hypocrite will say, Tush, this is hid, and the world sees it not; for me to take pains to work upon my soul, the world cannot see it; what profit comes by this course? But the child of God is most busy and carefully employed about that which carries with itself least applause with the world. This is always a sure sign of a good heart; for the best work of the new creature is within us, that the world cannot see. And therefore if ye will have sound assurance of salvation, then call often in question the state of your own souls, and labour to get this disposition, and inquire of your souls what is the reason. Do you well to be angry? What! thus angry? At this time, and upon this occasion? And, what! do you well to be merry thus now? If we could do this, what an excellent state of soul should we live in! It would clear religion of many scandals. For from whence comes all these scandalous actions we fall into, but because we do not check ourselves in evil things before they break out into our lives? The soul many times doth rise in rebellious motions, and troubles the Spirit of God in us; but what an honour is it to a Christian to be free from scandal in this life, and to suppress evil in the beginning! There is nothing that is evil but it is first in thought, then in affection, and then in action; therefore if we could think when we are tempted to any evil, this thing will be a scandal, it will be open in the mouths of wicked men, it will grieve the true-hearted servants of God, oh how glorious might the servants of God shine in these woeful, dark, and sinful days! Well, I beseech you, do but consider, and bring the practice and carriage of most men and women to this rule that I have laid down, and what a pitiful estate shall we find the most to be in, who would seem to be religious, whose lives declare this before men.

Do but ask a covetous man why he is so extremely carried away with the things of this world; he answers by and by, Oh, he hath a great charge, and the times are hard; and in the mean time he neglects wholly the making sure of his own salvation. Nay, come to God's children themselves, who do too much hunt after the things of this world, I say to them, and sometimes ye shall hear the same answer, But what, have not ye a Father to provide for

you? and this your Father, hath he not all things at his own disposing—having promised, you shall want nothing that is good—even he who is an infinite, loving, and merciful Father? I beseech you, consider what can we want, if we have faith to rely upon God? And then consider how vile a thing covetousness is; what for an old man now to be worldly, when one foot is in the grave! So for a blasphemer to provoke the majesty of God, there is no reason to be given for it. For sin is an unreasonable thing, and it cannot endure this question, What reason is there for this and that? Therefore the Scripture calls all wicked and ungodly men unreasonable men and fools, because they cannot give a good reason for anything they do. And therefore when they are in hell they may well say, We fools thought this and said thus. I beseech you, consider what reason is there that a man should sell God's favour, and the assurance of his salvation, for a wicked action, and for his lust, and for a little honour; I say, consider what you shall get, and what you shall lose, even the hope of heaven, for the attaining at the best but of perishing things, and many times miss of them also.

These things considered, the Spirit of God doth well to call us to question with ourselves, to give a reason for that we do, and then to censure ourselves, as David in another place did: 'How foolish was I, like a beast,' Ps. lxxiii. 22. And so, I beseech you, when you are tempted to any sin, then say, What a base thought is this! what base thing is this! is this according to my profession and religion? If we would but thus examine and question ourselves, accuse and condemn ourselves, oh how happy and blessed creatures might we be! And thus much for the first remedy.

Now come we to the second: 'Trust in God, wait on God.' Here is, 1, An action; 2, a fit object.

The action, trust; the object, God: 'wait on God,' for God is the only prop and rock whereon we may rest safe in time of danger. Waiting on God implies his meeting our souls, before we can have any comfort from him. Therefore all our care should be to bring God and our souls together. This trusting in God, and waiting for God, is an especial means to uphold us in our greatest troubles. This is the state of the new covenant; for we have fallen in Adam by our infidelity, and must now have faith to recover ourselves, which is the applying grace that doth help us up, and enable us to wait on God and his truth, for they are all one. As a man of credit and his word are all one, so is our trusting in God and his trust and promises. But because I have spoken of this trusting in God out of another place of

Scripture, I will be brief in it; only I will now add something to help us on in this point, wherein our souls shall find so much comfort.

Doct. 7. 'Trust in God.' This trusting in God is the way to quiet our souls, and to stay the same in every estate. The reason is, because God hath sanctified this holy grace to this end. This is the grace of the new covenant, the grace of all graces, which stays the soul in all disquietings whatsoever.

The first thing that disquiets the soul is sin. Now God by his Spirit and word doth give us the pardon thereof. Therefore trust in God for this, and for life everlasting, and then trust in God in this life for whatsoever thou dost want. Know that the same love of God that brings thee to everlasting life will give thee daily bread. Therefore trust in God for provision, for protection, and for whatsoever thou dost want. For the first thing that a troubled soul doth look unto is for mercy, salvation, and comfort; and therefore in every troubled estate we have one thing or other still from God to comfort us. I say, if we be in trouble, there is answerable comfort given us of God. Are we sick? He is our health. Are we weak? He is our strength. Are we dead? He is our life. So that it is not possible that we should be in any state, though never so miserable, but there is something in God to comfort us. Therefore is God called in Scripture a rock, a castle, a shield. A rock to build upon, a castle wherein we may be safe, a shield to defend us in all times of danger, showing that if such helps sometimes succour us, how much more can God. I beseech you, consider God is our 'exceeding great reward,' Gen. xv. 1. God is bread to strengthen us, and a Spirit of all comfort; and indeed there is but a beam in the creature, the strength is in God. And if all these were taken away, yet God is able to do much more, and to raise up the soul. What! can a castle or a shield keep a man safe in the time of danger? how much more can God! I beseech you, consider how safe was Noah when the ark was afloat, Gen. vii. 16. And why? Because God shut the door upon him and kept him there. Thus you see there is something in God for every malady, and something in the world for every trouble; then 'trust in God.' This is the way to quiet our souls. For as heavy bodies do rest when they come to the centre of the earth, so the soul, for joy, and for care, for trust, doth find rest in God when it comes to him and makes him her stay. The needle rests when it comes to the North Pole, and the ark rested when it came to the mount Ararat, Gen. viii. 4, so the soul rests safe when it comes to God, and till that time, it moves as the ark upon the waters. Therefore our blessed Saviour saith in Matthew, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and you shall find rest

in your souls,' Mat. xi. 28. This holy man would have rest, therefore he saith, 'O my soul, wait upon God.'

Quest. Well, in a word, how shall we know if we have this rest and trust in God or no?

Ans. By this which I have said; for if we trust in God, then we will be quiet, for faith hath a quieting power. Therefore, if thou canst stay thyself, and rest upon God for provision, for protection, for all that helps thee from grace to glory, thou art safe. Again, faith hath a comforting power. There is a distinction between alchemy gold and true gold; for that which is true will comfort the heart, but counterfeit faith, like alchemy gold, will not strengthen the heart. Therefore, if thou dost find thy faith strengthen thee, to cast thyself upon God and his mercy in Jesus Christ, then there is true faith. The garment of Christ, when it was but touched, there was virtue went out of it, so that the woman found strength therein to quench her bloody issue, Mat. ix. 21, xvi. 36; and dost not thou find strength from God to quench the bloody issue of sin in thy soul? Then hast thou cause to doubt of the truth of thy faith; for precious faith brings virtue from the root. As the tree doth draw strength from the earth to feed the body and the boughs, whereby it is fruitful, so faith brings virtue from Christ and his promises, which strengthens the soul.

I beseech you consider, if you have your soul strengthened by the promises of God, and the nature of God, it is a sign you have true faith. What a shame is it for Christians, when they have an infinite God for their God, who hath made abundant promises, and have a rich Saviour, and yet they live so unquiet and discontented, and sometimes for earthly trash, as if there were no Father for them in heaven, nor providence upon earth! Now, at this time, which are times of trouble abroad, wherein our faith should be exercised, how are the hearts of many cast down, as though God had cast away his care over his church! Consider, I pray you, doth an husband cast away his care over his wife in time of danger when she is wronged? No; but is the more inflamed to be revenged: much more will God arise to maintain his own cause, but we must wait the time, knowing 'they that believe make not haste,' as it is Isa. xxviii. 16.

Quest. But what is the matter for which we are to trust God? 'I shall yet praise him.'

Ans. His meaning is, though he be for the present in great afflictions, yet he shall be delivered. See the language of Canaan. The holy people of God, if they receive any deliverance, they give God the praise and glory, for this is all that God looks for; if thou art in any affliction, and God doth deliver thee, then to give him all the glory and the praise. So this holy man saith to his soul, 'God will deliver thee;' then saith the soul, 'I will praise him;' so he gives the delivered soul both matter and affection to praise his name. I beseech you, consider here when the soul hath nothing in itself to trust in, how it doth sustain itself by looking towards God. Christ himself, when he was in his extremities, looks upward to his Father in heaven, Mat. xxvi. 39, so this holy man comforts himself he shall be delivered. Thus he lays sound grounds in God, for there is no loose sands there. Therefore the ship of his soul rides safe. He trusts God for the present and for the time to come; as though he should say, 'Though I am now in great affliction, yet it shall be better with me, howsoever it be now.'

Use. Let us raise this comfort to ourselves, trust in God. What if we should live here all the days of our life in this troubled estate that we are now in! 'Yet wait upon God, O my soul, for I shall yet praise him.'

We live here in many troubles and afflictions, and we sit down by the rivers of Babel. Well! what if we die in this affliction? Yet I shall have glory with Christ. Thus, I beseech you, extend this comfort to the whole church of God; put the case the church be in trouble, what hath the church to do? 'To wait on God;' because it shall have delivery, and all the true church shall praise God upon their delivery. God will deliver his church, and in the mean time preserve and provide for it. It is as dear unto him as the apple of his eye, it is his jewel, his vine which himself hath planted; and therefore let us comfort ourselves with this. What though we are now cast down and in heaviness for the church of God abroad; yet God will redeem Israel from all his iniquities, much more out of all his troubles and afflictions, Ps. cxxx. 8. The church must be delivered, and Babel must fall. Nay, the Holy Ghost saith it is fallen, Rev. xviii. 2, to show the certainty of it, for God will do it. The Red Sea and Jordan must return, and the church must sing praises for her delivery; and thus we do daily and continually wait upon God for the performance hereof.

Quest. What ground hath this holy man for this waiting?

Ans. He is my present help and my God, he is my salvation and my God. The word is 'salvations:' he hath more salvations than one. Therefore

though we be troubled with poverty, shame, or any other affliction, yet God is salvations and helps. Consider this, if you are in trouble of conscience for sin, or Satan condemns you, then say that 'God is salvation;' if you are in trouble, God is deliverance; if you are persecuted by any wicked malicious enemies, God is a castle: as Ps. xviii. 2, 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, and my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.' 'Who is a rock, save our God? I will call upon the name of the Lord, so shall I be delivered from all mine enemies.' Thus you see how David after all his victories describes God to be his God, and his salvation both for body and soul, for the present and for the time to come, with means, without means, and against all means. What a comfort is this! He can command salvation, he can command the creature to save, and the devil himself to be a means to save us; and if there be no means for thee to see, yet he can create means to do it in an instant. Thus God is our help; and what a ground of comfort is this! Therefore I beseech you be not discouraged. Mourn we may like doves, but not roar like beasts in our afflictions; when we have humbled ourselves enough, then must we raise up our souls from our grief to another object. For a Christian must look to divers objects: look to the trouble with one eye, and to God with the other, and know him to be his salvation. Then, let the trouble be what it will be, if God be thy deliverer; it is no matter what the disease be, if God be thy physician. But many times we do betray ourselves into the hands of the devil for want of thinking of these things.

1. God is the God of his children. 2. He is so constantly.

This is the ground of all comforts, God is my God, and God is our God. First, because he doth choose us, and call us in his due time, and then makes a covenant with us to be our God, and then he knows us, loves us, and preserves us, and so he is our God; because they whom God doth choose, he knows them for his own, and stirs up answerable affections, that we may take God, and know God to be ours. For there must be an action on God's part in taking and choosing us, and an action of soul in us to choose God again. If God say to our souls, I will be thy God, then our souls should answer God, 'Thou art the strength of my salvation.' First, God doth love us, then know us, and then we reflect God's love upon God. Again, he knows us, and we know him again; he delights in us, and we delight in him. The Scriptures are full of speeches in this kind. There is a reciprocal natural passage between God and the soul; for in covenant there must be consent on both sides, and then we make him our God when we choose him before all creatures both in

heaven and in earth. Then we have familiarity with him, love him, and trust in him in all our necessities.

Thus we see how God is said to be our God. First, God is ours by election, adoption, by sanctification and redemption. God is our God, by dwelling with us; and this propriety, 'My God,' is the first of all; for when God saith, 'Thou art mine,' the soul saith, 'Thou art mine, and shalt be mine. This is an everlasting covenant of salvation: God doth endure world without end. Our salvation is according to the nature of God, from everlasting to everlasting, from election to glory. Thus God is the God of Abraham from everlasting to everlasting; he is the God of Abraham's body, now his soul is in heaven, and his body is in the dust, Mat. xxii. 32. Abraham hath a being in his love. And so we have an everlasting propriety therein, God takes us for ever, marries us for ever, Hos. ii. 19. Therefore we must trust in God, and wait upon God, for he is our God and our salvation.

Use 1. I beseech you, give me a little leave to press this; for certainly there is more comfort in this word 'My God,' than in all the words of the world; for what is God to me if he be not my God, and so make me his? For this same propriety of comfort is more than all the comforts in the world. We account a little patch of ground, or corner of an house of our own, more than all the city and town where we live. This comforts a man, when he can say, This is mine. As a man that hath a wife, it may be, she is not of the best, or the richest, or the fairest, yet she comforts him more, and he takes more content in her, than in all the women in the world, because she is his wife; so if a man can say, 'O my God,' he needs not say any more, for it is more than if he could say, All the world is mine. If we have God we have all, and if we had a thousand worlds, all were nothing to this, if we cannot say 'God is my God.' Therefore, though the child of God may seem to be a poor man, yet he is the only rich man. Other men have the riches of this world, as a kind of usurpers, for they have not the highest right unto them. Worldly men are like unto bankrupts, who are taken to be rich men because they have a great deal of goods in their possession, but the true right belongs to others, and so they prove in the end to be worth nothing. I beseech you, consider what God's servants have said heretofore: 'God is my portion,' Lam. iii. 24. If God be our God, then he will supply all our wants, as it shall make for the best unto us. This is a great comfort to all Christians in what estate soever. God in dividing things, it may be, he hath given others honours, beauty, and riches, and parts of nature. Well! God falleth to thy lot. Let the worldlings, the lascivious and ambitious persons, make themselves merry with their portions

in this life, yet let the Christian, in what estate soever, glory in his portion, for God is his, and all things else. Though there be many changes in thyself, why shouldst thou be discouraged or disquieted in any state whatsoever? God is thine to do thee good.

Use 2. Again, Here is a ground of comfort against all losses whatsoever. The world, and worldly men, may strip us of these earthly things, vex our bodies, and restrain our liberties, and take away outward things from us; but this is our comfort, they cannot take our God from us, for this is an everlasting portion, my God, my help, my all-sufficiency. In truth, friends, means, and life itself may be taken away, yet God will never fail nor forsake us. We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow, and life is the longest thing we have, for we may out-live our riches and honours. But what then? Ps. xc. 1, 2, it is said, 'Thou art an everlasting habitation, from everlasting to everlasting,' and we dwell in the fear of God. We had a being in thy love, O Lord, before ever we were born, and when we are dead, we are in thy love still. What a comfort is this to cause us to rest in our God, and that for ever! But as for the wicked, it is not so with them; their voice is, The 'Philistines are upon me, and God hath forsaken me,' 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. This is a fearful speech, and is, or shall be, the voice of every wicked man ere long. Now they ruffle it out, and none so free from care and trouble as they; but where is their comfort when their consciences shall be awakened? Then their voice will be, Death and hell and all are upon me, and God hath forsaken me; what shall become of me and mine? But as for the children of God, let what will come upon them, yet God can command salvation, and he commands comfort to attend his people, for God is my God. I beseech you to enlarge these things in your own meditations, and do not disquiet yourselves, but believe in God for these things, and for your own happiness in heaven, and cast yourselves upon Christ for the pardon of sins in the first place; and then, 'trust in God,' and nothing in all the world that comes between you and heaven but God will remove it, and bring you safe thither; but, in this case, many doubts arise:

1. For perseverance.

Obj. I may fall away for time to come.

Ans. I answer, That God, that hath begun this good work in me, will finish it in his due time, Philip, i. 6.

Obj. Ay, but I am changeable.

Ans. It is true, but God is unchangeable; thou mayest be off and on, but God is not so, for the ground of his love is always alike. Therefore fear nothing for the present nor for the time to come.

Obj. Oh but I have a great charge, and these are hard and evil times.

Ans. God is thy God, and the God of thy seed, therefore labour to make this sure, that God is thy God, and in thus doing, thou providest for thyself and thy posterity; and when thou art dead and gone, then the living Father will be a God to thy posterity and children. Therefore I beseech you trust in God, wait upon him, and fear not the want of necessaries in this life. What foolish children are we, that think God will give us heaven when this life is gone, and yet we fear he will not give us such things as shall maintain this life, while we are here employed in his service! 'The heathen seek after all these things,' saith our Saviour, Mat. vi. 32; but 'it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke xii. 32.

Exhortation. Well, therefore, for provision and protection both in life and death, trust in God for all, and all shall be well with us; then wait upon God. I beseech you make one thing sure, that is, make God to be our God, by trusting in him, and walking worthy of him. And this one care will free you of all other cares. This one study is better than all other studies; for if we can make God our God, then we make all other things ours also. This requires more than ordinary of a Christian, to walk worthy of the Lord: 'Two cannot walk together if they be not agreed,' saith Solomon, therefore this requires great mortification of soul, and much holiness, to walk with God. This world knows not what this is, to walk with God in the ways of heaven, where there is nothing but holiness. Therefore we must exercise our communion with God, by praying to him, and by hearing of him, and thinking upon his word and presence, and abstaining from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We have an holy God, therefore we must labour for a good measure of holiness, if we will maintain communion with God. This should enforce us thus to stand for God and his truth, because he is our God. It is strange to see how men do not walk this way. They will part with anything, or do anything for their lust, but yet they will not endure to part with anything for God, and for the comfort of their souls. Well! Christ stood for us unto the death, and gained us life, when it could not be had otherwise; and are we too good to stand for a good cause; nay, to die for the maintenance of God's cause? What! shall not we stand for God? Yes; for he is an 'hiding-

place' to us; and if death come to us for this cause, he is life to us, and we have a being for ever in his love.

## The Saint's Happiness

*But it is good for me to draw near to God.*—Ps. LXXIII. 28.

This psalm is a psalm of Asaph, or of David, commended to Asaph, who was a seer and a singer. It represents one in a conflict afterward recovered, and in a triumphant conclusion. It begins abruptly, as if he had gained this truth: Say flesh and Satan what they can, yet this I am resolved of, I find God is yet good to Israel. Then he discovers what was the cause of this conflict. It was his weakness and doubt of God's promises in ver. 13, occasioned from the great prosperity that the wicked enjoyed, described from the 2d verse to the 13th. Then he sets down his recovery in the 17th verse. He went into the sanctuary, and saw what God meant to do with them at last. Then follows the accomplishment of the victory in the 23d verse. I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me up. Thou wilt guide me now and bring me to glory. Therefore there is none in heaven but thee. Though nature may be surprised, yet God is my help; and for the wicked, they shall perish; nay, thou hast destroyed them. Therefore 'it is good for me to draw nigh to God.'

Now from that which hath been laid open we may observe, Doct. First, That God's dearest children are exercised with sharp conflicts in the faith of principles, yea, of God's providence. This should comfort such as God suffers to cast forth mire and dirt of incredulity. It is the common case of God's dearest children, yea, of the prophets of God, David, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, and therefore we ought not to be dejected too much; and the rather because,—which also we may note in the second place,—

Doct. [Second,] God's children, though they be thus low, yet they shall recover, and after recovery comes a triumph. They may begin to slip a little, but still God's hand is under them, and his goodness ever lower than they can fall; and this should teach us to discern of our estates aright, and to expect such conflicts, yet to know that still God's Spirit will not be wanting to check and repress such thoughts in the fittest time. Contrarily it is a principle to wicked men to doubt of God's providence, and therefore they suffer such temptations to rule in them.

In the next place observe,

Doct. [Third,] The way for a Christian to recover his ground in time of temptation, is for him to enter into God's sanctuary, and not to give liberty to his thoughts to range in, considering the present estate that he is in; but look to former experiences, in himself, in others; see the promises and apply them; it shall go well with the righteous, but woe to the wicked, it shall not go well with them. This is to go into the sanctuary; and happy man thou art, and in high favour, whom God admitteth so near to him. The world will tell thee of corn, and wine, and oil, and how great and glorious men are here; but the sanctuary will shew thee they are set in slippery places. Carnal reason will tell thee God hath left the earth; he sees not, he governs not, all are out of order. But the sanctuary will shew thee all things are beautiful in their time, Eccles. iii. 11. Mark the end of the righteous, Ps. xxxiii. 37. See Joseph, once a prisoner, after lord of Egypt; Lazarus, once contemned and despised, after in Abraham's bosom; Christ himself, once a rebuke and scorn of all on the cross, but now triumphing on the right hand of God, far above all principalities and power,' Eph. i. 21. All God's ways are mercy and truth, though we seem never so much forsaken for the present. Again, from David's observing the state of wicked men,—it is said, he saw the prosperity of wicked men,—we may gather,

Doct. [Fourth,] Whether it be the eye of faith or the eye of sense, all serveth to bring us nearer to God. God represents to the outward view of his children the example of his justice on others, to draw his children nearer home; and it is one main reason why God suffers variety of conditions in men, that his children may gain experience from seeing their behaviour and by conversing with them.

Last of all, from the connection of this text with the former words, observe,

Doct. [Fifth,] That the course of the children of God is a course contrary to the stream of the world. 'They withdraw away from thee, and shall perish,' saith the prophet, but 'it is good for me to draw near as if he had said, Let others take what course they will, it matters not much, I will look to myself, 'it is good for me to draw near to God;' and the reason is, Reason 1. Because they are guided by the Spirit of God, which is contrary to the world, and the Spirit teacheth them to see, not after the opinions of the world that is their best friend, but God is my best friend, that will never forsake me. 'Many walk that are enemies to the cross of Christ, but our conversation is in heaven,' Philip, iii. 18. And then a Christian hath experience of the ways of God, and

by it he is every day settled in them; by it he sees what the world works in others, and how God is opposite to them, and thereby he is made more zealous; as in winter time the body is more hot within than in summer. And those that are well grounded grow more strong by opposition; and however they may sometimes stagger, yet their motion is constant.

Use. If we will know our estates, examine after what ride we lead our life, and what principles ice follow. If outward weights of the love of the world, self-love, or the like do move us, as clocks that go no longer than the weights hang on them, this shews that we are but actors of the life of a Christian, and that we are not naturally moved, that our nature is not changed, and that we are not made 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4; for then our motion would come from above: 'My life and flesh may fail, but thou, Lord, wilt never fail,' Ps. xl. 12. Therefore it is good for me to draw near to thee; which words proceeding from an experimental trial of David, of the goodness and happiness of this nearness to God, afford us this consideration, Doct. [Sixth,] That God's Spirit enableth his children by experience to justify wisdom. He suffers his children to meet with oppositions, that they may see they stand by an almighty power above their own, and above the power of their enemies. *Nihil tain certain est, quam quod post dubium certum est*, and therefore those that have felt the bitterness of their sins know how bitter it is; and those that have been overcome in temptations know their nature is weak, and those that have felt the unconstancy of the world, and the vanity of it, know it is a bitter thing to be far from God, and therefore they resolve, Hosea ii. 7, 'I will go to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now and as the prodigal, 'There is meat enough in my father's house, why then do I perish here with hunger?' Luke xv. 17; and therefore, if we will ever think to stand out resolutely in our courses against trials, we must labour for experience, and diligently observe God's dealings. It is experience that breedeth patience and hope. Experience of a truth seals a truth with a *probatum est*. And without it, the best and strongest judgments will in time of trial be' ready to be jostled out of the maintenance thereof, and great professors will be ashamed of their good courses.

But to come to the particulars. 'It is good;' that is, it puts in us a blessed quality and disposition. It makes a man to be like God himself; and, secondly, 'it is good,' that is, it is comfortable; for it is the happiness of the creature to be near the Creator; it is beneficial and helpful.

‘To draw near.’ How can a man but be near to God, seeing he filleth heaven and earth: ‘Whither shall I go from thy presence?’ Ps. cxxxix. 7. He is present always in power and providence in all places, but graciously present with some by his Spirit, supporting, comforting, strengthening the heart of a good man. As the soul is said to be tota in toto, in several parts by several faculties, so God, present he is to all, but in a diverse manner. Now we are said to be near to God in divers degrees: first, when our understanding is enlightened; intellectus est veritatis sponsa; and so the young man speaking discreetly in things concerning God, is said not to be far from the kingdom of God, Mark xii. 34. Secondly, in minding; when God is present to our minds, so as the soul is said to be present to that which it mindeth; contrarily it is said of the wicked, that ‘God is not in all their thoughts,’ Ps. x. 4. Thirdly, when the will upon the discovery of the understanding comes to choose the better part, and is drawn from that choice to cleave to him, as it was said of Jonathan’s heart, ‘it was knit to David,’ 1 Sam. xviii. 1. Fourthly, when our whole affections are carried to God, loving him as the chief good. Love is the first-born affection. That breeds desire of communion with God. Thence comes joy in him, so as the soul pants after God, ‘as the hart after the water springs,’ Ps. xlii. 1. Fifthly, and especially, when the soul is touched with the Spirit of God working faith, stirring up dependence, confidence, and trust on God. Hence ariseth sweet communion. The soul is never at rest till it rests on him. Then it is afraid to break with him or to displease him. But it groweth zealous and resolute, and hot in love, stiff in good cases; resolute against his enemies. And yet this is not all, for God will have also the outward man, so as the whole man must present itself before God in word, in sacraments; speak of him and to him with reverence, and yet with strength of affection mounting up in prayer, as in a fiery chariot; hear him speak to us; consulting with his oracles; fetching comforts against distresses, directions against maladies. Sixthly, and especially, we draw near to him when we praise him; for this is the work of the souls departed, and of the angels in heaven, that are continually near unto him. And thus much for the opening of the words. The prophet here saith, ‘It is good for me.’ How came he to know this? Why, he had found it by experience, and by it he was thoroughly convinced of it.

Doct. [Seventh,] Spiritual conviction is the ground, of practice; for naturally the will followeth the guidance of the understanding; and when it is convicted of the goodness of this or that thing, the will moveth toward it. Now there are four things that go to conviction: first, the understanding must be enlightened to see the truth of the thing, that there is such a thing,

and that it is no fancy; secondly, we must know it to be good, as the gospel is called the good word of God; thirdly, that it is good for me; and lastly, upon comparing all these together, it is the best for me of all, though other things seem to be good in their kind. A wicked man may be convinced that heaven and grace are good things; but his corrupted affections persuade him it is better to live in pleasure and lust; and when death comes then he may repent, for God is merciful. But a good man preferred drawing near to God above all, and therefore we should labour for this conviction of our spirits. For it is not enough to hear, read, discourse, pray, but we must get the Spirit to set to his seal to all upon our hearts; and this made Moses in sober balancing of things, choose rather to draw near to God and join with his afflicted brethren, than to be in honour in Pharaoh's court, to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, or to enjoy the pleasures of sin, 'for he had respect to the reward,' Heb. xi. 25. He was convinced that there was more to be gotten with them than amongst the Egyptians. Thus Abraham came to forsake his country, and the disciples to forsake all and follow Christ. And undoubtedly the ground of all profaneness is from atheism that is within. Would the swearer trample upon the name of God, if he did believe and were convinced that he should not be guiltless? Would the filthy person come near strange flesh, if he were persuaded that God would judge? Would any wicked man change an eternal joy for a minute's pleasure, if he did believe the unrighteous should not inherit the kingdom of God? Nay, the best have a remainder of this corruption of atheism. David: 'So foolish was I, and a beast,' Ps. lxxiii. 22. From hence come all sin against knowledge and conscience in men, whereof David complains: 'Keep me, that presumptuous sins prevail not over me, or get not dominion over me,' Ps. xix. 13. And for remedy against this vile corruption, there is no way but the immediate help of the Holy Spirit; and therefore, John xvi. 9, it is said that the Spirit, when it comes, 'shall convince the world of sin;' that is, it shall so manifest sin to be in the whole world, because of the general unbelief, as they shall see no remedy but in Christ; and therefore we should beforehand search out the crafty allurements to sin, that we may be provided to give them an answer when they set upon us, lest we be suddenly overcome, and labour to see the excellency of the things that are freely given us of God, which amongst other titles are called a feast, 'a feast of fat things,' Isa. xxv. 6. Now if we will not feast with him, how do we ever think to suffer with him if he should call us thereto? 'It is good.' How is it good? Both in quality and condition; for while we are here in this world we are strangers, and in an estate of imperfection as it were. Paul saith, while he was present in the body he was absent from the Lord; and the more near perfection we are, the more near must we be to the ground of all perfection,

and this is only in God. For, first, he is goodness itself. He hath the beauty of all, the strength of all, the goodness of all, originally in himself. He is the gathering together of all excellency and goodness. Secondly, he is the universal good. He is good to all. What all hath that is good, cometh from him. Of creatures, some have beauty, others riches, others have honours, but God hath all together. Thirdly, he is the all-sufficient and satisfactory good. The goodness of no creature can give full content; for the soul of man is capable of more than all created goodness together can satisfy. Only it is filled with God's likeness, and satisfied with communion with him. The best thing here to satisfy the soul, as Solomon witnesseth, is knowledge; and yet it contents not the heart of man: *sine Deo omnis copia est egestas*, [saith] Bernard. God alone filleth every corner of the soul in him. We are swallowed up with 'joy unspeakable,' and 'peace that passeth understanding.' 'Eye cannot see it, ear cannot hear it, heart of man cannot conceive those things which even in this life are but beams of his brightness,' 1 Cor. in. 9. Fourthly, God is a goodness that is proportionable and fitting to our souls, which is the best part in a man; and that which we draw near unto must communicate some loveliness, for that moves us to draw near to it. Now God is a Spirit fit to converse with our spirits; and he is love, and can answer the love and drawing near of our spirits with love and drawing near to us again. The things of this world cannot love us so as to give us content, or to help us in the day of wrath. Fifthly, nothing can make us happy but drawing near to God. If there were nothing in the world better than man, then man would be content with himself; but by nature it is evident man seeth a better happiness than is in himself, and therefore he seeketh for it out of himself. And as Solomon tried all things, and found no happiness but in the fear of God, so man cannot rest in any outward content till he comes to God as the Creator of all happiness, and the spring-head from whence the soul had its original; and therefore, 1 John i. 3, 'All the gospel is to this end, that we may have fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ and 1 Pet. iii. 18, 'Christ's sufferings [were] to this end, that being dead in flesh, but quickened in the spirit, he might bring us again to God,' Eph. i. 10, and 22, 'That he might gather all into one head.' By sin we were scattered from God, from angels, and from our ourselves; but now by Christ we are made one, with one another, and with the holy angels, one with God our chief good.

For use hereof, it should teach us to labour to attain to this estate of being spiritually convinced of the goodness of God, that we may by experience say, 'It is good for me to draw near to God,' for God will not esteem of us according to our knowledge, but as our affections are, and

therefore the wicked man he calls a worldling, because the world filleth him, let his knowledge be never so great. And the church in the Revelation is called heaven, because their affections and minds are that way, xxi. 1; and again, the more we are convinced of God's goodness, the better we are; for God's goodness, tasted and felt by the soul, doth ennoble it, as a pearl set in a gold ring maketh it the more rich and precious. But to come to the estate that is so commended to us, it is described to us by drawing near unto God, so as we may take this for a received ground, that Doct. [Eighth,] Man's happiness is in communion with God. Before the fall of man, there was a familiar conversation with God; but by the sin of our first parents we lost this great happiness, and now we are strangers, and as contrary to God as light is contrary to darkness, and hell to heaven; he holy, we impure; he full of knowledge, we stark fools; and instead of delighting in him, we now tremble at his presence, and are afraid of such creatures as approach nigh to him, trembling at the presence of angels, nay, afraid of a holy man. 'What have I to do with thee, thou man of God? art thou come to call my sins to remembrance?' 1 Kings xvii. 18. And therefore we fly the company of good men, because their carriage and course of life do upbraid us; and hence it is that at the least apprehension of God's displeasure, wicked men do quake. The heathen emperor trembled at a thunder clap. But God, in his infinite mercy and goodness, left us not, but entertaining a purpose to choose some to draw near unto him; and to this end he hath found out a way for man and him to meet, but no way for the angels; and the foundation of this union is in Christ, in whom he reconciled the world to himself; for he being God, became man, so to draw man back again unto God; and thus, like Jacob's ladder, one end of it is in heaven, the other on earth. The angels ascending and descending shew a sweet intercourse between God and man, now reconciled together, so as Christ is now 'a living way' for ever, being 'the way, the truth, and the life.' He is a way far more near and sure than we had in Adam; for in him God was in man, but now man subsisted in God, so as our nature is now strengthened by him, who also hath enriched it and advanced it: and what he hath wrought in his own human nature, he by little and little will work in all his mystical members; so being once far off, we are now made near, and this he did principally by his death, for reconciliation is made by his blood, Col. i. 20; and thus, by the admirable mystery of his deep wisdom, he hath found a means to make the seeming opposite attributes of justice and mercy to kiss each other, so as we are saved, and yet his infinite justice hath full content. For how could his hatred of sin appear more gloriously than in punishing it upon his own only beloved Son? And therefore worthily he is called 'our peace;' for he is that great peacemaker

offering himself up, and us in him, 'as a sweet-smelling sacrifice, acceptable to God,' Philip, iv. 8, being then thus brought near to God, to keep and maintain this nearness, be as nothing may separate us again. He hath put into us his own Spirit, so as we are one spirit with Christ; and by that Spirit he worketh in us and by us by that Spirit. We hear, read, pray, and as by the soul in us our bodies do live, breathe, and move, and the like, so he maketh his Spirit to move in us to a holy conversation and a heavenly life, being thus made 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4; and this sanctifies us to a holy communion with God; and therefore the apostle prays, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with them;' that is, for a fuller manifestation of the love of God in sending Christ, the grace of Christ in coming to us, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, because by it we are made to live a holy life, and to communicate with God; and thus the three persons in Trinity conspire together in reducing man back again to be more near to God.

Use 1. Now, for use of this, it should teach us how to think on God, not as all justice and power, hating sin and sinners, but as a Father, now laying aside terrible things that may scare us from drawing nigh to him, and as a God, stooping down to our human nature, to take both it and our miserable condition upon himself, and see our nature not only suffering with Christ, but rising, nay, now in heaven united to God; and this will feed the soul with inestimable comfort.

Use 2. Secondly, Labour to be more near to him, by the more full participation of his Spirit. Those that have not Christ's Spirit are none of his. By it we in Christ have access to God; and therefore the more spiritual we are, the nearer access we have to the secrets of God. In our first estate, we are altogether flesh, and have no spirit; in our present estate of grace, we are partly flesh and partly spirit; in our third estate in heaven, we shall be all spiritual; yea, our bodies shall be spiritual, 1 Cor. xv. 44. It is sown natural, but it shall be raised spiritual, and shall be obedient to our souls in all things, and our souls wholly possessed and led by the Spirit of God, so as then God shall be all in all with us; and for means hereunto, First, Labour to be conversant in spiritual means, as in hearing of the word, receiving of the sacraments. God annexeth his Spirit to his own ordinances; and thence it is that in the communion with God in the ordinances, men's apprehensions are so enlarged as they are many times spiritually sick, and do long after the blessed enjoying of God's presence in heaven. But take heed how we come,

think what we have to do, and with whom. Come not without the garment of Christ; and it is no matter how beggarly we are, this food is not appointed for angels, but for men. And come with an humble heart, as Elizabeth. Who am I, that (not the mother of my Lord) God himself from heaven should come to me? Luke i. 43.

Secondly, Converse with those that draw near unto him. God is present where two or three are assembled in his name, warming their hearts with love and affection, as it is said of the two disciples going to Emmaus, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while we walked in the way, and conferred of the sayings?' &c., Luke xxvi. 32. Oh, it is a notable sign of a spiritual heart to seek spiritual company; for when their hearts join together, they warm one another, and are hereby guarded from temptations; nay, the wicked themselves in God's company will be restrained. Saul, a wicked man, amongst the prophets will prophesy now, 1 Sam. x. 12. If by good company carnal men themselves do in a manner draw near to God, how acceptable ought this to be to us, and how powerful in us.

Thirdly, And especially, be much in prayer; for this is not only a main part of this duty of drawing near to God, but it is a great help thereunto. God is near to all that call upon him; for then are those most near to God when their understandings, affections, desires, trust, hope, faith, are busied about God; and therefore as Moses's face did shine with being in the presence of God, so those that are conversant in this duty of prayer have a lustre cast upon their souls, and their minds brought into a heavenly temper, and made fit for anything that is divine. I could wish that men would be more in public prayer, and that they would not forget private prayer, if ever they intend the comfort of their souls, not only hereafter, but even during this present life. For every day's necessities and dangers in the midst of many enemies, the devil, flesh, and world, ill company, and strong corruptions, should invite us to cast ourselves into the protection of an almighty Saviour. There is not a minute of time in all our life but we must either be near God or we are undone.

Fourthly, Observe the first motions of sin in our hearts, that may 'grieve the Spirit of God' in the least manner, and check them at the first. Give no slumber to thine eyes, then, nor the reins to thy desires: 'Thou, O man of God, fly the lusts of youth,' 2 Tim. in. 22. The best things in us, if they come from nature in us, God abhors. Rebuke therefore the first motions, before they come to delight or action. God abhorreth one that gives liberty to his

thoughts, more than one that falleth into a grievous sin now and then, through strength of temptation; and such shall find comfort sooner of the pardon of their sins, for they cannot but see their offences to be heinous, and so have ground of abasement in themselves; but the other, thinking of the smallness of their sins, or at least that God is not much offended with thoughts, do fill themselves with contemplative wickedness, and chase away the Spirit of God, that cannot endure an unclean heart. We must therefore keep ourselves pure and unspotted of this present world, 'for the pure in heart shall see God,' Mat. v. 8; and 'without holiness none shall ever see him,' Heb. xii. 14. The least sin in thought, if it be entertained, it eats out the strength of the soul, that it can receive no good from God, nor close with him, so as it performeth all duties deadly and hollowly: Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer;' and hence it is that so little good is wrought in the ordinances of God. Men bring their lusts along with them. They neither know the sweetness of the presence of God's Spirit, neither do they desire it. It is a true rule that every sin hath intrinsically in it some punishment; but it is not the punishment that is the proper venom or poison of sin, but this, that it hinders the Spirit of God from us, and keeps us from him, and unfits us for life or for death. But this inward divorce from God's Spirit above all it is the most bitter stab that can befall any one that ever tasted of the sweetness of Christian profession. Now, for the better keeping of our thoughts, we should labour to watch against our outward senses, that by them thoughts be not darted into us. 'The eyes of the fool are in the corners of the world,' Prov. xvii. 24, saith the wise man; and therefore let men profess what they will, when they go to lewd company and filthy places, where corruptions are shot into them by all their senses, they neither can take delight to draw near to God, nor can God take any delight to draw near to them. Dinah, that will be straying abroad, comes home with shame; and that soul that either straggles after temptations, or suffereth temptations to enter into it uncontrolledly, both ways doth grieve God, and that good Spirit that should lead us to him. As for such as live in gross sins, as lying, blaspheming, swearing, drunkenness, adultery, or the like, let them never think of drawing near to God. They must first be civilised before they can appear to be religions; and they contrarily proclaim to the whole world that they say to God, 'Depart from us, for we will none of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14; so as God draws away from them, and they draw away from him.

Fifthly, Be in God's walks and ordinances in a course of doing good, in our Christian or civil calling, sanctified by prayer and a holy dependence upon God for strength, wisdom, and success. Go not out of those ways

wherein he gives his angels charge of our persons and actions, and whatever we do. Labour to do it with perfection, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Sixthly, Observe God's dealings with the church, both formerly and now in these days, and how he dealeth and hath formerly dealt with ourselves, that from experience of his faithfulness to us we may gather confidence to approach nigh him at any occasion. God's works and words do answer one another: 'Hath he said, and shall he not do it?' He is always good to Israel. Observe therefore how all things work together for thy particular drawing nigh unto him; for if all do work together for thy good, then it must be of necessity for thy drawing near to God, and drawing thee away from this present world; and observe how thy soul answereth the purpose of God, how thy affections are bent, and so how all comes out for thy benefit at last. See God in afflictions embittering ill courses in thee; in thy success in thy affairs, encouraging thee; and thus walk with God. But evermore think of him as of a Father in covenant with thee.

Seventhly, Labour to maintain humility, having evermore a sense of thy unworthiness, and wants, and continual dependence on God, and thus humble thyself to walk with him. Hence the saints in God's presence call themselves 'dust and ashes,' as Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27; 'and less than the least of God's mercies,' as Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. God is 'a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29, and will be sanctified in all that come nigh unto him. He will give grace to the humble, but beholdeth the proud afar off, as they look on others: James iv. 8, 'Draw near to the Lord, and he will draw near to you.' 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,' and he will lift you up. He that lifteth himself up, maketh himself a god; and God will endure no co-rivals. Contrarily, he dwelleth in the heart of the humble, Isa. lxvi. 2; and in the Psalms, 'An humble and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' But pride he abhorreth as an abomination of desolation.

Eighthly, Labour for sincerity in all our actions. Whatever we do to God or man, do it with a single eye, resolute to please God. Let men say what they will, 'a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' James i. 8; and what is a double-minded man, but one that hath one eye on God, another on a by-respect? If religion fail him, he will have favour of men, or wealth, yet would fain have both, for credit sake. Such are gross temporisers; and in time, of temporisers [it] will appear that their religion serves but for a cloak to their vile hypocrisy. This God loathes, and will 'spue them out,' Rev. iii. 16.

Ninthly, Observe the first motions of God's Spirit; and give diligent heed to them, for by these God knocks for entrance into the heart: Rev. iii. 20, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' God is near when he knocks, when he putteth inclinations into the heart, and sharpeneth them with afflictions. If, then, we stop our ears, we may say 'the kingdom of God was near unto us;' but if he once ceaseth knocking, our mouths shall for ever be stopped; and for this reason it is that so many live daily under the means, and yet live in vile courses, as if God had determined their doom. They resisted the first motions, and close with their lusts, and so God pronounceth a curse: 'Make this people's heart fat,' Isa. vi. 10. On the contrary, those that will open to God while he continues knocking, God will come in and make an everlasting tabernacle in them, and sup with them, Rev. iii. 20.

Lastly, Take up daily controversies that do arise in us, through the inconstancy of our deceivable hearts. Repentance must be every day's work, renewing our covenant, especially every morning and evening; repair breaches by confession; and considering the crossness of our hearts, commit them to God by prayer: 'Knit my heart to thee, that I may fear thy name,' Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

A third use of this doctrine is of instruction; and, first, to teach us that a Christian that thus draweth near to God is the wisest man. He hath God's word, reason, and experience to justify his course. He is the wisest man that is wise for himself. The Christian feels it and knows it, and can justify himself, 2 Tim. i. 12. Paul suffered, and was not ashamed.

Why? 'I know,' saith he, 'whom I have believed.' Let men scorn, I pass not for man's censure. They shall never scorn me out of my religion; and for them, the Scripture, that can best judge, calls those wicked men fools; for they refuse God, who is the chiefest good, and seek for content where none is to be found. Contrarily, if we do affect honour, or riches, or pleasure, God is so gracious as in religion he gives us abundance of these. In God is all fulness; in Christ are unsearchable riches; in God everlasting strength, 'and his favour is better than the life itself,' Ps. lxiii. 3. Ahithophel was wise, but it was to hang himself; Saul a mighty man, but to shed his own blood; Haman's honour ended in shame.

Secondly, Hence we may learn how to justify zeal in religion. If to be near God be good, then the nearer him the better; if religion be good, then the more the better; if holiness be good, then the more the better; it is best to excel in the best things. Who was the best man but Christ, and why? He was

nearest the fountain. And who are next but the angels, and why? Because they are always in God's presence. And who next but those that are nearest to Christ. If we could get angelical holiness, were it not commendable? And therefore it should shame us to be backward, and cold, and to have so little zeal, as to be ashamed of goodness, as most are.

Thirdly, This should teach us that a man must not break with God for any creature's sake whatever. It is good to lose all for God. Why? Because we have riches in him, liberty in him, all in him. A man may be a king on earth, and yet a prisoner in himself; and if we lose anything, though it be our own life, for God, we shall save it. If we be swallowed up of outward misery, the Spirit of God, that 'searcheth the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. in. 10, passes and repasses, and puts a relish into us of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. iii. 8. 'Taste and see how good God is,' Ps. xxxiv. 8. 'How excellent is thy loving-kindness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee,' Ps. xxxvi. 7. 'How precious are thy thoughts to me, O Lord,' Ps. xxxix. 17. 'Thou hast the words of everlasting life, whither then shall I go?' said Peter, when he felt but a spark of the divine power, John vi. 68.

A further use of this doctrine shall be an use of trial, to know whether we draw near to God or not.

First, therefore, where this is, there will be a further desire of increase of communion with God. The soul will not rest in measure, Exod. xxxiii. 11, seq. Moses had divers entertainments of God: he had seen him in 'the bush,' and in mount Sinai, and many other times; but not contented herewith, he would needs see God's face. And thus Abraham, he gathers upon God still more and more ground in his prayers: 'What if fifty, what if forty, what if twenty, what if ten righteous be found there?' saith he, Gen. xviii. 24, seq. And Jacob, how often was he blessed whom Isaac blessed, when he was to go into Paran! when he was there at his return; and yet when he comes to wrestle with the angel, 'I will not let thee go till thou bless me,' Gen. xxxii. 26. And the reason is, because as God is a fountain never to be drawn dry, so is man an emptiness never filled, but our desires increase still till we arrive in heaven; and therefore the more we work, and the more we pray, and the more good we do, the more do our desires increase in doing good.

Secondly, This will appear in abasing or humbling ourselves, as it was with Abraham. The more near God is, the more humbly he falls on his face, and confesseth he is but 'dust and ashes.' The angels, in token of reverence, do cover their faces, 'being in the presence of God.' And it is an universal

note, that all such as draw near to God, they are humble and reverent in holy duties; and therefore proud persons have no communion with God at all.

Thirdly, The nearer we are to God, the more we admire heavenly things; and count all others dross and dung,' as St Paul, Philip, iii. 8. When the sun riseth, the stars they vanish; and those that do not admire the joy, peace, and happiness of a Christian, are unacquainted with drawing near to God.

Fourthly, When we have a sense and sight of sin, then we may truly be said to 'draw near,' and to be near to God; for by his light are our eyes enlightened, and we are quickened by his heat and love; and hence we come to see little sins great sins, and are afraid of the beginnings of sin: 'Lord, purge me from my secret sins; create in me a new heart; oh let the thoughts of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight,' Ps. cix. 12. And those that make no scruple of worldly affairs on the Lord's day, of light, small oaths, as they call them, or of corrupt discourse, they neither are nor can draw near to God.

Fifthly, The nearer we draw to God, the more is our rest. 'Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and you shall find rest unto your souls,' Mat. xi. 28. Ps. xvi. 4, 'The sorrows of those that worship another god shall be multiplied,' and therefore they may well maintain doubting. And therefore such, if they be in their right minds, never end their days comfortably.

Sixthly, In all distresses, those that draw near to God will fly to him with confidence; but a guilty conscience is afraid of God, as of a creditor that oweth him punishment, or that intendeth to cast him into perpetual prison. And as a child will in all his wrongs go and complain to his father, Rom. v. 2, seq., so if we have the spirit of sons we have access to God, and peace with God, and can come boldly to the throne of grace, to find help in him at need.

Seventhly, He that is near to God is neither afraid of God nor of any creature, for God and he are in good terms. In the midst of thundering and lightning, Moses hath heart to go near, when the Israelites fly, and stand afar off: Ps. xxvii. 1, 'The Lord is the strength of my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?' Ps. cxii. 7, 'He that feareth the Lord will not be afraid of evil tidings;' but, contrarily, on the wicked there are fears, and snares, and pits. They fear where no cause of fear is; and when God revealeth his terror, indeed then, Isa. xxxiii. 14, 'the sinners in Sion are afraid, and the hypocrites that make show of holiness are surprised with fearfulness; who amongst us shall dwell

with devouring fire, and who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?’

Eighthly, The nearer we are to God, the more in love we will be with spiritual exercises; the more near to God, the more in love with all means to draw nigh to him; as of books, sermons, good company. My delight ‘is in the excellent of the earth,’ Ps. xvi. 3; ‘Oh how I love thy law,’ Ps. cxix. 97; ‘How beautiful are thy dwelling-places, O Lord of hosts,’ Ps. lxxxiv. 1.

Ninthly, He that is near God is so warmed with love of him, so that he will stand against opposition, and that out of experience—‘He that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hands of this uncircumcised Philistine,’ 1 Sam. xvii. 37,—and out of his experience he will be encouraged to use the ordinances of God. He will pray, because he hath found the sweetness of it; he will be in good company, because he finds it preserves him in a better temper for the service of God; he will hear the word spiritually and plainly laid open to him, because he hath found the power of it in renewing and quickening his affections and desires; and those that do not draw nigh to God, do either loathe, or at least are indifferent, to days, to companies, to exercises. All are alike to them; and they wonder at the niceness of Christians that take so much labour and pains, whereas a man may go to heaven at an easier rate by much; and, on the contrary, Christians do as much wonder at them, that they are so careless, whereas ‘few are called;’ and of those that are called, some ‘hear the word, but receive it not.’ Some receive, ‘and in time of trial fall off,’ Luke viii. 5, so as not the third part of hearers are saved. What then now remaineth but that we should be encouraged unto this duty of drawing near unto God. We see how Scripture, reason, and experience proves that it is a thing necessary and profitable; and those that are far from God shall perish, and those that go a-whoring from him he will destroy, as it is in the foregoing verse. Those that are either of a whorish judgment, or affections after lust or covetousness, or the like, God will curse, for all sin is but adultery, or defiling of the soul with the creature; and therefore labour for chaste judgments and affections; love him, and fear him above all, and this is the whole duty of man; and use other creatures in their own place, as creatures should be used. We know not what troubles and difficulties we shall meet with ere long, wherein neither friends nor all the world can do us any good; and then happy shall we be if, with a comfortable heart, we can go to God with David: Ps. xxii. 11, ‘Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.’ If God be then far off from us when trouble is near to us, we may go and cry to him; but his answer will be,

Prov. i. 31, 'You shall eat the fruit of your own way; you have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.' You would not draw nigh to me; you shall now call and seek to me, but now you shall not draw nigh to me, you shall not find me. What, then, can our friends do? What can the whole world then supply to us, when sickness comes as 'an armed man,' and death as a mighty giant, against whom is no resisting; but will we or nill we, away we must be gone? Then to have a God nigh us, to whom we may go as Peter did in the storm, 'O Master, save me, I perish,' Mark iv. 36; then to have a friend in heaven, who can for the present guide us by his counsel, and instruct us against Satan's wiles and our deceivable hearts, and be a safe guard to us in the fire and in the water, in the dungeon and when we are in the greatest depths of misery to outward sense; though in death, in the shadow of death, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet can send us such cheerful remembrances of his love, as the cloud shall be scattered, the shadow taken away, and death, an enemy, shall be a friend; nay, a friendly meeting between God and the soul, so as the soul shall triumph in death, and shall delight to die, and desire it: 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for,' by the eye of faith, I have 'waited for thy salvation,' Luke ii. 29; I say, then will the sweetness of this estate of drawing near to God be manifested to us, and then shall we not repent of any labour or travail spent in our lifetime, in the attaining of such a condition.

## David's Conclusion; or the Saint's Resolution

*But it is good for me to draw near to God.*—Ps. LXXIII. 28.

This psalm is a psalm of Asaph, or a psalm of David, and committed to Asaph the singer, for Asaph was both a seer and a singer. Those psalms that David made were committed to Asaph, so it is thought to be a psalm of David. And if not of David, yet of Asaph, that likewise was a singer in the house of God.

The psalm represents to us a man in a spiritual conflict, by a discovery of the cause of it, and a recovery out of the conflict, with a triumphant conclusion afterwards.

1. He begins abruptly, as a man newly come out of a conflict: 'Truly God is good to Israel;' as if he had gained this truth in conflicting with his corruptions and Satan, who joins with corruption in opposing. Say the flesh what it can, say Satan what he can, say carnal men what they can, 'yet God is good to Israel.'

2. After his conflict he sets down the discovery, first of his weakness, and then of his doubting of-God's providence, and then the cause of it, the prosperity of the wicked, and God's contrary dealing with the godly. Then he discovers the danger he was come to, ver. 18, 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency,' &c.

3. And then the recovery, in ver. 17: 'I went into the sanctuary, and there I understood the end of these men.' The recovery was by going into the sanctuary; not by looking upon the present condition, but upon God's intention, what should become of such men; and there he had satisfaction.

4. Then his victory and triumph over all: ver. 23, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee.' It was a suggestion of the flesh that thou wast gone far from me, by reason of the condition of carnal men that flourish in the eye of the world. No: 'Thou art continually with me, and thou holdest me by my right hand.' Thou upholdest me, I should fall else. But what, would God do so for the time to come? 'He will guide me by his counsel,' while I live here and when I am dead. What will he do for me after? 'He will receive me to

glory.' Whereupon saith he, 'Who have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire besides thee.' Therefore, though for the present 'my flesh fail,' yea, and 'my heart fail,' yet God is the 'strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' We see here his victory set down, and he gives a lustre to it, by God's contrary dealing with the wicked: 'For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from thee.' Now, in the words of the text, you have his conclusion upon all this, 'Nevertheless it is good for me to draw near to God.'

This is the conclusion upon the former principles. This is, as it were, the judgment upon the former demurs. The sum of all comes to this: Let all things be weighed and laid together, I am sure this is true, 'it is good for me to draw near to God.' So he ends where he began, 'God is good to Israel.' Therefore, because God is so good to Israel, 'it is good to draw near to God.' So you see in what order the words come. They are the words of a man got out of a conflict, after he had entered into the sanctuary, and after he had considered the end of wicked men, at whose prosperity he was troubled and took scandal.

Before I come to the words, it is not amiss briefly to touch these points, to make way to that I am to deliver.

First of all, that, 1. God's dearest children are exercised with sharp spiritual conflicts.

God suffers their very faith in principles sometimes to be shaken. What is more clear than God's providence? Not the noonday. Yet God suffers sometimes his own children to be exercised with conflicts of this kind, to doubt of principles written in the book of God, as it were, with a sunbeam, that have a lustre in themselves. There is nothing more clear than that God hath a particular special providence over his; yet God's ways are so unsearchable and deep, that he doth spiritually exercise his children; he suffers them to be exercised, as you see here he comes out of a conflict; 'but it is good for me to draw near to God.' I will touch it. Therefore I will extend it only to God's people, that, if by reason of the remainders of corruption God suffer their rebellious hearts to cast mire and dirt, to cast in objections that are odious to the spiritual man, that part that is good, they may not be cast down too much and dejected. It is no otherwise with them than it hath been with God's dear children, as we see in Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and others. It is a clear truth. I only point at it that we might have it ready to comfort

ourselves when such things rise in our souls. It is no otherwise with us than it hath been with other of God's dear children.

The second point is, that, 2. God's children, when they are in this conflict, they recover themselves.

God suffers them to be foiled, but then they recover themselves. First, there is a conflict, and then oftentimes the foil. A man is foiled by the worst part in him, and then after a while he recovers; and then, as in other conflicts, there is triumph and victory, as we see here his conflict and recovery.

For God's children go not far off from him, as it is in ver. 27, 'Lo, they that are far off from thee shall perish.' They may have their thoughts unsettled a little concerning God's providence, but they run not far off, they go not a-whoring, as carnal men do. They begin to slip, but God hath a blessed hand under them to recover them, that they do not fall away, that they fall not foully. They may slip and fall a little, to stand better and surer after, but they go not far off as wicked men do. They never slip so low but God's goodness is lower to hold them up. He hath one hand under them and another hand above them, embracing them, so that they cannot fall dangerously. This is the second; from this that we see here, he recovers out of this conflict.

Use. Which may serve to discern our estate in grace. If we belong to God, though such noisome imaginations rise, yet, notwithstanding, there is a contrary principle of grace always in God's children that checks them, at the least afterwards, if not presently. Such noisome thoughts as these rule and reign in carnal men, for they take scandal at God's government, and they judge, indeed, that the ways of wicked men are happy. They have false principles, and they frame their course of life to such false principles and rules, from cherishing atheistical doubts of God's providence, and the like. It is far otherwise with God's children. There are conflicts in them, but there is a recovery; they check them presently; they have God's Spirit, and the seed of grace in them. That is never extinct.

3. The way of recovery is to enter into God's sanctuary. For we must not give liberty to ourselves to languish in such a course, to look to present things too much, but look into God's book, and there we shall find what is threatened to such and such ill courses, and what promises are made to good courses. And then apply God's truth to the example; see how God hath met with wicked men in their prosperity, and advanced his children when they

were at the lowest, when they were even at the brink of despair. Examples in this kind are pregnant and clear throughout the Scripture. The Lord saith, 'It shall go well with the righteous, and it shall not go well with the wicked,' Ps. xci. 8; 'Let him escape a thousand times. Doubtless there is a reward for the godly,' Ps. lviii. 11. Let us look in the book of God, upon the predictions, and see the verifying of those predictions in the examples that act the rules, and bring them to the view: let us see the truths in the examples. This entering into God's sanctuary it is the way to free us from dangerous scandals, and to overcome dangerous conflicts; for the conclusions of the sanctuary are clean contrary to sensible carnal reason. Carnal reason saith, Such a one is a happy man; sure he is in great favour; God loves him. Oh, but the sanctuary saith, It shall never go well with such a man. Carnal reason would say of Dives, Oh, a happy man; but the sanctuary saith, 'He had his good here,' and 'Lazarus had his ill here.' Carnal reason saith, Is there any providence that rules in the earth? Is there a God in heaven, that suffers these things to go so confusedly? Ay, but the word of God, the sanctuary, saith, there is a providence that rules all things sweetly, and that 'all things are beautiful in their time,' Eccles. iii. 11.

We must not look upon things in their confusion, but knit things. 'Mark the end, mark the end of the righteous man,' Ps. xxxvii. 37. Look upon Joseph in prison. Here is a horrible scandal! For where was God's providence to watch over a poor young man. But see him after, 'the second man in the kingdom.' Look on Lazarus at the rich man's door, and there is scandal; but see him after in Abraham's bosom. If we see Christ arraigned before Pilate, and crucified on the cross, here is a scandal, that innocence itself should be wronged. But stay awhile! See him at the right hand of God, 'ruling principalities and powers, subjecting all things under his feet,' Eph. i. 21.

Thus the sanctuary teacheth us to knit one thing to another, and not brokenly to look upon things present, according to the dreams of men's devices; but to look upon the catastrophe and winding up of the tragedy; not to look on the present conflict, but to go to the sanctuary, and see the end of all, see how God directs all things to a sweet end. 'All the ways of God to his children are mercy and truth,' Ps. xcvi. 3, though they seem never so full of anger and displeasure. Thus you see God's children are in conflict oftentimes, and sometimes they are foiled in the conflict; yet by way of recovery they go into the sanctuary, and there they have spiritual eye-salve. They have another manner of judgment of things than 'flesh and blood hath.'

4. Again, we see, when he went into the sanctuary, the very sight of faith makes him draw near to God. Sometimes God represents heavenly truths to the eye of sense, in the examples of his justice. We see sometimes wicked men brought on the stage. God blesseth such a sight of faith, and such examples to bring his children nearer to him; as we see immediately before the text, 'thou wilt destroy all that go a-whoring from thee and then it follows, 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' So that the Spirit of God in us, and our spirits sanctified by the Spirit, takes advantage when we enter into the sanctuary, and see the diverse ends of good and bad, to draw us close to God.

Indeed, that is one reason why God suffers different conditions of men to be in the world, not so much to show his justice to the wicked, as that his children, seeing of his justice and his mercy, and the manifestation and discovery of his providence in ordering his justice towards wicked men, it may make them cleave to his mercy more, and give a lustre to his mercy. 'It is good for me to cleave to the Lord.' I see what will become of all others.

5. The next that follows upon this, that God's children, thus conflicting and going into the sanctuary, and seeing the end of all there, they go a contrary course to the world. They swim against the stream. As we say of the stars and planets, they have a motion of their own, contrary to that rapt motion, whereby they are carried and whirled about in four-and-twenty hours from east to west. They have a creeping motion and period of their own, as the moon hath a motion of her own backward from west to east, that she makes every month; and the sun hath a several motion from the rapt motion he is carried with that he goes about in a year. So God's children, they live and converse, and are carried with the same motion as the world is. They live among men, and converse as men do; but notwithstanding, they have a contrary motion of their own, which they are directed and carried to by the Spirit of God, as here the holy prophet saith, 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' As if he should say, For other men, be they great or small, be they of what condition they will, let them take what course they will, and let them see how they can justify their course, and take what benefit they can; let them reap as they sow; it do not matter much what course they take, I will look to myself; as for me, I am sure this is my best course, 'to draw near to God.'

So the sanctified spirit of a holy man, he looks not to the stream of the times, what be the currents, and opinions, and courses of rising to preferment, of getting riches, of attaining to an imaginary present happiness

here; but he hath other thoughts, he hath another judgment of things, and therefore goes contrary to the world's course. Hear St Paul, Phil. ii. 21; saith he there, 'All men seek their own,—I cannot speak of it without weeping,—whose end is damnation, whose belly is their god, who mind earthly things.' But what doth St Paul, when other men seek their own, and are carried after private ends? Oh, saith he, 'our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body, according to his mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.' So you see the blessed apostle, led with the same Spirit as the man of God here, he considers not what men do, he fetcheth not the rules of his life from the example of the great ones of the world or from multitude. These are false, deceiving rules. But he fetcheth the rule of his life from the experimental goodness he had found by a contrary course to the world. Let the world take what course they will, 'it is good for me to draw near to God.'

6. I might add a little further, that the course and corrupt principles of the world are so far from shaking a child of God, that they settle him. They stir up his zeal the more. As we say, there is an antiperistasis, an increasing of contraries by contraries, as we see in winter the body is warmer by reason that the heat is kept in, and springs are warmer in winter because the heat is kept in; so the Spirit of God, in the hearts of his children, works and boils when it is environed with contraries. It gathers strength and breaks out with more zeal, as David, Ps. cxix. 126, when he saw men did not keep God's law. We see how he complains to God, 'It is time, Lord, for thee to work.' Indeed, it is the nature of opposition to increase the contrary. Those that have the Spirit and grace of God in truth, they gather strength by opposition.

Use. Therefore the use we are to make of it, is to discern of ourselves of what spirit we are, what principles we lead our lives by; whether by examples of greatness, or multitude, or such like, it is an argument we are led by the spirit of the world and not by the Spirit of God. God's children, as they are severed from the world in condition, they are men of another world, so they are severed from the world in disposition, in their course and conversation. Therefore, from these grounds their course is contrary to the world. 'But it is good for me;' 'but' is not in the original. It is, 'And it is good for me;' but the other is aimed at. The sense is, 'But it is good for me to draw near to God,' and so it is in the last translation. Thus you see what way we have, made to the words. I do but touch these things, and it was necessary to say something

of them, because the words are a triumphant conclusion upon the former premises.

7. And in the words, in general, observe this first of all, that God by his Spirit enableth his children to justify wisdom by their own experience.

To make it good by their own experience: 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' And this is one reason why God suffers them to be shaken, and then in conflict to recover, that after recovery they may justify the truth. *Nihil tarn certum, &c.*, nothing is so certain as that that is certain after doubting. Nothing is so fixed as that that is fixed after it hath been shaken, as the trees have the strongest roots, because they are most shaken with winds and tempests. Now God suffers the understanding, that is, the inward man, of the best men to be shaken, and after settles them, that so they may even from experience justify all truths; that they may say it is naught, it is a bitter thing to sin. Satan hath abused me, and my own lust abused me, and enticed me away from God; but I see no such good thing in sin as nature persuaded me before. As travellers will tell men you live poorly here. In such a country you may do wondrous well. There you shall have plenty and respect. And when they come there, and are pinched with hunger, and disrespect, they come home with shame enough to themselves that they were so beguiled; so it is with God's children. Sometimes he suffers them to be foiled, and lets them have the reins of their lusts awhile, to taste a little of the forbidden tree; that after they may say with experience, it is a bitter thing to forsake God, it is better to go to my 'former husband,' as the church saith in Hosea, when God took her in hand a little, ii. 7. Sin will be bitter at the last. So the prodigal he was suffered to range till he was whipped awhile, and then he could confess it was better to be in his 'father's house.' God suffers his children to fall into some course of sin, that afterward, by experience, they may justify good things, and be able to say that God is good.

And the judgment of such is more firm, and doth more good than those that have been kept from sinking at all. God, in his wise providence, suffers this.

Use. We should labour, therefore, to justify in our own experience all that is good. What is the reason that men are ashamed of good courses so soon? It may be they are persuaded a little to pray, and to sanctify the Lord's day, to retire themselves from vanity and such like. Ay, but if their judgments be not settled out of the book of God, and if they have not some experience, they will not maintain this; therefore they are driven off. Now a Christian

should be able to justify against all gainsayers whatsoever can be said, by his own experience. That to read the book of God, and to hear holy truths opened by men led with the Spirit of God, it is a good thing, I find God's Spirit sanctify me by it. To sanctify the Lord's-day, I find it good by experience. That where there is the communion of saints, holy conference, &c., I can justify it, if there were no Scripture for it: I find it by experience to be a blessed way to bring me to a heavenly temper, to fit me for heaven. So there is no good course, but God's children should be able, both by Scripture, and likewise by their own experience, to answer all gainsayers. When either their own hearts, or others, shall oppose it, he may be able to say with the holy man here, it is no matter what you say, 'it is good for me to draw near to God.' So much for the general. To come more particularly to the words.

'It is good for me to draw near to God.'

Here you have the justification of piety, of holy courses, which is set down by 'drawing near to God;' and the argument whereby it is justified, 'It is good.' This gloss put upon anything commends it to man; for naturally since the fall there is so much left in man, that he draws to that which is good; but, when he comes to particulars, there is the error, he seeks heaven in the way of hell, he seeks happiness in the way of misery, he seeks light in the way of darkness, and life in the way and path of death: his lusts so hurry him and carry him the contrary way. But yet there is left this general foundation of religion in all men; as the heathen could say, naturally all men from the principles of nature draw to that which is good. Here religious courses are justified and commended from that which hath the best, attractive, and most magnetical force. 'It is good to draw near to God.' 'Good' hath a drawing force; for the understanding, that shows and discovers; but the will is the chief guide in man, and answerable to the discovery of good or ill in the understanding, there is a prosecution or aversation in the will, which is that part in the soul of man that cleaves to good discovered. To unfold the words a little.

'It is good' to draw near to God, who is the chief good. It is good in quality, and good in condition and state. It is good in quality and disposition; for it is the good of conformity for the understanding creature to draw near to God the Creator, who hath fitted the whole inward man to draw near, to conform to him.

And then it is good in condition; for it is his happiness to do so. The goodness of the creature is in drawing near to God. The nearer anything is to the principle of such a thing, the better it is for it; the nearer to the sun, the more light; the nearer to the fire, the more heat: the nearer to that which is goodness itself, the more good; the nearer to happiness, the more happy; therefore it must needs be the happiness of condition to draw near to God. So you see what is meant, when he saith here, 'It is good.' It is a pleasing good, conformable to God's will; he commands it; and it is for my good likewise; it advanceth my condition to draw near to God.

'To draw near.' What is it to draw near to God? We shall see by what it is to go from God. God is everywhere. We are always near to God. 'Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I go to hell, thou art there,' &c., saith the psalmist, Ps. cxxxix. 8. God is everywhere indeed in regard of his presence, and power, and disposing providence; but then there is a gracious presence of God in the hearts of his children. And there is a strange presence of God to Christ, the presence of union; which makes the human nature of Christ the happiest creature that ever was, being joined by a hypostatical union to the second person. But we speak not of that nearness here. There is a gracious nearness when the Spirit of God, in the spirits of those that belong to God, sweetly enlargeth, and comforts, and supports, and strengtheneth them, working that in them that he works in the hearts of none else. For instance, the soul is in the whole man. It is diffused over all the members. It is in the foot, in the eye, in the heart, and in the brain. But how is it in all these? It is in the foot as it moves it. It is in the heart, as the principle of life. It is in the brain and understanding, using and exercising his reasoning, understanding power. So that, though all the soul be in the whole man, yet it is otherwise in the brain than in the rest. So, though God be everywhere, yet he is otherwise in his children than in others. He is in them graciously and comfortably, exercising his graces in them, and comforting them. He is not so with the rest of the world. You see how God is present everywhere, and how he is graciously present with his. So answerable we are said to be near to God. We are near him in what state soever we are, but then there is a gracious nearness when our whole soul is near to God, as thus: when our understandings conceive aright of God; as it is said of the young man in the Gospel, when he began to speak discreetly and judiciously, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' When men have a right conceit of divine truths, they are not far from the kingdom of God, when there is clearness of judgment to conceive aright. Those that have corrupt principles are far off. If

the understanding be corrupt, all the rest will go astray. There is the first nearness when the judgment is sanctified by the Spirit to conceive aright.

Then again, there is a nearness when we not only know things aright, but mind them; when the things are present to our minds; when God is in our thoughts. David saith of the wicked man, 'God is not in his thoughts.' When we mind and think of God and heavenly things, they are near to us, and we to them. For the soul is a spiritual essence. It goes everywhere, it goes to heaven, and is present with the things it minds. We are nearer to God and heavenly things when we mind them, and think on and feed our thoughts on them.

Again, we are near them when our wills first make choice of the better part with Mary; when upon discovery of the understanding, the will chooseth deliberately. Upon consideration follows the determination and choosing of the will; and upon choice, cleaving, which is another act of the will. When it chooseth that which is spiritually best, every way best for grace and condition, then it cleaves to it. As it is said of Jonathan, 'His heart did cleave to David,' 1 Sam. xviii. 1. So the woman cleaves to her husband, as Saint Paul speaks, 1 Cor. vii. 10. When the will chooseth and cleaves to that which is good, then there is a drawing near.

And likewise, when the affections are carried to God as their object, then there is a drawing near to God; when our love embraceth God and heavenly things, for love is an affection of union. It makes the thing loved and he that loveth to be one. It is the primary, the first-born affection of the soul, from which all other affections are bred. When we love God, we desire still further and further communion with him. And where there is love, if we have not that we love, then the soul goes forth to God in desire of heavenly things. 'The heart pants after God, as the hart doth after the rivers of waters,' Ps. xlii. 1, and after holy things, wherein the Spirit of God is effectual. And when we have it in any measure, then the soul shows a sweet enlargement of joy and delight in God. Thus when we judge aright of and mind heavenly things, and make choice of them, and cleave to God with all our affections of love, and joy, and delight, when these are carried to God and heavenly things, then we draw near to him.

And especially when the 'inward man' is touched with the Spirit of God. Even as the iron that is touched with the loadstone, though it be heavy of itself, it will go up, so, when the inward man is touched by the Spirit of God with a spirit of faith, which is a grace by which we draw near to God with

trust,—for it is confidence and trust that draws us near to God,— faith, it is wrought in the whole inward man, in the understanding, in the mind, in choosing and cleaving, but especially it is in the will; for faith is described to be a going to God, a coming to him, which is a promotion or going forth, which is an act of the will; so by faith and trust specially we draw near and cleave to God. Even as at the first we fell from God by distrusting of his word; saith the Devil, ‘Ye shall not die at all,’ Gen. iii. 4: we believed a liar more than God himself. Now we are recovered by a way contrary to that we fell; we must recover and draw near to God again by trusting and relying upon God. You see what is meant by the words, ‘It is good for me to draw near to God.’

To come to observe some things from them, first this, that Spiritual conviction of the judgment, it is the ground of practice.

It is good, and good for me. For we know in nature that the will follows the last design of the understanding. That which the understanding saith is to be done, here and now, all circumstances considered it is best, that the will chooseth and that a man doth, for the will rules and leads the outward man. Now where there is a heavenly conviction of the understanding of any particular thing, this at this time is good, all things considered; and weighed in the balance, on the one side and on the other, where this is, there comes in practice and drawing near to God alway. Conviction is when a man is set down, so that he cannot gainsay nor will not, but falls to practice presently; then a man is convinced of a thing.

That which is immediately before practice, and leads to practice, it is conviction. Now, there are these four things in conviction.

There is first truth. A man must know that such a thing is true. Then it must not only be a truth, but a good truth; as the gospel is said to be ‘the good word of God,’ Heb. vi. 5, and ‘it is a true and a faithful saying,’ 1 Tim. i. 15. It is a true saying, ‘that Christ came to save sinners,’ Matt. ix. 13; and it is a faithful, a good saying. If it be not good as well as true, truth doth not draw to practice as it is truth, but as it is good.

As it must be truth, and a good truth, so it must be good for me, as the holy man saith here, ‘It is good for me,’ &c. A thing may be good for another man. The devil knows what is good; and that makes him envy poor Christians so. Wicked men know that which is good when they sin against the Holy Ghost; but for them it is better to keep in the contrary. So that we

must know it is a truth, and a good truth, and good for us in particular, that it is best for us to do so.

The fourth is this: Though it be true, and good, and good for us; yet before we can come to practice, it must be a good that is comparative, better than other things that are presented, or else no action will follow. A man must be able to say, This is better than that. A weak man that is led with passions and lusts, he oftentimes sees the truth of things, and sees they are good, and good for me, and wishes that he could take such a course; but such is the strength of his passions at this time, that it is better to do thus, it is better to yield to his lusts, and he trusts that God will be merciful, and he shall recover it afterwards. These four things, therefore, must be in conviction before we can take the best course; and these are all here in this holy man, for he saw it was a truth, a duty, and likewise that it was a good truth; for to be near to God, the fountain of good, it must needs be good. And then it was good for him to be so, nay, it was good, all things considered; for it is a conclusion, as it were, brought out of the fire, out of a conflict. Nay, say the flesh, and say all the world what it can to the contrary, 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' He brings it in as a triumphant conclusion. Put drawing near to God in one balance, and lay in that balance all the inconveniences that may follow drawing near to God,—the displeasure of great ones, the loss of any earthly advantage,— and lay in the other balance all the advantages that keep men from drawing near to God,— as if a man do not keep a good conscience, he may please this or that man, he may get riches, and advance himself, and better his estate,—consider all that be, yet notwithstanding, it is better to draw near to God, with all the disadvantages that follow that course, than to take the contrary. Thus you see the truth clear, that conviction is the way and foundation of practice.

Use. Therefore we should labour by all means to be convinced of the best things. It is not sufficient to have a general notion, and slightly to hear of good things. No; we must beg the Spirit of God that he would seal and set them upon our souls; and so strongly set and seal them there, that when other things are presented to the contrary, with all the advantages and colours and glosses that flesh and blood can set upon them, yet out of the strength of spiritual judgment we may be able to judge of the best things out of a spiritual conviction, and to say it is best to cleave to God. So said the blessed man of God Moses. There was in the one end of the balance the pleasures of sin, the honours of a court, there was all that earth could afford,—for if it be not to be had in a prince's court, where is it to be had? His

place was more than ordinary; he was accounted the son of Pharaoh's daughter,—yet lay all that in the balance, and in the other part of the balance, to draw near to God's people, though the people of God were a base, forlorn, despised, afflicted people at that time, yet notwithstanding to draw near to the cause of religion, the disgraced cause of religion, 'to draw near to God' when he is disgraced in the world,—it is easy to draw near to God when there is no opposition,— but to draw near to God's part and side when it is disgraced in the world, Moses saw it the best end of the balance, put in the afflictions, and disgrace of God's people, or what you will. So it was with Abraham when he followed God as it were blindfold, and left all, his father's house and the contentments he had there. So it was with our Saviour's disciples. They left all to follow Christ; they were convinced of this, Surely we shall get more good by the company of Christ than by those things that we leave for him.

Let us labour therefore to be convinced of the excellency of spiritual things, and then spiritual practice will follow. And undoubtedly the reason of the profane conversation of the world, it comes from hidden atheism; that men make no better choice than they do, that they draw not near to God. Let them say what they will, it proceeds from hence. I prove it thus. When men are convinced of good things, they will do good, for conviction is the ground of practice; and when men do not take good courses, it is because they are not convinced of the best things. Therefore men that swear, and blaspheme, that are carnal, brute persons, at that time atheism rules in their hearts, that they believe not these things in the book of God to be true. Can the swearer believe that 'God will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain; that a curse shall follow the swearer,' Exod. xx. 7, and the whoremonger; 'that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge?' Heb. xiii. 4, and so the covetous, and extortioners, they that raise themselves by ill means, 'shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Can men believe this, and live in the practice of these sins? If they did believe these things indeed, as the word of God sets them down, if they did believe that sin were so bitter, and so foul a thing as the word of God makes it, certainly they would not; therefore it comes from a hidden atheism. Indeed, there is a bundle of atheism and infidelity in the heart of man, and we cannot bewail it too much. In the best there are some remainders of it: as this holy man, 'So foolish was I, and as a beast before thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 22, when he thought of his doubting of God's providence. Therefore considering that the cause of all ill practice is that we are not spiritually convinced of the contrary, that sin is a naughty and bitter

thing, nor are we sufficiently convinced of the best things, let us labour more and more to be soundly convinced of these things.

Now, nothing will do this but the Holy Ghost, as ye have it John xvi. 7, seq.: ‘Christ promiseth to send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, and he shall convince the world of sin;’ that is, he shall so set sin before the eyes of men’s souls, that they shall know there is no salvation but in Christ. He shall convince them of unbelief, that horrible sin. They shall have it presented so to them, that they shall believe presently upon it. This the Holy Ghost must do.

But the Holy Ghost doth it in the use of means. Therefore it must be our wisdom to hear and pray and meditate much, that God would vouchsafe his Spirit to persuade us, to convince our understanding, to convince us of all our false reasonings against good things, that there may not a vile imagination rise in our hearts contrary to divine principles.

‘It is good to draw near to God.’ Therefore it is good to come to the sacrament, which is one way of drawing near to God. Let us be so convinced of it, that it is not only a necessary, but a comfortable and sweet duty)lo have communion with God; for will we suffer for Christ if we will not feast with him? What shall we say of those, therefore, that are so far from drawing near to God, when they have these opportunities, that they turn their backs? They clean thwart this blessed man here. He saith, ‘It is good for me to draw near to God;’ nay, say they, it is good for me to have nothing to do with God, nor Christ, no, not when he comes to allure me. Now, he is come near us indeed, that we might come near him. Because we were strangers to God, and could not draw near to him, simply considered, God became man, Emmanuel, God with us, that he might bring us to God. Christ is that Jacob’s ladder that knits heaven and earth together. Christ, God and man, knits God and man together. This was the end of his incarnation and of his death, to make our peace, to bring those near that were strangers, nay, enemies before; and of our part and portion in the benefits of his death, we are assured in the sacrament. Therefore let us draw near to our comfort, with cheerfulness, for his goodness that we have these opportunities. Let us draw near to God to have our faith strengthened and our communion with him increased.

Only let us labour to come with clean hearts. ‘God will be sanctified in all that come near him,’ Lev. x. 3. Let us know that we have to deal with a holy God, and with holy things, and therefore cast aside a purpose of living in sin; let us not come with defiled hearts, for then, though the things be holy

in themselves, they are defiled to us. Let us come with a resolution to renew our covenant, and come with rejoicing that God stoops so low to use these poor helps, that in themselves are weak, yet by his blessing they are able greatly to strengthen our faith.

## The Church's Blackness

*I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, and as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me; my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards: but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*—Cant. I. 5, 6.

In the former verses of this chapter, the church having showed her fervent love and dear affection unto Christ, and longing for a nearer communion with him; having also confessed and professed her own weakness and inability to come towards him, for which cause she says, 'Draw me, we will run after thee;' in the words which I have read, and in the verse following, she comes to remove certain objections and impediments, which might either discredit her or discourage her daughters, which she doth by turning her speeches unto them, who are answered as though they had expressed their objection in direct words; for the Spirit knows how to meet with our secret thoughts, either present or to come. Now these daughters who here make the objection, are supposed to be such as have no sanctifying grace as yet in them, at least very little (as it appeareth by their contemning of the church, ver. 6, and disacquaintance with Christ, chap. v. 9), yet daughters of Jerusalem. Now the first objection the church hath to meet with, is by reason of such as live in the church, are bred and born there, partake of the ordinances, are in the church, though not all of it, and these the church hath to do withal. As for the daughters of Babylon, and those out of the church, they do not heed what she saith, nor understand in any measure her language, they are neither for her nor her love. Well, with these daughters she deals, and taking up their objection, first, she answers it, ver. 5; secondly, she enlarges her answer, ver. 6. The objection is, 'Thou art black;' and this is aggravated from a comparison; the manner with her affected love, thus: And is Christ indeed, as thou reportest him, the best lover, full of sweetness and holiness, a king? what an unwise woman art thou to entertain any hopes of marrying him, since you have nothing, be poor, afflicted, filthy; in a word, black, yea, very black. This is the objection, which she answers nimbly two ways.

1. By yielding what was said: 'I am black;' that is, my estate here is imperfect, subject to sin, to affliction; not beautiful, therefore, in carnal eyes and judgments, but deformed.

2. By denying the argument, that therefore she must be despised of men, rejected of Christ as one that had nothing in her; nay, black folks may be handsome and desirable, and so saith she, I am to the eye contemptible, yet inwardly rich, desirable, and lovely, which she showeth by two comparisons.

First, thus: It is with me as with the tents of Kedar. The Kedarenes dwelt in Arabia, they dwelt in tents covered with hair (as Solymus and Pliny speaks), which tents were very coarse to look to, tanned, exposed to all weather, rough with the sun, and hard, and yet in those tents they had much treasure, they were full of wealth, in cattle, in spices, in gold, in precious stones. So is it with the church; though outwardly base, yet there are treasures within, and much glory, as further she shows, saying, she was like Solomon's curtains; his bed is after mentioned; and out of question all his doings were admirable.

This is her second comparison. You read what a glorious house he built, how long it was a-building. If the church therefore be like his curtains, she is very glorious, amiable, and rich. But how is she like them? Thus, as the curtains of Solomon's bed were most glorious, and yet did not he open to every eye, it being for those especially favoured to be admitted into such a king's bedchamber, and inmost rooms, which be for the king and his spouse, so it is with the church; she is rich, though her riches be inward, and not discernible by every eye: as Ps. xlv. 13, 'The king's daughter is all glorious within; like Solomon's curtains and Kedar's tents.' As if she should say, 'I am black,' so are the tents of Kedar, and yet have treasures in them. And not to send you so far, ye daughters of Jerusalem, know that there is much treasure and glory in Solomon's palace, which every one sees not, and so in me. Thus she answers the objection, and next, ver. 6, she dwelleth upon it, and enlargeth it. But first of this. For the meaning thereof, you see what we conceive of it; we will not be prejudicial to any man's opinion. The very matter is, she contends that it is possible for her to be rich, glorious, and lovely inwardly, though not in show (because her outward blackness did expose her to censure in the eyes of most men), and this she proves by two instances, well known unto these daughters: 1, of the Arabians, who brought treasure yearly to Solomon, 2 Chron. ix. 14, which argued their riches, though they lived in sun-burnt tents; and 2, of Solomon, who was as rich

within doors as without, though all saw it not. Thus you have the church's confession, and her defence; black outwardly, and inwardly for some corruption, as after this is objected. Thus much is yielded. Hence then learn we, Point 1. The church of God and Christians, whilst they are here, are in an imperfect state. No Christian in this life attains to full happiness and brightness, but is attended on by those sins and sorrows that argue an imperfect estate. The church of God, and every converted Christian, must needs confess that they be black outwardly and inwardly. This we hear not only from her own mouth, in her first conversion, but after; for howsoever we conceive of these things in the first chapter and part of the second, to agree with the first age of a Christian especially, yet not only; for what is here said of her is ever true whilst here on earth, though the degree be somewhat varied. The Holy Ghost useth a fair comparison; he makes the church to be born in the night, and to travel towards the day; she is going towards perfection, as one that sets out before day; yea, she is gone so far that it draweth towards the dawning. There is a mixture of some light and darkness together, and so it will be till we come to heaven, both for sin and sorrow, for sins and defects in soul. So, 1 Peter ii. 20, the saints have faults in this life, and are buffeted for them; there must be addition of grace to grace, 2 Peter i. 5, so Eph. i. 18. The eye of our understanding is shut until it be opened; and we have wonderful things to look after beyond the power of our present condition; for outward estate, see Prov. iv. 18, the church's path is like the shining light, 'which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;' for both she is duskish between night and day, and so will be till that full morning come. So Ps. xlix., what is the whole tenor thereof, save only a large commentary of our frailties and imperfections whilst we live here? So we find by Paul's description of the church, Eph. iv. 12, she is a house not yet fully furnished, nor beautified, but exposed to storms, and imperfect; she is a body not yet grown, like the tabernacle, an imperfect thing. This we see, Rev. ii. 8. Every church there is noted for sins, or afflictions, or both. If we conceive these churches to be types, the proof is most pregnant; if not (for I am persuaded God hath done teaching his church by types; for, as Heb. i. 2, 'In these last and latter days he speaks unto us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things'), yet since no church was more famous than those, who yet had blemishes and frailties a-many, it warrants here, and strengthens the point we have in hand. Hence comes the church's confession here both of sin and sorrow. Hence Paul saith, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, speaking of the church's estate, 'We know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' Hence 1 John i. 8, it is said, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is

not in us. The causes why God will have it so are, Reasons. 1. First, In regard of outward infirmities, that we might be made conformable to his Son, Rom. viii. 17, and so reign with him, being first made suitable to the body. Christ was to be like us in all things, sin excepted, and to partake with us in flesh and blood, that he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14. And we are to partake of him and his afflictions, that so we may come to partake of the divine nature, and be all in a suit, as servants of the same master.

2. Secondly, In respect of outward and inward infirmities, both because God's glory is seen in our infirmities, 2 Cor. xii. 7, his grace being sufficient to uphold us, and also in regard our weakness commends his strength, and our folly his wisdom.

3. Thirdly, Because he would draw us out of the earth, and have us hasten to accomplish the marriage and come away, therefore he sends us so many crosses, and so little rest in the flesh.

4. Again, Because God would have us humble, patient, and pitiful people, neither of which would be unless our state were imperfect; we would never know ourselves, our brethren, and God, unless it were so, that on both sides we saw the prints of our imperfections. The use is twofold.

Use 1. Is this so? Learn these lessons. First, confess if we be of the church, so much. No man is more ready to charge the church than she is to confess her infirmities. She never hideth them, she never justifieth them; she is black, she hath afflictions, she kept not her own vine, she wants knowledge, affection, discretion, love. She never denies it, but confesseth all freely from her heart; she hides not her sin, but tells what she is, what she hath done, that so she may give glory to the Lord God of Israel. And indeed, it maketh much for the honour of Christ, and commends his grace, that he, such a king, will set his heart and his eye upon such a deformed slut as the world deemeth her to be. It makes for the comfort of her poor children, and much stayeth them, when they shall hear the church in all ages, and in her Abraham, David, and Paul, saying, 'I am black,' I have affliction, corruption, as well as others. It makes for the silencing of all saucy daughters that will upbraid her; an ingenuous confession, stops their mouths, and puts them all to silence. It much quickens her to the use of the means, and maketh her cry, 'Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest.' And to seek her comfort in Christ Jesus. Oh it doth her good to receive the sentence of death, shame, poverty, damnation, in herself, that so she may be found in

Christ, arrayed with the rich robes of his righteousness. Hence her plain-hearted openness in her confession. Let us do the like, and leave it to the harlot and whore of Babylon to say herself is a queen, she is glorious, she cannot err. But let us say with the church, we are black; yea, let us see it, let us speak it with sorrow, with shame, as the saints have done, and be so affected with our estate, that it may truly humble us, and cause us to say, 'It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.' And let us so confess it in ourselves, that we pity others, and bear with them, though full of sins and miseries; so confess it, that we stir up others thereby to run, as Paul did, and use the ordinances with all diligence, to pray much, to read much, to hear, to confer, to advise, and be humble and sincere. A verbal confession of frailties, without humility, mercy, diligence, without the use of the means, is hypocrisy. If we will speak- with the church, we must feel what we say, and so well understand ourselves and our estate, that we may gain humility, mercy, watchfulness by it.

Use. 2. In the second place, thirst after heaven, nay, after the day of resurrection. Well may it be called the day of refreshing, the day of marriage. Till then the church is parched with the sun, and not half tried, till then she is accompanied with sundry imperfections in her outside. The saints are subject to aches, shames; their bodies are vile, corruptible; though in the grave free from pain, yet not from dishonour. Imperfections within the soul there are many, conflicts, corruptions, temptations, fears, sorrows, &c. Imperfections also in company: she is not taken out of the world; she hath her dwelling in the tents of Kedar, meets with hypocrites, atheists, persecutions, devils. Imperfections for means; she seeth but in a glass, she beholds Christ but through a window; she is in prison, and speaks through it; and there are imperfections in services, repentance, faith, prayer; and imperfections in parts and members: some members be not called yet, and it grieves her; some being called are very sickly, weak, heady; the best on earth imperfect, those in heaven not perfected till we come also, Heb. xii. 23. Nay, Christ himself, as head of the body, not yet perfected in his members, and in his church, which is his fulness, as Paul speaks, Eph. i. 23. Oh then, since nothing in the church attains its perfection till that day, since Christ calleth, come away, that head and members may have the same glory together, since the creatures here, and all saints cry, come; let us so well understand our estate here, and there, and the odds of both, that we may say also, come, fly, my beloved, and be like the roe, that so all the shadows may fly away; and therefore, not only pray and hasten ourselves, but others also, that so harvest may be ripe when we sow betimes.

Well, then, she yields herself to be black, but yet she is not discouraged; she will not be set down, she is comely for all her blackness, she will to Christ still, as the verse tells us. Hence learn, Doct. 2. Though our estate be here imperfect, yet we must not be discouraged. God's children must so see their sins, and sorrow for them, as that though they be thereby sent to humiliation, yet they may retain hope of mercy. So the church does, Ps. xli. 17, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant; our heart is not turned back,' &c. So Isa. lxiii. 17, though the church was hard-hearted, yet she goes to Christ to bemoan herself: 'Oh Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return, O Lord,' &c.; yet she conceives hope. This was Samuel's counsel to the people, 'Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart,' 1 Sam. xii. 20, 21. And David likewise to his soul, Ps. xlii. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou discouraged within me? yet trust in God.' So the like is Paul's practice, Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?' &c. Then he answers, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thus you see the point is plain; now the reasons.

Reason 1. We have a great and mighty deliverer. He loves his children in the midst of all their deformities. Like a good father, he tenders us in our weaknesses of soul and body, and as a father pities his child the more for being sick, so here he calls her for all this, 'O thou fairest amongst women,' &c.

2. Secondly, He is able to help them in all estates; his grace is still sufficient, he hath present help. What needs the child be dismayed for pain, when the Father can remove it at his pleasure?

3. Thirdly, The saints of God in all ages have gone through imperfections; they have been sick, poor, doubtful, passionate, as well as we. God hath brought them to heaven, to happiness, through all storms. Though in their life they cried, 'we are black,' we are forsaken; and why should we fear to wade through those waters where all have escaped that went before us?

4. Fourthly, Uprightness may stand with imperfection, some gold may be amongst earth; as the church shows here, beauty and deformity may stand together, some light, some darkness. Now God bids the upright hope, rejoice, says he is blessed, Ps. xxiii. 6.

5. Lastly, Because the effects of discouragement are too bad, as fretting, Ps. xlii. 11; yea, this doth not only keep out praises, but causes neglect of all ordinances, drives from God, makes one fierce, envious, uncomfortable, impotent, &c.

Use 1. This is to humble ourselves for our weakness; for, alas! how soon are we swooning and discouraged. Every slight affliction, corruption, temptation, doth dismay and put us to silence. If storms fall, and winds blow, if flesh stir, and Satan be busy, our faith trembles, and hearts are shaken; we meditate, fear and suspect ourselves; we suspect God, and shun his presence, and say in our haste 'we are forgotten;' this is our death. Oh how unworthy Christ is this carriage! How unlike the church in this place. She is charged with faults, upbraided with baseness, yet she holds on, she prayeth still. To Christ she runs; no affliction, no temptation, no corruption shall keep her from him, because nothing can keep him from her, as Rom. viii. 38 is at length showed. Where is our faith, strength, courage, patience? Where is the spirit of power, that we are so weak in every temptation? Verily, these faintings of spirit, these despairing questions, these violent fears, do argue much weakness. Let us be humbled for this; humbled, I say, but not discouraged; for even the church sometimes, sometimes Manoah, yea, a David, have thus failed.

Use 2. Now learn to be courageous. Are afflictions upon thee? Be sensible of them, be humbled in them, but never shrink from thy hold of Christ or hope of mercy. Be of Paul's resolution; 'We are distressed,' saith he, 'but yet faint not.' See God at thy right hand, as David did, and therefore be not moved. See what is gained by affliction, 'the inward man grows.' See what is laid up for these light and short afflictions, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'even a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory.' Art thou censured and scorned by men? Make use of it, but not to discouragement. Remember Christ was despised, counted a worm, judged wicked, and then say with the church, 'Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, though I fall I shall rise again: When I am in darkness, the Lord he will be a light unto me,' Micah vii. 8. Art thou assaulted by Satan? Cry with Paul, and bemoan thyself; but know therewith that God's 'grace is, and shall be sufficient for thee,' 2 Cor. xii. 9; that he hath overcome, and therefore resolve, with Job, to receive from God what he will put upon thee, yea, to die at his feet, Job xiii. 15. Art thou led captive with thy corruptions? Mourn with Paul, but say withal. 'It is not I, but sin in me; I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Romans vii. 17, 25. It is a most worthy service to give Christ the glory of his riches in poverty, of his power

in weakness, grace in sin, life in death. Then we live by faith, then we show forth the strength of the Spirit. To this purpose, first learn to know thyself, what thou art by nature, and all men else. The want of this knowledge breeds pride, discouragement, error in judgment, mistaking, misapplication of things. Secondly, know what Christ is, how lovely, how rich, how able, how true; how willing he is to help the distressed and miserable, never adding affliction unto affliction. Thirdly, see what he hath done for others, for thyself heretofore. Now lay thyself by infirmities with the church here, and when the devil upbraids thee with thy maims, look on thy cures; when he sets before thee the tempestuous dark works of the first Adam, do thou oppose, and lay before thee the quiet fruit of righteousness and peace-making reconciliation and works of Christ, the second Adam, thy surety, who hath paid thy debts and satisfied divine justice to the full.

Further, in that the church here stands upon her comeliness, notwithstanding of all her deformities and infirmities, learn we, Doct. 3. There is a glory and excellence in the saints of God in the midst of all their deformities and debasements. Though they be encompassed with many miseries, yet are they glorious even in this life. Indeed their glory is like Solomon's curtains, not obvious to every eye; like Kedar's tents, or a heap of wheat in the chaff, and outwardly base, but inwardly excellent. Their life is sanctified indeed, and they live the life of grace, hence they are termed glory, Isaiah iv. 5; hence, as Ps. lxxviii. 13, after their misery, it is promised they should be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; hence, Ps. xlv. 16, they are called princes in all lands, all glorious within, to be of excellent beauty; hence. Ps. cx. 3, their beauty is termed a holy beauty; yea, that which is said of the church of Smyrna, Rev. iii. 9, may be said of every church, 'She is poor, but rich;' and that which Paul saith of the apostles may be said of all, they are poor and rich, base and honourable, dying and yet living, having nothing, and yet possessing all things, 2 Cor. iv. 8, et seq. And why?

Reason 1. Needs it must be so, for being converted, they obtain a new name, Rev. ii. 17; yea, they have this peculiar favour granted, as 1 John iii. 1, to be called the 'sons of God.' This is set down with a 'behold,' to admire the wonderful love of God and excellency of the saints, who are also called princes on earth, as Ps. xlv. 16.

2. Secondly, they have a new nature, being made partakers of the image of God, and so of the divine nature; as it is, 2 Pet. i. 4, 'having escaped that corruption which is in the world through lust.'

3. Thirdly, they have a new estate; Christ Jesus makes them free, as John viii. 35, and he makes them also rich, supplying all their wants with the riches of his glory: as Ps. iv. 3, the prophet says, 'But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself,' &c.

4. Lastly, they have a new kindred and guide. God is their Father, they are members of Christ: 1 Cor. xii. 13, they are 'led by the Spirit of God.' God dwelleth in them, and the Spirit of glory rests upon them even in affliction, 1 Pet. iv. 14, and filleth them with glorious faith and precious graces.

[1.] This first discovers a wonderful blindness in us, who can see no such matter in the saints of God. Christians shine in the world as stars in a dark night, and as far excel all others as corn weeds, chaff; yea, as far as lilies and roses do thorns and briars; and yet we cannot see it, unless we have riches, titles, fashions, wit, beauty to grace them. We see no beauty in them, we do not regard nor reverence them, we neglect, nay, despise them. Oh hearts of flesh, oh carnal eyes, that can see nothing but outward gauds and toys! How do we stick in the outward mud of this world, that serve only the world! How do we judge by the outward appearance! How carnal to have the glorious faith of Christ in respect of persons! Jude 16. How blind are we who cannot see the sunshine, and no excellency in those whom all the glorious angels serve, whom the King of glory terms 'the fairest of women!' Brethren, what shall I say to you? If your eyes be so blinded that you cannot see the church like Solomon's curtains, cannot see beauty in a Christian's face, wisdom in his language, glory in his behaviour, even in affliction; when their happiness is revealed, it will be a proof against you that you have not that anointing of God which teaches you all things, that you are but natural. Ask yourselves, therefore, the question, what men do I most admire, reverence, and who is most glorious in my eye? And if the Christian be not, you have but fleshly eyes, hearts, and affections. Strive and labour reformation.

[2.] Secondly, This is comfort to saints now and hereafter. Now they be glorious, but yet they are but in the way going to glory; as Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light' that waxeth more and more unto the perfect day.' Yet 'their life is hid with God in Christ.' When Christ, 'which is their life, shall appear, then shall they likewise appear in glory,' Col. iii. 3. Now they are the sons of God; but it appeareth not in this world what they

shall be; and if they be now such, whilst black, what when in heaven, when Christ is made glorious in them? If thus in their pilgrimage, what at home in their country? If thus, imperfect, what in perfection? If thus, in corruption, what when this corruption shall put on incorruption? And if thus, in mortality, what when mortality shall be swallowed up of life?

Thus we have heard the church's apology for her blackness. The next verse, which I cannot now speak of as I would, contains the remainder of her answer, wherein she proceeds to show thus much, that the church and Christians, even at the worst, are not to be despised for infirmities. This she takes for granted, as formerly proved, and then goes on to show the causes which wrought her blackness and misery.

1. First, outwardly; The sun had parched her, that is, many afflictions had overtaken her; and then, in her particular, her mother's sons had crossed her; false hypocrites, erroneous, proud professors, carrying the name of brethren, had vilified and taken all occasions to put base drudgery upon her.

2. The second cause was inward; She kept not her own vineyard, that is, she did not husband her own soul aright; she looked not to her own work and charge; which words contain not an extenuation of her blackness, but an amplification of the causes of it rather. Thus you see the church's mind: she thinks men should rather comfort and encourage her, than despise her for her many afflictions, seeing she doth so freely confess them; and those who are in misery ought to be comforted. Not to stand upon it: hence we learn, Doct. 4. We must not still be poring into the deformities of God's church and people, like flies on galled places, or dogs upon garbage and raw flesh. For, Reason 1. First, This is a practice which utterly crosseth God in his commandments, who chargeth us 'not to despise the day of small things,' Zech. iv. 10.

Reason 2. Secondly, This is quite against justice; for Christians have beauty as well as blackness, graces as well as corruptions.

Reason 3. Thirdly, This neither cometh from any good, nor worketh good. It ariseth from pride, ignorance, &c., and showeth that a man neither knows his own estate, nor God's proceedings with his people, who brings them to honour through baseness, and confounds the glory of the world with base things.

Use 1. This condemneth those Christians who have their eyes still upon the blackness of the church, who are of three sorts:

First, papists, who deck a whore, and call her Christ's spouse, and in the mean time despise the church of Christ for blackness and outward deformities.

Secondly, against such who stumble as much at our inward deformities, as these at our outward debasements, at our discipline, preaching, ministry, sacraments, calling, ordinances, as though all were antichristian. Why will not such see white with black? good with bad? We confess that in our church, as in every church visible, there is corn and tares, fish, good and bad, sometimes children, sometimes bastards, only sons by the mothers' side: we never knew it otherwise in any church.

Thirdly, This is against such as like bats can see to fly in the dark only. The prosperity of Christians they cannot see, or graces, nor comforts, nor good works, to be provoked thereby to obedience; but if any one be crossed in his profession, they speak of it; if any fall into sin, they remember him; if any suffer shipwreck, if any live less comfortably, or die less cheerfully, oh then there is work enough: who would be a Christian? How doth it make men mopish and lumpish, and bring men out of their wits? And whence is all this; but from ignorance or great hypocrisy, or malice? In love there is no such offence, as John speaks, and therefore to these the church speaks, 'Look not upon me, because I am black, &c.

A word only of the causes of her affliction, and so I have done—which came by her mother's sons, such as live in the church. So that we see the church hath those who afflict her and persecute her even within herself. See for this point: Rebekah's sorrow and struggling within her, two nations, Gen. xxv. 22. Next, see how they use her, and why? They take her by violence, and force her to slavery, and exercise too much hardness over her; and the reason that she apprehends is, the neglects in her own business; lay these together: so we learn, Doct. 5. Then God's children pay for it, when they do not their own work, not keeping their own standing. It is with them as soldiers and scholars, when they keep not their own places, and learn not their own lessons: they are met with on every side. And that, Reason 1. First, because no man speeds well out of his own place, but Christians worst of all; as Prov. xxvii. 8, a thousand inconveniences befall to one's self, to his charge, when absent. God will be upon him, and leave him to himself, till he hath wound himself into woeful brakes.

Reason 2. Secondly, Men will be upon his back, as Paul on Peter's, or else grow strange till he be humbled; but bad men they will curse him, all the hypocrites in the town will be at his heels.

Reason 3. Thirdly, The devil will be upon them, and having drawn them out of the way, will either still mislead them, or else cut their throats and steal all, or hold them, if possible he may, from returning unto God; as in the prodigal son.

Reason 4. Fourthly, Their own consciences will be upon them, and it is with them as with a child that plays truant, his heart throbs, he hath no peace: so a Christian, whether he prosper or not prospers, he hath no peace, he eats not, he sleeps not in peace. The uses briefly are two.

Use 1. Is this true? It first teacheth us to do as the church doth, to examine ourselves when troubles come, when the Lord sends officers to arrest us, sets dogs upon us to fetch us in. When we meet stirs and storms abroad, when wicked men bark and brawl, when they tyrannize and task, when good men look strangely on us, when God hides his face, and our consciences be not comfortable unto us, oh, then, let us ask ourselves the question, where am I? what have I done? wherein have I been negligent? This, this is that which God aimeth at. Therefore he makes our paths uncomfortable, to the end we should examine our vaunts; therefore he turneth loose wicked men, that we might inquire. This is that which will work us patience in all provocations, drive us to repentance, and bring us home; this will make one lay his face in the dust, and rather justify God, than charge him foolishly. Therefore let us not fret or chafe at men, their pride, malice, &c., but say, why doth living man fret? He suffers for sin: Lament, iii. 1, et seq., say with the church here, 'I kept not mine own vine: and this hath hurt me.' And then howsoever God's people may sometimes smart for not keeping their vines, and performing their own duties; yet those crosses sting not, but comfort; they then ere long abound with joy, peace, increase of love and watchfulness, which are let in most an end by former negligences. God saw his people drowsy, worldly, secure, and therefore is constrained to send persecution, so that if evils be upon us, we have cause to say, 'I kept not mine own vine;' time was when I was idle all day in the vineyard, and did nothing, and yet I am too negligent.

Use 2. Secondly, Here see what is the best way to prevent crosses. All crosses be rods, as Christ speaks in the gospel, and scourges. Now if a child will do well, what father will whip him? If we will learn the lessons of our

salvation, Christ, God will not scourge us; if we would follow the shepherd and not stray, what need dogs run at us? Why then, let us know the duties of our place and do them, and keep ourselves close to them, for all our safety, peace, comfort, lieth there. Our place is a ship on the seas. Now two ways we fail in our course. First, by out-running our callings. We grow too far over-busy, and indeed this is most incident to the church in her first beginning. She is then too nimble with others, and too busy; her zeal, as she thinks, carries her captive. Secondly, by running too slowly. This is incident to Christians of riper years. After a while they slack, cooling apace, and it is with us as with children, so eager to go to school at first, that there is no quiet, but after hardly drawn. So it is with us. Amend, amend therefore these: turn neither to the right hand nor the left; for if thou doest, thou art like to smart for it. Then up and upon your callings as Christians, as masters, as servants, as magistrates, as husbands, as wives. Every one hath a vine to look to, look to your callings; and then whatsoever befall you, 'if you suffer not as evil doers, blessed are you,' 1 Peter iii. 14.

# Miracle of Miracles

## First Sermon

*“The Lord himself shall give a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”—Isaiah VII. 14.*

The Jews at this time were in a distressed condition, by reason of the siege of two kings, Resin and Pekah: the one the king of Syria, the other the king of Israel. Whereupon the prophet labours to comfort them, and tells them that these two kings were but as two fire-brands, that should waste and consume themselves, and then go out. For confirmation thereof, because he saw the heart both of king and people astonished, he biddeth them ‘ask a sign of things in heaven or earth.’ No, saith king Ahaz, ‘I will not tempt God;’ and making religion his pretence against religion, being a most wilful and wicked man, would not.

For he had framed an altar according to the altar which he had seen at Damascus, neglecting God’s altar at Jerusalem as too plain and homely.

Man, unsubdued by the Spirit of God, admires the devices of men, and the fabric of his own brain.

And though this king was so fearful, that his heart, and the rest of their hearts, were ‘as the leaves in the forest,’ shaking, and trembling, and quaking at the presence of their enemies, and though he was surprised with fear and horror, seeing God his enemy, and himself God’s enemy, and that God intended him no good, yet he would go on in his own superstitious course, having some secret confidence in league and affinity with other kings that were superstitious like himself. This, by the way.

We may learn by this wretched king, that those that are least fearful before danger are most basely fearful in danger. He that was so confident and wilful out of danger, in danger, his heart was ‘as the leaves of the forest.’ For a wicked man in danger hath no hope from God, and therefore is incapable of any intercourse with him. He will trust the devil and his instruments, led with a superstitious spirit, rather than God: as this king had more confidence in the king of Syria, that was his enemy, and so shewed himself after, than in God. It is the nature of flesh and blood, being not

sanctified by God, to trust in this means and that means, this carnal help and that carnal help, 'a reed of Egypt,' yea, the devil and lies, rather than to God himself.

The prophet, in an holy indignation for the refusing of a sign to confirm his faith that these kings should not do the church harm, breaketh forth thus: Know, O house of David, 'is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?' God offers you a sign out of his love, and you dislike and condemn his blessed bounty. Therefore 'the Lord himself shall give you a sign.' What is that? 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'

From the inference, we may see the conflict between the infinite goodness of God and the inflexible stubbornness of man; God's goodness striving with man's badness. When they would have no sign, yet God will give them a sign. His goodness overcometh and out-wrestleth in the contention man's sinful strivings, his mercy prevails against man's malice.

To come to the text itself. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.' It was not so much a sign for the present, as a promise of a miraculous benefit, which was to be presented almost eight hundred years after the prophet spake these words, even the incarnation of Christ, a miracle of miracles, a benefit of benefits, and the cause of all benefits. He fetcheth comfort against the present distress from a benefit to come. And to shew how this can be a ground of comfort at this time of distress, 'that a virgin shall conceive,' we must know that 'Christ was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. All the godly of the Jews knew it well enough, the Messiah being" all their comfort. They knew that he was 'yesterday and to-day, and shall be the same for ever.' The church had in all times comfort from Christ. *Profuit antequam fuit*: he did good before he was exhibited in the world.

And thus the prophet applies the comfort to the house of David: 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, who shall be of the family of David.' And therefore the house of David shall not be extinct and dissolved. The reason is strong. You of the house of David are in fear that your kingdom and nation shall be destroyed; but know that the Messiah must come of a virgin, and of the house of David. And considering this must certainly come to pass, why do ye fear, ye house of David?

Again, it hath force of a reason thus. The promise of our Messiah is the grand promise of all, and the cause of all promises; for all promises made to the church, are either promises of Christ himself, or promises in him and for his sake, because he takes all promises from God, and conveyeth them, and maketh them good to us. God maketh them, and performeth them in Christ and for Christ.

Now the reason stands thus, if God will give a Messiah, that shall be the 'son of a virgin,' and 'Emmanuel,' certainly he will give you deliverance. He that will do the greater will do the less. What is the deliverance you desire to the promised deliverance from hell and damnation, and to the benefit by the Messiah, which you profess to hope for and believe?

The apostle himself, Rom. in. 8, reasons thus: 'God, that spared not his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall not he with him give us all things?' If God will give Christ to be Emmanuel and incarnate, he will not stand upon any other inferior promises or mercies whatsoever.

Obj. But you will say, this promise was to come; and how could this confirm their faith for the present, that they should not be destroyed?

Ans. I answer, In regard of his taking our nature, he was 'to come,' yet Christ was always with his church before. They understood him in the 'manna;' he was the 'angel of the covenant.' They that were spiritually wise amongst the Jews, understood that he was the rock that went before them.

And again, it is usual in Scripture to give signs from things to come, as Isa. xxxvii. 30, 'The next year thou shalt eat that which groweth of itself,' &c., because where faith is, it maketh things 'to come' all one as if they were present.

And so we should make this use of the grand promises of Christ to comfort us against all petty matters and wants whatsoever. And to reason with the holy apostle, 'God spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him to death.' He hath given Christ, and will he not give things needful? Hath he given the greater, and will he stand with thee for the less? This is a blessed kind of reasoning. And so to reason from other grand things promised. God shall raise my body out of the dust and the grave, and cannot he raise my body out of sickness, and my state out of trouble? Cannot he raise the church out of misery? So saith St Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, 'God that raised Christ, restored me again, that had received the sentence of death.' When we receive sentence

of death in our persons, look to him that raised Christ from the dead, and to the grand promises to come. They before Christ comforted themselves in times of all distress by the grand promise of Christ 'to come.' But now the Messiah is come. And which may much more strengthen our faith, he hath suffered, and given his body to death for us; and therefore, why doubt we of God's good will in any petty matters whatsoever.

To come to the words more particularly, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' &c.

You have diverse articles of our faith in these few words. As Christ's conception by the Holy Ghost, his being born of the Virgin Mary,' &c. You have here the human nature of Christ, 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' And the divine nature of Christ, his name shall be called Emmanuel, which signifieth also his office, 'God with us' by nature, and God with us by office, to set God and us at one. So you have divers points of divinity couched in the words, which I will only open suitable to the occasion.

'Behold.' This is the usual beacon set up, the usual harbinger to require our attendance in all matters concerning Christ. And it hath a threefold force here. 'Behold,' as being a thing presented to the eye of faith. He mounteth over all the interim between the promise and the accomplishment, for faith knoweth no difference of times.

2. And then, it is to raise attention. 'Behold;' it is a matter of great concernment.

3. And not only attention, but likewise admiration. 'Behold,' a strange and admirable thing. For what stranger thing is there than that a virgin should conceive, that a virgin should be a mother, and that God should become man.

We had need of strong grace to apprehend these strange things. And therefore God hath provided a grace suitable, above reason, and above nature, and that is faith. Reason mocketh at this. The devil knoweth it and envieth it. The angels know, and wonder at it. The soul itself, without a grace suitable to the admirableness of the thing, can never apprehend it. And therefore, well may it be said, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' &

‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear.’ And why a virgin? When God is to be born, it is fit for a virgin to be the mother. Christ was not to come by the ordinary way of propagation. He was to come from Adam, but not by Adam; for he was to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Because he was indeed to be a sacrifice, and he must be without spot or sin himself, that was to offer himself for the sins of others. Therefore the foundation and ground of his nature must be pure and clean; and that is the foundation of all the purity of his life and conversation, and therefore a virgin.

This was typified in Aaron’s rod, which budded though it had no root. No juice could come from a dry stick, yet by an almighty power the rod did bud. And so Moses’s bush. It burned and did not consume. And that God that caused those things, caused a virgin to be a mother.

He enters into the womb of a virgin without any defilement at all, considering the Holy Ghost, from the Father and the Son, did purge and purify and sanctify that mass whereof the blessed body of our Saviour was made. The virgin afforded the matter, but the wise framer was the Holy Ghost. She was passive, the Holy Ghost was the agent.

Now, when did the virgin conceive? When upon the angel’s coming to her and telling her ‘that she was greatly beloved,’ and that she should conceive; she assented, ‘Be it so as the Lord hath spoken,’ Luke i. 38. When she assented to the word, presently Christ was conceived; her faith and her womb conceived together. When her heart did conceive the truth of the promise, and yielded assent thereunto, her womb conceived at the same time also.

Obs. From hence learn something for ourselves: It had been to little purpose though a virgin conceived Christ, unless Christ had been conceived likewise in her heart. And there is no benefit by virtue of this conception to others, but to such as conceive Christ in their hearts also.

To which end our hearts must be in some measure made virgin hearts, pure hearts, hearts fit to receive Christ.

We must assent to promises of pardon and of life everlasting: ‘Be it as the Lord saith.’ A Christian is a Christian, and Christ liveth in his heart, at the time of the assenting to the promise. So that if you ask, When doth Christ first live in a Christian’s heart? I answer, then, when the heart yieldeth a firm assent to the gracious promises made in Christ for the pardoning of sins and

acceptation to the favour of God, and title and interest to life everlasting. For faith is the birth of the heart.

Christ was conceived in the womb of an humble and believing virgin. So that heart that will conceive Christ aright, must be a humble and believing heart: humble, to deny himself in all things; and believing, to go out of itself to the promises of God in Christ. When God by his Spirit hath brought our hearts to be humble and believing, to go out of themselves and believe in him, rest upon him and his promises, then Christ is conceived in our heart.

‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.’ Here is the birth of Christ as well as the conception. Christ must not only be conceived in the womb, but also brought forth, because God must be manifested in the flesh; as St Paul saith, ‘Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,’ 1 Tim. iii. 10. If he had only been conceived, and not brought forth, he had not been manifested. He was to do all things that befitted a Mediator.

And therefore he went along with us in all the passages of our lives. He was conceived as we are, remained in the womb so many months, born as we are born, brought into the light as we are; away therefore with idle, monkish devices and fond conceits, that affirm the contrary!

He was like to us in all things, ‘sin excepted;’ conceived, brought forth, hung upon the breast as we, an infant as we; hungry, and thirsty, and suffered as we.

And as he was in all things like to us, so in everything that was in him there was something extraordinary; as he was a man like to us, so he was an extraordinary man. He was conceived, but of a virgin, which is extraordinary. He was born as we are, but there his star appeared, and the wise men came to adore and worship him. He was poor as we are, but there were beams of his Godhead appeared. When he was poor, ‘he could command a fish to furnish him,’ Mat. xvii. 27. He died as we die, but he made the ‘earth to quake, the veil of the temple to rend,’ when he triumphed on the cross, Mat. xxvii. 51. All which declared he was more than an ordinary person.

And so we must all conceive Christ, and bear Christ in our words and actions. It must appear that Christ liveth in us; it must appear outwardly to man what we are inwardly to God. Our whole outward life must be nothing but a discovery of Christ living in us. ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,’ saith St Paul, Gal. ii. 20; which should appear by word, conversation,

and action. Our lives should be nothing but an acting of Christ living in our souls.

This is not a mere analogical truth, but it floweth naturally. Whosoever are to have the benefit of his birth and conception, Christ sendeth into their heart the same Spirit that sanctified the mass whereof he was made, and so frameth a disposition suitable to himself. He sets his own stamp upon the heart. As the union of his human nature to the divine was the cause of all other graces of his human nature, so the Spirit of God, uniting us to Christ, is the cause of all grace in us. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his.

‘And shall call his name Emmanuel.’ Many things might be observed concerning the ordinary reading of the words. Some read, ‘She shall call his name Emmanuel,’ because he had no father; others, ‘His name shall be called Emmanuel;’ but they be doubtful, therefore I leave them (a).

But ‘Jesus’ was his name; therefore how can it be said, he shall be called ‘Emmanuel’?

The meaning is, he shall be ‘Emmanuel,’ and shall be accounted and believed to be so; he shall be God with us indeed, and shall shew himself to be so; for in the Hebrew phrase, the meaning of a thing imports the being of the thing. The like phrase is in Isa. ix. 6, ‘To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace;’ that is, ‘He shall be believed to be so, and shall shew himself to be so, and shall be so indeed.’ The like you have, because it is an answer to the cavil of the Jews, which object he was not called ‘Emmanuel.’ ‘Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness,’ Jer. ii. 8. For indeed he is Jehovah our righteousness, and we have no righteousness to stand before God with but his. Divers other places of Scripture there be of the same nature; but these two are pregnant, and therefore I name them for all the rest.

Besides the conception and birth of Christ, you have here likewise the divine nature of Christ and the offices of Christ; for Emmanuel is a name both of nature and office.

It is a name of his nature, God and man; and of his office, which is to reconcile God and man. We could not be ‘with God,’ but God must first be

‘man with us.’ We were once with God in Adam, before he fell; but there being a breach made, we cannot be recovered again till God be with us. He must take our natures, that he may reconcile our persons.

Now, Christ is ‘Emmanuel;’ first, in regard of nature, ‘God with us,’ or God in our nature. The pure nature of God, and the base nature of man, that were strangers ever since the fall, are knit together in Christ. What can be in a greater degree of strangeness, except the devil’s, than men’s unholiness and God’s pure nature? Yet the nature of man and of God being so severed before, are met together in one Christ; so that in this one word ‘Emmanuel’ there is heaven and earth, God and man, infinite and finite; therefore we may well prefix ‘behold.’

A true Saviour of the world must be ‘God with man, whether we consider the greatness of the good we are to have by a Saviour, or the greatness of the evil we are to be freed from by a Saviour, both which do enforce that he must be Emmanuel, God with us.

I. (1.) First, The greatness of the good which we are to have, for he is to be God and man together, to satisfy the wrath of God, to undergo a punishment due to sin as our surety. He must give us title to heaven, and bring us thither, and who can do this but God?

(2.) Besides, secondly, he must know our hearts, our wants, our griefs, our infirmities; he must be everywhere to relieve us; and who can do this but God?

(3.) So, thirdly, in regard of evil, which we are to be freed from. He is to defend us in the midst of our enemies;’ and who is above the devil, and sin, and the wrath of God, and all the oppositions that stand between us and heaven, but God? So in regard of the good, in regard of the evil, and in regard of the preservation to an eternal good estate, and freedom from eternal evil, he must be ‘Emmanuel, God with us.’

These grand principles are enough to satisfy in this point.

II. And, secondly, as he must be God, so there was a necessity of his being man. Man had sinned, and man must suffer for sin, and ‘without blood there was no remission,’ Heb. ix. 22; and then, that he might be ‘a merciful and pitiful Saviour,’ Heb. in. 17, he must take that nature on him that he meaneth to save. There must be a suitableness and sympathy; suitableness,

that the head and the members, the sanctified and the sanctifier, may be both of one nature; and a sympathy, that he might be touched with human infirmities.

III. Thirdly, This God and man must be one person; for if there were two persons, God one distinct person and man another, then there were two Christs, and so the actions of the one could not be attributed to the other.

As man died and shed his blood, it could not have been said that God died; but because there was but one person, God is truly said to die, though he died in man's nature, for he took man's nature into unity with his person; and whatsoever either nature did, the whole person is said to do; and therefore Christ is a Saviour according to both natures, as God and as man; for he was to suffer, and he was to overcome, and satisfy in suffering. He was not only to hear our prayers, but to answer them. Both natures had an entrance into all the work of mediation.

God died, and God suffered, and supported the manhood, that it might uphold the burden of the wrath of God, that it might not sink under it.

And so in all his actions there was concurrence of divinity and humanity; the meaner works being done by the manhood, the greater works by the Godhead, so making one 'Emmanuel, God with us.'

For God must bring us to heaven by a way suitable to his holiness, and therefore by way of satisfaction; and that cannot be but by God equal with himself.

And that is the reason why the apostle joins together 'without Christ, without God,' Eph. iii. 12; that is, they that know not Christ God-man, to reconcile God and man, have nothing to do with God. For the pure nature of God, what hath it to do with the impure nature of man, without Emmanuel, without him that is God-man, to make satisfaction?

But now that Christ hath taken our nature, it is become pure in him, and beloved of God in him. And God in him is become lovely, because he is our nature; yea, in Christ, God is become a Father: 'I go to your Father, and my Father,' John xvi. 28. His nature is sweet to us in Christ; our nature is sweet to him in Christ; God loveth not our nature, but first in him in whom it is pure. And then he loveth our nature in us, because, by the Spirit of Christ, he will make our natures like to Christ's; and therefore we may conceive of God

as Emmanuel, God well pleased with us, and we well pleased with him. Out of Christ we are angry with God, and he angry with us. We could wish there were no God, and choose rather to submit to the devil, to be led by his spirit to all profaneness and licentiousness. We have a rising against God and his image; and whatever comes from God, the proud, unmortified heart of man swelleth against it. But when the heart once believeth that Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, hath satisfied God's justice, now, God is taken by the believing heart to be a Father 'reconciled in Jesus Christ,' 2 Cor.

v. 18. And we are taught to be his sons. And our nature is more and more purified and cleansed, and made like the pure nature of Christ; and so by little and little the terms between God and us are more sweet, till we get to heaven, where our nature shall be absolutely perfect and purged by the Holy Spirit. So that he is Emmanuel, God with us, to make God and us friends, which is two ways: first, by satisfaction, taking away the wrath of God; and then, secondly, by the Spirit; for God sendeth his Spirit into our hearts, to fit us for friendship and communion with him, when we have something of God in us.

From hence many things may be spoken, partly for instruction and comfort. I will name a few.

1. First of all, it is to be wondered at, and we cannot wonder enough, though we were angels, and had natures larger than they are, at the marvellous mercies and love of God, that would stoop so low, as that God in the second person should take our nature and become one with us. It is marvellous love that he would be one with us by such a means as his own Son, to make peace between him and us. It is a marvellous condescending and stooping in the Son to take our nature. When there be better creatures above us, that he would let pass all above us, and take our nature, that is dust, into unity of his person; that earth, flesh and blood, should be taken into one person with the Godhead, it is wonderful and marvellous.

He took not the nature of angels; so that we be above angels, by the incarnation of Christ. Because he took not the angels' nature, they are not the spouse of Christ, but every believing Christian is the spouse of Christ. He is married to Christ; he is the head, we the members. He is the husband, we the spouse; and therefore we may stand in admiration of the love of God, in taking our natures on him.

It requires hearts warmed by the Spirit of God to think of and admire these things answerable to their natures. The angels, when Christ was born, could not contain, but break out, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men,' Luke in. 13, 14, because there was then peace; peace between God and us, and by consequence with all the creatures, which do but take part with God and revenge his quarrel.

These things be matters of admiration; and we shall spend eternity in admiration thereof in another world, though here our narrow hearts can hardly conceive it. But what we cannot believe by understanding, as things above nature, let us labour to understand them by believing. Desire God we may believe them, and then we shall understand them to our comfort.

'Emmanuel, God with us.' If God be with us in our nature, then he is with us in his love; 'and if God be with us, who shall be against us?' Rom. viii. 31. For this Emmanuel hath taken our nature forever; he hath taken it into heaven with him. God and we shall for ever be in good terms, because God in our nature is for ever in heaven, as an intercessor appearing for us. There is no fear of a breach now; for our Brother is in heaven, our Husband is in heaven, to preserve an everlasting union and amity between God and us. Now, we may insult in an holy manner over all oppositions whatsoever. For if God be with us in our nature, and by consequence in favour, who shall be against us? and therefore with the apostle, 'let us triumph,' Rom. viii. 37, seq.

Let us make use of this Emmanuel in all troubles whatsoever, whether of the church or of our own persons. In troubles of the church; the church hath enemies, hell, and the world, and Satan's factors; but we have one, Emmanuel, God with us, and therefore we need not fear. You know whose ensign it is, whose motto, *Deus nobiscum* is better than *Sancta Maria*. *Sancta Maria* will down when *Deus nobiscum* shall stand.

I beseech you, therefore, let us comfort ourselves in regard of the church, as the prophet in the next chapter, verse 7, comforts the church in distress: 'He shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.' It may seem a kind of complaint, 'The enemy stretcheth out their wings over thy land, O Emmanuel;' which may teach us in the person of the church to go to Emmanuel: Remember the enemies of thy church spread their wings over thy land and people; O Emmanuel, thou seest the malice of the enemy, the malice of antichrist and his supporters. He is the true Michael, that stands for his church. And then in

the tenth verse, 'Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.' And as the church before Christ came in the flesh, much more may we, now he is come in the flesh, insult over all. Let all the enemies consult together, this king and that power, there is a counsel in heaven will disturb and dash all their counsels. Emmanuel in heaven laugheth them to scorn. And as Luther said, 'Shall we weep and cry when God laugheth? He seeth a company of idolatrous wretches, that conspire together to root out all protestants from the earth, if it lay in their power. They that are inspired with Jesuitical spirits, the incendiaries of the world, have devoured all Israel and Christendom in their hopes; but the church, which is Emmanuel's land and freehold, sees it, and laughs them to scorn. God can dash all their treacherous counsels.

And so in all personal trouble whatsoever, 'Emmanuel, God with us,' is fitted to be a merciful Saviour. He was poor, that he might be with the poor. He took not on him an impassible nature, but he took our poverty, our miserable nature. He is poor with the poor, afflicted with the afflicted, persecuted with the persecuted. He is deserted with them that be deserted: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He suffers with them that suffer; he hath gone through all the passages of our lives. In the beginning of it he was conceived and born; and he hath gone along with us, and is able to pity and succour us in our poverty, in prison, in bonds, in disgrace, in our conflict with God, in our terror of conscience, in all our temptations and assaults by Satan. He was tempted himself by Satan, for this purpose, that Emmanuel might in all these be merciful.

Let us not lose the comforts of this sweet name, in which you have couched so many comforts. In the hour of death, when we are to die, think of Emmanuel. When Jacob was to go into Egypt, saith God, 'Fear not, Jacob; go, I will go with thee, and bring thee back again,' Gen. xlv. 3; and he did bring him back to be buried in Canaan. So fear not to die; fear not to go to the grave, Emmanuel hath been there. He will go into the grave; he will bring us out of the dust again; for 'Emmanuel' is 'God with us,' who is God over death, over sin, over the wrath of God, God over all, blessed for evermore; and hath triumphed over all. So that 'what shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?' Rom. viii. 35.

He is not only God with us in our nature, but he is God for us in heaven at all times. He is God in us by his Spirit. He is God amongst us in our meetings: 'Where two or three be gathered together in my name, I will be in

the midst of them,' Mat. xviii. 20. He is God for us to defend us, for he is for us in earth, for us in heaven, and wheresoever we be, specially in good causes. And therefore enlarge our comforts as much as we can.

And shall not we then labour to be with him, as much as we can? All spirits that have any comfort by this Emmanuel, they are touched on by his Spirit, to have desires to be nearer and nearer to him.

How shall I know he is my Emmanuel, not only 'God with us,' but God with me? If by the same Spirit of his that sanctified his human nature, I have desires to be nearer and nearer to him, to be liker and liker to him; if I am on his side; if I be near him in my affections, desires, and understanding; if I side not against the church, nor join in opposition against the gospel; if I find inwardly a desire to be more and more with him, and like to him; if outwardly, in the place where I live, I side with him, and take part with his cause: it is a sign I have interest in him. And therefore let us labour to be more and more with Christ and with God in love and affections, in faith, in our whole inward man, because he is in us.

We must know this Emmanuel doth trust us with his cause, to speak a good word for him now and then, to speak a word for his church, and he takes it ill if we neglect him: 'Curse ye Meroz, because he came not out to help the Lord,' Judges v. 23. God trusteth us, to see if we will be on his side; and calls to us, as Jehu did, 'Who is on my side? who?' 2 Kings ix. 32. Now, if we have not a word for the church, not so much as a prayer for the church, how can we say, 'God with us,' when we are not used to speak to God by way of prayer, nor to man but by way of opposition and contestation? By this therefore examine the truth of our interest in Christ.

Those that intend to receive the communion must think, Now, I am to be near unto Christ, and to feast with him. Christ is with us in his word, in the sacrament. There is a near relation between the bread and the wine, and the body and blood of Christ. Now, the true child of God is glad of this most special presence of Christ. All true receivers come with joy to the sacrament. Oh, I shall have communion with Emmanuel, who left heaven, took my nature into a more near hypostatical union, the nearest union of all; and shall not I desire the nearest union with him again that can be possible? Oh, I am glad of the occasion, that I can hear his word, pray to him, receive the sacrament. Thus let us come with joy, that we may have communion with this Emmanuel, who hath such sweet communion with our nature, that our

hearts may be as the Virgin's womb was to conceive Christ. I beseech you, enlarge these things in your meditations.

And because we know not how long we may live here, some of us be sick, and weak, and all of us may fall into danger we know not how soon, let it be our comfort that God is Emmanuel. He left heaven, and took our nature to bring us thither, where himself is. When times of dissolution come, consider, I am now going to him to heaven, that came down from thence to bring me to that eternal mansion of rest and glory. And shall not I desire an everlasting communion with him? God became man that he might make man like God, partaking of his divine nature, in grace here and glory hereafter. Shall not I go to him that suffered so much for me? Therefore saith St Paul, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' Philip, i. 23; which is the effect of Christ's prayer, 'Father,' saith he, 'my will is, that where I am they may be also, John xvii. 24. And in this God heareth Christ, that all that believe in him shall be where Christ is, as he came down from heaven to be where we are. Lay up these things in your hearts, that so you may receive benefit by them.

## Second Sermon

*“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”—Isaiah VII. 14.*

The occasion of these words we have heard. The church was in great distress under two mighty kings, that threatened great matters; but indeed were but two smoking firebrands, that went out of themselves. Ahaz, being a wicked king (and wickedness being always full of fears, fearful in trouble, though not before trouble, for they that be least fearful of trouble be most fearful in trouble), and God intending comfort to the church, the prophet bids him ask a sign. Ahaz, out of guiltiness of conscience and stubbornness together, would ask none. God intended to strengthen his faith, and he would not make advantage of the offer; and therefore the prophet promiseth a sign, the grand sign, the sign of all signs, the miracle of all miracles, the incarnation of the Messiah.

Doct. By the way, I beseech you let me observe this: It is atheistical profaneness to despise any help, that God in his wisdom thinketh necessary to prop and shore our weak faith withal. And therefore, when many out of confidence of their own graces and parts refuse the sacrament,—God knowing better than ourselves we need it,—unless it be at one time of the

year, and refuse the other ordinance of preaching, which God hath sanctified, they seem to know themselves better than God, who out of knowledge of our weakness, hath set apart these means for the strengthening of our graces. And as Ahaz, refusing God's help, provoked God by it, so these must know they shall not escape without judgment, for it is a tempting of God, and proceedeth from a bad spirit of pride and stubbornness.

How this promise of the Messiah could be a sign to them to comfort them, we spake at large. We will now deliver something by way of addition and explication.

The house of David was afraid they should be extinct by these two great enemies of the church; but, saith he, 'A virgin of the house of David shall conceive a son,' and how then can the house of David be extinct? Secondly, heaven hath said it; earth cannot disannul it. God hath said it, and all the creatures in the world cannot annihilate it. It was the promise made to Adam, when he was fallen. It run along to Abraham, and afterwards to the patriarchs; so that it must needs be so.

It was the custom of the men of God, led by the Spirit of God, in these times, in any distress, to have recourse to the promise of the Messiah, as for other ends, so for this, to raise themselves up by an argument drawn from the greater to the less. God will give the Messiah, God will become man.

'A virgin shall conceive a son;' and therefore he will give you lesser mercies.

I note this by the way for this end, to teach us a sanctified manner of reasoning. Was it a strong argument before Christ's coming, the Messiah shall come, and therefore we may expect inferior blessings? And shall not we make use of the same reason, now Christ is come in the flesh, and is triumphant in heaven? 'God having given Christ, will he not give all things necessary whatsoever?' Rom. viii. 32. Shall the reasonings before Christ's coming be of more force than these be, now Christ is come, and is in glory, appearing in heaven for us.

Beloved, it should be a shame to us, that we should not have the sanctified art of reasoning, to argue from the gift of Christ, to the giving of all things needful for us.

The ground of this reason is this, All other promises, whatsoever they are, are secondary to the grand fundamental promise of Christ. All promises issue from a covenant founded in God-man. Now covenants come from love; and love is founded in the first person, loved, and the foundation of all love. Therefore, if God giveth Christ the foundation of love, and out of love makes a covenant, and as branches of the covenant giveth many promises, then, having made good the main promise of all, Jesus Christ, will he not make good all the rest? And therefore we should have often in our hearts and thoughts, the accomplishment of all promises in Christ, and from thence make use of the expectation of all inferior promises; for they issue from that love of God in Christ, which is fully manifested already.

We have spoken of the preface, 'Behold,' which is a word usually prefixed before all the passages of Christ; his birth, his resurrection, his coming again. And great reason.

For what do we usually behold with earnestness? Rare things, new things, great things, especially if they be great to admiration, and that concern us nearly; useful things, especially if they be present. And is any thing rarer than that, 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son?' Then the incarnation of Christ. Never was the like in nature, never the like in heaven or earth, that God and man should be in one person. It is a rare thing, a new thing, it is great to wonderment; and therefore in the ninth chapter of this prophecy, 'His name shall be called Wonderful,' Isa. ix. 6, as in many other respects, so wonderful in his conception and birth.

And then all is for us. 'To us a child is born, to us a Son is given,' in the same chapter. For us, and for us men, he came down from heaven. And then to the eye of faith all these things are present. Faith knoweth no difference of time.

Christ is present to the eye of faith now. We see him sacrificed in the sacrament and in the word. Faith knoweth no distance of place, as well as no distance of time. We see him in heaven, as St Stephen, sitting at the right hand of God for the good of his church, Acts vii. 56; and therefore 'behold.'

If ever any thing were, or shall be great, from the beginning of the world to eternity, this is great, this is wonderful. And if any thing in the world be fit for us; and if any thing dignifieth the soul, and raiseth the soul above itself, it is this wonderful object.

We, out of our weakness, wonder at poor petty things, as the disciples at the building of the temple, ‘What stones are these?’ Mat. xiii. 1. We wonder at the greatness of birth and place, but, alas! what is fit for the soul, being a large and capable thing, to stand in admiration of? Here is that that transcendeth admiration itself. ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive a son;’ and therefore attend to the great matter in hand. This I thought good to add to what I formerly delivered in that particular.

‘A virgin shall conceive a son,’ &c.

You need not go farther than the text for wonders; for here are two great ones, a virgin a mother, and God man.

So in the words you have the conception and the birth of Christ, his human nature, his divine nature and his office, to reconcile God and us in one.

As he is God in our nature—he took our nature into communion of person—so his office is to bring God and man together; his two natures is to fit him for his office. God and man were as much distant terms as could be, unless between the devil and God. And therefore God-man in one person must perform the great office of bringing such as were in such opposite terms together.

Of his conception by the Virgin Mary we spake sufficiently, only we will add this for further explication. A further type of this was in the birth of Isaac. Isaac; you know, was born of a dead womb. Christ was conceived of a virgin, and in a manner far more improbable than the other. Isaac was the ‘son of the promise,’ Christ was ‘the promised seed,’ both in some sort miraculously born; for indeed it was a true wonder that Isaac should be born of a dead womb, and here that a virgin should conceive. Sarah had nothing to supply moisture and juice to the fruit; and so here was nothing of a man to further Christ’s conception.

I will shew why there must be this kind of conception of Christ, which will help our faith exceedingly.

1. First, Christ must be without all sin of necessity; for else when he took our nature, stubble and fire had joined together. ‘God is a consuming fire,’ Heb. xii. 29;’ and therefore the nature must be purified and sanctified by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin.

2. And then again, in the conception, there must be a foundation of all obedience, active and passive, and of all that was afterwards excellent in Christ. If there had been any blemish in the foundation, which was his conception, if he had not been pure, there had been defect in all that issued from him, his active obedience and passive obedience, for every thing savours of the principle from whence it cometh. And therefore it was God's great work in this strange conception, that sin might be stopped in the root and beginning; nature might be sanctified in the foundation of it. And so that he might pursue sin from the beginning to the end, both in his life, by living without sin, and also in his death, by making satisfaction for sin.

And therefore ground our faith on this, that our salvation is laid on one that is mighty, God-man, and on one that is pure and holy. And therefore in his obedience active, holy; and in his obedience passive, holy.

Again, He came to be a surety for us; and therefore he must pay our whole debt, he must pay the debt of obedience; he must pay the debt of punishment. Now obedience must come from a pure nature, and his death must extend to the satisfying of an infinite justice. And therefore he must be conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a pure virgin.

And we must know that in this conception of Christ there were two or three things wherein there was a main difference between Christ and us.

(1.) Christ was in his human nature altogether without sin. We are sinful in our nature.

(2.) Again, Christ's human nature had always subsistence in the divine, and it was never out of the divine nature. As soon as his body and soul were united, it was the body and soul of God. Now our natures are not so.

(3.) And then in manner of propagation. His was extraordinary altogether. Adam was of the earth, neither of man, nor woman; Eve of man, without a woman; all other of Adam and Eve; Christ of a virgin, and without a man. But setting aside his subsistence in the second person, and extraordinary means of propagation, Christ and we are all one; he had a true human body and soul, and all things like ourselves, sin and the former differences excepted.

Why Christ must be man we have already heard. He became man to be suitable to us in our nature, and to sympathise in all our troubles.

And shall call his name Immanuel. 'He shall call his name Immanuel,' saith the New Testament, Mat. i. 23. That is, he shall be Immanuel indeed, and shall be known to be, and published to be so. Whatsoever hath a name is apparent. Christ was before he took our flesh; but he was not called Emmanuel. It did not openly appear that he was God in our nature; he was not conceived in the womb of a virgin. They before Christ, knew that he should come, but when he was conceived and born, he was then called Emmanuel.

There were divers presences of Christ before he came. He was in the 'bush' as a sign of his presence. He was in the 'ark' as a sign of his presence. He was in the prophets and kings as a type of his presence. He took upon him the shape of a man as a representation of his presence, when he talked with Abraham and the patriarchs. But all this was not 'God with us,' in our nature. He took it on him for a time, and laid it aside again. But when he was Emmanuel, and was called and declared so to be, he took on him our nature, never to lay it aside again. He was born in our nature, brought forth in our nature, lived in our nature, died in our nature, was crucified in our nature, became a curse for us in our nature, buried in our nature, rose in our nature, is in heaven in our nature, and for ever will abide there in our nature.

All their faith before he came in the flesh was in confidence that he should take our flesh in the fulness of time. Now came the time when he was called Immanuel; and then the word became flesh and took our nature on him.

From hence, that God took our nature on him in the second person, come divers things considerable.

(1.) For, first, it appears that he hath dignified and raised our nature above angels, because he hath taken the seed of Abraham and not of the angels;—a wonderful advancement of our nature, for God to be with us, to marry such a poor nature as ours is; for the great God of heaven and earth to take dust into the unity of his person. If this may not have a 'behold' before it, I know not what may.

(2.) To join altogether. For the great God of heaven and earth, before whom the angels cover their faces, the mountains tremble, and the earth quakes, to take our flesh and dust into unity of his person, and for such ends, to save sinful man, and from such misery as eternal misery, from such great enemies, and then to advance him to such great happiness as we are

advanced, to take Christ, Emmanuel, in the whole passage of his mediation, and there is ground of admiration indeed.

(3.) But consider it specially in the raising and advancing of our natures to be one with God. Shall God be God with us in our nature in heaven, and shall we defile our natures that God hath so dignified? Shall we live like beasts, whom God hath raised above angels? Let swearers, beastly persons, and profane hypocrites, either alter their courses, or else say they believe not these truths. Shall a man believe God hath taken his nature into unity of his person, and hath raised it above all angels, and can he turn beast, yea, devil incarnate, in opposition of Christ and his cause? What a shame is this! Can this be where these things are believed? A Christian should have high thoughts of himself. What! shall I defile the nature that God hath taken into unity of his person?

(4.) And as he hath dignified, and raised, and advanced our nature so highly, so likewise he hath infused and put all the riches of grace into our nature; for all grace is in Christ that a finite nature can be capable of, for Christ is nearest the fountain. Now, the human nature being so near the fountain of all good, that is, God, it must needs be as rich as nature can possibly be capable of. And is not this for our good? Are not all his riches for our use?

And therefore seeing our nature is dignified by Emmanuel, and enriched exceedingly by his graces next to infinite—for our human nature is not turned to God as some are conceited; it is not deified, and so made infinite—yet as much as the creature can be capable of there is in Christ-man, and so shall we defile that nature?

(5.) And from hence, that our nature is engrafted into the Godhead, it followeth, that what was done in our nature was of wonderful extension, force, and dignity; because it was done when our nature was knit to the Godhead, and therefore it maketh up all objections. As, How could the death of one man satisfy for the deaths of many millions?

Secondly, It was the death of Christ, whose human nature was engrafted into the second person of the Trinity. For, because they were but one person, whatsoever the human nature did or suffered, God did it. If they had been two persons, God had not died, God had not suffered, God had not redeemed his church.

And therefore the scripture runneth comfortably on this: 'God hath redeemed the church with his own blood,' 1 Peter i. 18. Hath God blood? No. But the nature that God took into unity of persons hath blood; and so being one person with God, God shed his blood. It is God that purchased a church with his blood. It is God that died. The Virgin Mary was mother of God, because she is the mother of that nature which was taken into unity with God.

Hereupon comes the dignity of whatsoever Christ did and suffered. Though he did it in our nature, yet the Godhead gave it its worth, and not only worth, but God put some activity, some vigour, and force into all that Christ did. It doth advance Christ Mediator according to both natures. And from hence ariseth communication of properties, as divines call it, which I will not now speak of. It is sufficient to see that whatsoever was done by Christ was done by God, he being Emmanuel, and therefore had its worth and dignity to prevail with God. Hence cometh a forcible reason, that God must satisfy divine justice, because it was the action of a God-man. His great sufferings were the sufferings of the second person in our nature. And hereupon from satisfaction and merit comes reconciliation between God and us. God being satisfied by Christ, God and we are at terms of peace. Our peace is well founded if it be founded in God the Father, by God the Son taking our nature into unity of his person. These things must have influence into our comforts and into our lives and conversations, being the grand articles of faith. And therefore we ought to think often of them. We must fetch principles of comfort and holiness from hence, as from the greatest arguments that can be. Therefore I desire to be punctual in them. God is Emmanuel, especially to make God and us one. Christ is our friend in taking our nature to make God and us friends again.

Quest. But how doth friendship between God and us arise from hence, that Christ is God in our nature? I will give two or three reasons of it.

(1.) First, It is good reason that God should be at peace with us, because sin, the cause of division, is taken away. It is sin that separateth between God and us, and if sin be taken away, God is mercy itself, and mercy will have a current. What stoppeth mercy but sin? Secondly, take away sin, it runneth amain. Christ therefore became Emmanuel, God with us, because 'He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.'

Before Adam had sinned there was sweet agreement and communion between Adam and God, but sin, that divided between God and the creature.

Now Christ having made satisfaction for all our sins, there can be nothing but mercy.

(2.) Again, Christ is a fit person to knit God and us together, because our nature is pure in Christ, and therefore in Christ God loveth us. After satisfaction God looks on our nature in Christ, and seeth it pure in him. Christ is the glory of our nature. Now if our nature be pure in our head, which is the glory of our nature, God is reconciled to us, and loveth us in him that is pure, out of whom God cannot love us.

As Christ is pure, and our nature in him, so he will make us pure at length.

(3.) Thirdly, Christ being our head of influence, conveyeth the same Spirit that is in him to all his members, and by little and little by that Spirit purgeth his church, and maketh her fit for communion with himself, for he maketh us 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. He took our frail human nature, that we might partake of his divine nature; that is, of his divine qualities, to be holy, pure, humble, and obedient as he was.

And thus Christ being a head, not only of eminence to rule and govern, but of influence to flow by his Spirit into all his members, is fit to be a reconciler, to bring God and us together, partly because our nature is in him, and partly because he doth communicate the same Spirit to us that is in himself, and by little and little maketh us holy like himself.

I hasten to the main use of all.

(4.) Then God the Father and we are in good terms, for the second person is God in our nature for this end, to make God and us friends. There is a notable place of Scripture which I note for the expression's sake, he speaking there of a 'day's-man:' 'There is no day's-man between us, that might lay his hand on us both,' Job ix. 33; that is, a middle person to lay his hand on the one and the other. Now Christ is the middle person, as the second person in the Trinity. And then he is God and man, and therefore he is fit to be mediator, to lay his hand on both sides, on man as man, on God as God. And Christ is a friend to both, to God as to God, and to man as man, and therefore he is fit to be an umpire, to be a day's-man, to be a mediator. And he hath done it to purpose, making that good in heaven that he did on earth. And therefore labour to make a gracious use of all this. I know nothing in the world more useful, no point of divinity more pregnant,

no greater spring of sanctifying duty, than that God and man were one, to make God and us one. He married our nature, that he might marry our persons.

Use 1. And if it be so that God and man are brought to terms of reconciliation on such a foundation as God-man, then ought not we to improve this comfort? Have we such a foundation of comfort, and shall not we make use of it? Shall we have wisdom in the things of this world, and not make use of the grand comforts that concern our souls?

Use 2. But how shall we improve it? In all our necessities and wants go to God. How? Through Christ, God-man, who is in heaven making intercession and appearing for us by virtue of his satisfaction made oil earth, and therefore we may go boldly to the throne of grace to God, being reconciled by God. God hath God at his right hand, appearing for us, and shall we be afraid to go to the throne of grace? When we want strength, comforts, or anything, go to God, in the mediation of Emmanuel, and then God can deny nothing to us that we ask with the spirit of faith in the name of Christ.

I beseech you, therefore, let this be the main use, continually to improve the gracious privileges we have by Emmanuel. Our nature is now acceptable to God in Christ, because he hath purified it in himself, and God's nature is lovely to us, because he hath taken our nature. If God loved his own Son, he will love our nature as joined to his Son, and God's nature is lovely to us. He took our flesh upon him, and made himself bone of our bone. And shall not we like and affect that which was so graciously procured by Emmanuel.

Consider of it, and let it be ground of reverent and bold prayer, in all our wants to go to God in Emmanuel.

Use 3. Let us make use of it likewise in behalf of the church. The church is 'Emmanuel's land,' as ye have it in the next chapter: verse 8, 'The stretching out of his wings shall be the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.' The church of the Jews was Emmanuel's land, but then it was impaled within the pale of the Jews. But now the Gentiles are taken in. The church is scattered and spread abroad over the whole earth. And therefore go to God in behalf of the church. Thou tookest our nature into unity of thy person, that thou mightest be a gracious and a merciful head. And therefore look in mercy on thine own mystical body, the church. They, before Christ came in

the flesh, who had the spirit of faith, knew the church of the Jews could not be extinct, because Emmanuel was to come of it.

And we may know the church shall never be destroyed till the second coming of Christ, because those things are not yet performed that God hath promised, and must be performed. And therefore we may go as boldly to Christ, and spread the cause of the church before him now, as they spread the cause of the Jews before him then; look upon thy land, look upon thy church, O Emmanuel.

That there must be a church we must believe, and we cannot believe a non ens. We must have ground for our faith, and therefore never fear that heresy shall overspread the face of the church, 'Emmanuel's land' shall be preserved by some way or other, though not perhaps by the way we expect. God must have a church to the end of the world. The gospel must get ground. Antichrist must fall. God hath said it, and man cannot unsay it. And therefore in all estates of the church spread its cause before Emmanuel.

When Emmanuel came once, the church of the Jews wasted. Therefore, if you will have good arguments against the Jews, this is a good one to convince them, that Christ is come in the flesh. The church of the Jews was to continue till Emmanuel, but the church of the Jews hath ceased to continue, and is now no church. There is now no family of David, and therefore Emmanuel is come.

And for a further use, let us have thoughts of the second coming of Emmanuel, as they had thoughts of the first. Christ was called the consolation of Israel at his first coming, and in the New Testament it is everywhere expressed a sign of a gracious man to look for the appearing of Jesus Christ, and to love it. Now let us comfort ourselves that this Emmanuel will appear in our flesh ere long; let us wait for the 'consolation of Israel.' Emmanuel came down to us, to take our nature upon him, and to satisfy God's wrath, that he might take us to heaven with himself, and that we might be for ever with him in glory. And therefore let us, if we would make a true use of Emmanuel, desire to be with him. Christ delighted, before he came in the flesh, to be with the sons of men, and he is with us now by his Spirit, and so will be with his church to the end of the world; and shall not we be with him as much as we may? Indeed, he loved our nature so much, that he descended from the height of majesty to take our misery and business upon him, and shall not we desire to be with him in glory?

There be divers evidences whether we have any ground of comfort in this Emmanuel or no. This shall be one.

(1.) We may know we have benefit by the first coming of Emmanuel, if we have a serious desire of the second coming, if we have a desire to be with him; if, as he came to us in love, we have desires to be with him in his ordinances as much as may be, and in humble resignation at the hour of death. How shall we be with him here? Be with him in thoughts, in meditation, in faith and prayer; meet with him wheresoever he is. He is in the congregation: 'Where two or three are gathered together in his name,' he is amongst them, Mat. xviii. 20. Be with them in all things where he vouchsafeth his gracious presence. It is the nature of love to desire perfect union, and therefore the Christian soul, touched with the Spirit of God, will desire 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ, as best of all,' Philip, i. 23; 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20; and therefore in the hour of death is willing to resign himself to God that he may go to Emmanuel, and enjoy his presence, that left the presence of his Father, to take our nature, and to be with us on earth.

(2.) But the main thing I desire you to observe, is matter of comfort from this Emmanuel, that now he having taken our nature upon him, that he might take our persons into unity of his mystical body, we might have comfort in all conditions. For he took our nature upon him, besides his other ends, that he might take our persons to make up mystical Christ. He married our nature to marry our persons. And therefore if he did it for this end, that we might be near him as our nature is near him, shall not we make it a ground of comfort, that our persons shall be near Christ as well as our natures?

As Christ hath two natures in one person, so many persons make up one mystical Christ, so that our persons are wonderfully near to Christ. The wife is not nearer the husband, the members are not nearer the head, the building is not nearer the foundation, than Christ and his church are. And therefore comfort ourselves in this; Christ is Emmanuel, God with us in our nature. And will he suffer his church to want, that he hath taken so near to himself? Can the members want influence when the head hath it? Can the wife be poor when the husband is rich? Whatsoever Christ did to his own body, to his human nature taken into the unity of his person, that he will do in some proportion to his mystical body.

I will shew you some particulars. He sanctified his natural body by the Holy Ghost, and he will sanctify us by the same Spirit. For there is the same Spirit in head and members. He loveth his natural body, and so as never to lay it aside to eternity. And loveth his mystical body now in some sort more, for he gave his natural body to death for his mystical body. And therefore, as he will never lay aside his natural body, he will never lay aside his church, nor any member of his church. For with the same love that he loved his natural body he loveth now his mystical members. As he rose to glory in his natural body, and ascended to heaven, so he will raise his mystical body, that it shall ascend as he ascended. I beseech you, therefore, consider what a ground of comfort this is. God took our nature on him, besides the grand end of satisfaction, that he might make us like himself in glory, that he might draw us near to himself. And therefore now Christ being in heaven, having commission and authority over all things put into his hand; he 'having a name above all names in heaven and earth, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,' Philip, in. 10, 11; that is, every subjection should be given; will he suffer any member of his body to suffer more than he thinks fit? No; seeing he is in heaven and glory, for his church's good. For all that he hath done and suffered is for the church and the church's use.

To conclude all, let us consider what we are. Let not a Christian be base-minded. Let him not be dastardly in any cause that is good, or God's. Let him be on God's side. Who is on his side? A Christian is an impregnable person. He is a person that can never be conquered. Emmanuel became man to make the church and every Christian to be one with him. Christ's nature is cut of danger of all that is hurtful. The sun shall not shine, the wind shall not blow, to the church's hurt. For the church's head ruleth over all things, and hath all things in subjection. Angels in heaven, men on earth, devils in hell, all bow to Christ. And shall anything befall them that he loveth, unless for their greater good? Therefore though they may kill a Christian and imprison him, yet hurt him they cannot. 'If God be on our side, who can be against us?' Rom, viii. 30. But God is on our side, and on what grounds? God-man hath procured him to be our friend, he hath satisfied God, and therefore if we believe, we be one with Christ, and so one with God.

We have many against us. The devils are against us, the world is against us, to take away the favour of God, to hinder access to him in prayer, to stop the church's communion with God, and hinder the sweet issue of all things that befall us as far as they can." But their malice is greater than their power. If God should let them loose, and give the chain into their own hand, though

they seem to hurt, yet hurt they cannot in the issue. And shall not we make use of these things in times of distress? Wherefore serve they but to comfort us in all conflicts with Satan, and in all doubtings that arise from our sinful hearts? Answer with this, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' If any be against us, name them; if not, be satisfied. And therefore come life, come death, Christ is our surety. He layeth up our dust, keepeth our acts in the grave; and will Christ lose any member? 'Fear not, Jacob, to go down into Egypt, for I will bring thee back again.' So fear not to go down into the grave. The Spirit of God will watch over our dust, and bring us to heaven. Therefore fear nothing. God will be with us in life and death, yea, for ever; and we shall be for ever with the Lord, as the apostle saith in the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. iv. 17. And that issue of all that Emmanuel hath done, Christ was one in our nature, that he might bring God and us into favour, that we may be for ever with him in heaven, that we may be for ever with the Lord, which is the accomplishment of all the promises.

## The Touchstone of Regeneration

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall be down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall be down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, &c.—Isaiah XI. 6-9.*

I have formerly, in divers sermons upon this scripture, declared that it, by way of prophecy, foretelleth what shall be the fruits of Christ's kingdom under the gospel, showing that miraculous change Christ should make upon men, shadowed out in this scripture under the similitude of beasts, as lions, wolves, bears, leopards, &c. The sum whereof is, that God will take from us that fierceness, malignity, and bitterness of nature in us, and bring us, in place thereof, to a loving, sweet, mild, and meek society together.

Many things already have been particularly handled out of this text; as, 1. First, from the condition and natural estate of men, wherein they may be called beasts, lions, serpents, &c.

2. And secondly, of that change Christ thereafter makes in us, which indeed is a miraculous change. This was the first thing handled.

First, That in every soul which shall come to heaven there must be a change.

Secondly, You have heard whereof the change must be; not of the substantial parts of a man's body, but of the corrupt qualities of the mind; or, if you will have it so, of the soul, and all the powers thereof.

Thirdly, I showed upon whom this change was made—look verse 9; it is made upon the church of God in this world, which in my text is called God's holy mountain. So also, Heb. xii. 22, the church is called the mountain of God.

The fourth thing considered was, by whom this change was made; even by the spring-head of all. From the God of grace it cometh, and floweth to us by Jesus Christ our Lord, who was 'God manifested in the flesh.' Fifthly, We inquired then by what means this change is wrought. This we showed to be by the knowledge of the law, &c. And this is the reason which is added why there shall be no hurt nor destroying in all this holy mountain, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; meaning there shall then be an abundant knowledge, a deep knowledge, and a well-seasoned permanent knowledge, which shall keep every one within their limits, every one knowing his duty, so maintaining a mutual peace in all this holy mountain.

Next, now sixthly and lastly, for ending of this text, I am to speak of the marks of this change; or rather, I may call them, the effects of this change, the certain and infallible signs of the same. Yet look not that here I will undertake to handle a commonplace, and show unto you all the signs of regeneration; only I will contain myself within this text, contented to show you those which this scripture affordeth, which whosoever hath, may assure themselves of the rest. Wherein, ere we proceed further in particular, let us first make the general; that is, a taming, a subduing, a taking away of the fierceness and cruelty of our corrupt nature. This throughout the text is the main mark of the change; which will yet be more evident by the particulars. 'What meaneth this, 'that the lion shall he down with the calf, that the leopard shall he down with the kid,' when they shall come from their own kind to another strange generation, as it were? What meaneth this, that they shall trust one another with their young ones? that the lion shall no more prey upon blood, as in times past, but eat straw with the ox? that the serpent shall let the little child play upon the hole of his den? and all these to be so tamed that a little child should lead them, take them, and rule them? What meaneth all this but this, That it is an eminent and infallible mark of regeneration to have the violence and fierceness of our cruel nature taken away. This is a sure sign; for this look Rom. i. 29, how naturally the heart is filled with all maliciousness and sinful cruelty, which to be subdued and tamed is a special grace; so Gal. vi. 7-9, and Eph. iv. 17, et seq. There you may see the fruits of the old man to be idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, sedition, &c.; there you may also read of a change, of a renewing of the new man in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against whom there is no law. There you may see what a great alteration this change maketh, and what the marks of corruption are.

But yet there it is worth the marking, that here in these places the Holy Ghost calleth for works of mercy, to perform duties to men, meekness, temperance, patience, &c., not mentioning duties directly due unto God. Why are these duties towards men so much urged, but to show that our corruption is not so much manifested in the worship of God as in works of mercy to men? Therefore it is that all the prophets do so call for works of mercy, that Christ himself so inviteth thereunto, because men may deceive the world with a counterfeit show of outward justice to God, but in works of mercy there is no means to escape, Micah vi. 7. 'If the first-born, or ten thousand rivers of oil,' with a number of the like sacrifices, might please God, all would be given for the sin of the soul; but the Lord calleth for works of mercy, meekness, and to walk humbly with God.

Now the cause why men are so hardly brought to be merciful to others, and more easily to works of piety towards God's worship, I take to be, because, as it is John viii. 44, 'the devil is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.' Now his prime quality being to be a murderer, he worketh so in the children of disobedience, that, like unto him, they have a murderous disposition to show no mercy, to relieve none, which showeth that such are poisoned with the same sorts of poison wherewith he is infected. Thus you see there must be a general meekness in all who are heavenly wise, far from this murderous disposition. So James iii. 13, he saith, 'Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom.' There he speaks of a devilish wisdom, which comes not from above, 'which is full of envying and strife; but the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits,' &c. Thus he shows by what coat-armour a Christian must be known; how the sons of God must be discerned. This is the general mark: if that natural cruelty and bitterness bred in us be taken away, and meekness, gentleness, and the like, put in place thereof, this for the general is a sure sign that the change is made, regeneration is begun. Now I come to speak of these marks and infallible signs of regeneration contained in this test, which must be in some measure in the party regenerate. The first is, 1. Harmlessness.

Which, though it be a thing that runs along the body of my text, and is last named, yet here I bring it first, because it is partly implied in all; for in this, that it is said 'the little child shall play upon the hole of the asp,' and take no hurt, what doth this imply but a mild and harmless disposition, contrary to our natural fierceness and cruelty? It is written, Prov. iii. 27, 'Withhold not

good from them to whom it is due, though it be in thy power to do it.' As I take it, by good in that place is meant works of mercy; that we must be so like God as may be in works of charity. He that refuseth works of mercy to those in need, he is a murderer. How can a man say he is renewed, unless in some sort he be like unto God in mercifulness? We see the wicked, it is a prime quality in them to do mischief; they delight in evil; it is meat and drink to them to do wickedly; they are still musing on some cursed deed or other. But it is a property of God's child to be harmless. Yet for further trial of this grace note we two signs of this sign.

First, If we could not do evil, though we might do it unseen of any creature: as, when a little child shall lay his hand on the cockatrice's den, the serpent might sting, and yet, unseen of any, pull in the head again. This, likewise, is a true sign of harmlessness—when, though a man may do some hurt unseen, yet he will not. Thus was not Herod; he abstained a-while from beheading of John Baptist, but it was more for fear of the people, than any other cause. Therefore, Christ, in another place, calleth him a fox, Luke xiii. 32, so far was he from this harmlessness we speak of. Thus we see the doctrine of Christ may be preached to a-many, but the power of the same extendeth but to a few.

Beloved, I would have all of us to consider this. We live, all of us, in the kingdom of Christ; but where is the man that, though he might do evil unseen, yet would not do it? We have a worthy pattern of this grace in Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9, who, though he might have done evil unseen, yet would not, 'Oh,' saith he, 'how shall I do this evil, and sin against God?' and offend God. Oh, how many are there which withhold the passions of their tongues, and the violence of their hands, only because they are not able to work mischief! How many men now smooth the hands of God's people, and say as they say, only because they dare not, and cannot do them mischief, who, if that opportunity served, would sting them! This will show a change to be made, and we to be harmless, if, when opportunity of doing evil is offered, yet we can abstain.

A second sign of this sign is, when, though a man hath provocation to do evil, yet he will abstain. This is a sound trial. We see it is said, that the little child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall lay his hand upon the cockatrice's den. Is not here provocation, and yet no hurt done? In this the Holy Ghost would give us a sure sign indeed. Many men are of a mild natural disposition, and so may, perhaps, forbear mischief when

it is in their power. And so, many men, which are merely natural, may bear with religion for some by-respects. But, provoke them, and then you shall have them all of a fire, ready to fly in your face. What religion is there in this? For to do good for good, and evil for evil,—this, Christ says, even publicans may do: there is no thank in this; but if, when we are provoked, we can forbear to revenge, this is a blessed thing. If there be true love in our hearts, the apostle says, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, that it is not ‘provoked.’ And it is written, Isa. liii. 7, that Christ he was afflicted, oppressed, yet opened he not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened not he his mouth.’ This he did, thus holy men have done, and this, if we would see life, we must do. Yet we see, though we should be like sheep, even they will now and then push at one another; but this is not with much violence; besides that, it doth not endure. The apostle wills us to forbear, forgive one another; so this strife hath an end. Therefore, if I cannot forgive in a small matter, but that either my tongue must fly out in words, or the heart be set on mischief, this is a woeful estate. If this be all our goodness, surely it is miserable goodness; here is no harmlessness: suspect thy estate. But the true goodness and blessed estate is to follow that counsel of our Saviour Christ, ‘Bless them that curse and persecute you,’ &c., Mat. v. 54. This, then, is harmlessness, when there is afforded unto us both secret occasion and provocation to do evil, and yet we abstain. So much for the first.

Now I pass to the second, which is 2. Sociableness.

Which is set out in the whole body of my text. But with whom is it that this society holdeth? Not of lions with lions, or wild beasts with wild beasts; and yet many of these cannot endure one another: for the rhinoceros and the unicorn, when they meet, they fight; so doth the wild horse and the bear; but if at length they agree, this sociableness of theirs is of wicked beasts one with another. But this is more, that the wolf and the lamb, the cow and the bear, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion, shall he down together, and that the little child shall play upon the hole of the asp. This implies, not only a simple society, as among wild beasts, but a sociableness, as it were, among those of another generation.

To apply this unto ourselves: there be good bands of our sociableness one with another, both reason and speech; for, naturally, all of us have been lions, bears, and wolves, and unsociable haters of goodness in others. Now, then, this sociableness with those former servants of God, who have been

called, this is a very sure mark of this change in us; so the apostle speaks, 1 John iv. 14, 'By this we know we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.' And so Christ, our master, speaketh, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' This nearness imports consanguinity. It is common, in the Scripture, to call the children of God brethren.

[1.] No man can love a saint, as a saint, but a saint. This is a sure sign of this sign. For this cause, the apostle to Philemon, he rejoiceth for his faith to God, and love to the brethren, ver. 5. And so again, ver. 7, it was his joy that the brethren were comforted. The reason hereof is, because, as there is a natural enmity among us by sin, to show a difference, the children of God must rejoice in unity.

Further, a true trial of sociableness is, when men will joy to sort themselves with those with whom formerly they have been most unsociable, and whose company they most loathed: as, first, we see the wolf doth he down with the lamb, which is a slow beast; secondly, the leopard with the kid; thirdly, the young lion and the calf, for these fat beasts are, for the most part, a prey to the lion; fourthly, the cow and the bear, for the cow is a prey to the bear; fifthly, the serpent is especially an enemy to mankind, as, Gen. iii. 15, God said, 'I will put enmity betwixt thy seed and that of the woman.' This, I confess, is chiefly meant of the devil, yet the extent thereof reacheth thus far unto us, who naturally loathe serpents, that so great shall this sociableness be, that even a little child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and receive no harm. Now, when all these are reconciled thus, where formerly was special envy, this is a true trial of sociableness. For further proof hereof, note an idolater when he is converted, none are so dear unto him as God's servants. The voluptuous man, having left his lust, loves none so well as Christ's people; the riotous man, having left his excess, loveth none so well as the sober; the atheistical, profane man delighteth, being changed, so much in none as the truest worshippers: so, we see, though before conversion men may roar like bears, as Isa. lix. 11, yet, being tamed, it is said, Jer. xxxi. 9, that then they shall come weeping, &c., and draw into sociableness with others formerly hated. When some men come to be of our religion, and yet keep such about them as are not sincere, this is no good sign. But, take this for a sure rule, that no man is truly turned unto God, but he that loveth the society he formerly hated.

[2.] A second sign of this sign is, to love every brother, yea, though it were to lay down our life for a brother. But how is this implied?—‘The calf and the young lion shall he down together.’ If the young lion can endure not to raven on the calf, then it can endure any other of that kind. Beloved, it is a special grace to love all the brethren, without respect of persons. So the prophet David, Ps. cxix. 63, says, ‘I am a companion of all those that fear thee.’ Here is implied, not to love some one brother, but the brethren. I confess, for some special cause a man may rejoice and delight more in the company of some, than of others; as David, Ps. xvi. 2, ‘But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, all my delight is in them.’ So that, I say, for some special grace, or graces, one may love one better than another. Thus Christ loved John best, being called the beloved disciple, which was not for any special grace in John, but from a kind of sympathy in natures, which many times, from a hidden cause, produceth much love. But, if we have respect of persons, as it is, James ii. 3, we are to blame. If we respect a great rich man, with a little grace, more than a poor man with a great deal; or, if we respect not a poor man as a rich, with alike graces. We see, Acts viii. 14, et seq., when Philip preached at Samaria, Simon Magus did cleave also to him; but it seems he did not stick so close to Philip for his graces, as it appeareth he did for somewhat in his person. Brethren, if partially we admire some for their persons, it is suspicious. It is dangerous too much to admire fleshly excellency, for those gifts of goodness in the same. If I do truly love goodness in rich apparel, why do I not also love it in rags? Beloved, if we love not thus, we love with the parrot, our love is not true; there ought ever to be the like love in kind, though not in measure.

Now I come to the third mark, which is, 8. Constancy.

How is this implied? By dwelling and lying together. You shall have beasts meet together, by chance, yet part asunder quickly again; but when they he and dwell together in constant abode, this is a sure sign. You shall have many companions go with a man, for fashion’s sake, to the church, and yet leave going ere it be long; you shall have some men sick, and then, like a serpent frozen in winter, which casts his skin, you shall have them cast their skin a little, that is, send for a preacher, or such a man, make confession of their sins, saying, Oh, if God will spare me, I will become a new man, I will never do as I have done, I will never any more haunt such company; but yet, when he is well, within a month after, where shall you find him? Not with the lambs, but with the bears, and wolves, and lions. Thus, when we can

constantly hold on with an unmoved, constant affection, to the children of God, this is a sure sign.

But I hasten to the next. The fourth is, 4. Inwardness.

How is this implied? Their little ones shall he down together. There is nothing so dear unto all creatures as their young ones, of which they are most jealous. There are no creatures which are not jealous and tender of their young ones, chiefly the bear, which is most of all tender, fighting sometimes, even to the death, in defence of her young ones. But this, that the little ones of the bear, and of the cow, shall he together, this implies an inwardness together, such an inwardness as I think is meant, Acts iv. 32, where it is said, 'These dwelt together, and possessed all things in common use.' Yet not losing that title they had unto the same as their own; and, ver. 34, their charity is described, that 'no man lacked anything which another had, but in necessity all things were common.' This, their united charity to help others, was their little ones which did he together. And this, also, must be our trial, if whatsoever is dear and near unto us, even our young little ones, if they be ready to be down together with the necessities of others, this is inwardness. Think of this also, that this dwelling and lying together is a thing free, not any way constrained. This is a trial of our sociableness, not when we are tied together in a cage, but at liberty, and then we dwell together; for many keep company now together, both in dwelling and lying together, which would fly out if time served. We read in the book of Esther, that when the Jews had the better hand, many of their enemies joined with them, but not of love, but because they had the better hand of their enemies, Esther x. 3; and so, when the people of God came from Egypt, many of the people, because of their prosperity, did join with them; and now also, in the time of the gospel, I appeal to the consciences of many among us, whether they do not he down with us for fear now. Let no man think amiss of me for that I thus speak, for now such join with us, who, if they had another day, would show other strange tricks unto us; and, as it is, Jer. xviii 18, 'let us smite him with our tongues;' so many of these are ready to smite us with their tongues now, who seem to be inward with us. What would these do if the day were their own? Beloved, such men cannot be of God, who thus do malign the servants of God. You may couple beasts together in a chain, but, being loose, they run asunder again; so many now, like such beasts among us, are tied with chains for a while, but untie them once, and all is gone. Many of these, when once they are loose, keep company with bears and wolves.

But I hasten to the fifth, which is, 5. Tractableness.

How is this implied? A little child shall lead them and rule them. It is a true sign of grace when we become easy to be ruled and brought in compass. We read of lions to have been tamed to draw in chariots; this is tractableness. So when a poor servant of God hath nothing but his simplicity to bring us in, this is tractableness, when we can be content to be brought in even by men inferior to us, that are simple and of mean gifts. So when the husband can endure to be brought home by the wife, being wiser and of more knowledge than she; when the wife can be content to be brought home by the daughter or maid-servant, like Job, who despised not the counsel of his own servants, Job xxxi. 13; this is tractableness. To be brief, when men can be content to come to their old, ancient food.

6. Simplicity, Which is the sixth and last sign of this change. This is a sure trial of regeneration. But how is this implied? That the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Beasts at the beginning were not thus cruel as since the fall of man, but did feed on grass, &c.; so the Holy Ghost doth imply, that when our state is come back to that it was at the beginning, as near as may be, that is to say, when the lost image of God is so restored in us that a man is come to his former food again, that as then, so now, he feeds on the contemplation of the wisdom of God, the justice of God, the mercy of God, the greatness and power of God, the abundant goodness and truth of God, &c., this is a sure sign of regeneration. Cain he was bloody, and fed upon blood; therefore, as it is John iv. 32, when a man is come thus far, that he hath meat which one seeth not, whereupon he feedeth, holy thoughts, holy meditations, &c., when he can suck the breasts of God's consolations, whereon his children feed, to draw virtue from the same unto himself, this is a sure sign that a man is most happy, and born again. In a word, as the apostle speaks, when thus striving for masteries, he becomes temperate in all things, 2 Tim. ii. 5, this is a sure mark and infallible. Now, I come to the uses, which are two:

1, For consolation;

2, for exhortation.

Use 1. The first thing is, for the place. But how shall this be brought in? What of the place? I say a trial by the place, where all shall be in: 'In my holy mountain.' It shall be therefore for trial of religion. Where the mountain is, there is the true religion, there is the church; look where you will, still it is in the mountain. Many now-a-days cry out and keep a stir to know where the

true church is, and I affirm, it is in the mountain. So that in this I may say of the church, as sometime Elijah did speak of the true God, 1 Kings xviii. 24, 'Let him which answereth by fire be the true God;' so I say of the church and of true religion, Let that be the true religion that hath most fire in it, that which showeth forth most piety and holiness. The papists they say they are the true church; but look on God's mountain, look which religion makes a man most mild, and tames his fierce nature, which takes away a man's dogged disposition, for a dog harks and then he bites, so the barking and biting of the Romish Church shows them not to be in the mountain; their church doth allow biting. Was there ever any doctrine like theirs, which teaches a man to murder his own king, to keep no faith, &c.? Was there ever any religion like theirs, that set poisoning afoot? which also set princes at variance? The last sacrament of theirs will never be forgotten, when that peace was proclaimed between both religions, then one would have thought all was well and ended, there were ten thousand massacred at one place called Labius, eighty slain with one sword, with many other of their cruelties; and the gunpowder treason, so odious and monstrous as the like hath not been heard. The like I may say of Garnet's part, who must not reveal this treason, because it was done in confession. Oh monstrous times, that confession should be so abused to barbarous, inhuman, matchless cruelty! If ever you take our religion to teach such things, though popery should prevail against us, as God forbid, we will claim no more right of the mountain. Never did, nor never will, our religion teach taking up of arms against our king, cruelty against superiors and others; but, by the contrary, our religion teacheth a man to suffer with and for Christ. It may be some cruel men may be among us, but we look what we profess, and teach that men with meekness must suffer; all this that I have said much concerneth us. If God will have no cruelty to be taught nor reign where he loveth, see what a thing it is to be thus cruel. If we be thus fierce and savage, let us not deceive ourselves, we are not yet come to the mountain of God; for, saith the prophet, 'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.'

Use 2. Now I come to the second use, for exhortation. There is yet a little of the lion and the bear remaining in every one of us, which shows us to be not thoroughly renewed, yet I do not say that those who are angry are not regenerate; but I say, if this do rage and rule with us, all is not safe and well. A good tree sometimes may have some bare or crab stock on some side of the tree, that bears crabs, and yet the tree be good; but this must not be predominant. The apostle says, 'If there be divisions and dissensions among you, are you not carnal?' 1 Cor. iii. 3. I speak not of some little faults,—God

help us! in all our natures there is much frailty,—but of such that rule in us. It is a wonder to see how uncharitable many men are to censure others for every little fault, when they themselves swallow down camels, I mean gross sins. Some man, for refusal of riotous excess, though he be full of excellent parts, yet say they, Such a one is a Puritan; and so again, if an honest man or woman fall by infirmity into some sin, Oh, say some, lo, now his hypocrisy discovers itself. Shall men be thus censured, as though perfection were on earth? This is far from covering thy brother's nakedness, this is far from St Paul's rule, 'to restore such a one with the spirit of meekness,' Gal. vi. 1. Beloved, God forbid that I should harden any man in sin; I speak these things only that since a little of the bear and the lion will still be in every one of us so long as we shall live in this world, let us learn to bear one another's infirmities, otherwise if thou chafe, censure, brawl, and chide still, I can give thee no comfort of thy state. Can such a one be regenerate? What! is the bear, and the lion, and the wolf come among us again? To conclude, as abroad, so look to thy conversation at home, among thy servants and friends; take heed thy authority deceive thee not, to think thou mayest set thy heart to raging and plotting envy and strife, to be angry and chafing still. If such raging be at home in thy house, I can give thee no comfort; as thou wouldest look for the evidences of thy lands, as certainly must thou look for this mildness, meekness, and this change in thyself. Mark this still, when a good man hath found out his sins, he is bound and doth lament for them; when he hath offended, he turneth the stream of his anger that way. So that, I say, if a man be thus bitter of his tongue, look what St James saith of such a one: 'That man's religion is in vain that cannot bridle his tongue,' James i. 26. 'Be not,' saith he, 'my brethren, many masters; for we have one Master,' &c., James iii. 1. If these contentions remain still among us, our stock yet bears crabs; we may suspect ourselves. But withal take with you this caution, let not men think it cruelty to execute the justice of God upon malefactors; but if magistrates do it cruelly, let them look to it, they shall dearly pay for it. The prophet David saith, Ps. ci. 1, 'I will sing of mercy and judgment,' &c. So for war, I call not that cruelty to fight God's battles; but if any man without a commission will take up the sword, he shall perish by the sword; so Christ saith unto Peter, Mat. xxvi. 52. This point is needful to be pressed still, because men cry Mercy, mercy; but, I say, judgment must be mingled; for as there may be a cruel justice, so there may be a cruel mercy, to suffer the lions to devour the sheep. We must, like God, temper them together, and make justice and mercy go hand in hand, that so the God of mercy may deal with us as we with others.

Thus you see what minds we must have if we look for an habitation in God's holy mountain. God, for his Christ's sake, grant unto us this tamedness and meekness, this thorough change of our cruel nature, that so we may come unto the assurance to be of that number for whom Christ died, seeing his Spirit hath wrought such an effectual, thorough change in us.

## The Discreet Ploughman

*Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not thrashed with a thrashing-instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be thrashing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.—* Isa. XXVIII. 23-29.

The drift of these words is to comfort God's children in afflictions; and because in such smarting crosses, when one is sorrowful, weak, taken up and overpressed with grief, we are then unfit and incapable of instruction, the anguish of the suffering destroying our attention; he therefore says' doubling it four times, 'Give ye ear,' 'hear my voice,' hearken ye,' and 'hear my voice;' wherein he insinuates that the matter he is about to deliver requires attention. As though he should say, You can hearken to the world, to carnal reason, to the devil and his instruments, who lead you astray; but if you would have sound peace and comfort, you must hearken unto God's word, because it is his voice, one who loves you, tenders your good, and does all things well.

Then he comes to the consolation, the sum whereof is, that none loseth by God's afflictions, but rather they are gainers, and great gainers. This he shows by two comparisons, both taken from a husbandman, who when he hath sowed will not harrow it always, but will give every ground sufficient labouring and manuring; who will sow seed, and every seed, and fit seed, in measure, time, and fit place. And then he shows, when God doth give this discretion to a husbandman, how much more doth he abound therein, who, John xv. 1, is called an husbandman; yea, he is the best husbandman who knows times and seasons, when to begin and when to make an end. This is the ground, as the wise husbandman's discretion teaches him how, when, and how much to plough his ground, and when and what seed to sow; so God is

much more the greatest and wisest husbandman, who knows when and how much to afflict us; when to begin and when to make an end; when to sow, and how to make fruitful. -

The second work of the husbandman is taken from the purging of his grain, where he shows the labourer will take and use fit instruments to cleanse it with. First, cummin, a cart-wheel is not turned about upon it; then, secondly, the fitches shall not be thrashed with a thrashing-instrument. Thirdly, then the third he shows as having most need, shall have the wheel to go over it; yet he shows the wheel shall not always go over it, nor break it so as to have any hurt by the pressure, for it shall lose nothing thereby but the chaff.

Now having declared thus much, then he shows, this discretion of wisdom in husbandry comes from the Lord of hosts, 'who is wonderful in counsel,' knowing with the height of deliberation and knowledge how to do all things. And then 'excellent in working,' to make all things frame to a good, sweet, seasonable, and happy end.

Before I come to the particulars, see in general he applies both comparisons to one and the same end, to evince us of this great truth. As Pharaoh had his vision and dreams of the seven ears and seven lean kine doubled unto him, which two were but to confirm one thing that Pharaoh must be assured of; so here he deals in drawing us the right way to find comfort.

'Give ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech,' &c.

Doct. 1. Hence observe, the only way to quiet one's heart, and pacify one in all distresses, is to hearken what God says. Therefore he goes over and over with it, 'give ear;' 'hearken,' and 'hear my voice,' for this shall quiet your souls, and bring you much quiet and peace of mind. In afflictions we toss, turmoil, and trouble ourselves more than we need. We cry out, Oh, none were ever so vexed and crossed as we are! and so say, Oh, I shall never get an end of this cross! this affliction will make an end of me! And then God comes to us to parley with us in this slumber, and hath much ado to wake us. He loves us best, and shows us this is our best way to find ease, to hear his voice.

Reasons. 1. First, Because God's word will work faith, which does purify the heart, overcome the world, and quenches the fiery darts of Satan.

2. Secondly, It will teach a man wisdom, whence and why it comes, and that struggling with God is in vain, and that in so doing we shall have the worse. The greatest hurt of our crosses comes from passion and distemper; for if we put no more in crosses than God puts in, all should be well; but we put in other things, our own impatience, false fears, fretting, and carnal reason, which makes this good purge of our heavenly Father's providing, be so bitter and heavy unto us. This we should by all means strive against, and make a good use of affliction, such as God would have and intends.

3. Thirdly, It will be a means to work patience in the heart. All the Scriptures are written to work patience in us; for God would have us submit, and our proud hearts can hardly be brought to stoop. This is the end of all.

4. Fourthly, If we hearken to God, this will make us go to God and pray, and prayer will bring comfort and ease to the heart ere long; but if we hearken to the flesh, the further we run this way, the more we plunge ourselves in misery. God, you know, bids us come to him, and says, Wait a while, and all shall be well; he will come flying with deliverance when the hour is come. Thus, if a man do pray and wait, he shall be heart-whole quickly. What saith the apostle in this case? Phil. iv. 7, 'And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.' As though he should say, You think the cross causes this disquietness, carking and caring; but if you trust, wait, and pray, you shall have quietness and ease in the most boisterous afflictions.

Use. The use hereof is, to take no more such unprofitable courses for comfort and ease in afflictions, as we have done in running to broken cisterns that can hold no water. It is usual with us, when afflictions are great, and pressing down, to complain, Oh, I have great crosses, never the like; they are beyond my strength; God is against me, and these and these afflict me. But the truth is, if we look to it, we may say, My folly, my pride, my foolishness, distrust, unbelief, and our great hearts, these be the special causes that disquiets us. So that if we would have a quiet heart in trouble, and a happy end of it, we must hearken to God. He loves us as well in trouble as out of trouble, and there is a medicine in the word against all troubles whatsoever. Then he asks, 'Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?' &c.

Doct. 2. Hence we see all God's children must be ploughed. All the elect are compared to God's husbandry, all who must be ploughed and humbled. To this the Lord exhorts them, Hos. x. 12, 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground,' &c. God hath no

heath nor brakes in his church but are or shall be ploughed; they shall at one time or other have deep furrows made in them; they shall go whither they would not; all must be taken down.

Reason. And there is great reason for it; for naturally, all the elect of God be as subject to that would cross and keep down the seed as others. They have thorns and brambles growing, weeds of all sorts, which would quickly mar them if they were not soundly ploughed. Job for this purpose says that 'man new born is like an ass's colt; nay, like a wild ass's colt,' Job xi. 12. A tame ass might perhaps be ruled, but a wild ass's colt, this is worst of all. So is man following his own reason, led by his own affections, passions, desires, and actions. We would run riot, never be tamed unless the Lord did plough us and cause us break up our fallow ground. Even God's elect are foolish, worldly, covetous, full of envy, lusts, passions, mistakings, ignorance, and the like. God's ploughing helps all, tempers the ground better, digs out and keeps down the weeds, and makes the seed to grow, which otherwise would be cropped and destroyed. Thus, howsoever we may think of ourselves, and please ourselves in a thing of nought, no corn is more apt to have weeds amongst it than our hearts, unmastered, are unfit to bear or bring forth fruits of grace. We would think a husbandman foolish and mad that would sow corn amongst grass, where, having no root, it must rot, and not grow, the ground being unploughed. So we must hold, this judgment in ourselves; for unless our hearts be tamed, no good seed will grow or take root there. To this effect our Saviour speaks: John xv. 2, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' If God be a husbandman, we shall be ploughed and pruned to make us be fruitful, lest we grow wild, and so be only fuel for condemnation.

The uses are, Use 1. First, not to envy those who are not thoroughly ploughed with afflictions, for to admire the happiness of such, is no more than if a man should pass through a barren heath, and say this is good ground. I say no; if it were so, it should not be unploughed. So we may fear of the state of many wicked men; unless they repent, they are not God's; were they of his husbandry they should be ploughed.

Use 2. Secondly, If we be of God's husbandry, and would be thought so indeed, then think we not the fiery trial of our ploughing to be a strange new thing, that God should sometimes set so sore upon us and plough us to our cost. If we would have an easier way, take the prophet's counsel, 'Plough up

your fallow ground, and sow no more amongst thorns.' Oh, but some may say, I read and pray, and go to sermons. Ay, but you sow amongst thorns if thorns come up; look to this. The husbandman will plough indeed, but he will not sow amongst thorns. The church complains, Ps. cxxix. 3, 'The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and they made long their furrows.' Why did God suffer this? They were ploughed deep indeed, but had no hurt by it, but only ploughed them so as to be fit and good ground. Because in her ploughing she ploughed short, and left many balks and patches unploughed; therefore when we plough not ourselves as we should, it is a mercy of God to send us many ploughers. God will plough us rather than we should be overtaken with sins. God will find other means of afflictions to plough us. If, therefore, we plough ourselves soundly, crosses when they come will not do us so much hurt. If we ourselves be not guilty of neglect this way, afflictions when they come will be nothing so weighty, or of continuance. It follows:

The first comparison.

'Doth he open and break the clods of his ground, when he hath made plain the face thereof?' &c. The sum is, as if he should say, I appeal to your consciences, if you did see a husbandman ploughing and breaking the clods of his ground, casting out rubbish and the like, would you imagine he did spoil the ground, to break it up so always, and be still digging in it? Sure no. From our confession he would have it, that no husbandman knows so well how to plough, dig, and when to make an end of ploughing and afflicting as he doth, whose infinite knowledge and skill is beyond all others' knowledge, and therefore will make an end of ploughing his children in the best time. Whereby we learn thus much,

Doct. 3. God will make a sweet and seasonable end of afflicting his children. He doth correct us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness: for, as it is, Ps. cxxv. 3, 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth his hand unto iniquity.' Miseries and afflictions never rest till they meet with wicked men; but on the righteous they come as a sojourner, which comes to tarry a while and so be gone; it shall not rest on them. And why so? Because, if God did not help us betimes, we would either murmur, or use some ill means to help ourselves. God will therefore make a good and seasonable end of the afflictions of his children.

Obj. Ay, but when will God will make an end of afflicting his servants? How shall it be known when he will make an end?

Ans. Why, as husbandmen, when the clods be high, bring the harrow over the same, that the seed may spring through with the more ease; and when the weeds are ploughed and weeded out that would mar all, then he will make an end; and then affliction shall cease when the ground is made smooth and apt to bear and be fruitful in due season. Whence we may observe this much, Doct. 4. When the Lord hath made us plain, and hath fitted us with hearts to receive good seed, then is the time of rest. If a man would plough in seedtime, we would think this a foolish, unwise action. God's ploughing is seasonable to cleanse and purge us, that we may have all fit helps to enable us for his service, as it is written, Isa. xxvii. 9, 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin,' &c.

Use. Therefore, if we would have a good and a speedy end of our crosses, fears, and afflictions, if we would have rest, and God to make an end of ploughing us, we must labour to be plain and even ground, to take down the pride of our hearts and wills; all high things, and everything which exalts itself, must be cast down and laid low. Many of God's children yet are weary, and suffering, and cry out, Oh when, when shall there be an end? In this case, I say, see in what fitness thy heart is brought to attend upon the word, look in what measure it is engrafted in thy heart. When we can hear the word with joy, and the stream of our endeavours is that way, then we are near an end of our affliction; when the ground is once made plain and fit, then the hour is come.

What remains then? When he hath made plain the face of the ground, he will sow seed, and the fittest seed, and do it in measure with wisdom. Whence observe:

Doct. 5. When God hath humbled us by his word, then he will furnish and aim us with his word, and enable us with strength that way. This is a difference betwixt his teaching of godly and wicked men: the one are the better, and mend by it; the other worse and worse; for the godly, with ploughing, he doth instruct and teach them, and make them pliable, it being contrary with the wicked. Many heaths, you know, do meet with streams and floods of water, and yet are nothing the better nor more fruitful; but God's arable, the saints, they are ploughed and instructed, as the psalmist speaks: 'Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, and teachest in thy law,' &c., Ps. xcvi. 12. To have the one without the other is nothing, and does no good,

but when correction and teaching go together, then one sees all the good of affliction, and why God sent it upon him.

It is said in the Hebrews, that, 'he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth he corrects them, and convinces them of that evil by his word, of that sin which brought such and such a misery upon them, and makes them acknowledge God's justice in it. Conviction is this, when I bring evident reasons unanswerable, for to prove that which I would bring another to practise and believe. Now, we must acknowledge God's goodness unto us, that gives us not the one without the other, not correction only, but his word also to instruct and teach us. Hereby we know afflictions come from God's love, when they make us in love with the word, and cleave unto it. When we see a husbandman in a field ploughing, and one in a garden digging, we hope for good corn, fine herbs and flowers ere long; so we may say, Thus doth the Lord; now he is a-ploughing and digging of my heart: it is because he means to sow good seed, the seed of eternal life therein. Now, understand thou therefore by afflictions, when God is the husbandman, and afflictions the seed, there must come a good crop of it; God will make it multiply and increase abundantly to our comfort, whatsoever the difficulties be which may seem to hinder the growth of it. The reason hereof is added in the next place.

'For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.' Whence, in brief, learn we thus much:

Doct. 6. Skill in husbandry is the gift of God, wisdom must come from him.

'Every good gift, and every perfect gift,' says James, 'is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning,' James i. 17. So, in other deep things, wherein we have ability to discourse of, know, and practise, let us give God the praise. Usually we are prone to sacrifice to our own nets, to magnify nature in our actions which we do wisely; but, know we, all is of God. If we did believe this, we would never be proud of our skill, and wit, and whatsoever gifts, but labour rather to use it to God's glory, and the good of others. Now comes The second comparison.

'For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin,' &c. Hence see, Doct. 7. All God's grain needs threshing and ploughing; and as they need it, so they shall have it. There is no husbandman but he sends his corn to the mill; wheat, or

barley, and all sorts of grain must be purged and winnowed, ere it be useful and serviceable unto us. And whereas he speaks of divers grains, some more useful and excellent than others, this shows that some be of more excellent degree in the church than others. But the sum is, that all the best corn hath chaff, and all shall and must be purged, which shall ever be of use to God's service, and the good of others, as Zech. xiii. 9. All God's third must be purged and passed through the fire. As the best gold and silver hath dross in it, which must be purged and refined, so the best Christians must be melted, in a manner, and tried; but he shows they shall lose nothing by afflictions but the dross and chaff, which shall be purged out, during which trial as he brings them into the fire, so he will be with them in it, and bring them through it in safety. Again,

It is said, 'Bread corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it.' This shows,

Doct. 8. The best grain shall have the sorest trial, and hardest pressure. So God proportions answerable crosses to our strength, and no further. The rest have not such manner of usage. The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, but are beaten with a staff; neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin, but beaten with a rod; but the wheat must have the wheel go on it. The meaning is an allusion unto that manner of the ancient Jews in treading their wheat, as appears by that precept, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox or the ass that treadeth down thy corn,' Deut. xxv. 4, for then the oxen, drawing a wheel over the wheat, did so bruise it, but not break it. So the best Christians and patriarchs have been visited with sore and hard trials. Jacob, even after the blessing, how grievous crosses and afflictions endured he! how was he tossed and tumbled up and down! Alas, saith the prophet, speaking of a great calamity, 'it is a time of great trouble, there is none like it: it is like the time of Jacob's trouble; yet he shall be delivered,' Jer. xxx. 7. And Abraham, the friend of God, had many, and sore afflictions. The prophets also, you know how they had all their several crosses in life, many in life and death. Jeremiah complains of his persecutors, which were many. Holy David, a man of sorrows all his lifetime, how was he vexed with variety of crosses, one after another! What shall I say of Job, the mirror of patience, and his many sorrows? And the apostles, were they not the chiefest men next unto Christ? and yet all destinate to sore and great afflictions and trials, so that the nearer they were unto him, the greater were their afflictions.

Reason. And that because God thereby doth humble us and make us heavenly-minded, and keeps us low, for if God did not thus put water amongst our wine, and now and then give us vinegar and wormwood to drink, we would have been proud, and lifted up above measure: as we read of Paul, he was buffeted, and had a prick in the flesh to keep him under, 2 Cor. xii. 7. For, as the main posts and beams of a house are laid forth a long time ere they be used, endure many winds, storms, and tempests, lest, being unseasoned, they should warp, bear no weight, and shrink, marring the building, so God's warriors, the main posts of his spiritual building, if not seasoned with winds and tempests of afflictions, they would grow to ease and pomp, to abound in vanity. Therefore, that they may bear weight, and not warp or shrink, but hold out, Paul, a chosen vessel, what shall be told him? Why, this, 'I will tell him what he shall suffer for my name's sake,' saith our Lord, Acts ix. 16.

Use. The use hereof, briefly, is thus much, to reform our judgments, to be comforted, not to be dismayed, nor condemn ourselves or others because of great afflictions. The afflictions of wicked men make them more proud; but what afflictions bring out more prayers, and drive us nearer to God, these are happy afflictions. 'It is good for me,' saith David, 'that I have been afflicted, for thereby I have learned thy law,' Ps. cxix. 71. When we are come thus far, then we shall be no more bruised. He knows how to deliver his own out of temptation, and how to moderate the cross when they have been humbled, and make a speedy and a seasonable end, even of great crosses. As a wise husbandman knows when to stay the wheel of his cart, when the wheat is, and when it is not, enough bruised; as he is careful of the treading and bruising, so is he also of rest and ease, the work being done; much more so is the Lord careful of his spiritual husbandry, not to overdo, but to give his children sufficient ploughing, in measure, and not beyond measure. Oh, but some for all this cry out, Oh, I have been long afflicted, things are worse and worse, I see no hope of any end; the more I pray, all is one, no deliverance comes, I grow more impatient, not able to hold out. Sure, if this cross continue thus and thus, it will make an end of me. Oh the foolishness of flesh and blood! What is the matter? Knowest thou in whose hands thou art? Look about thee, unto the experience and confession of all the saints, and unto which of them canst thou turn thee, who have not been the better by their afflictions, and come forth as the gold, as Job assured himself he should before his delivery, Job xxiii. 10. Look upon them, and see what end the Lord made. This is as much as for thee to say, the Lord is an ill husbandman; he can, indeed, tread his corn, but he knows not when it is

enough bruised, or he is careless of it, indifferent whether it be broken or spoiled, or what come of it. Oh take heed, know thou that thy God, who gives the husbandmen all their discretion, much more doth he know the best time and fittest for thy deliverance. Which is now the next point to speak of.

‘Bread corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheels of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.’ The point is this,

Doct. 9. God almighty knows best, and he appoints what shall be the means, time, and measure of the trials of his children. He knows what is the fittest instrument to purge his grain with. The husbandman, he knows the fittest instruments to purge his corn with: ‘The fitches are beaten with a staff, and the cummin with a rod, the wheel going over the wheat much more God will have the fittest rod, to do all in love, and for our good. Thus he corrects all he loves. I note this so much the more, because, in a great cross we are ready to fly out, and say, Oh, if it had been any cross, any trouble but this, I could have borne it, but oh, this, this, I know not how to bear it. Why, what’s the matter? Know, none was so good or fit for thee as this. Might the patient appoint the potion or plaster to be applied and taken, it is like he might perish, or the wound rot; he would endure no corrosive to eat out the proud and dead flesh, nor anything to make him sick, and purge out his bad humours. So, if we might have what instrument or cross we list to appoint, our corruptions would never be mastered and cured. If a child should see his father use the wheel to bruise and fit the wheat for purging and winnowing, and should come and say, Father, why do you use this instrument? this were better; would not we judge such a one to be a foolish, rash child, and that a frivolous, idle question? Surely so is the ease with us, when we cry out, Oh, were it any other instrument, or any other cross but this, I could bear it. No; thou deceivest thyself; we cannot, without him, bear the least, and supported by his strength, we shall be able to bear the greatest. Job had many and strong crosses, and many creatures against him,—the Sabeans, Chaldeans, wind, and fire from heaven,—yet he would not do them that credit, as to think or say, it was the Sabeans or Chaldeans that destroyed his substance, but this, ‘The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh, blessed be the name of the Lord,’ Job i. 21.

Use. The use hereof is, Since the Lord himself appoints the instrument, time, measure, and ending of our afflictions, therefore never fear, we shall not be overpressed or overborne by them, as Isa. xxvii. 8, ‘In measure he will

contend with us, he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind'; and Job xxxvi 23, it is said, 'He will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God;' and the apostle says, 1 Peter i. 6, that 'these afflictions are but for a season (if need be), otherwise we should not be in heaviness through manifold temptations.' Therefore, always think and be persuaded of this, that his instrument is the best. Every one shall be beaten with the fittest rod, and not too long nor too much. He who is able to make a good and a holy use of a former affliction, having his ground made plain and fit for good seed, he shall have the cross mitigated or removed, with a comfortable issue of all his troubles.

But how shall all this be made good? What assurance may we have of this discreet and seasonable ploughing, in time, measure, and continuance, we having so many enemies without us, and corruptions within us? 'This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' From hence we observe,

Doct. 10. God, in the chastisements, trials, and afflictions of his elect, hath wonderful wisdom and power beyond our understanding. He knows not only which is the best way to lead us to heaven, but also he is excellent in working, to bring his counsel to pass. See it in examples. As in Joseph, appointed to be the greatest save Pharaoh in all Egypt. First, he is sold for a slave. Secondly, accused falsely by his mistress; so cast into prison, that for a long time, as it is Ps. cv. 18, 'the iron entered in his feet, until the Lord's time was come.' What meant God thus to suffer an innocent man to be wronged and disgraced? He was 'wonderful in counsel' all this while. One might think at first that counsel was darkened without knowledge; but, indeed, this affliction was the best means for him, as upon stairs, to climb up to his preferment. Besides all this, while in the prison, God so tamed him that he bare all patiently. He could not have come to this honour, nor borne it as became him, unless the Lord had first thus ploughed him. So David, after he was anointed king, in a state of honour, and all pomp and pleasure, how was he vexed and ploughed with many crosses? In all likelihood he lived a much better and quieter life when he was a shepherd. What means was this to raise him, to be so afflicted ere he came to it? He was humbled and acquainted with God by these trials, which drove him to prayer, to believe, trust, and wait upon God; and then, all these were helps to fit and enable him for his kingdom. So at Ziklag, his wives and all his goods were taken away; the flesh had a bout, he wept till he could weep no more; yet then was God excellent in working; Saul was overthrown within a while; and the Amalekites, having

much goods together, he asked counsel of God, being but four hundred men, and overtook, overthrew them, and had a great spoil, being able to send presents and rewards to all his men. So that which was at first a strange and uncouth thing, a most grievous cross, was turned into a very great blessing. So God was wonderful in counsel, to put all their store in his possession; secondly, he was excellent in working, his enemies had no heart to withstand him.

Use. The use is, therefore, to be 'patient, because in all troubles and afflictions 'he is wonderful in counsel;' and all his works are beautiful in time, which we shall see when both ends of the cross shall meet; and though we see not which way things shall be effected, yet he is infinite in wisdom. If we will but be quiet, stand still, and see his salvation, we shall see a wonderful issue, if we wait in patience.

Obj. Oh but, say some, they come, I know, from God; but I cannot bear this cross, I see no fruit of the working thereof upon me.

Ans. I say, Yet stay a while; as it is true his physic always works at length, so it is as true that he is not bound it shall work by and by at all times. Perhaps this is not good for thee; yet know, that as he is 'wonderful in counsel,' so he is also 'excellent in working.' We give counsel many times, and cannot make the party follow it; but God can, he hath power, and wisdom, and will abundantly; he who gives the purge, can cause it work to purpose; he who applies the plaster, can make it cure and heal, and in the best time; therefore we must be comforted in all our troubles with these considerations.

Lastly, to conclude, where he says, 'This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts,' thereby he shows, Doct. 11. That nothing can stay him from working, to hinder our comfort and deliverance in due time. Why? Because 'he is Lord of hosts,' and all the creatures are his soldiers at command, and must do what he will, as, Isa. liv. 16, he most excellently shows, that no weapon without him shall prosper to hurt his people: 'For,' saith he, 'behold I have created the smith that bloweth the coals of the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the water to destroy;' therefore he overrules all things to work for our good, so as we shall have a seasonable, happy, and blessed end to all our afflictions. Oh, if we could believe this, how happy were it for us!—that God is the Lord of hosts, that the devil is chained up, and all the creatures, from hurting us, till he arm them with his power against us; that he is a fiery wall about us, and hath

hedged us, and all that we have, about; that he loves us, pities us, delights not in chastising and afflicting us; that he doth it not willingly, but enforced, in a manner, for our good; and that all the while, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, 'he waits to have mercy upon us,' Isa. xxx. 18, having a certain appointed time for our deliverance. This, I say, being believed, would help to carry our heads above water, in all the tempestuous waves of our afflictions, so as to expect and hope for the accomplishment of this divine scripture: that, as the ploughman will not plough all the day to sow, &c., no more will our all-sufficient, only wise God; but will make a happy and comfortable end of his spiritual husbandry, in the best and fittest time, to the everlasting comfort and salvation of his children.

## The Matchless Mercy

*Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins in the depth of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.—Micah VII. 18-20.*

The drift and scope of this place is to show God's infinite and constant mercies unto his children, who are tossed and tumbled in a world of miseries of this life, sometimes being altogether void of comfort and the sense of God's love; and this is two ways propounded:

1, In the benefits they receive; 2, in the reasons moving unto the same. The benefits he promiseth are in number two:

1, Justification by the blood of Christ; 2, sanctification by his Spirit. Now, this justification is set forth, for our better understanding, by divers arguments:

1. He shows what he will take away, viz., First, He says he will take away original sin, in these words, 'pardoneth iniquity.'

Secondly, He showeth that he will take away our rebellion in these words, 'and passeth by transgression.' In sum, he showeth that he will take away both the root and the fruits of sin.

2. He showeth the fruits of this justification in this, what he will pass by.

'He passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.' The sum is, he will both forgive and forget. The original, in the time present, thus reads it, 'taking away,' arguing and showing a continual act of God, even a continual act of mercy in him; implying, that as there is a continual spring of original corruption in us, which staineth all our best actions, making us continually liable to the wrath of God, so that in him there is a continual

spring of mercy flowing from him, both to pardon and wash away this iniquity.

And now having showed this benefit of justification, in the next place he cometh to describe the persons who shall obtain this great favour two ways:

1, They are but a remnant; 2, they are God's heritage.

Now, before he come unto the other benefit of sanctification, he answereth two objections:

Obj. First, Whereas some poor souls may object, What! how can this be? Is God such a God who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the same? I find my sins to be heavy and sore upon me; they accuse me day and night, and they pursue me.

Ans. To this he answers, True it is God is forced to take notice of your sins, to let them accuse you, to curb and keep you in. If we will not take notice of our sins, then God must do the same. Yet, saith he, for your comfort rejoice, he 'retaineth not his anger for ever;' be patient a while, and you shall see deliverance, it is for your good that you are thus afflicted.

Obj. Ay, but here, because the afflicted soul may again object, But I am not only troubled with outward crosses and afflictions, but also many inward temptations do assail me; I have committed sins of knowledge and presumption since my calling; I have trespassed against my enlightening, grieved the Spirit, I have forced God to depart from me; this seemeth hard, to be without the favour of God.

Ans. To this he answereth, It is true: God, to your thinking, seemeth to be gone from you. Ay, but despair not, stay your mind in peace a while; he hath but turned away his face for a little, he will turn again, he will have compassion upon you, &c. Though he correct and humble you for a while, yet you shall have a joyful issue of all. Now, having propounded this first mercy of our justification, he cometh to, 2. The second benefit, of sanctification, and it is amplified by two degrees:

1, In this life;

2, in the life to come.

For the first he says, 'He will subdue our iniquities;' that is, though at first we were sinful, ruled and overruled by our sins, yet now, when God cometh unto us thus in justification, working sanctification, he says he will subdue them; that is, by little and little he will master them, so that the force and power of them shall be taken away.

Secondly, He showeth that all the sins of those whom he subdueth he will throw into the bottom of the sea. To understand which we must call to mind a history of former times, which is, that the Lord will deal with our sins as sometimes he did with the temporal enemies of his people. When Pharaoh and his army pursued them, the Lord did overthrow the chariots and horsemen of Egypt, and drowned them in the bottom of the sea; unto which the Spirit of God alludeth here, that he will, for assurance's sake, for ever drown all our sins; so that, as the Lord said to Moses, 'The Egyptians whom ye have now seen, ye shall not see any more,' Exod. xvi. 13; so here the Lord saith, that our sins, which vexed us, we shall never hereafter see any more, for he will drown all our sins from out of his sight; they shall never any more either vex us or grieve him, they shall be all cast into the bottom of the sea.

Now, the reasons moving God are taken from his nature:

1, From his mercy; 2, from his truth, aided with four reasons thereof.

For the first he saith, for mercy pleaseth him, or, 'he delighteth in mercy.'

For the second, of God's truth, because above all things we are full of infidelity, and hardly believe this, therefore he strengthened and confirmeth it with divers other reasons.

First, From antiquity. It is an ancient truth, even from the days of old, so that a thing of so ancient a truth must needs be believed.

Secondly, From the often repetition thereof: 'to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' So that a truth that hath been so often repeated, must needs be true.

Thirdly, It is a truth confirmed by many witnesses, even a truth known of all our fathers; so that must needs be true which is confirmed by such a cloud of witnesses.

Fourthly, If all this will not serve, yet he says that ‘God hath sworn it.’ It is as true as God’s truth; so that better it were that all the world should fail, than God should fail of his truth. And therefore, if we will needs keep and observe our oaths, much more must God. It stands him to defend his truth. Thus far of the opening and meaning of the words; now let us come to the instructions rising from hence.

And first, in that we see in the coherence of the text, he cometh in, as it were in a triumph, challenging all the powers in heaven and earth, angels and devils, with admiration, crying, ‘Who is a God like unto thee,’ &c., we learn that,

Doct. 1. There is none so merciful as God. So the Lord speaketh, Isa. xlix. 13, ‘Can a woman forget her child, and not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Though they should forget, yet will not I forget thee,’ &c. He showeth here that all natural compassion is nothing to that great care God hath of us. So Ps. ciii. 13, ‘As a father hath compassion on his children, so the Lord hath compassion on them that fear him.’ So also we may see the same practised by examples. For at first when Adam had forfeited his estate, flying away out of God’s presence, yet we see God cometh, and findeth him out, then forgives his sin, and lastly, comforts him in the promise of the blessed seed, Gen. iii. 15. And for the loss of a paradise upon earth, he bringeth him to a far more glorious and eternal paradise in heaven. So Saul, Acts ix. 3, et seq., going unto Damascus in fury and rage to persecute the saints, we see Christ he comes unto him, finds him out, lovingly reasons the matter with him, and forgives him, sending him unto the means of his final conversion. Thus as of sins of nature, so of sins after regeneration, we may see the like. When David had sinned in adultery and murder, before he could half make confession of his sin, the Lord he meets him as it were half way, and pardoneth his sin, putteth it quite away from his sight, imputeth not the same unto him; so that we may justly cry out also with this prophet, ‘Who is a God like unto thee?’ &c. The reasons are divers.

Reason 1. First, Because mercy is God’s nature. It is his name, even an attribute as infinite as himself. And he himself being infinite for measure, infinite in continuance, so his mercy must needs be as infinite as himself.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because all creatures in heaven and earth have their mercy by derivation from this mercy of God. In him it is his nature, in us derived, as a drop to the ocean, from him; so is all our mercy nothing else but a drop of his infinite mercy: so that he is merciful above all.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because mercy in God is free, without any cause in us moving him to the same. In us mercy and love is still procured by something in the party we love. In God it is not so, for he loveth freely, without any moving cause in us: so that his mercy is over all his works.

Use. The use is, Is it so that mercy is God's nature, is an infinite essence, is free in him? Why then, in all distresses, let us come running freely unto him, and reaching out the hand of faith, let us confidently promise unto ourselves whatsoever mercies the best child hath ever found from the most kind and tender-hearted father and mother; for it is certain, if we come unto God, and have a good conceit of his mercy, and of the infinite immensible depth, and length, and breadth, and height thereof, that we shall return from the throne of grace filled with a great measure of this mercy.

As the prodigal son, before he resolved to go unto his father, he had first a good conceit of him by a secret comparison and unequals,—‘Oh,’ saith he, ‘how many hired servants are at my father's, and have bread enough, and I die for hunger! therefore, I will rise, and go to my father,’ &c., Luke xv. 17, —even so we come unto God very often with small comfort. Why? Because we have not a high conceit of God's attributes; we judge of him like unto ourselves, and so we speed for the most part, departing as we came. And I pray you, if our children should lament, weep unto us, and bemoan themselves, would not we pity them? What pride then is this in us, to think better of ourselves than of God? If we be thus merciful, is not he much more merciful unto his children, since all our mercy is but a small drop of his infinite mercy? It was a good speech uttered by Benhadad, though a heathen man, who because of a flying report he had, that the kings of Israel were merciful, did humble himself in sackcloth, and found mercy; so, I say, if Ahab, a wicked man, upon this was merciful to Benhadad, though with his own destruction, how much more, do we think, doth God exceed in mercy? So many of us want comfort, because we will not go unto him for mercy; and therefore also do we want comfort even of our dearest friends, because God would have us run unto him, call earnestly for his mercy, be so much the more desirous thereof, and be acquainted with him.

Now, in the second place, where he beginneth to reckon up what this mercy is, first he showeth that he pardoneth iniquity, which is remission of sins; where the doctrine is, Doct. 2. That it is the mercy of all mercies to have our sins forgiven, to have them covered, buried, and done quite away. Now

there be many reasons to prove this, that it is the mercy of mercies to have our sins forgiven.

Reason 1. First, Because other mercies reprobate men may have, as an abstinence from some sins; a show of sanctification, some outward gifts of the Spirit, &c., but this mercy none can have but the elect.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because this benefit is the chieftest fountain which flowed from Christ's blood: 'He hath loved us, and washed away our sins with his own blood.'

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because it bringeth unto us the happiest fruits and benefits here and hence; for, first, here; by this we are at peace with God, yea, in a more perfect peace than God had with Adam before his fall. Secondly, by this we have peace of conscience. When God favours us, then our conscience favours us, and all is at peace when once we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Thirdly, he hath peace with all the creatures, even in league with the beasts of the field, as Job speaketh: so also for the world to come.

Reason 4. Fourthly, This brings us to an everlasting peace in heaven, making us to be able that we may stand in the great day of his appearance without fear, as also now it is no small benefit, that God with forgiveness of sins healeth the nature of his children, that sin and Satan shall never have their former dominion over them.

Use 1. Since, then, we see this is so great a benefit and mercy to have our sins forgiven, it must teach all of us earnestly to prize it, since such are so blessed who have their sins forgiven. The means is, to pray often and earnestly for the forgiveness of the same; to confess them often, and to appeal often to that payment which Christ hath already made for us; for if we come to confess our sins before God, we come but to get an acquittance of that debt which Christ hath formerly paid for us.

Use 2. Secondly, It is comfort unto such who have been sorry and grieved for their sins, who have got power against them, to be thankful for such deliverances, yea, to be thankful for all crosses in the mean time, for all such following crosses are but as wholesome medicines to cure our souls from our sins, that we may have our corruptions and the cry of sins removed. This is a great cause to rejoice, as Ps. ciii. 1, 'Praise the Lord, O my

soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name; which forgiveth all thy sins,' &c.

Obj. But here the trembling soul may object. Oh, but I am sinful, and full of sins!

Ans. What then, if thou believe in Christ he hath paid all. Imagine two men did owe one of them a hundred thousand pounds, the other a small sum, having one surety for both, may not a man demand the hundred thousand of the party, as well as the little sum? Even so I say, it is all one to Christ thy surety, to pay thy great debts as well as thy small ones, if thou come unto him.

Obj. Ay, but here the trembling soul may object again, But I am a daily sinner, I sin again and again, how then shall I be sure to be still forgiven?

Ans. To this the Lord answereth, as it is in the original, in the present number, 'passing by iniquity,' arguing a constant, continual act in God of forgiving. He is more ready, saith he, to forgive than you to sin; as there is a continual spring of wickedness in you, so there is a greater spring of mercy in God. It is not, as many think, that God expects that after regeneration we should sin no more; no, he looks but that still we should be a-cleansing our bodies and souls, that we should still come unto him for new assurance. God he cleanseth us not like unto a cistern, which filleth not again, but like unto a vessel that will fill again, and so must still be emptied and filled, until it break by dissolution.

Use 3. It is for imitation. Is God thus merciful unto us, and ready to forgive? Why, then, we must labour to be like God, and merciful one to another.

Obj. Oh, but my enemy hath a spring of evils against me.

Ans. And I answer, But God hath a greater spring of mercy to forgive thee. Oh! but it is great! Oh! but God hath forgiven us much more. And yet further, as St Luke saith, It is a matter of great credit to forgive, Luke vi. 35, for thereby we are declared to be the children of our heavenly Father. It is also matter of comfort for us, for if we forgive, so shall we also be forgiven. If a poor man had a few shillings owing him, and he did owe the king many thousand pounds, were not he, think you, a mad man, that would not forgive the shillings to have the many thousand pounds forgiven him? Even so, we

all owe many thousand pounds unto God; we must then forgive our shillings, that he may forgive our pounds.

And thus we see how the poor, as well as the rich, may be merciful even to forgive wrongs, to love for hatred, and the like.

Having thus showed you both what God doth forgive in the wonder of forgiveness of sins by a more wonderful mercy, and also how he doth forgive, none being like unto him, now he cometh to describe, The persons who shall enjoy these great benefits; and first, he calleth them God's heritage; whence learn, Doct. 3. That God in a wonderful and special manner respecteth his heritage, the proof whereof, I need not stand upon it, is evident enough, and known both by his working since the creation, and in our time of the gospel. I come to reasons thereof.

Reason 1. First, Because they are God's purchase; for, whereas the elect forfeited all their estates, he hath again purchased them by the blood of Christ. The rest of the world are none of his. If we then do make much of our purchases, much more will God do with his. This is the reason, because God hath paid a full and a valuable price for them all.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because of his providence, in that he keepeth a continual watch over them, as it is Isa. xxvii. 3; there the Lord saith, 'I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep my vineyard night and day.' Again, he speaketh, John xv. 2, to same purpose, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.'

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because he dwelleth amongst his church, and therefore he will have a special care of his own heritage, to do them all manner of kindnesses.

Use 1. The uses are, Since, therefore, the Lord is so ready, present, and willing to defend and prune his heritage, 1. We must labour to be fruitful unto him with some proportionable obedience, as Heb. vi. 7, 8. We see good ground will be fruitful and drink in the rain, and receiveth therefore a blessing from God; but that which bringeth forth thorns and briars is rejected, being nigh unto cursing and burning. It is no strange thing to see brambles and thistles in a heath, but to see such weeds in a watered garden of good ground were more than strange. So let us look to it, and be sure, that

now, when God hath bestowed much cost upon us, he looketh for some answerable fruits.

Use 2. Secondly, It is matter of comfort unto us, that since God always dwelleth with his heritage, he therefore sees all our sorrows and cares; and because of this his abode, for this cause the church shall stand, because he loveth his dwelling-place; yea, though all the power of hell should be turned loose, yet they shall not hurt the church of God; yea, though their sin draw down judgments upon them, yet they shall not rest upon them for ever.

In the second place, we see the persons are described by calling them ‘a remnant,’ ‘a little flock,’ whence the point is, Doct. 4. That the people of God be but a remnant in regard of the wicked, even like the gleanings of the corn, a small company, which is a cause they are so despised of the world. Whereof the uses are, Use 1. First, We must not be discouraged though we see few go with us in the way to heaven. Many are ready to object and cavil against such, but few are ready to profess and suffer with them; yet, let all such who walk forward with the multitude, remember they are but a remnant which shall be saved.

Use 2. Secondly, Is it so, that this small remnant is so opposed and scoffed at? Why then, let us labour so much the more to love and make much one of another, and thus we shall be assured to do more good, than all the power of hell can procure hurt unto us. The devil he labours to sow sedition amongst us; but by love we shall overcome all. The church hath ever received more hurt by discord, than by open enemies.

Having thus described the parties on whom these great mercies shall be bestowed now he proceedeth to prevent an objection of some troubled souls, which might arise from the former doctrine.

Obj. You say that God is thus, and thus, and thus merciful, yet I feel him scourge me often and long together for my sins; I am sure he seems to be angry for the time.

Ans. To this he answereth, ‘He retaineth not his anger for ever.’ Whence the doctrine ariseth, Doct. 5. That the afflictions of God’s children shall have a seasonable and a speedy end. The Lord he knoweth best when it is good to begin, and when to make an end; so the Lord speaketh, Isa. liv. 7, ‘For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hide my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting

kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.' So saith the psalmist, 'Heaviness may come in the morning, but joy cometh in the evening,' Ps. xxx. 5. The reasons whereof be divers.

Reason 1. The first is taken out of Lam. iii. 33, 'Because the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' He doth it not to hurt us, but to mend us and make us come unto him, otherwise we would not come.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because we, having such a sure friend in the court of heaven, even Christ Jesus, to make intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, it is not possible but our afflictions should have a seasonable end; for if the church, having Esther, so sure a friend in the court of Ahasuerus, found by her so speedy and true deliverance, much more shall the church now, by the intercession of Christ, obtain deliverance from the court of heaven.

Reason 3. Thirdly, We shall have speedy and seasonable deliverance from afflictions, because by afflictions we gain instruction. This leadeth us to humiliation and confession of sins, and then the Lord having bound himself by promise and oath, it is not possible but we must have deliverance. He cannot choose but be merciful. Whereof the ground is, that, look how soon God hath his end, which is our unfeigned humiliation, confession, and amendment of life, instantly we have also our end, which is deliverance.

Reason 4. Fourthly, They shall have speedy and seasonable deliverance, because he correcteth them only for their profit; lest, therefore, they should faint and mourn under the burden, he will and hath promised to hasten help, as the psalmist speaketh: 'The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the just, lest the wicked oppress and triumph over him.' Excellently also to this purpose doth the Lord speak, Isa. lvii. 16, 'I will not contend for ever, neither will I always be wroth: for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made.' So, certain it is, God will not beat his children unto death; he beateth not in revenge, but to bring home and amend us. The uses are,

Use 1. Reproof to God's own dear servants, who, in a sharp and quick cross, where they see no issue, they begin to murmur and repine, saying, Oh! I shall never get out of this cross. But what, tell me, wouldst thou think of thy child, that, when thou art a-chastising him for some fault, would have such a conceit of thee, that thou wouldst beat him to death? Mightest not

thou think him an unnatural child? Yet much more unnatural are we unto God, who is a great deal more loving; for if he once begin, we straight imagine that he will never make an end. But we ought not thus to repine, but rather quench his anger with repentant tears, and take away the fuel of sin which kindleth the sense of this wrath, and then the fire will cease. So let us take away the proud and dead flesh, and the plaster will quickly fall away.

Use 2. Secondly, We must hereby learn to imitate and be like unto God. If we will needs be now and then angry, let it be quickly gone; let us spend our anger upon our sins, and not let the sun go down upon our wrath.

But now here ariseth another objection, worse than the former, for the troubled soul might object, Oh! but I have driven God quite away by my innumerable sins; I have lost my feeling, angered my God, grieved the Spirit, and forced God to depart from me. This is a miserable estate; but yet the prophet, in the next verse, answereth, for the comfort of such, that he is not quite gone away, 'He will turn again,' saith he, 'and have compassion,' &c. Whence I gather, Doct. G. Those who have once had any saving comfort, they shall have it again. We see David, he quenched the Spirit, made a foul house, brought all things out of frame; he kept his union with God, but he lost his communion with Christ. The graces of the Spirit were seeming dead in him, yet this man had much comfort again, and did much good to the church, and died in peace and prosperity. So we see, Cant. iii. 1, the church at first quite lost Christ, in a manner; she had no feeling, yet she sought him up and down; nay, she went through all the means of salvation, yet found not Christ. It seems a strange thing, that sometimes one should use all holy means, and yet find no comfort or feeling; yet is it most true. But what then? She went a little further, and then she found him whom her soul loved. So let us always learn this much, that when we have used all the means to find feeling and comfort in vain, yet to go a little further, which is, to wait in patience for God's good time, and to hope above hope,&c., and then we see the issue—we shall find him whom our soul loveth; yea, then he will enable us to lay surer hold upon him than ever, and also keep him surer. So Peter, he fell for a while, yet we know Christ came again unto him, and made sure work, that he was the stronger for ever. The reasons are plain.

Reason 1. First, Because all God's saving graces be given for everlasting, therefore they shall never be finally taken away from his children, as those outward graces of the Spirit, which were in Saul, was.

Reason 2. Secondly, He will turn again and have compassion, though he turn away his face, because his heart is near unto us; like unto a mother, who in seeming anger turneth away her face from her child, yet she longeth until she turn again, even so the Lord when his face is turned from his children, he longeth until he turn again and have compassion, &c.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because of all burdens the absence of God's favour is so intolerable, which absence Christ himself at that time could not endure, but cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii.46. And David, you know, he cries out, 'Thy loving kindness is better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. Therefore, I say, God being a most loving Father unto his children, and knowing how precious his favour is unto them, and how grievous his absence, that they cannot live without him, why then, as sure he is God, and goodness itself, no more can he be without them; he will turn again and have compassion, though not in our time, yet in a better time, even in such a time as he shall see fittest; therefore let us not be dismayed, but redouble our courage.

Use 1. The use hereof is, first, reproof unto such who say, that if their peace be once lost, oh! they shall never have it again, they shall never have comfort, favour, or feeling of God's love. But mark our error: we in this case judge God to be like unto a man, who will say, Oh! I will never again love this man, who hath deceived me. But let us. remember that God did foresee all our errors and sins that ever we should commit, before we did commit the same. Now if these our sins, before our calling, which in the course of our life we were to commit, being all before God's face, could not hinder his love unto us, what folly is it to think that now, after our effectual calling, our sins which he foresaw can stay his mercies from us. This the apostle aimeth at, Rom. v. 10, 'For if, whilst we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' So. that most certain it is he will turn again and have compassion. For if a father should foresee such and such faults in his son, do you think he would punish his son for those faults which he foresaw would of necessity be in him? Certainly he would not. Though he seemed angry, yet he would love him still.

Use 2. Secondly, If we have lost our feeling, like the church, Cant. iii. 1, let us seek it again night by night, that is, constantly, diligently, and earnestly; as Isa. lxii. 7, let us give God no rest until he return; let us, with David, entreat him to 'restore unto us his Spirit again,' Ps. li. 12. Now, restoring

argueth a former having, so he will return and have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.

Having thus at length propounded and spoken of the first benefit God promiseth, of justification, now he cometh unto the second, of Sanctification, 1. In this life; 2. In the life to come.

First, then, for this life. After he hath spoken of justification, now he cometh to sanctification, as a necessary, inseparable fruit thereof; and showeth, that whensoever God cometh to have mercy upon us, then he also subdueth our sins, and bringeth them in subjection. 'He will subdue,' saith he, 'our iniquities.' Whence learn that, Doct 7. Where God forgiveth sin, there he also subdueth sin; as unto Paul, look how soon God was merciful unto him in effectual calling, so soon did he begin to subdue sin in him. So we see of Mary Magdalene, how penitent she was after forgiveness of sins; and so Peter, weeping bitterly after the same; so of Manasseh, that great sinner, who, when his sins were once pardoned, did leave off his sins;—they were subdued also.

Reason 1. The reasons are, first, Because the virtue of Christ's death can never be separated from the merit of the same. Now the merit of his death being the purchase of our free pardon by what he hath done for us imputed for forgiveness of sins, the virtue of his death, which is to kill and wound sin by degrees, to subdue and bring it under, to mortify the affections, can never be separated from the same.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because without this subduing of sin upon forgiveness, neither should we have comfort from him, nor he glory from us; for, so long as we groan under the burden and dominion of sin, we cannot rejoice in God heartily, we cannot serve him. Now, because God would have his servants to rejoice and serve him here fully, therefore upon acceptation of our persons, he will also loose our bands, and make us able to serve him.

Use 1. The use is, (1.) reproof and terror unto such who say they hope their sins are forgiven, when indeed they are not subdued; for it is certain that with forgiveness of sins God also healeth the nature in such, that the like be committed no more, at least there is a resolution, and a total, constant endeavour and striving, to leave all sin.

Use 2. Secondly, This serveth unto us for strong consolation, to see that this is not a death of sin here meant, but that it shall not assail so often, come

so strong, act with such delight, and be so violent. No; the child of God in this life shall never have sin so subdued, as to find a death of it, only it shall be subdued. Therefore, this is a stronghold unto us, that if God have abated the force of sins in us, this is a sure sign of our justification.

Use 3. Thirdly, It is matter of instruction for us all, that whensoever we find our sins too strong for us, let us then fly out of ourselves unto him, who is stronger than all, and hath sworn to subdue them.

Obj. Some object, and say, Oh! I would come if I could but subdue this sin.

Ans. No, I say, because thou canst not overcome this or that sin, yet come. God, he bids thee come because thou art not able to subdue it, that he may come against it with his mighty power and subdue it; otherwise, if it were in our power to subdue our sins, we should be like unto so many gods. Now, I mean, we must go unto God in all his means, to prayer, to the word also, which is mighty to cast down holds, all strong mountains of sin. Again, we must go unto the sacraments, which, we must think, are as able to feed us to life, by eating and drinking of a little bread and wine, as the eating of a little unholy food was at first to bring upon us destruction. This is a stronghold to rest upon. Again, for subduing of our sins, let us bind them up in fetters and chains, let us bind one another by reproofs and holy admonitions. I deny not, for all this, God's children have, and may have, many vexing sins, but with humiliation let them be humbled for them. This is a death of sin, even this weakening and subduing of it.

Now followeth the second part of this sanctification, after this life, in these words, 'He will cast all our sins in the depth of the sea,' meaning that he will drown all our enemies, dealing with our spiritual enemies, as sometimes he did with the temporal enemies of his church. Pharaoh and all his army he drowned in the bottom of the sea; so he says, at length he will drown and destroy all our spiritual enemies. After subduing of sins shall come drowning of them. Whence the doctrine is, that, Doct. 8. Those who have their sins subdued whilst they live, shall have them all drowned when they are dead. We see, 1 Cor. xv. 26, it is said, 'The last enemy we have is death;' but this is only in regard of nature—to them it is a passage to heaven, for the others, unto hell. Rev. xvi. 13, the dead in the Lord are pronounced blessed, for then all their enemies are quite subdued. Here we labour under the burden of many crosses and afflictions, but then is deliverance; here we are troubled with many sins, but then cometh freedom from sin, then we

labour no more, then all shall have an end. Wait but a little until then, and all shall appear most exceeding glorious; for then, for our comfort, all our sorrows and troubles, wherewith we are now fired in the furnace of affliction, shall be quite forgot, as though they had never been: former things shall be remembered no more.

Use 1. The use of all this is for us, since all our sins and sorrows shall then be subdued and forgot, to fight our battles cheerfully here, and look up unto heaven for help.

Use 2. Secondly, Again, that we should be exceedingly comforted in this, that our battle is so short, our victory so sure, and our reward so infinite and eternal; since after a little while all our sins and crosses shall be drowned, they shall be put as far from us as the east is from the west, as heaven is from hell: then, then our long tedious enemies shall all fly away.

Use 3. Thirdly, It is infinite consolation for us against the fear of death, that that death which parteth body and soul, shall also part us from all our sins, sorrows, and crosses for evermore. All those means we now do use, serve but to weaken sin, but death, this kills and vanquisheth it for evermore. So that the speech of Moses to the Israelites may as truly be said of our enemies, 'The Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall never any more see,' Exodus xvi. 13. Even so, I say, though thou be vexed and troubled with many sins, crosses, and afflictions, yet stand still but a while, yet a little while, nay, a very little while, and all these crosses and sins which vex you, you shall never see any more: he will drown them all in the bottom of the sea.

I now come unto the reasons of these doctrines, which are in number two, wherein I must use brevity:

1, His mercy;

2, his truth.

I will only touch them, and so make an end. The first is, because he delighteth in mercy. If we will needs speedily and earnestly perform that wherein we do delight, much more will God. The point is, that, Doct. 9. That wherein God delighteth, it is impossible but it must needs come to pass. Now he, delighting in mercy, therefore it is of necessity that he must needs pour upon us abundance of all his mercies; for he is the perfection of

goodness, the perfection of love. Nothing can stay him from performing that wherein he delighteth, therefore all these excellent mercies must needs be bestowed upon his children.

The next reason, as I showed in the opening, is taken from the truth of God, aided with many reasons: of antiquity, often repetition, many witnesses, and the oath of God confirming the same. So that the giving of these mercies, and certain assurance thereof, dependeth upon God's truth. Whence learn, Doct. 10. God is bound, in regard of his truth, to fulfil all his former mercies unto his children; and therefore as certainly as God is true, as certainly all his benefits and mercies shall be given unto them.

Use 1. The use hereof is unto us, notwithstanding all these promises, to see our weakness, how in temptation we are ready to rob God of his truth, neglecting the promises, because we find not present help. Behold how we deal with God! If a man promise us a thing again and again, we believe him; but if he swear and confirm the same with an oath, then we doubt no more; and yet when God he promiseth again and again unto us many precious promises, yea, and giveth us the earnest in hand, and sweareth unto us, yet, lo our wretchedness, we trust not with assured confidence in him; a mortal man would take it ill to be thus used at our hands. So every small temptation maketh us to rob God of his truth, and to think that he will not be as good as his word.

Use 2. Secondly, It must be matter of instruction for us all, that when we come unto God we must promise ourselves to have good speed, since God is most true of his promises, and we must labour by all means to remember and apply them, and so to turn them into prayers; thus reasoning the matter, What! I am in this and this necessity, God he hath promised to help; since he is true, it must needs be that he will have a care to fulfil his truth; for howsoever I should not be heard, yet God he should be the greatest loser, to lose his truth. O beloved, it is easy for us to speak, but in the evil day to put on our armour, to fly unto prayer, to hang upon God, to fight against temptations, to give unto God the praise of his attributes, that as he is true, loving, just, merciful, all-sufficiency, infinite, omnipotent, so to expect infinite love, infinite truth, infinite mercy from him,—this is no small matter, yea, it is true Christian fortitude, in temptation and affliction thus to reason the matter, to rely upon God, and as it were to bind his help near unto us with the chains of his loving promises. If a promise bind us, much more it bindeth God; for all our truth is but a small spark of that ocean of truth in

him. And therefore to conclude all with this promise, worthy to be engraven in everlasting remembrance upon the palms of our hands, God he hath promised that all the afflictions of his children they shall work for the best, Rom. viii. 28. This is as true as God's truth, I shall one day see and confess so much if I wait in patience; why, therefore, I will wait. God is infinite in wisdom and power, to bring light out of darkness; so also he is true, and he will do it. Therefore because I believe 'I will not make haste;' I will walk in the perfect way until he show deliverance. This must be our resolution, and then it shall be unto us according to our faith; which God, for his Christ's sake, grant unto us all!

## The Sun of Righteousness

*“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be as the dust in that day.”* —Malachi IV. 2, 3.

In the former chapter we may read of a sort of wicked men, yet those not of the worst, that had in their corrupt observation noted that God did seem to approve of those that were notorious idolaters; therefore they contested with him, ‘What profit is there,’ say they, ‘that we have kept his ordinances?’ ver. 14 and 15. This God could not endure, and therefore, verse 8th and 13th, he reproveth their boldness, telling them that they had robbed him, and had spoken stout and rebellious words against him, and from the laying open of their rebellious carriage, he proceeds to describe the carriage of some that were good, who spake often to one another; whence we may observe by the way, that in the worst times some take God’s part. Some are notoriously wicked, carrying sin with a high hand, and some are more civil, yet irreligious, murmuring and complaining as if Christ were not king, and as if true religion were not to be cared for; and these are as hateful to God as the other. For this complaining proceeds either of anger, because things are not suitable to their humours, or from a murmuring at God’s government, as if they were wiser to dispose of things than God; and there are likewise some that recover themselves from such misapprehensions of God’s dealings, and justify God: ‘Just art thou, O Lord, and righteous; and it is thy mercy we are not consumed,’ Neh. ix. 33; and such look at those favours they have, though burdened with other calamities, and to these are these words spoken, ‘But to you that fear my name,’ &c.

In the former verse there is a terrible denunciation against the wicked, and therefore there is no ground that any should be offended at their prosperity. There is a day of vengeance, when they shall be burnt up, and there shall be left them neither root nor branch. This vengeance began to the Jews at the first coming of Christ, and was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem. They looked indeed for the Messiah, and the day of the Lord, but woe be to them, ‘for it shall be a day of darkness,’ Amos v. 8. The persons against whom this denunciation was threatened are said to be the proud men, such as sin against their own consciences, casting off God’s rule

and laws. When he bids them not to swear, they will; when he commands them to attend the means of salvation, they will not, they will live by their own law. So as pride is an ingredient in every sin, as humility is in every virtue; for humility gives God place above ourselves, and above our lusts. But to the present purpose; those words are a gracious promise made to those that fear. In the worst times God hath a number that do fear him; for else it would follow, there should be an act without an object, that we should believe a church where none is, and that there should be war without enemies, that there should be God without glory. For what glory hath God from such as rebel and shake off all rule? No; it is the saints, that praise God: Ps. cxlv. 10, 'All thy works praise thee, and thy saints bless thee.' This should comfort us in that our posterity shall ever have some to stand for God in the worst times; nay, in the worst places, where Satan's throne is. In the next place we may observe, that comfort belongs to such as are God's; for here it is pronounced to those 'that fear.' The ground of which is in this, that Christ is given to them, and ministers should give 'such their portion,' and not grieve those that God grieves not; for such as do not thus are carnal in their disposition, and do steal the word from the people. But to proceed: good men are described here by this, that 'they fear the name of God;' that is, they fear lest by their infirmities there should be a divorce between God's outward favours and them, and fear lest they should offend so good a God, and so they fear his name; that is, fear him as he hath revealed himself in his word; for the devil will fear when God comes in his person. Therefore it is no thank for men to fear his presence; nay, those that fear God most when God declares his presence in his judgments, as when the wicked are smitten with horror and trembling, as Belshazzar was at the handwriting, they have the least true fear. And therefore to come to church at a set time with a composed carriage, and doing outward duties, is not enough to make a man such a one as fears God. Some solace themselves while they are in prosperity, Oh! they will repent when judgments come. The devil will do as much, he will tremble. Can there be any comfort in this fear? Can we think that a man who lives in all manner of notorious crimes till judgment overtake him, will heartily repent him of his faults, that he hath committed, out of love to God? No. It is the fear of wrath and judgment that terrifies him. If this be repentance, the damned in hell have it. How then shall this fear be discerned where it is? I answer, If we fear the name of God there will be a jealousy over ourselves, and a special jealousy of our inward corruptions, so as we fearing the traitor within us, will not give ear to everything, nor give our eyes liberty to look on temptations, but eat with fear, and converse with fear; for those that fear temptations are not secure, and fear not God. Secondly, where this

fear of [God] is, it frees us from base fears. We will fear no man when we are in a good cause. 1 The man that feareth God shall not be afraid of evil tidings,' for his heart is fixed upon God, Ps. cxii. 7, and fears no creature further than as having a beam of God's glory. He fears not death itself, though the king of fears. God he fears as his king, father, husband, and master, and considers of him accordingly to stir up in him an awful reverence of so great a majesty. There is indeed a covenant between God and him, but so as it is with those that fear him.

'Shall the Sun of righteousness arise.' From the most glorious creature, 'the sun,' he expresseth the most glorious Creator, 'Christ Jesus,' taking occasion to help our understandings in grace by natural things, and teaching us thereby to make a double use of the creatures, corporal and spiritual; out of the excellency of the creatures, raising up our minds to consider the excellency of the Creator, so as if these things have beauty and strength, and are comfortable; how much more he that endueth these things with these qualities. Thus, as the rivers lead to the sea, so these creatures should lead us to the glorious majesty of God. But the main observation is, that Christ is the Sun of righteousness, for as by nature there was no guile found in his lips, so is he habitually and actually righteous. He is wisdom, justification, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is compared to the sun, first, because as all light is gathered into the body of the sun, and from it derived to us, so it pleased God that in him should the fulness of all excellency dwell, Col. i. 19; and therefore those that look for perfection out of Christ, do look for light without the sun. Secondly, as there is but one sun, so there is but one Sun of righteousness; and therefore what needeth two heads, or two husbands. One must needs be an adulterer. Christ doth all by his Spirit, which is his vicar. Other vicar needs not, though there were a thousand worlds more. Thirdly, as the sun is above in the firmament, so Christ is exalted up on high, to convey his graces and virtues to all his creatures here below; even as the sun conveys life, and quickens the earth, yea, all things thereon, though itself be but one. Fourthly, as the sun works largely in all things here below, so doth Christ. Fifthly, as the sun is the fountain of light, and the eye of the world, so Christ is the fountain of all spiritual light. 'I am the light of the world,' saith he of himself, John viii. 12. He was that light that enlightens the world, saith St John of him, John i. 9, and therefore Zacharias termeth him 'the day-spring from on high,' Luke i. 78. Sixthly, as the sun directeth us whither to go, and which way, so doth Christ teach us to go to heaven, and by what means; what duties to perform, what things to avoid, and what things to bear. Seventhly, as the sun is pleasant, Eccles. xi. 7, and

darkness is terrible, so Christ is comfortable; for he makes all at peace where he comes, and sends his Spirit the Comforter. Now he is in heaven. Therefore as ignorance and error is expressed by darkness, so, contrarily, joy and honour and knowledge, which bringeth it, is expressed by light, Esther viii. 16; and Christ is our director, our supporter, and without him what are we? and what do we but glory in our shame? Eighthly, By the beams of the sun is conveyed influence to make things grow, and to' distinguish between times and seasons. Thus Christ, by his power, makes all things cheerful, and therefore is called the 'quickenings Spirit,' 1 Cor. xv. 45; for he quickens the dead and dark soul, which, till Christ shine on us, it is a dungeon of ignorance and unbelief; and as his Spirit blows on our spirits, so also it works a spring in growth of grace, or a summer in strength of zeal. Ninthly, the sun works these effects not by coming down to us, but by influence, and shall we, then, be so sottish as to imagine that Christ of necessity must come bodily in the sacrament to us, or that there is else no work of the Spirit by that ordinance. Can the sun be thus powerful in operation by nature, and shall not this Sun of righteousness be more powerful by the influence of his Spirit to comfort and quicken us, though he cometh not bodily down into a piece of bread? Tenthly, As the sun doth work freely, drawing up vapours to dissolve them into rain upon the earth, to cherish it when it is dry, so doth Christ. He freely came from heaven to us, and freely draws up our hearts to heaven, which cannot ascend thither but by

his exhaling power. Christ is our loadstone, that draws these iron hard hearts of ours upward, causing us to contemn this base world, counting it 'dross and dung,' as the church is shadowed out in the Revelation treading the moon under our feet. Eleventhly, as the sun shines upon all, yet doth not heat all, so Christ is offered to all. He shines on all where the gospel cometh, but all are not enlightened; and all that are enlightened do not burn in love to him; nay, some are more hardened by it, as it is the nature of the sun to harden some bodies. Twelfthly, and lastly, as the sun quickens and puts life into dead creatures, so shall Christ, by his power, quicken our dead bodies, and raise them up again when he shall come to judgment. And notwithstanding all these particulars, yet he is not every way like it, for the sun shines upon all alike; but Christ doth not thus, for many are in eternal darkness, notwithstanding this light. He is mercy, yet many are in misery.

How, then, shall we know whether Christ be a sun to us or not?

I answer, If ice find that we feel the heat and, comfort of a Christian, 'it is a sign Christ hath effectually shined upon us. We know that a stone, being naturally cold, if it be hot, that either the sun hath shined on it, or it hath been near some fire. The papists ask us how we know faith to be faith. We may ask them how they know heat to be heat, or light to be light. Even so, by experience, do we find Christ his presence by enlightened hearts and holy affections. They, forsooth, will have the pope judge of these main things, and of the Scripture itself, and thus teach men to look for the sun by candle light.

Secondly, He shall see his marvellous light, and admire it, even as a man newly out of a dark prison, or a blind man restored to sight, how cheerful and joyous is he; or a cripple, when he is healed, oh how he skips and leaps; so a Christian he shews forth the joy of his own heart by telling how good God hath been to his soul. Carnal men wonder at fair buildings, precious jewels, and the like, but David crieth out, '£ Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and then I shall rejoyce,' Ps. iv. 6.

Thirdly, If Christ have shined upon any effectually, they will walk comely as children of the light; and therefore if they live in a course of sin against conscience, the light will tell them their conscience belies them, if they think the light hath shined on them. And indeed it is a wonder how a man should be thus sottish to think he is a child of the light, and yet live in such sins as indeed a man should be ashamed to name; yea, such as the heathen did condemn. This shall be their condemnation, even because they sin against the light; '£ light is come into the world, and yet they love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil,' John iii. 19.

But how shall we carry ourselves, that Christ may shine on us?

For answer thereunto; we should ever be under sanctified means. All the light is gathered into the Scriptures. Attend we, in humility and obedience to God's commandment, on them, and let Christ alone for the profiting of us. It is he that gives us to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Use we the company of those that are good, for by conference God works strangely many times, as in the hearts of the two disciples that went to Emmaus, Luke xxvi. 13. Contrarily take we heed of filthy company. Christ will not shine on base houses, and company where all serves to fire temptations and strengthen our lusts.

Quest. But here may it be demanded what comfort was this to the Jews, to whom this was spoken, whereas it was now near a hundred years after, before Christ came?

Ans. To which I answer, it was a comfort to them to be assured that their seed and posterity should see this ‘Sun of righteousness.’ Abraham rejoiced because the promise was made to him; the Jews rejoiced because of the conversion of the Gentiles which was to come; and where grace is, there will be joy for any good that ariseth to others that are led by the same Spirit, and one spiritual member is engaged in the good of another.

Secondly, Christ was a son before he was in the flesh. He was ‘a Lamb slain from the beginning of the world,’ Rev. xiii. 8, in virtue and force, and also to the eye of faith, so as thereby those Jews saw this Sun of righteousness as present, and thus Abraham saw Christ’s day and rejoiced; and thus is the second glorious coming of Christ present to every believer, and wraps up the soul in joy, as if it were in heaven; for faith regards no distance of time nor place, and therefore it sees Christ really present in the sacrament without the help of popish presence.

Now for use of this doctrine.

Use 1. Is Christ a Sun of righteousness? Then should we pity their estate that are in darkness, and never had Christ to shine on them by his Spirit nor ordinances, as in many places of this kingdom. It is a cruel bloody practice of those lay pastors, that for want of the ministry of the word do betray the souls of many poor people into the jaws of the devil. Use 2. Secondly, If Christ be the Sun of righteousness, we should, when we are cold and benumbed, repair to him, and conceive of him as one having excellencies suitable to our wants. Are we dark? He is light. Are we dull? He can heal us. Are we dying? He is life. And are we in discomfort? He is the fulness of love. He is therefore the Son, that we should seek to him, and make him ours all in all; our Prophet, to direct us by his light; our Priest, to make atonement for us; our King, to help us overcome all our corruptions, and to make us more than conquerors.

‘With healing in his wings.’

By wings are understood beams of the sun, for beams are spread from the lightsome body, as wings from the body; and thus Christ, though but one, can spread all his graces to all parts of the world; and by the beams are

conveyed all that is in the sun, as light and power; and the like effects which grace works in us. Again, wings have a power to keep warm, and comfort the young ones; and therefore God is said to gather his children as a hen doth gather her chickens, Mat. xxiii. 37. In the beams there is a healing nature also. So as the meaning is evident, that this Sun of righteousness shall be a healing sun.

For naturally we are all sick and wounded. Some see and feel their diseases and pain, others do not; but those that do not are the most dangerously afflicted. We are all sick of a general spreading leprosy; and besides, we have every one of us our particular diseases. Some swell with pride, as men do with the dropsy; others that are covetous have ever a supposed hunger, crying ever 'Give, give;' some burn in wrath and anger, as men do in the hot ague; and as we are sick, so are we also wounded by terror of conscience, by Satan's temptations, and therefore have need of healing; and this is wrought by Christ, but after a wonderful manner, even from heaven he comes to invite us to come to him. 'Come to me, all ye that are weary,' Mat. xi. 28. Healing is ordinarily by natural medicines of drugs and the like; but Christ heals with a plaster of his own blood, even by his wounds and stripes are we healed,' Isa. liii. 5. He heals by his Spirit, enlightening our understandings, which by nature is dark, and soon led away to mistake light for darkness, and darkness for light. This he heals by his word breeding sound affections and judgments, whereby we esteem of things as they are, and accordingly do affect them. He heals our wounds of conscience that Satan makes by his darts and sharp temptations, whereby he would bear us in hand that we are reprobates, and that God is angry with us. Against these he strengthens our faith and trust in God, yea, though he kill us. These temptations, and many other, may gather together to cloud this Sun, but it will at length scatter them all. So as there is ever hope of comfort so long as we use good means. Indeed, amongst bodily diseases some there are that are called *opprobria medicerum*; but in soul there is no disease but if it be felt it may be cured. The soul that hungers after comfort shall find it; for Christ is an universal healer, healing both bodies and souls of men, and healing them from all evil, both blindness and deafness of the heart; nay, the very dead heart he can restore to life. And this serves to reprove the carelessness of men. It is wonderful, if the head doth but ache, no cost nor labour is spared to redress it. The physician is sent for presently; but in the soul's sickness they are so far from sending for them as they hate them. Am not I your enemy because I tell you the truth? saith the apostle, Gal. w. 16; and thus

now-a-days none are greater enemies in the esteem of ordinary men than the minister that deals faithfully with them.

Again, this should teach us to take notice of our diseases in time, and go to the healing God, as he terms himself, *Exod. xv. 26*, and lay open our estates to him, and confess, as David did, *Ps. xli. 4*, ‘Heal me, Lord, for I have sinned against thee.’ And thus lay open our sores, as beggars use to do to move commiseration; for as there are beams of majesty in this Sun, so are there beams of mercy and bowels of compassion in him. And to this end we should claim his nature and truth in performance of his promises, and we should attend on the means; for there is a tree in the church of God, even ‘the tree of life,’ whose leaves are appointed ‘to heal the nations,’ *Rev. xxii. 2*, and this is the word of God. We should also take heed of despair. Though as yet Satan lulls us asleep, telling us that the sin we are tempted to is but a little one, and that God will dispense with it; that we may yet a while swear and commit adultery, and when we die we may repent. Believe him not, for when death approacheth he will alter his rhetoric. Oh! thou hast lived in sins against conscience a long while. Though thou hast been told of it often, thy sins are scandalous; thou hast resisted God, he will now resist thee; never hope for mercy, thou art mine. What comfort is there then for a poor miserable wretch, but to be well grounded in the knowledge of his Physician, and to be assured of his healing power that hath cured innumerable souls. We should furthermore take heed of ignorance; for many, when temptations come, have not the least knowledge of any healing power in Christ, and so they go on till death, and die like blocks. We should meditate of his commandments and promises; of his goodness and nature; of his encouragements given to us to come to him, *4 Come to me, all ye that are weary,* *Mat. xi. 38*. We praise physicians that have peculiar sovereign medicines, that can work extraordinary cures. Now Christ he hath a medicine of his own able to cure any disease, though never so desperate, any person though never so sick; Mary Magdalene as well as Paul; Zaccheus as well; all come whole from him; and therefore when Satan would tempt us to despair, we should call to mind that we have a merciful God that ‘forgives all our sins, and heals all our infirmities,’ *Ps. ciii. 3*.

Quest. But it will be asked, Why then are we not healed? What means this that we are subject to these infirmities of ours?

Ans. I answer, Some of Christ’s works are all at one time perfected, but some by degrees, by little and little. Christ heals the soul of guiltiness

presently, but there remains the corruption and the dregs of this disease for heavenly purposes. And thus he heals by not healing, and leaves infirmities to cure enormities. He suffers us to be abased and humbled by our infirmities, lest we should be exalted above measure, as he dealt with Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7, even as the body of a man is cured of apoplexy by an ague, *est utile quibusdam ut cadant*; Peter did more profitably displease himself when he fell, than please himself when he presumed; and therefore we should retort Satan's accusations when he tempteth us to despair because of our sins, and reason thus, because we have infirmities, therefore we will pray the more earnestly, 'forgive us our trespasses;' because we are sick, we will go to Christ that took our nature not to cure the whole but the weak; for we may be sure Christ will not perfectly cure our weaknesses, because he will have us live by faith, every day going to the throne of grace, and depending on his promise for the forgiveness of our sins, assuring ourselves that the spirit, like David's house, shall grow stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker and weaker, 2 Sam. iii. 1; and this flesh beginning once to fall, shall surely fall.

'And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.'

The most translations have it, 'you shall leap forth;' and the last translation is, 'you shall grow up.' All is to one end, signifying a cheerful moving. The terminus a quo is sickness or bonds. Those that are sick are God's prisoners; but here it is taken for weakness of the spirit, and the promise is, that they should go forth in all good duties, and that they should walk with strength, so that Christ's benefits go together. Where there is forgiveness, there is also strength of grace promised; and where there is strength, there is promised increase thereof, even to fulness; for where Christ begins, he leaves not till his work be complete, in wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and therefore he comes both by water and blood also, for God is unchangeable; and that love that moves him to elect, moves him to justify, and sanctify, and glorify us; and all the promises do join these together, justification and sanctification: 'I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart away from me,' Jer. xxxii. 40. Where forgiveness of sin is, there is also power against sin, and strong resolutions to labour against it; and where there is justification, it will shew itself in works of sanctification. This will convict many to be no Christians that boast of the forgiveness of sins.

But where is this healing power of Christ seen? In their conversations. He that is cured can rise and walk,—as the cripple did,—in good duties of a

holy life; for the spirit of adoption is the spirit of sanctification, and we are sick in the bed of sin if we come not out. In the next place we may observe, that in every Christian there is a going out; for so it is promised here, and this hath many degrees. There is a going out of misery in this life, for at this present the church was in great misery, and 'a going out' was promised to them; for when a comfortable worldly estate is good for the church, it shall have it. Secondly, there is a going out of the bonds of sin, by little and little in this world; and because here we are in a warring estate, and our freedom here is but from the dominion of sin; there is another 'going out' at the last day, when we all shall go perfected out of the graves, body and soul being freed from sin; and then shall our joy be full. But in this world there is a going out to good duties, for true believers have hearts enlarged to 'go forth' in good duties. Their hearts are set at liberty, being freed from damnation, and free to walk in good courses; for where grace enables us to go, it enables us freely to go, so as God's people are a free people. In the building of the tabernacle and the temple, they did offer 'freely,' and David praised God for it, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, and Ezra likewise, Ezra in. 4; and the reason is, because these have Christ's Spirit, which is a Spirit of liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17; and it is a promise, Ps. ex. 3, that Christ's people shall be willing. God's people are all volunteers, doing holy duties freely; for they are freed from exaction and coercion. The Spirit that witnesseth the one worketh also the other, and setteth them at liberty. And as this is true, so it is also true that it is dearly bought. It cost Christ's blood, who redeemed us 'to serve him without fear,' Luke i. 74; and that we might be a holy people, zealous of all good works, Titus in. 14; and therefore our lukewarm, cool carriage shews that we are not yet at liberty. And that is the reason we cannot spend an hour in good duties, but it is very irksome and tedious to us. It was otherwise with Zaccheus after his conversion; how free in charitable works! And with the jailor, how cheerful was he in feasting the apostle, whom a little before he had tormented! In the primitive church, how willingly did they endure persecutions, living together with one heart, one mind, and had all things common, Acts in. 44. Thus is it in some measure in all Christians, when they are once heated by this Sun of righteousness. In the next place, God's people do not only go forth, but grow up, and go on in a continued motion; for it is promised that the soul shall grow strong in grace as well as the body in natural strength. And as nature doth enable the body, so doth grace enable the soul, giving ever a desire of liberty to grow up, and to grow in strength, thereby to overcome all weaknesses of the soul whatever, by those holy means appointed to that end. And this is necessary in regard of God, that he might have the more glory; for when we pray or do any good duty with strength, as when we can be

resolute in the defence of a good cause, God is honoured thereby, and his truth honoured, and his wisdom justified. And it is likewise necessary in regard of others, that they may be won, and strengthened by our examples, they seeing that such things are possible to be done; and thus are they also won. When in our actions to one another we do them with all our might and cheerfulness, how grateful and lovely is it to them! And likewise in regard of ourselves; for the stronger we grow, the less burdensome will our profession be to us. For why are we so untoward and dead, that goodness comes from us as fire out of the flint, by force, but because we want this habit, that should grow upon us by practice? Therefore it is we are not grown yet; and therefore cannot pray privately, nor hear conscientiously, but with almost an insensible heart. And likewise this is necessary in regard of oppositions, which is such as must be gotten out of the fire, whatever good we” labour for. We daily feel the strength of our own corruptions of outward oppositions by indispositions of others and scandal of the times, and therefore we had need grow up.

Now, for means hereunto, we should first purge and cleanse the soul of deadening matter. Practise the duty of repentance daily; and though it be bitter, it is better to burn, to cut and lance here, than to die hereafter. It is better to renew our repentance daily, than to go on in security to desperation. And as it is in the body that is sick, the more it is nourished the greater is the strength that the humours do gather; or as it is in leaking ships, the longer we suffer the leak to open, the more danger the ship is in. The best of us daily gather ill humours, partly by reason of our own corruptions within us, partly by reason of the corruption in others with whom we converse; and these make us like sick men, either without stomachs, or with stomachs that can digest none but unwholesome meats; and these once purged out, makes us hunger after goodness, and stronger than before, and more intense in our love to Christ, as Peter was after his bitter tears.

In the next place, we should come to good food. When we have purged out the ill humours of our corruption, digest some comfortable truths, and that presently after we are humbled, lest Satan get advantages on us; therefore we should resort to the preaching of the word whiles we may. That study is accursed that takes up a man when he should be at God’s ordinances; and the good that is gotten at home, when we may go to church on the Sabbath, is as the water of cursing, because it is gotten in contempt of God’s ordinances.

And what though, as many poor Christians object, we forget immediately many times what we hear, yet for the present it will strengthen our souls to walk more strongly after it; as our meat doth when it is passed from us, yet the virtue thereof remaineth behind in us.

Thirdly, We should use exercise of holy duties. We see men that are given to daily labour, how strong they are to bear burdens, and what stomachs they have to their meat; and thus it is in those that are oft in prayer and meditation, how do they long after the word! and how sweet is it to them! and how do they treasure it up! Contrarily those that use no exercise, let them boast as they please, they are full, and care not for the word; and are graceless, however they may excel for civil parts. If they come to church, or like of any of that breed, it must be to their taste, or they will have none of it; gross meat their finer stomachs cannot digest. The preacher must be as a player upon a well-tuned instrument; and this sort of men are never good practitioners,<sup>I</sup> but commonly given to vanity.

But let us take heed we do not lightly esteem of God's ordinance, but in reverence use all means for the strengthening of our faith by the word, sacraments, and prayer. We have but a short time to work. Our wages are in heaven; and it should be a shame to us that we do no more work for so great a reward as we shall have. We should set no stay nor pitch in religion, but evermore pray and endeavour that God's kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Be not dejected by the length of the way, nor the fierce serpents of this world. Take heed of returning into Egypt in our thoughts, but go on from grace to grace, and from one degree to another, till God shall call us to rest.

Quest. But doth a Christian perpetually grow?

Ans. In answer, Not at all times in all parts. Trees we know, in winter time, grow in the root. Christians grow not always in all graces, but only in some one radical grace, as in faith, or humility, or the like. If there be any stop, it is to further his speediness afterwards, as we see in those that stumble in their course, and as water stopped, breaks out more outrageously. Thus was it in the slips of David and Peter. And God's children, after such times, are as a broken bone: after it is set, it grows stronger in that part than in any other.

Obj. But a man may say, I perceive not this growth.

Ans. To which I answer, We perceive not the corn grow, nor the shadow to move, yet in continuance of time we perceive the corn hath grown, and the shadow hath moved. So, though we perceive it not, yet every act of repentance and faith doth strengthen us. There may be many turbida intervalla, cloudy times in every Christian's life. David, a man after God's own heart, had many infirmities; and this may cloud a man's eyes that he may think he is going quite backward. But yet these should not hinder our faith in God's love; for God calls not every slip in a man's life to reckoning. Any traveller may set his foot awry and may go out of his way, yet at length he gets home; and God judges not of us by single acts, but by the tenor of our lives.

How then shall we know whether we are grown or not?

1. I answer, Our growth may be discerned by these signs: first, if we can taste and relish the food of our souls, the word of God; for it is with the soul herein as with the body. If our meat be not loathsome to us, our stomach is good, and it is a sign of health; so if we can hear the word of God with delight, and if it be not tedious to us, it is a sign of our Christian growth.

2. Another sign is, if we find ourselves able to bear great burdens of the infirmities of our brethren; and thus did Christ long bear the infirmities of his weak disciples that followed him; and the apostle, Gal. vi. 1, counts it the office of those that are strong, to restore such as are fallen with the Spirit of meekness.

3. A third sign of our growth is, if we find ourselves able, like Samson, to break the green cords of pleasure and profits, that they cannot bind us, and to run lightly away with a heavy load of afflictions, as Samson did with the city gates of Gaza, counting them light and momentary, as the apostle calls them, 2 Cor. w. 17.

4. Lastly, our growth of grace is seen in our performance of duties; if they be strongly, readily, and cheerfully performed; an example whereof we have in the apostle, Phil. iv. 12, who could abound and suffer want, yea, could do all things through Christ that strengthened him: and this is in all Christians more or less, to content themselves in the will of God, and to run the race of God's commandments with a large and cheerful heart.

Ver. 3, 'And ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be as dust.

This is another promise made to the church, and in it to every member thereof, of victory over their enemies. God's children and the wicked are like scales, when the one is up, the other is down, j Therefore, as this is a promise to the children of God, so is it a threatening to the wicked; for it is the happiness of the church 'to tread down the wicked,' which words must have a large interpretation; for the wicked generally seem to tread down the godly, and therefore we must know that these words were spoken to the Jews, and in them to all other Christians analogically; and it was fulfilled, first, when the good Jews saw the confusion of all the rebellious Jews under Vespasian, when the temple and the city was destroyed, and they made a by-word unto the nations. Secondly, the words may have reference to the conversion of the Jews, whereas all the enemies of their glorious conversion shall be trodden down, as it is in Micah iv. 13, 'Arise, O Zion: thou shalt beat in pieces many people;' for undoubtedly there is a glorious conversion of the Jews to come, in what manner and at what time we hope ere long to know; for ever since this prophecy their estate and condition hath been very low and mean, and there must come a time of restoring. In the next place, these words may be intended as a promise to all God's church; for while they gloriously and powerfully profess the truth, they are the head and not the tail, ruling and not ruled, as appeareth by the Jews' example.

1. First, While they obeyed God, they were a terror to the whole earth, but once fallen from God, they were and remain a scorn to all people; and thus is it now where the white horse goes before, the red horse follows after, as it is in the Revelation, Rev. vi. 4. So long as the church keeps good terms with God, none so terrible as they, and their enemies knoweth this full well: 'Let us take him, God hath forsaken him, and he shall fall into our net,' Ps. lxxi. 11.

\_ 2. Secondly, The church treadeth down its enemies in regard of true judgment and discerning of their estates; for they do think and account of the wicked as a vile and abominable thing, and as of an object of pity; and this the wicked do know, and this makes them hate God's children.

3. Thirdly, The church of God tramples on all things that rule wicked men,' as riches, honours, and the like; and therefore, in the Apocalypse, it is said to 'tread on the moon,' Rev. xii. 1; that is, putting all earthly, worldly things under it; and thus did Moses, Daniel, and Paul. All is dross and dung in comparison of Christ; and thus is the church and child of God a spiritual king.

4. Fourthly, The church and children of God tread down the, wicked in regard of their example, for by it and by the word they subdue the spirits of the world, and bind kings in chains, bringing down their mighty strong corruptions and hard hearts to obedience, and if not, yet by making them inexcusable, we fasten a censure and a sentence of condemnation which hereafter is executed on them; and thus the saints in old time were said to condemn the world, and the white horse to go forth conquering; and there is no man but he must either yield or he is condemned already; and the allows of God stick fast in him even here, and the liberty they seem to have is no other but as the liberty of the Tower.

5. But lastly, this promise is accomplished at the last day of judgment, when we shall sit with Christ as kings, ruling with him, and as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel, judges of the world. We are here conquerors of the world, flesh, and devil; but then all things shall be put under our feet. And this should comfort us in our sufferings under wicked men; for at that time those that now triumph over us shall be trodden down as dust. And again, we should learn not to fret to see the prosperity of the wicked, Ps. xxxvii. 1. They are but flowers of a day's continuance. Who envies the estate or happiness of a base person that in a play acts the person of a king? This world is no other than a stage play. Let the wicked be in never so great a place, he must return to his rags; and the good man, though he acts the part of a beggar here for a while, he shall be a king hereafter for ever, and in the mean time God considers of him as his dear son, and it is no matter how high or low he is in the subsidy book.

If we see ill men therefore advanced, and scandalous men insult, let us enter into the sanctuary, and then we shall see their end to be cursing; and feed we ourselves with meditations, by faith seeing ourselves sitting in judgment on these wicked men. For God's truth and justice will not always suffer these men to ruffle, for then the devil would be a better master than Christ. And for the present times, do we see that wicked men prevails and increases, take no scandal at it. "We know we have as great promises as the Jews ever had; though by these trials God doth purge and quicken his church, it will not always be thus. The beast is going to destruction. They may serve for a while as scouring stuff to purge the church, or as horse-leeches to suck the corrupt blood of the church, and when this work is done, they shall be thrown on the dunghill. It will be thus ere long. 'Babylon is fallen;' and as Christ out of his deep and basest abasement under death did rise to the highest pitch of glory, so his enemy antichrist contrarily, when he

is most high and lifted up, shall suddenly and irrecoverably come tumbling down, and at the judgment day shall be more despicable and confounded. He shall be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, Rev. xix. 20. Amen!

# Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations

To the Christian Reader

Courteous Reader,—Thou hast here meditation upon meditation offered to thy consideration, as a help to thee when thou art privately alone.

As sweet spices yield small savour until they are beaten to powder, so the wonderful works of God are either not at all, or very slightly smelled in the nostrils of man, who is of a dull sense, unless they be rubbed and chafed in the mind, through a fervent affection, and singled out with a particular view; like them which tell money, who look not confusedly at the whole heap, but at the value of every parcel. So then a true Christian must endeavour himself to deliver, not in gross, but by retail, the millions of God's mercy to his soul; in secret thoughts, chewing the cud of every circumstance with continual contemplation. And as a thrifty gardener, which is loath to see one rose leaf to fall from the stalk without stilling; 'so the Christian soul is unwilling to pass, or to stifle the 'beds of spices,' in the garden of Christ, without gathering some fruit, Cant. vi. 2, which contain a mystery and hidden virtue; and our 'camphire clusters' in the vineyards of Engedi,' Cant. i. 14, must be resolved into drops by the still of meditation, or else they may be noted for weeds in the herbal of men, which hath his full of all kinds. But some are slightly passed over, as the watery herbs of vanity, which grow on every wall of carnal men's hearts, and yield but a slight taste how good the Lord is, or should be to their souls. It therefore behoveth us, first, to mind the tokens of his mercy and love, and afterwards for the helping of our weak digestion, to champ and chew by an often revolution, every part and parcel thereof, before we let it down into our stomachs; that by that means it may effectually nourish every vein and living artery of our soul, and fill them full with the pure blood of Christ's body, the least drop whereof refresheth and cheereth the soul and body of him which is in a swoon through his sin, and maketh him apt to walk and talk as one who is now living in Christ.

By this sweet meditation the soul taketh the key where all her evidences he, and peruses the bills and articles of covenant agreed and condescended unto between God and man. There she seeth the great grant and pardon of her sins, subscribed unto by God himself, and sealed with the blood of Christ.

There he beholdeth his unspeakable mercy to a prisoner condemned to die, without which at the last in a desperate case he is led and haled unto execution, by the cursed crew of hellish furies.

Here she learneth how the Holy Land is entailed, and retaileth by discourse the descent from Adam, unto Abraham and his son Isaac, and so forward unto all the seed of the faithful. By meditation the soul prieth into the soul, and with a reciprocal judgment examineth herself and every faculty thereof, what she hath, what she wanteth, where she dwelleth, where she removeth, and where she shall be.

By this she feeleth the pulses of God's Spirit beating in her; the suggestions of Satan; the corruptions of her own affections, who like a cruel step-dame mingleth poisons and pestilent things to murder the Spirit, to repel every good motion, and to be in the end the lamentable ruin of the whole man.

Here she standeth, as it were with Saul upon the mountains, beholding the combat between David and Goliath; between the Spirit and the uncircumcised raging of the flesh, the stratagems of Satan, the bootless attempts of the world.

Here appear her own infirmities, her relapses into sin, herself astonished by the buffets of Satan, her fort shrewdly battered by carnal and fleshly lusts, her colours and profession darkened and dimmed through the smoke of affliction, her faith hidden because of such massacres and treasons; her hope banished with her mistrust; herself hovering ready to take flight from the sincerity of her profession.

Here she may discern, as from the top of a mast, an army coming, whose captain is the Spirit, guarded with all his graces; the bloody arms of Christ by him displayed, the trumpets' sound, Satan vanquished, the world conquered, the flesh subdued, the soul received, profession bettered, and each thing restored to his former integrity.

The consideration hereof made Isaac go meditating in the evening, Gen. xxvi. 63.

This caused Hezekiah to 'mourn like a dove, and chatter like a pye' in his heart, in deep silence, Isa. xxxviii. 14.

This forced David to meditate in the morning, nay, all the day long, Ps. lxxiii. 6, and cxix. 148th verse, as also by night in ‘secret thoughts,’ Ps. xvi. 7.

This caused Paul to give Timothy this lesson to meditate, 1 Tim. iv. 13, seq. And God himself commanded Joshua, when he was elected governor, that he should meditate upon the law of Moses both day and night, to the end he might perform the things written therein, Josh. i. 8.

And Moses addeth this clause, teaching the whole law from God himself, ‘These words must remain in thy heart, thou must meditate upon them, both at home and abroad, when thou goest to bed, and when thou risest in the morning,’ Deut. vi. 7.

This meditation is not a passion of melancholy, nor a fit of fiery love, nor covetous care, nor senseless dumps, but a serious act of the Spirit in the inwards of the soul, whose object is spiritual, whose affection is a provoked appetite to practise holy things; a kindling in us of the love of God, a zeal towards his truth, a healing our benumbed hearts, according to that speech of the prophet, ‘My heart did wax hot within me, and fire did kindle in my meditations,’ Ps. xxxix. 3, the want whereof caused Adam to fall, yea, and all the earth, into utter desolation; for there is no man considereth deeply in his heart, Jer. xii. 16. If Cain had considered the curse of God, and his heavy hand against that grievous and crying sin, he would not have slain his own brother. If Pharaoh would have set his heart to ponder of the mighty hand of God by the plagues already past, he should have prevented those which followed, and have fore-slowed his haste in making pursuit, with the destruction of himself and his whole army.

If Nadab and Abihu had regarded the fire they put in their censers, they might have been safe from the fire of heaven.

To conclude, the want of meditation hath been the cause of so many fearful events, strange massacres, and tragical deaths, which have from time to time pursued the drowsy heart and careless mind; and in these our days is the butchery of all the mischiefs which have already chanced unto our countrymen; for whilst God’s judgments are masked, and not presented to the view of the mind by the serious work of the same, though they are keen and sharp, it being sheathed, they seem dull, and of no edge unto us, which causeth us to prick up the feathers of pride and insolency, and to make no reckoning of the fearful and final reckoning which most assuredly must be made, will we, nill we, before God’s tribunal. Hence it cometh to pass that

our English gentlewomen do brave it with such outlandish manners, as though they could dash God out of countenance, or roust it in heaven as they carve it here, so that thousands are carried to hell out of their sweet perfumed chambers, where they thought to have lived, and are snatched presently from their pleasant and odoriferous arbours, dainty dishes, and silken company, to take up their room in the dungeon and lake of hell, which burneth perpetually with fire and brimstone.

And for want of this, God's children go limping in their knowledge, and carry the fire of zeal in a flinty heart, which, unless it be hammered, will not yield a spark to warm and cheer their benumbed and frozen affections towards the worship and service of God, and the hearty embracing of his truth.

By this God's works of creation are slipped over, even 'from the cedar to the hyssop that groweth on the wall,' 1 Kings iv. 33.

The sun, the moon, the stars, shine without admiration; the sea and the earth, the fowls, fishes, beasts, and man himself, are all esteemed as common matters in nature. Thus God worketh those strange creatures without that glory performed which is due, and his children receive not that comfort by the secret meditation of God's creation as they might.

Hence it proceedeth that they are often in their dumps, fearing as though they enjoyed not the light; whereas if they would meditate and judge aright of their estates, they might find they are the sons of God, and heirs of that rich kingdom most apparently known and established in heaven, and shall suddenly! possess the same, even then most likely when their flesh thinketh it farthest off; as the heir being within a month of his age, maketh such a reckoning of his lands that no careful distress can trouble him. But this consideration being partly through Satan's, and partly through their own dulness and over-stupidness, they fare like men in a swoon, and as it were bereaved of the very life of the Spirit, staggering under the burden of affliction, stammering in their godly profession, and cleaving sometimes unto the world. Through this they carry Christ's promises like comforts in a box, or as the chirurgeon his salves in his bosom.

Meditation applieth, meditation healeth, meditation instructeth. If thou lovest wisdom and blessedness, meditate in the law of the Lord day and night, and so make use of these Meditations to quicken thee up to duty, and

to sweeten thy heart in thy way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Farewell.—Thy friend, Ezekiel Culverwell.

### Divine Meditations

1. That man hath made a good progress in religion that hath a high esteem of the ordinances of God; and though perhaps he find himself dead and dull, yet the best things have left such a taste and relish in his soul, that he cannot be long without them. This is a sign of a good temper.

2. A wife, when she marries a husband, gives up her will to him. So doth every Christian when he is married to Christ. He gives up his will and all that he hath to him, and saith, 'Lord, I have nothing but if thou callest for it thou shalt have it again.'

3. When we come to religion, we lose not our sweetness, but translate it. Perhaps before we fed upon profane authors, now we feed upon holy truths. A Christian never knows what comfort is in religion till he come to be downright; as Austin saith, 'Lord, I have wanted of thy sweetness over long; all my former life was nothing but husks.'

4. God takes care of poor weak Christians that are struggling with temptations and corruptions. Christ carries them in his arms. All Christ's sheep are diseased, and therefore he will have a tender care of them, Isa. xl. 11.

5. Whatsoever is good for God's children, they shall have it; for all is theirs, to further them to heaven. Therefore if poverty be good, they shall have it; if disgrace be good, they shall have it; if crosses be good, they shall have them; if misery be good, they shall have it; for all is ours, to serve for our main good.

6. God's children have these outward things with God himself. They are as conduits to convey his favour to us; and the same love that moved God to give us heaven and happiness, the same love moves him to give us daily bread.

7. The whole life of a Christian should be nothing but praises and thanks to God. We should neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, but eat to God, and sleep to God, and work to God, and talk to God; do all to his glory and praise.

8. Though God deliver not out of trouble, yet he delivers from the ill in trouble, from despair in trouble, by supporting the spirit. Nay, he delivers by trouble, for he sanctifies the trouble to cure the soul, and by less troubles he delivers from greater.

9. What are we but a model of God's favours? What do we see, or 10. God pities our weakness in all our troubles and afflictions. He will not stay too long, lest we out of weakness put our hands to some shifts. He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous, Ps. cxxxv. 3.

11. Is it not an unreasonable speech for a man at midnight to say it will never be day? And so it is an unreasonable thing for a man that is in trouble to say, 'O Lord, I shall never get out of this! it will always be thus with me.'

12. Do the wicked think to shame or fear good men? No; a spirit of grace and glory shall rest upon them. They shall not only have a spirit of grace rest upon them, but a spirit of glory, so that their countenances shall shine as Stephen's did when he was stoned, Acts vi. 15.

13. If God hides his face from us, what shall become of our souls. We are like the poor flower that opens and shuts with the sun. If God shines upon the heart of a man, it opens; but if he withdraws himself, we hang down our heads: 'Thou turnedst away thy face, and I was troubled,' Ps. xxx. 7.

14. When we have given up ourselves to God, let us comfort our souls that God is our God. When riches, and treasures, and men, and our lives fail, yet God is ours. We are now God's Davids, and God's Pauls, and God's Abrahams; we have an everlasting being in him.

15. A special cause of too much dejection is want of resolution in good things, when we halt in religion; for as halting is a deformed and troublesome gesture, so in religion, halting is always joined with trouble and disquiet.

16. God hath made the poorest man that is a governor of himself, and hath set judgment to rule against passion and conscience against sin; therefore reason should not be a slave to passion.

17. It is the peculiar wisdom of a Christian to pick arguments out of his worst condition, to make him thankful. And if he be thankful, he will be joyful; and so long as he is joyful he cannot be miserable.

18. God hath made himself ours, and therefore it is no presumption to challenge him to be our God. When once we have interest in God, he thinks nothing too good for us. He is not satisfied in giving us the blessings of this life, but he gives himself unto us.

19. As we receive all from God, so we should lay all at his feet, and say, 'I will not live in a course of sin that will not stand with the favour of my God;' for he will not lodge in the heart that hath a purpose to sin.

20. God's people have sweet intercourse with God in their callings. When we look for comfort, we shall find it either in hearing, reading, or praying, &c., or else in our callings.

21. We glorify God when we exalt him in our souls above all creatures in the world, when we give him the highest place in our love and in our joy, when all our affections are set upon him as the chiefest good. This is seen also by opposition, when we will not offend God for any creature, when we can ask our affections, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25.

22. There is no true zeal to God's glory but it is joined with true love to men; therefore let men that are violent, injurious, and insolent, never talk of glorifying God so long as they despise poor men.

23. If we do not find ourselves the people of God's delight, let us attend upon the means of salvation, and wait God's good time, and stand not disputing, 'Perhaps God hath not a purpose to save me;' but fall to obedience, casting thyself into the arms of Christ, and say, If I perish, I will perish here.

24. The love of God in Christ is not barren kindness. It is a love that reaches from everlasting to everlasting; from love in choosing us, unto love in glorifying of us. In all the miseries of the world, one beam of this loving-kindness of the Lord will scatter all.

25. Our desires are holy if they be exercised about spiritual things. David desires not to be great, to be rich in the world, or to have power to be revenged upon his enemies, but that he may 'dwell in the house of the Lord, and enjoy his ordinances,' Ps. xxvii. 4.

26. Desires show the frame of the soul more than anything; as where there is a spring, it discovers itself by vapours that arise; so the breathing of these desires show that there is a spring of grace in the heart.

27. Desires spring from the will; and the will being as the whole man, it moves all other powers to do their duty, and to see for the accomplishing of that it desires. Those therefore that pretend they have good desires, and yet neglect all means, and live scandalously, this is but a sluggish desire.

28. An hypocrite will not pray always, but a child of God never gives over; because he sees an excellency, a necessity, and a possibility of obtaining that he desires. He hath a promise for it: 'The Lord will fulfil the desires of them that fear him,' Ps. cxlv. 19.

29. Prayer doth exercise all the graces of the Spirit. We cannot pray but our faith is exercised, our love, our patience; which makes us set a high price upon that we seek after, and to use it well.

30. God takes it unkindly if we weep too much, and over-grieve for loss of wife, child, or friend, or for any cross in the things of this life; for it is a sign we fetch not that comfort from him which we should and may do. Nay, though our weeping be for our sins, we must keep a moderation in that. We must with one eye look upon our sins, and with the other eye look upon God's mercy in Christ; and therefore if the best grief must be moderated, what must the other?

31. The religious affections of God's people are mixed; for they mingle their joy with weeping, and their weeping with joy, whereas a carnal heart is all simple. If he joy, he is mad; if he be sorrowful, unless it be restrained, it sinks him; but grace always tempers the joy and sorrow of a Christian, because he hath always something to joy in and something to grieve for.

32. We are members of two worlds. Now, whilst we live here, we must use this world; for how many things doth this poor life of ours need! We are passing away; and, in this passage of ours, we must have necessaries. But yet we must use the world as if we used it not; for there is a danger lest our affections cleave to the things of this life.

33. It is a poorness of spirit in a Christian to be over joyful, or overgrieved for things worse than ourselves. If a man hath any grace, all the world is inferior to him; and therefore what a poorness of spirit is it to be

over joyful, or over-much grieved, when all things are fading and vanish away. Let us therefore bear continually in our minds, that all things here below are subordinate.

34. A sincere heart that is burdened with sin, desires not heaven so much as the place where he shall be free from sin, and to have the image of God and Christ perfected in his soul; and therefore a sincere spirit comes to hear the word, not so much because an eloquent man preacheth, as to hear divine truths: because the evidence of the Spirit goes with it, to work those graces. You cannot still a child with anything but the breast; so you cannot still the desires of a Christian, but with divine truths, as, Isa. xxvi. 8, 'The desires of our souls is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee.'

35. There is a thousand things that may hinder good success in our affairs. What man can apply all things to a fit issue, and remove all things that may hinder? Who can observe persons, times, places, advantages, and disadvantages; and when we see these things there is naturally a passion, that it robs us of our knowledge: as, when a man sees any danger, there is such a fear or anger, that he is in a mist. So that, unless God give a particular success, there is none. As it is in the frame of a man's body; it stands upon many joints, and if any of these be out of frame it hinders all the rest.

36. If we will hold out, because the error is in want of deep apprehension of the miseries we are in by nature; let us labour therefore to have our hearts broken more and more. Upon this fault it was that the stony ground spoken of in the gospel wants rooting. Therefore it is Christian policy to suffer our souls to be humbled, as deep as possible may be, that there may be mould enough; otherwise there may be a great joy in divine truths, and they may be comfortable, but all will be sucked up like dew when persecution comes, if it be not rooted.

37. What is the reason that God's children sink not to hell when troubles are upon them? Because they have an inward presence strengthening them: for the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities, not only to pray, but to bear crosses, sweetening them with some glimpse of his gracious countenance. For what supports our faith in prayer, but inward strength from God.

38. In prosperity, or after some deliverance, it is the fittest time for praise; because then our spirits are raised up and cheered in the evidence of God's favour: for the greater the cross is from which we have been delivered, the more will the spirit be enlarged to praise God.

39. Whenever we receive any good to our souls, or to our bodies, whoever is the instrument, let us look to the principal; as in the gifts we receive, we look not to the bringer but to the sender.

40. Take heed of Satan's policy, 'That God hath forgotten me because I am in extremity;' nay, rather God will then show mercy, for now is the special time of mercy, therefore beat back Satan with his own weapons.

41. Whatsoever God takes away from his children, he either supplies it with a great earthly favour, or else with strength to bear it. God gives charge to others to take a care of the fatherless and widow, and will he neglect them himself?

42. That is spiritual knowledge, which alters the taste and relish of the soul: for we must know there is a bitter antithesis in our nature, against all saving truths; there is a contrariety between our nature and that doctrine, which teacheth us, that we must 'deny ourselves,' Titus ii. 12, and be saved by another. Therefore the soul must first be brought to relish, before it can digest: there must be first an holy harmony between our nature and truth.

43. If we walk aright in God's ways, let us have heaven daily in our eye, and the day of judgment, and times to come, and this will stern the course of our lives, and breed love in the use of the means, and patience to undergo all conditions. Let us have our eye with Moses upon him that is invisible, Heb. xi. 27.

44. A man may know that he loves the world, if he be more careful to get than to use. For we are but stewards, and we should consider, I must be as careful in distributing as in getting: for when we are all in getting, and nothing in distributing, this man is a worldling; though he be moderate in getting, without wronging any man, yet the world hath gotten his heart, because he makes not that use of it he should.

45. It is a sottish conceit to think that we can fit ourselves for grace, as if a child in the womb could forward its natural birth. If God hath made us men, let us not make ourselves gods.

46. As natural life preserves itself by repelling that which is contrary to it, so, where the life of grace is, there is a principle of skill, of power, and strength to repel that which is contrary.

47. It is the nature of the soul, that when it sees a succession of better things, it makes the world seem cheap; when it sees another condition, not liable to change, then it hath a sanctified judgment to esteem of things as they are; and so it overcomes the world.

48. In the covenant of grace, God intends the glory of his grace above all. Now faith is fit for it, because it hath an uniting virtue to knit us to the mediator, and to lay hold of a thing out of itself; it empties the soul of all conceit of worth, or strength, or excellency in the creature: and so it gives all the glory to God and Christ.

49. What) we are afraid to speak before men, and to do for fear of danger, let us be afraid to think before God. Therefore we should stifle all ill conceits in the very conception, in their very rising: let them be used as rebels and traitors, smothered at the first.

50. The heart of man, till he be a believer, is in a wavering condition, it is never at quiet, and therefore it is the happiness of the creature to be satisfied, and to have rest: for perplexity makes a man miserable. If a man have but a little scruple in his conscience, he is like a ship in the sea, tossed with contrary winds, and cannot come to the haven.

51. The righteousness of works leaves the soul in perplexity. That righteousness which comes by any other means than by Christ, leaves the soul unsettled, because the law of God promiseth life only upon absolute and personal performance. Now the heart of man tells him, that this he hath not done, and such duties he hath omitted; and this breeds perplexity, because the heart hath not whereon to stay itself.

52. Glory follows afflictions, not as the day follows the night, but as the spring follows winter; for the winter prepares the earth for the spring: so doth afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.

53. This life is not a life for the body, but for the soul; and therefore the soul should speak to the body, and say, 'Stay, body, for if thou movest me to fulfil thy desires now, thou wilt lose me and thyself hereafter.' But if the body be given up to Christ, then the soul will speak a good word for it in heaven; as if it should say, 'Lord, there is a body of mine in the earth, that did fast for me, and pray with me:' it will speak for it as Pharaoh's butler to the king for Joseph, Gen. xli. 9.

54. Afflictions makes a divorce and separation between the soul and sin. It is not a small thing that will work sin out of the soul; it must be the spirit of burning, the fire of afflictions sanctified: heaven is for holiness, and all that is contrary to holiness afflictions works out, and so frames the soul to a further communion with God.

55. When the soul admires spiritual things, it is then a holy frame; and so long it will not stoop to any base comfort. We should therefore labour to keep our souls in an estate of holy admiration.

50. All those whom Christ saves by virtue of his merit and payment, to those he discovers their wretched condition, and instead thereof a better to be attained; he shows by whom we are redeemed, and from what, and unto what condition: the Spirit informing us thoroughly, that God enters into covenant with us.

57. Spiritual duties are as opposite to flesh and blood as fire to water; but, as anointing makes the members nimble, and strong, and cheerful, so, where the Spirit of God is in any man, it makes him nimble, and strong, and cheerful to good duties. But when we are drawn to them as a bear to the stake, for fear, or an inbred natural custom, this is not from the Spirit; for where the Spirit is, there duties are performed without force, fear, or hopes. A child needs no extrinsecal motion to make him please his father, because it is inbred and natural to him.

58. As the weights of a clock makes all the wheels to go, so artificial Christians are moved with things without them; for they want this inward principle to make them do good things freely. But where the Spirit of God is, it works a kind of natural freedom.

59. As the woman in the law, when she was forced by any man, if she cried out she was blameless, so if we unfeignedly cry unto Christ, and complain of our corruptions, that they are too strong for us, this will witness to our hearts that we are not hypocrites.

60. Good duties come from unsound Christians as fire out of the flint; but they flow from a child of God, as water out of a spring; yet because there is flesh in them as well as spirit, therefore every duty must be gotten out of the fire. And yet there is a liberty, because there is a principle in them that resists the flesh. ,,

61. God's children are hindered in good duties by an inevitable weakness in nature, as after labour with drowsiness; therefore 'the spirit may be willing when the flesh is weak,' Mat. xxvi. 41. If we strive therefore against this deadness and dulness, Christ is ready to make excuse for us, if the heart be right, as he did for his disciples.

62. A child of God is the greatest freeman, and the best servant, even as Christ was the best servant, yet none so free; and the greater portion that any man hath of his Spirit, the freer disposition he hath to serve every one in love.

63. Sight is the most noblest sense. It is quick: it can see from earth to heaven in a moment. It is large: it can see the hemisphere of the heavens with one view. It is sure and certain: for in hearing we may be deceived. And, lastly, it is the most affecting sense. Even so is faith the quickest, the largest, the most certain, and most affecting. It is like an eagle in the clouds: at one view it sees Christ in heaven, and looks down into the world. It sees backward and forwards: it sees things past, present, and to come; and therefore it is, that faith is expressed by beholding.

64. A veil or covering had two uses amongst the Jews. One was subjection, and therefore the women were veiled; another was obscurity, and therefore was the veil on Moses's face. Both these are now taken away in Christ; for we serve God as 'sons,' and as a spouse her husband. We are still in subjection, but not servile; and now also with 'open face' we behold the glory of the Lord. We behold the things themselves; they are now clearly laid open; the veil is taken away.

65. Our happiness consists in our subordination and conformity to Christ; and therefore let us labour to carry ourselves, as he did to his Father, to his friends, to his enemies. In the days of his flesh he prayed whole nights to his Father. How holy and heavenly-minded was he, that took occasion from vines, and stones, and sheep, to be heavenly-minded. And when he rose from the dead, his talk was only of things concerning the kingdom of God. For his carriage to his friends, 'he would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed,' Mat. xii. 20. He did not cast Peter in the teeth with his denial. He was of a winning and gaining disposition to all. For his carriage to his enemies, he did not call for fire from heaven to destroy them, but shed many tears for them that shed his blood. 'O Jerusalem,' &c., Mat. xxiii. 37; and upon the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' Luke xxiii. 34. So that if we will be minded like unto Christ, consider how he

carried himself to his Father, to his friends, to his enemies, yea, to the devil himself. When he comes to us in wife, children, friends, &c., we must do as Christ did, bid Avoid, Satan;’ and when we have to deal with those that have the spirit of the devil in them, we must not render reproach for reproach, but answer them, ‘It is written.’

66. When we find any grace wrought in us, we should have a holy esteem of ourselves, as when we are tempted to sin. What! I that am an heir of heaven, a king, a conqueror, the son of God, a freeman, shall I stain myself? God hath put a crown upon my soul, and shall I cast my crown into the dirt? No; I will be more honourable. These are no proud thoughts, but befitting our estate.

67. Those that are besotted with the false lustre of the world, do want spiritual light. Christ himself, when he was here upon the earth, he lived a concealed life; only at certain times some beams broke out. So let it comfort us that our glory is hid in Christ. Now it is clouded with the malice of wicked men, and with our own infirmities. But let us comfort ourselves with this, that we are glorious in the eyes of God and his angels.

68. As men after a fit of sickness grow much, so God’s children grow, especially after their falls, sometimes in humility, sometimes in patience. As we may observe in plants and herbs, they grow at the root in winter, in the leaf in summer, and in the seed in autumn; so Christians appear, sometimes humble, sometimes spiritual and joyful, and sometimes they grow in spiritual courage.

69. That which we drew from the ‘first Adam’ was the displeasing of God, but we draw from the ‘second Adam’ the favour of God. From the ‘first Adam’ we drew corruption, from the ‘second Adam’ we drew grace: from the ‘first Adam’ we drew misery and death, and all the miseries that follow death. We draw from the ‘second Adam’ life and happiness. Whatsoever we had from the ‘first Adam’ we have it repaid more abundantly in the second.

70. Grace makes us glorious, because it puts glory upon the soul. It carries the soul above all earthly things: it tramples the world under her feet: it prevails against corruptions, that foil ordinary men. A man is not more above beasts than a Christian that hath grace is above other men.

71. It is an evidence that we are gracious men, if we can look upon the lives of others that are better than we, and love and esteem them glorious. A man may see grace in others with a malignant eye; for natural men are so vain-glorious, that when they see the lives of other men outshine theirs, instead of imitation they darken. What grace they will not imitate, they will defame. Therefore those that can see grace in others, and honour it in them, it is a sign they have grace themselves. Men can endure good in books, and to hear good of men that are dead, but they cannot endure good in the lives of others to be in their eyes, especially when they come to compare themselves with them. They love not to be out-shined.

72. As the sun goes its course, though we cannot see it go; and as plants and herbs grow, though we cannot perceive them: even so it follows not, that a Christian grows not, because he cannot see himself grow. But if they decay in their first love, or in some other grace, it is that some other grace may grow and increase, as their humility, their broken-heartedness. Sometimes they grow not in extension, that they may grow at the root. Upon a check, grace breaks out more; as we say after a hard winter, usually there follows a glorious spring.

73. God's children never hate corruption more than when they have been overcome by corruption. The best men living have some corruptions, which they see not till they break out by temptations. Now when corruptions are made known to us, it stirs up our hatred, and hatred stirs up endeavour, and endeavour revenge; so that God's children should not be discouraged for their falls.

74. When the truth of grace is wrought in a Christian, his desires go beyond his strength, and his prayers are answerable to his desires. Whereupon is it that young Christians oftentimes call their estate in question, because they cannot bring heaven upon earth, because they cannot be perfect; but God will have us depend upon him for increase of grace in a daily expectation.

75. Christ is our pattern, whom we must strive to imitate. It is necessary that our pattern should be exact, that so we might see our imperfections, and be humbled for them, and live by faith in our sanctification.

76. Consider Christ upon the cross as a public person, that when he was crucified, and when he died, he died for my sins, and this knowledge of Christ will be a crucifying knowledge. This will stir up my heart to use my

corruptions, as my sins used Christ. As he hated my sin, so it will work the same disposition in me, to hate this body of death, and to use it as it used Christ, answerably. As we see this clearly, it will transform us.

77. With our contemplation let us join this kind of reasoning. God so hated pride, that he became humble to the death of the cross, to redeem me from it, and shall I be proud? And when we are stirred up to revenge, consider that Christ prayed for his enemies. When we are tempted to disobedience, think God in my nature was obedient to the death, and shall I stand upon terms? And when we grow hard-hearted, consider Christ became man, that he might show bowels of his mercy. Let us reason thus when we are tempted to any sin, and it will be a means to transform us from our own cursed likeness into the likeness of Christ.

78. When we see God blasphemed, or the like, let us think, how would Christ stand affected if he were here? When he was here upon earth, how zealous was he against profaneness, and shall I be so cold? When he saw the multitude wander as sheep without a shepherd, his bowels yearned; and shall we see so many poor souls live in darkness, and our bowels not yearn? Mat. ix. 36.

79. We must look upon Christ, not only for healing, but as a perfect pattern to imitate; for wherefore else did he live so long upon earth, but to show us an example. And let us know that we shall be countable for those good examples which we have from others. There is not an example of an humble, holy, and industrious life, but shall be laid to our charge; for God doth purposely let them shine in our eyes, that we might take example by them.

80. As the spirits in the arteries quickens the blood in the veins, so the Spirit of God goes along with the word, and makes it work. St Paul speaks to Lydia, but the Spirit speaks to her heart. As it was with Christ himself, so it is with his members. He was conceived by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit. He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. He offered up himself by the Spirit, and by the Spirit he was raised from the dead. Even so the members of Christ do answer unto Christ himself. All is by the Spirit: we are conceived by the Spirit. The same Spirit that sanctified him sanctifies us; but first we receive the Spirit by way of union, and then unction follows after. When we are knit to Christ by the Spirit, then it works the same in us as it did in him.

81. When a proud wit and supernatural truths meet together, such a man will have something of his own. Therefore in reading and studying of heavenly truths, especially the gospel, we must come to God for his Spirit, and not venture upon conceits of our own parts; for God will curse such proud attempts.

82. Many men think that the knowledge of divine truths will make them divine, whereas it is the Holy Ghost only that gives a taste and relish, for without the Spirit their hearts will rise when the word comes to them in particular, and tells them you must deny yourself, and venture your life for his truth.

83. When men understand the Scriptures, and yet are proud and malicious, we must not take scandal at it, for their hearts were never subdued. They understand supernatural things by human reason, and not by divine light.

84. Those that measure lands are very exact in everything, but the poor man whose it is knows the use of the ground better, and delights in it more, because it is his own. So it is with those ministers that can exactly speak of heavenly truths, yet have no share in them; but the poor soul that hears them rejoiceth, and saith, These things are mine.

85. This life is a life of faith; for God will try the truth of our faith, that the world may see that God hath such servants as will depend upon his bare word. It were nothing to be a Christian if we should see all here. But God will have his children to live by faith, and take the promises upon his word.

86. The nature of hope is to expect that which faith believes. What could the joys of heaven avail us if it were not for our hope? It is the anchor of the soul, which being cast into heaven, it stills the soul in all troubles, combustions, and confusions that we daily meet withal.

87. It is too much curiosity to search into particulars, as what shall be the glory of the soul, and what shall be the glory of the body. Rather study to make a gracious use of them, and in humility say, 'Lord, what is sinful man, that thou shouldst so advance him?' Ps. viii. 4. The consideration of this should make us abase ourselves, and in humility give thanks beforehand, as Peter did, 1 Peter i. 1. When he thought of an inheritance immortal and undefiled, and that faded not, he gives thanks, 'Blessed be God the Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us,' &c.

88. When we see men look big and swell with the things of this life, let us in a holy kind of state think of our happiness in heaven, and carry ourselves accordingly. If we see anything in this world, let us say to our souls, This is not that I look for; or when we hear of anything that is good, let us say, I can hear this, and therefore this is not that I look for; or when we understand anything here below, this is not the thing I look for: 'But for things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor that ever entered into the heart of man,' 1 Cor. ii. 9.

89. There are four things observable in the nature of love: first, an estimation of the party beloved; secondly, a desire to be joined to him; thirdly, a settled contentment; fourthly, a desire to please the party in all things. So there is first in every Christian an high estimation of God and of Christ. He makes choice of him above all things, and speaks largely in his commendations. Secondly, he desires to be united to him, and where this desire is, there is an intercourse. He will open his mind to him by prayer, and go to him in all his consultations for his counsel. Thirdly, he places contentment in him alone, because in his worst conditions he is at peace and quiet if he may have his countenance shine upon him. Fourthly, he seeks to please him, because he labours to be in such a condition that God may delight in him. His love stirs up his soul to remove all things distasteful. It seeks out, as David did: 'Is there never a one left of the house of Saul to whom I may do good for Jonathan's sake?' 2 Sam. ix. 1.

90. Infirmities in God's children preserves their grace. Therefore it is that in God's Scripture, where God honours the saints, their weaknesses are made known. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed, but he halted, Gen. xxxii. 24; and Peter, 'Upon this rock will I build my church,' Mat. xvi. 18; yet, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' Mat. xvi. 23. 'Paul was exalted above measure with revelations, but he had the messenger of Satan to buffet him,' 2 Cor. xii. 7.

91. It is the poisonous nature of man to quench a great deal of good for a little ill. But Christ cherishes a little grace, though there be a great deal of corruption, which yet is as offensive to him as smoke. Therefore we should labour to gain all we can by love and meekness.

92. Christians find their corruptions more offensive to them than when they were in the state of nature, and therefore it is that they think their estate is not good, but then corruption boils more, because it is restrained.

93. The more will, the more sin. When we venture upon sinful courses, upon deliberation, it exceedingly wastes our comfort. When we fall into sin against conscience, and abuse our Christian liberty, God fetches us again by some severe affliction. There shall be a cloud between God's face and us, and he will suspend his comforts for a long time. Therefore let no man venture upon sin, for God will take a course with him that shall be little to his ease.

94. The reason why mean Christians have more loving souls than men of greater parts, is because great men have corruptions answerable to their parts. Great gifts, great doubts. They are entangled with arguments, and study to inform their brains, when others are heated with affection. A poor Christian cares not for cold disputes. Instead of that he loves; and that is the reason why a poor soul goes to heaven with more joy whilst others are entangled.

95. Many men are troubled with cold affections, and then they think to work love out of their own hearts, which are like a barren wilderness, but we must beg of God the Spirit of love. We must not bring love to God, but fetch love from him.

96. When we love things baser than ourselves it is like a sweet stream that runs into a sink. As our love therefore is the best thing we have, and none deserves it more than God, so let him have our love, yea, the strength of our love, that we may love him 'with all our souls, and with all our mind, and with all our strength,' Lev. xix. 18.

97. As the sun when it hath gotten to any height it scatters the clouds, so a Christian is then in his excellency when he can scatter doubts and fears, when in distress he can do as David did, comfort himself in the Lord his God.

98. Many men would be in Canaan as soon as they are out of Egypt, they would be at the highest pitch presently. But God will lead us through the wilderness of temptations and afflictions till we come to heaven. And it is a part of our Christian meekness to submit to God, and not to murmur, because we are not as we would be. But let us rather magnify the mercies of

God that works in us any love of good things, and that he vouchsafes us any beginnings.

99. As noblemen's children have tutors to guide them, so God's children have the Spirit telling them, This you should do, and that you should not do. The Spirit not only changeth, but leads forward unto holiness. Wicked men have the Spirit knocking, and fain would enter, but they will not hear; but God's children have the Spirit dwelling in them.

100. A Christian is now in his nonage, and therefore not fit to have all that he hath a title to. But yet so much is allotted to him as will conduct him, and give him a passage to heaven. If therefore he be in want he hath contentment, and in suffering he hath patience, &c. All things are his, as well what he wants as what he hath.

101. The word of God is then in our hearts, when it rules in the soul, when it rules our thoughts, affections, and conversations, so that we dare not do anything contrary but we shall be checked. Who shall get out that which God's finger hath written in our hearts? No fire nor faggot, no temptation whatsoever.

102. We shall never be satisfied to our comfort, that the Scripture is the word of God, unless we know it from itself by its own light, and it shows itself abundantly to a believer in casting down the soul, and altering the mind and conversation. When the word is only in the brain, if there come a temptation stronger than our faith, then we despair. The word is far off from those that can only discourse and talk of it, when they see it only as a natural truth, when they look upon holy things, not in a divine, but in a human manner.

108. When the word dwells as a familiar in the heart, to direct, counsel, and comfort, then it is a sign it is there. The devil knows good and hates it, therefore knowledge alone is nothing. But when the promise doth alter the temper of the heart itself, then it is engrafted.

104. God excepts against none, if we do not except ourselves. Therefore thou, and thou, whosoever thou art, if thou beest a man or a woman, and wilt come and take Christ upon his own terms, for thy Lord and husband, for better for worse, with persecutions, afflictions, crosses, &c. Take Christ thus, and take him for ever, and then thou shalt be saved.

105. When we believe divine truths by the Spirit, they work upon the heart and draw the affections after them. Therefore, if we spiritually believe the story of the gospel, we shall have our souls carried to love, and embrace it with joy and comfort,

106. We may be brought very low, but we shall not be confounded; yet we shall be brought as near confusion as may be, to show us the vanity of the creature. In the judgment of the world we may be confounded, but a hand of mercy shall fetch us up again. Let the depth of misery and disconsolation be what it will be, we shall not be ashamed.

107. The reason why God's children do oftentimes with great perplexity doubt of their salvation, is because they have a principle of nature in them as well as of grace. Corruption will breed doubtings. As rotten wood breeds worms, and as vermin comes out of putrefaction, so doubtings and fears come from the remainder of corruption.

108. For want of watchfulness God oftentimes gives us up to such a perplexed estate, that we shall not know that we are in grace, and though we may have a principle of grace in us, yet we shall not see it, but may go out of the world in darkness.

109. We ought not at any time to deny the truth, nor yet at all times to confess it. For good actions and graces are like princes that come forth attended with circumstances, and if circumstances in confession be wanting, the action is marred. It is true of actions as of words: 'A word spoken in season is like apples of gold with pictures of silver,' Prov. xxv. 11. Therefore discretion must be our guide, for speech is then only good when it is better than silence.

110. It is not lawful for any weak one to be present at the mass. Dinah ventured abroad, and came cracked home. It is just with God, that those that dally with these things should be caught, as many idle travellers are. It is pity but those should perish in danger that love danger.

111. He that will not now deny himself in a lust, in a lawless desire, will not deny himself in matter of life in time of trial. He that hath not learned the mortification of the flesh in time of peace will hardly be brought to it in time of trouble.

112. We must not only stand for the truth, but we must stand for it in a holy manner, and not swagger for it, as proud persons do. We must observe that in the first Epistle of Peter, iii. 15, to do it ‘in meekness and fear.’ We must not bring passion to God’s cause, nor must our lives give our tongues the lie.

113. There is such a distance between corrupt nature and grace, that we must have a great deal of preparation; and though there be nothing in preparation to bring the soul to have grace, yet it brings the soul to a nearer distance than those that are wild persons.

114. Nature cannot work above its own powers, as vapours cannot ascend higher than the sun draws them. Our hearts are naturally shut, and God doth open them by his Spirit in the use of the means. The children of Israel in the wilderness saw wonders upon wonders, and yet when they came to be proved they could not believe.

115. It is God’s free love that hath cast us into these happy times of the gospel; and it is his further love that makes choice of some, and refuses others. This should therefore teach us sound humility, considering that God must open or else we are eternally shut.

116. Seeing grace is not of our own getting, therefore this should teach us patience towards those that are under us, waiting if God at any time will give them repentance. Though God work not the first time, nor the second time, yet we must wait, as the man that lay at the pool of Bethesda for the moving of the water.

117. He that attends to the word of God, doth not only know the words, which are but the shell, but he knows the things. He hath spiritual light, to know what faith and repentance is. There is at that time a spiritual echo in the soul,—as Ps. xxvii. 8, ‘When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek,’—and therefore must men judge of their profiting by the word; not by their carrying of it in their memories, but by how much they are made able by it to bear a cross, and how they are made able to resist temptation, &c.

118. There should not be intimate familiarity but where we judge men faithful; and those whom upon good grounds we judge faithful, we must be gentle towards them, and easy to be entreated; and we wrong them if we show ourselves strange unto them.

119. True faith works love, and then it works by love. When it hath wrought that holy affection, it works by it; as when the plant is engrafted and takes, it grows presently, and shows the growth in the fruits.

120. The word of God is ancients than the Scripture; for the first word of the Scripture was the promise, 'The seed of the woman should break the head of the serpent,' Gen. iii. 15. The Scripture is but that modus, that manner of conveying the word of God. This Scripture is the rule whereby we must walk, and the judge also of all controversies of religion; and in spite of the Church of Rome, it will judge them. St Augustine hath an excellent discourse: 'When there is contention betwixt brethren, witnesses are brought; but in the end, the words, the will of the dead man is brought forth, and these words determine. Now, shall the words of a dead man be of force, and shall not the word of Christ determine? Therefore look to the Scripture.'

121. All idolaters shall be ashamed that worship images, that trust to 'broken cisterns.' Let those be ashamed that trust to their wits and policies. All those shall be ashamed that bear themselves big upon any earthly thing, for these crutches will, be taken away, and then they fall. These false reports shall make them all ashamed.

122. The way to bring faith into the heart is, first, there must be a judicious, convincing knowledge of the vanity of all things within us and without us that seems to yield any support to the soul, and then the soul is carried to lay hold on Christ; as David saith, 'I have seen an end of all perfection,' Ps. cxix. 96. Secondly, the soul must be convinced of an excellency in religion above all things in the world, or else it will not rest, for the heart of man would choose the best; and when it is persuaded that the gain in religion is above the world, then it yields. And, thirdly, a consideration of the firmness of the ground whereupon the promise is built. Put God to it, therefore, either to make his promise good, or to disappoint us; and he will be sure to make it good in our forgiveness of sin, proceeding in grace and strength, against temptations in time of trouble.

123. Man is naturally of a short spirit; so that if he have not what he would, and when he would, he gives up, and shakes off all. There is not a greater difference between a child of God and one that wants faith, than to be hasty. Such men, though they may be civil, yet they are of this mind. They will labour to be sure of something here; they must have present pleasures and present profits. If God will save them in that way, so; if not, they will put it to a venture.

124. There be many things to hinder this grace of waiting. There is a great deal of tedious time, and many crosses we meet with; as the scorn and reproach of this world, and many other trials. God seems also to do nothing less than to perform his promise; but let us comfort ourselves with this, that he waits to do them good that wait on him.

125. We should labour to agree mutually in love, for that wherein any Christian differs from another is but in petty things. Grace knows no difference; the worms know no difference; the day of judgment knows no difference. In the worst things we are all alike base, and in the best things we are all alike happy. Only in this world God will have distinctions, for order's sake; but else there is no difference.

126. Christians are like to many men of great means, that know not how to make use of them. We live not like ourselves. Bring large faith, and we shall have large grace and comfort. We are scanted in our own bowels, therefore labour to have a large faith, answerable to our large riches. And though Christians be low enough in outward things, and oftentimes poorer than other men, yet they are rich; for Christ is rich unto them, in their crosses and abasements. That which they want in this world shall be made up in grace and glory hereafter.

127. We ought daily to imitate Christ in our places, to be good to all; as the apostle saith, 'Be abundant always in the works of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. Let us labour to have large hearts, that we may do it seasonably, and abundantly, and unweariedly. The love of Christ will breed in us the same impression that was in him.

128. None come to God without Christ; none come to Christ without faith; none come to faith without the means; none enjoy the means but where God hath sent it. Therefore where there was no means of salvation before the coming of Christ, there was no visible intendment of God ordinarily to save them.

129. Preventing mercy is the greatest. How many favours doth God prevent us with! We never asked for our being, nor for that tender love which our parents bore towards us in our tender years. We never asked for our baptism and engrafting into Christ. What a motive therefore is that to stir us up, that when we come to years, we may plead with the Lord, and say, 'Thou hadst a care of me before I had a being; and therefore much more wilt

thou now have a care of me, whom thou hast reconciled unto thyself, and remember me in mercy for time to come.'

130. If God's mercy might be overcome with our sins, we should overcome it every day. It must be a rich mercy that must satisfy; and therefore the apostle never speaks of it without the extensions of love, 'the height and depth.' We want words, we want thoughts, to conceive of it. We should therefore labour to frame our souls to have rich and large conceits and apprehensions of so large mercy.

131. God is rich in mercy, not only to our souls, but in providing all we stand in need of. He keeps us from ill, and so he is called a 'buckler;' he gives all good things, and so he is called a 'sun.' He keeps us in good estate, and advanceth us higher, so far as our nature shall be capable.

132. The sun shines on the moon and stars, and they shine upon the earth; so doth God shine in goodness upon us, that we might shine in our extensions of goodness unto others, especially unto them of the household of faith.

133. We are styled in Scripture to be good and righteous, because our understandings, our wills, and affections are our own; but so far as they are holy, they are the Holy Ghost's. We are the principal in our actions, as they are actions; but the Holy Ghost is principal of the holiness of the action. The gracious government of the new creature is from the Spirit. If the Holy Ghost take away his government, and do not guide and assist us in every holy action, we are at a stand, and can go no further.

134. Every man naturally is a god unto himself, not only in reflecting all upon himself, but in setting upon divine things in his own strength, as if he were principal in his own actions, coming to them in the strength of his own wit and in the strength of his own reason. This seed is in all men by nature, until God have turned a man out of himself, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

135. Those that care not for the word, they are strangers from the Spirit; and those that care not for the Spirit, never make right use of the word. The word is nothing without the Spirit; it is animated and quickened by the Spirit. The Spirit and the word are like the veins and arteries in the body, that give quickening and life to the whole body; and therefore where the word is most

revealed, there is most Spirit; but where Christ is not opened in the gospel, there the Spirit is not at all visible.

136. When Christ comes into the soul by the Spirit, then he carries himself familiarly, discovering the secrets of God the Father, and showing what love there is in God toward us. It teacheth us how to carry ourselves in all neglects, and when we are at a loss it opens a way for us; it resolves our doubts, it comforts us in our discouragements, and makes us go boldly to God in all our wants.

137. As we may know who dwells in a house by observing who goes in and them that come out, so we may know that the Spirit dwells in us by observing what sanctified speeches he sends forth, and what delight he hath wrought in us to things that are special, and what price we set upon them. Whereas a carnal man pulls down the price of spiritual things, because his soul cleaves to something that he joys in more; and this is the cause why he slights the directions and comforts of the word. But those in whom the Spirit dwells, they will consult with it, and not regard what flesh and blood saith, but will follow the directions of the word and Spirit.

138. A Christian will not do common things, but, first, he sanctifies them, and dedicates himself, his person, and his actions to God, and so he sees God in all things. Whereas a carnal man sees reason only in all that he doth; but a Christian sees God in crosses to humble him, and, everything he makes spiritual. Yet because there is a double principle in him, there will be some stirring of the flesh in his actions, and sometimes the worse part will appear most. But here is the excellency of a Christian's estate, that the Spirit will work it out at last. It will never let his heart and conscience alone till it be wrought out by little and little.

139. The Spirit of God may be known to be in weak Christians. As the soul is known to be in the body by the pulses, even so the Spirit discovers itself in them by pulses, by groaning, sighing, complaining, that it is so with them, and that they are no better; so that they are out of love with themselves. This is a good sign that the Spirit is there in some measure.

140. Where the Spirit dwells largely in any man, there is boldness in God's cause, a contempt of the world: 'He can do all things through Christ that strengthens him,' Philip, iv. 13. His mind is content and settled. He can bear with the infirmities of others and not be offended, for it is the weak in spirit that are offended. He is ready in his desires to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus;

come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20. But where corruption bears sway there is, 'Oh stay a little, that I may recover my strength,' Ps. xxxix. 13; that is, stay a while that I may repent. For the soul is not fit to appear before God but where the Spirit dwells in grace and comfort.

141. When we are young carnal delights lead us, and when we are old covetousness drowns us; so that if our knowledge be not spiritual, we shall never hold out. And the reason why at the hour of death so many despair, is because they had knowledge without the Spirit.

142. God gives comforts in the exercise and practice of grace. We must not therefore snatch comforts before we be fit for them. When we perform precepts, then God performs comforts. If we will make it good indeed that we love God, we must keep his commandments. We must not keep one, but all. It must be universal obedience fetched from the heart root, and that out of love.

143. It is a true rule in divinity, that God never takes away any blessing from his people but he gives them a better. When Elijah was taken from Elisha into heaven, God doubled his Spirit upon Elisha. If God take away wife or children, he gives better things for them. The disciples parted with Christ's bodily presence, but he sent them the Holy Ghost.

144. God will be known of us in those things wherein it is our comfort to know him. In all our devotions, the whole counsel of heaven comforts us jointly. The second person prays to the Father, and he sends the third, and as they have several titles, so they all agree in their love and care to comfort.

145. In trouble, we are prone to forget all that we have heard and read that makes for our comfort. Now, what is the reason that a man comes to think of that which otherwise he should never have called to mind? The Holy Ghost brings it to his remembrance. He is a comforter, bringing to mind useful things at such times when we have most need of them.

146. Those that care not for the word of God, reject their comfort. All comfort must be drawn out of the Scriptures, which are the breasts of consolation. Many are bred up by education that they know the truth and are able to discourse of it, but they want the Spirit of truth; and that is the reason why all their knowledge vanisheth away in time of trial and temptation.

147. No man is a true divine but the child of God. He only knows holy things by a holy light and life. Other men, though they speak of these things, yet they know them not. Take the mysticallest points in religion, as justification, adoption, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, the sweet benefit of communion of saints, the excellent estate of a Christian in extremity, to know what is to be done upon all occasions, inward sight and sorrow for sin, they know not what those things mean. For howsoever they may discourse of them, yet the things themselves are mysteries. Repentance is a mystery, joy in the Holy Ghost is a mystery. No natural man, though he be never so great a scholar, knows these things experimentally; but he knows them as physicians know physic, by their books, but not as a sick man by experience.

148. It is a great scandal to religion that men of great learning and parts are wicked men. Hereupon the world comes to think that religion is nothing but an empty name; so that, without this inward anointing, they never see spiritual things experimentally; but though they know these things in the brain, yet secretly in their hearts they make a scorn of conversion and mortification; and though for his calling he may speak of these things excellently, and with admiration, yet in particular he hath no power of them in his heart.

149. It is good and comfortable to compare our condition with the condition of the men of the world; for howsoever they may excel in riches and learning, yet we have cause to bless God, as Christ saith in the 11th of St Matthew, ver. 25, 11 thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' It is good in all outward discouragements, when things go not well with us, thus to reason with ourselves. Wilt thou change thy estate with the men of the world? God hath advanced thee to a higher order. Let them have their greatness. Alas! they are miserable creatures, notwithstanding all that they do enjoy.

150. If we desire to have the Spirit, we must wait in doing good, as the apostles waited many days before the Comforter came. We must also empty our souls of self-love, and the love of the things of the world, and willingly entertain those crosses that bring our souls out of love with them. The children of Israel in the wilderness had no manna till they had spent their onions and garlic; so this world must be out of request with us before we can be spiritual. Let us therefore labour to see the excellency of spiritual things,

and how cheap and poor all the glory of the world is to those. These things, thought and considered on, will make us more and more spiritual.

151. The Holy Ghost would not come till Christ, by his death, had reconciled his Father, and after that as an argument of full satisfaction had risen again, because the Holy Ghost is the best gift of God; and whatsoever grace or comfort was received before was by virtue of this; so that the sending of the Holy Ghost is the best fruit of God's reconciliation.

152. Let a particular judgment come upon any man, presently his conscience recalls back what sins have been committed by him; so that this waking of conscience shows that we are sinful creatures.

153. Every man by nature, though the wisest, till he be in Christ, is a slave to the devil, who abuses his wits and parts, and makes him work out his own damnation. This is not the condition of a few fools; but the greatest and wisest in the world. Satan leads them to honours and voluptuousness, as a sheep is led by a green bough. He goes with the stream of man's nature, and so is never discerned.

154. As a man that is called before a judgment-seat, being guilty of many crimes, yet the judge offers him his book, as meaning to save him by that means; but he cannot read. Now he is condemned, partly for his former faults, but especially because he cannot read, and cannot have the benefit of the law; so therefore a wicked man, not believing in Christ, because the remedy is prepared, and he takes no hold of it. In this sense, as some divines speak, no sin but infidelity condemns a man; for if a man could believe and repent, no sin should be prejudicial to his salvation. We had need, therefore, to look to our faith, when want of belief seals a man up under sin. A man is imprisoned in his conscience until he come to Christ, and his conscience is his jailor. His conscience, enlightened by the law, tells him that he is guilty of such and such sins, and hereupon keeps him to further judgment.

155. There is a miserable cosenage in sin. Naturally, men will deny sin, or else mince it, as Adam did, and as Saul, when Samuel came to convince him; 'I have,' saith he, 'done the commandment of the Lord;' and when he was driven from that, then 'he did but spare them for sacrifice;' but when nothing could satisfy, 'then, I pray thee, honour me before the people,' 1 Sam. xv. 30. Things that we cannot justify, yet we will excuse them, unless God come by his Spirit. We are ready to shift them off'. But when the Spirit comes, and takes away all these fig-leaves, then it convinces him of his

miserable condition, not only in general, but the Spirit, working together with the word, brings him to confess, 'I am the man.'

156. The affections of grief and sorrow follow upon the discovery of sin by the ministry of the word. Where the judgment is convinced, the affections are stirred up with hatred against that sin; and where this is not, there is no convincing. When a man cries for mercy as for life, this is an argument of sound condition. He that is truly convinced will be as glad of a pardon as a malefactor that stands at the bar condemned.

157. It is the policy of the devil to labour to make us slight the gracious work of conviction; for he knows that whatsoever is built upon a false foundation will come to nothing, and therefore he makes us slight the work of self-examining and searching of ourselves. But slight this, and slight all; for if thou beest slight in searching and examining thyself, thou wilt also be slight in thy repentance and obedience.

158. Naturally, men labour to put out all checks of conscience by sensuality. Men are loath to know themselves to be as they are. They are of the devil's mind, they would not be 'tormented before their time,' Mat. viii. 29. Such men, when they are alone, are afraid of themselves. As the elephant will not come near the waters because he hath an ill shape, he would not see himself, so men, by nature, will not come near the light, lest they should see their ill deformities. For nature is so foul, that when a man sees himself, unless he be set in a better condition, it will drive him to despair.

159. We ought to have especial high conceits of the lordship of Christ, as lord paramount over all our enemies, the fear of death, and wrath of God; yea, whatsoever is terrible indeed. He hath freed us from the fear of it.

160. No sin is so great, but the satisfaction of Christ and his mercy is greater. It is beyond comparison of father or mother. They are but beams and trains to lead us up to the mercy of God in Christ.

161. The greatest spite of a carnal man is, that he cannot go to heaven with his full swing; that he cannot enjoy his full liberty; and therefore he labours to suppress all the ordinances of God as much as he can.

162. The quintessence and the spirits of the things we ask in prayer are in God, as joy, and peace, and contentedness; for without this joy and peace,

what are all the things in the world? and in the want of these outward things, if we have him we have all, because the spirits of all is in him.

163. Prayer is a venting of our desires to God, from the sense of our own wants, and he that is sensible of his own wants is empty. 'A poor man speaks supplications,' Prov. xviii. 23.

164. It is not so easy a matter to pray as men think, and that in regard of the unspiritualness of our nature, compared with the duty itself, which is to draw near to a holy God. We cannot endure to sever ourselves from our lusts. There is also a great rebellion in our hearts against anything that is good. Satan also is a special enemy; for when we go to God by prayer, he knows we go to fetch help and strength against him, and therefore he opposeth all he can. But though many men do mumble over a few prayers, yet indeed no man can pray as he ought, but he that is within the covenant of grace.

165. A child of God may pray and not be heard, because at that time he may be a child of anger. If any sin he unrepented of, we are not in a case fit to pray. Will a king regard the petition of a traitor that purposeth to go on in his rebellion? Therefore, when we come to God, we should renew our purposes of better pleasing him, and then remember the Scripture, and search all the promises as part of our best riches; and when we have them, we should challenge God with his promise, and this will make us strong and faithful in our prayers, when we know we never pray to him in vain.

166. When we pray, God oftentimes refuseth to give us comfort, because we are not in good terms with him; therefore we should still look back to our life past. Perhaps God sees thee running to this or that sin, and before he will hear thee, thou must renew thy repentance for that sin: for our nature is such, that it will knock at every door, and seek every corner before we will come to God; as the woman in the Gospel, she sold all before she came to Christ, Mat. ix. 20, seq. So that God will not hear before we forsake all helps, and all false dependence upon the creature; and then he gets the greatest glory, and we have the greatest sweetness to our souls. That water that comes from the fountain is the sweetest; and so divine comforts are the sweetest, when we see nothing in the creature, and he is the best discerner of the fittest time when to give us comfort.

167. When God means to bestow any blessing on his church or children, he will pour upon them the Spirit of prayer; and as all pray for every one, so

every one prays for all. This is a great comfort to weak Christians; when they cannot pray, the prayers of others shall prevail for them.

168. A fool's eye is in every corner, and fools' afflictions are scattered. The only object of the soul is that 'one thing needful,' Luke x. 42, and this will fill all the corners of it. When a man hath sucked out the pleasure of worldly contentments, they are then but dead things; but grace is ever fresh, and always yields fresh and full satisfaction.

169. Desires are the spiritual pulse of the soul, always beating to and fro, and showing the temper of it; they are therefore the characters of a Christian, and show more truly what he is than his actions do.

170. In the ark there was manna, which was a type of our sacraments; and the Testament, which was a type of the word preached; and the rod of Aaron was a type of government. Wheresoever, therefore, there is spiritual manna, and the word preached, and the rod of Aaron in the government, there is a true church, though there be many personal corruptions.

171. The bitterest things in religion are sweet. There is a sweetness in reproofs; when God meets with our corruptions, and whispers to us that those and those things are dangerous, and that if we cherish them, they will bring us to hell. The word of God is sweet to a Christian, that hath his heart touched. Is not pardon sweet to a condemned man, and riches sweet to a poor man, and favour sweet to a man in disgrace, and liberty sweet to a man in captivity? So all that comes from God is sweet to a Christian, that hath his heart touched with the sense of sin.

172. It is not happiness to see, but sight with enjoyment, and interest. There are but two powers of the soul, understanding and will. When both these have their perfection, that is happiness: when the understanding sees, and the will draws the affections. So there are these things concur to make up our everlasting happiness, the excellency of the thing, with the sight of it, and interest in it.

173. We see by experience that there is a succession of love. He that loves for beauty will despise when he sees a better; so it is in the soul, between heavenly and earthly things: when the soul sees more excellency, and more fruitfulness in heavenly things, then the love of earthly things falls down in his heart, as Saint Paul saith, Philip, iii. 7, 'I account all things dross and dung in comparison of Christ.'

174. In prayer we tempt God, if we ask that which we labour not for. Our endeavour must second our devotion; for to ask maintenance, and not put our hands to the work, it is as to knock at the door, and yet pull the door unto us that it open not. In this case, if we pray for grace and neglect the spring from whence it comes, how can it speed? It was a rule in the ancient time, 'Lay thy hand on the plough and then pray'. No man should pray without ploughing, nor plough without praying.

175. Wisdom is gotten by experience in variety of estates. He that is carried on in one condition, he hath no wisdom to judge of another's estate, or how to carry himself to a Christian in another condition; because he was never abased himself, he looks very big at him. And therefore, that we may carry ourselves as Christians, meekly, lovingly, and tenderly to others, God will have us go to heaven in variety, not in one uniform condition, in regard of outward things.

170. There is no condition but a Christian picks good matter out of it, as a good artsman sometimes will make a good piece of work of an ill piece of matter, to show his skill. A gracious man is not dejected over-much with abasement, nor lifted up over-much with abundance, but he carries himself in an uniform manner, becoming a Christian, in all conditions; whereas those that have not been brought up in Christ's school, nor trained up in variety of conditions, they learn to do nothing. If they abound, they are proud; if they be cast down, they murmur and fret, and are dejected, as if there were no providence to rule the world.

177. There is a venom and a vanity in everything, without grace, wherewith we are tainted; but when grace comes, it takes out the sting of all ill, and then it finds a good in the worst.

178. Christianity is a busy trade. If we look up to God, what a world of things are required in a Christian, to carry himself as he should do: a spirit of faith, a spirit of love, a spirit of joy and delight in him above all. And if we look to men, there are duties for a Christian to his superiors, a spirit of subjection; to equals he must carry a spirit of love; and to inferiors a spirit of pity and bounty. If we look to Satan, we have a commandment to resist him, and to watch against the tempter. If we look to the world, it is full of snares. There must be a great deal of spiritual watchfulness, that we be not surprised. If we look to ourselves, there are required many duties to carry our vessels in honour, and to walk within the compass of the Holy Ghost; to preserve the peace of our consciences; to walk answerable to our worth, as being the sons

of God and coheirs with Christ. He must dispense with himself in no sin; he must be a vessel prepared for every good work; he must baulk in no service that God calls him unto: and therefore the life of a Christian is a busy trade.

179. Sincerity is the perfection of Christians. Let not Satan therefore abuse us. We do all things, when we endeavour to do all things, and purpose to do all things, and are grieved when we cannot do better, than in some measure we do all things.

180. A Christian is able to do great matters, but it is in Christ that strengthens him. The understanding is ours, the affections are ours, the will is ours; but the sanctifying of these, and the carrying of these supernaturally, to do them spiritually, that is not ours, but it is Christ's.

181. We have not only the life of grace from Christ at the first, and then a spiritual power answerable to that again, whereby our powers are renewed, so as we are able to do something in our will, but we have the deed itself: the doing is from Christ, he strengtheneth us for the performance of all good.

182. God preserves his own work by his Spirit: first, he moves us to do, and then he preserves us in doing, and arms us against the impediments.

183. Though Christ be a head of influence that flows into every member, yet he is a voluntary head, according to his own good pleasure, and the exigents! of his members. Sometimes we have need of more grace, and then it flows into us from him accordingly. Sometimes we have need to know our own weakness, and then he leaves us to ourselves, that we may know that without him we cannot stand; and we may know the necessity of his guidance to heaven in the sense of our imperfections, that we may see our weakness and corruptions, that we had thought we had not had in us; as Moses, by God's permission, was tempted to murmur, a meek man, and David to cruelty, a mild man, that thought they had not had those corruptions in them.

184. God is forced to mortify sins by afflictions, because we mortify them not by the Spirit; and in the use of holy means God doth us favours from his own bowels, but corrections and judgments are always forced.

185. We may for the most part read the cause of any judgment in the judgment itself; as, if the judgment be shame, then the cause was pride; if the

judgment be want, then our sin was in abundance: we did not learn to abound as we should when we had it.

186. As we say of those that make bold with their bodies, to use them hardly, to lush upon this thing and that thing; in their youth they may bear it out, but it will be owing them after; they shall find it in their bones when they are old: so a man may say of those that are venturous persons, that make no conscience of running into sin, these things will be owing to them another day; they shall hear of these in time of sickness, or in the hour of death; and therefore take heed of sinning upon vain hope, that thou shalt wear it out, for one time or other it will stick to thee.

187. When God visits with sickness, we should think our work is more in heaven with God than with men or physic. When David dealt directly and plainly with God, and confessed his sins, then God forgave him them, and healed his body too, Ps. xxxii. 5.

188. It were a thousand times better for many persons to be cast on the bed of sickness, and to be God's prisoners, than so scandalously and unfruitfully to use the health that they have.

189. It is an art wherein we should labour to be expert, to consider God's gracious dealing in the midst of his corrections; that in the midst of them we might have thankful and cheerful, and fruitful hearts, which we shall not have, unless we have some matter of thankfulness. Consider, therefore, doth God make me weak, he might have struck me with death; or, if not taken away my mortal life, yet he might have given me up to a spiritual death, to an hard heart, to desperation.

190. In this latter age of the world, God doth not use the same dispensation. He doth not always outwardly visit for sin; for his government is now more inward. Therefore we should take the more heed, for he may give us up to blindness, to deadness, to security, which are the greatest judgments that can befall us.

191. We should labour to judge ourselves for those things that the world takes no notice of, for spiritual, for inward things; as for stirring of pride, of worldliness, of revenge, of security, unthankfulness, and such like unkindness towards God; barrenness in good duties, that the world cannot see. Let these humble our hearts; for when we make not conscience of spiritual sins, God gives us up to open breaches that stain and blemish our profession.

192. Many men put off the power of grace, and rest in common civil things, in outward performances; but when we regard not the manner, God regards not the matter of the things we do; and therefore oftentimes he punishes for the performance of good duties, as we see in 1 Cor. xi. 30, 31.

193. Our whole life under the gospel should be nothing but thankfulness and fruitfulness. Take heed, therefore, of turning the grace of God to wantonness. The state of the gospel requires 'that we should deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live righteously and soberly and godly in the present world,' &c., Titus ii. 12. Therefore, when we find ourselves otherwise, we should think, Oh! this is not the life of a Christian under the gospel: the gospel requires a more fruitful, a more zealous carriage, more love to Christ, &c.

19-1. If any man be so uncivil, when a man shows him a spot on his garment, that he grows choleric, will we not judge him an unreasonable man? And so, when a man shall be told this will hinder your comfort another day, if men were not spiritually besotted, would they swell and be angry against such a man? Therefore take the benefit of the judgment of others among whom we live. This was David's disposition, when he was told of the danger, going to kill Nabal and his household. So we should bless God, and bless them that labour by their good counsel and advice, to hinder us from any sinful course, whatsoever it is.

195. Those that truss up the loins of their souls, and are careful of their ways, they are the only sound Christians. They are the only comfortable Christians, that can think of all conditions and of all estates comfortably.

196. It is an ill time to get grace when we should use grace; and therefore that we may have the less to do, when we shall have enough to struggle with sickness; and that we may have nothing else to do when we die, but to die, and comfortably to yield up our souls to God, let us be exact in our accounts every day.

197. God takes a safe course with his children, that they may not be condemned with the world. He makes the world to condemn them, that they may not love the world: he makes the world to hate them, that they may not love the world, but be crucified to the world. He makes the world to be crucified to them. Therefore they meet with crosses, and abuses, and wrongs in the world. Because he will not have them perish with the world, he sends them afflictions in the world, and by the world.

198. If God should not meet with us with seasonable correction, we should shame religion, and shame Christ; and therefore God in mercy corrects us with fatherly correction.

199. In the governing of a Christian life we are carried naturally to second causes, whereas they are all but as rods in God's hands. Look, therefore, to the hand that smites; look to God in all. He chastiseth us, as David saith in the matter of Shimei, 2 Sam. xvi. 10; and as Job saith, 'It is the Lord that hath given, and the Lord that hath taken away,' Job i. 21.

200. We have oftentimes occasion to bless God more for crosses than for comforts. There is a blessing hidden in, the worst things to God's children, as there is a cross in the best things to the wicked. There is a blessing in death, a blessing in sickness, a blessing in the hatred of our enemies, a blessing in all losses whatsoever; and therefore in our affections we should not only justify God, but glorify and magnify him for his mercy, that rather than we should be condemned with the world, he will take this course with us.

201. Though our salvation be sure, and that we shall not be condemned with the world, yet the knowledge of this doth not make us secure; for though God doth not damn us with the world, yet he will sharply correct us here. And by a careful, sober life we might obtain many blessings, and prevent many judgments, and make our pilgrimage more comfortable. Therefore it argues neither grace nor wit, that because God will save me, therefore I will take liberty. No; though God will save thee, yet he will take such a course with thee, thou shalt endure such sharpness for thy sin, that it shall be more bitter than the sweetest of it was pleasant.

202. Gracious persons in times of peace and quiet do often underprize themselves, and the graces of God in them, thinking that they want faith, patience, and love, who yet, when God calleth them out to the cross, shine forth in the eyes of others, in the example of a meek and quiet subjection.

203. God oftentimes maketh wicked men friends to his children without changing their disposition, by putting into their hearts some conceit for the time, which inclineth them to favour, as Nehemiah ii. 8. God put it into the king's heart to favour his people; so Gen. xxxiii. 4, Esau was not changed, only God for the time changed his affections to favour Jacob. So God puts into the hearts of many groundedly naught, to favour the best persons.

204. Usually in what measure we in the times of our peace and liberty inordinately let loose our affections, in that measure are we cast down, or more deeply in discomfort. When our adulterous hearts cleave to things more than become chaste hearts, it makes the cross more sharp and extreme.

206. Partial obedience is no obedience at all. To single out easy things that do not oppose our lusts, which are not against our reputation, therein some will do more than they need. But our obedience must be universal to all God's commandments, and that because he commands us.

207. In every evil work that we are tempted unto we need delivering grace, as to every good work assisting grace.

208. That Christian who is privy to his own soul, of good intentions to abstain from all ill, he may presume that God will assist him against all ill works for the time to come.

209. We should watch and labour daily to continue in prayer, strengthening and backing them with arguments from the word and promises, and marking how our prayers speed. When we shoot an arrow, we look to the fall of it; when we send a ship to sea, we look for the return of it; and when we sow seed, we look for a harvest; and so when we sow our prayers into God's bosom, shall we not look for an answer, and observe how we speed? It is a seed of atheism to pray, and not to look how we speed. But a sincere Christian will pray, and wait, and strengthen his heart with promises out of the word, and never leave till God do give him a gracious answer.

210. Take a Christian, and whatsoever he doth he doth it in fear. If he call God Father, it is in fear. He eats and drinks in fear, as St Jude speaks of them that eat 'without fear,' ver. 12. The true servant of God hath fear accompanying him in all his actions, in his speeches and recreations, in his meat and drink. But he that hath not this fear, how bold is he in wicked courses, and loose in all his carriages! But mark a true Christian, and you shall always see in him some expressions of an holy fear.

211. The relation of servant is of great consequence to put us in mind of our duty. If we will be God's servants, we must make it good by obedience, we must resolve to come under his government, and be at his command, or else he will say to us, as to them in the 10th of Judges, 'Go to the gods whom you have served,' x. 14. Therefore empty relations are nothing to purpose. If we profess ourselves God's servants, and do not show it by our obedience, it

is but an empty title. Therefore let us make our relations good, at least in our affections, that we may be able to say, 'I desire to fear thy name,' Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

212. In reading of the Scriptures, let us compare experiments with rules: Neh. i. 8, 9, 'If you sin, you shall be scattered; and if you return again, I will be merciful.' We should practise this in our lives, to see how God hath made good his threatenings in our corrections, and his promises in our comforts.

213. Those that have had a sweet communion with God, when they have lost it, do count every day ten thousand till they have recovered it again; and when Christ leaves his spouse, he forsakes her not altogether, but leaves something on the heart that maketh her to long after him. He absents himself that he may enlarge the desires of the soul, and after the soul hath him again, it will not let him go. He comes for our good, and leaves us for our good. We should therefore judge rightly of our estates, and not think we are forsaken of God when we are in a desertion.

214. When men can find no comfort, yet when they set themselves to teach weaker Christians by way of reflection, they receive comfort themselves, so doth God reward the conscionable performance of this duty of discourse, that those things we did not so sweetly understand before, by discourse we understand them better. This should teach us to be in love with holy conference, for besides the good we do to others we are much bettered ourselves.

215. We may use God's creatures, but not scrupulously, nor superstitiously, singling out one creature from another, nor yet may we use them as we list. There is a difference between right, and the use of right. The magistrate may restrain the use of our right, and so may our weak brother in case of scandal. So that all things be ours, yet in the use of them we must be sober, not eating nor drinking immoderately, nor using anything uncharitably, whereby others may take offence; for albeit we have a right to God's bounty, yet our right and use must be sanctified by the word and prayer.

216. Many men fall to questioning, Oh that I had assurance of my salvation! Oh that I were the child of God! Why, man, fall to obedience. Ay, but I cannot; for it is the Spirit that enables. But yet come to holy exercises, though we have not the Spirit; for many times in the midst of holy exercises God gives the Spirit; and therefore, attend upon the means until we have strength to obey. Wait upon God's ordinances till he stirs in thy soul. All that

love your souls, attend upon the means, and have a care to sanctify the Lord's day: Rev. i. 10, 'John was ravished in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

217. God takes nothing away from his children, but instead thereof, he gives them that which is better. Happy is that self-denial that is made up with joy in God. Happy is that poverty that is made up with grace and comfort. Therefore let us not fear anything that God shall call us unto in this world. It is hard to persuade flesh and blood hereunto; but those that find the experience of this as Christians, do find withal particular comforts flowing from the presence of Christ's Spirit. St Paul would not have wanted his whippings to have missed his comforts.

218. Christ doth chiefly manifest himself unto the Christian soul in times of affliction, because then the soul unites itself most to Christ; for the soul in time of prosperity scatters and loseth itself in the creature, but there is an uniting power in afflictions to make the soul gather itself to God.

219. Christ took upon him our nature, and in that nature suffered hunger, and was subject to all infirmities. Therefore, when we are put to pains in our callings, to troubles for a good conscience, or to any hardship in the world, we must labour for contentment, because we are hardly- made conformable unto Christ.

220. There is not any thing or any condition that befalls a Christian in this life but there is a general rule in the Scripture for it, and this rule is quickened by example, because it is a practical knowledge. God doth not only write his law in naked commandments, but he enlivens these with the practice of some one or other of his servants. Who can read David's Psalms but he shall read himself in them? He cannot be in any trouble but David is in the same, &c.

221. As children in the womb have eyes and ears, not for that place, but for a civil life afterwards among men, where they shall have use of all members, even so our life here is not for this world only, but for another. We have large capacities, large memories, large affections, large expectations. God doth not give us large capacities and large affections for this world, but for heaven and heavenly things.

222. Take a Christian that hath studied mortification, you shall see the life of Jesus in his sickness, in a great deal of patience and heavenly-

mindedness, when his condition is above his power, his strength above his condition.

223. As men do cherish young plants at first, and do fence them about with hedges and other things to keep them from hurt, but when they are grown, they remove them, and then leave them to the wind and weather, so God, he besets his children first with props of inward comforts, but afterwards he exposes them to storms and winds, because they are better able to bear it. Therefore let no man think himself the better because he is free from troubles. It is because God sees him not fit to bear greater.

224. When we read the Scriptures, we should read to take out something for ourselves; as when we read any promise, This is mine; when we read any prerogative, This is mine, it was written for me; as the apostle saith, 'Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning,' &c., Rom. xv. 4.

225. As the Spirit is necessary to work faith at the first, so is it necessary also to every act of faith; for faith cannot act upon occasion but by the Spirit; and therefore we should not attempt to do or to suffer anything rashly, but beg the Spirit of God, and wait for the assistance, because according to the increase of our troubles must our faith be increased; for the life of a Christian is not only to have the Spirit work faith at first, but upon all occasions to raise up our former graces. For faith stirs up all other graces, and holds every grace to the word; and so long as faith continues, we keep all other graces in exercise.

226. There is no true Christian but hath a public spirit to seek the good of others, because as soon as he is a Christian, he labours for self-denial. He knows he must give up himself and all to God, so that his spirit is enlarged in measure unto God and to the church; and therefore the greater portion a man hath of the Spirit of Christ, the more he seeks the good of others.

227. If we would have hearts to praise God, we must labour to see everything we receive from God to be of grace, and abundance of grace answerable to the degrees of good. Whatsoever we have more than nature is abundant grace. Whatsoever we have as Christians, though poor and distressed in our passage to heaven, is abundant grace.

228. There are three main parts of our salvation: first, a true knowledge of our misery; and secondly, the knowledge of our deliverance; and then, to

live a life answerable. The Holy Ghost can only work these. He only convinceth of sin; and where he truly convinceth of sin, there also of righteousness, and then of judgments.

229. That we may be convinced of sin, the Spirit must work a clear and commanding demonstration of our condition in nature. It takes away therefore all cavils, turnings, and windings; even as when we see the sun shine we know it is day. The Spirit not only convinceth in generals that we are all sinners, but in particulars, and that strongly, 'thou art the man.' This convincing is also universal, of sins of nature, of sins of life, sins of the understanding, of the will, and of the affections; of the misery of sin, of the danger of sin, of the folly and madness of sin, of sins against so many motives, so many favours. Proud nature arms itself with deftness, strong translations,<sup>!</sup> strong mitigations. It is necessary therefore that the Holy Ghost should join with men's consciences to make them confess, 'I am the man.'

230. The convincing of the Spirit may be known from common conviction of conscience by this, that natural conviction is weak like a little spark, and convinceth only of breaches of the second table, and not of evangelical sins. Again, common conviction is against a man's will: it makes him not the better man, only he is tortured and tormented. But a man that is convinced by the Spirit, he joins with the Spirit against himself; he accuseth himself; he takes God's part against himself. He is willing to be laid open, that he may find the greater mercy.

231. It is not enough to know that there is a righteousness of Christ, but the Spirit must open the eyes of the soul to see, else we shall have a natural knowledge of supernatural things. It is necessary to have a supernatural sight to see supernatural things, so as to change the soul; and therefore the Spirit only works faith to see Christ is mine. Further, only the Spirit can work the conscience to be quiet, because he is greater than the conscience, and can answer all inward objections and cavils of flesh and blood. Unless, therefore, the Holy Ghost apply what Christ hath done, the conscience will not be satisfied.

232. The best men in the estate of grace would be in darkness, and call their state into question, if the Holy Ghost did not convince them, and answer all cavils for them; and therefore we must not only be convinced at the first by the Spirit, but in our continued course of Christianity. This, therefore, should make us to come to God's ordinances with holy devotion. O Lord, vouchsafe the Spirit of revelation, and take the scales from mine

eyes, that as these are truths, so they may be truths to me! Do thou sway my soul, that I may cast myself upon thy mercy in Christ!

233. Spiritual convincing is not total in this life, but always leaves in the heart some dregs of doubting, though the soul be safe for the main. As a ship that rides at anchor is tossed and troubled, but the anchor holds it, so it is with the soul that is convinced weakly: it is sure of the main, yet it is tossed with many doubts and fears, but the anchor is in heaven.

234. The Spirit of God doth so far convince every Christian of the righteousness of Christ, as preserves in him such a power of grace, as to cast himself upon the mercy of God. God will send his Spirit so far into the heart, as it shall not betray itself to despair. He will let such a beam into the soul, as all the powers of hell shall not quench.

235. When we neglect prayer, and set upon duties in our own strength, and in confidence of our own parts; if we belong to God we shall be sure to miscarry, though another man perhaps may prosper; and therefore we should be continually dependent upon God for his direction and for his blessing in whatsoever we go about.

236. As many women, because they will not endure the pain of childbirth, do kill their children in the womb, so many men, who will not be troubled with holy actions, do stifle holy motions. Therefore, let us take heed of murdering the motions of the Holy Spirit, but let us entertain them, that when they are kindled, they may turn to resolution, and resolution into practice.

237. This is a common rule, that we cannot converse with company that are not spiritual, but if they vex us not they will taint us, unless we be put upon them in our callings. We should therefore make special choice of our company, and walk in a continual watchfulness.

238. It is rebellion against God for a man to make away himself. The very heathens could say, that we must not go out of our station till we be called. It is the voice of Satan, 'Cast thyself down.' But what saith St Paul to the jailor? 'Do thyself no harm, for we are all here,' Acts xvi. 28. We should so carry ourselves, that we may be content to stay here till God hath done that work he hath to do in us and by us; and then he will call us hence in the best time.

239. He is a valiant man that can command himself to be miserable; and he that cannot command himself to endure some bondage and disgrace in the world, it argues weakness. Christ could have come down from the cross, but he showed his strength and power by enduring their reproaches and torments.

240. The reason why many Christians stagger, and are so full of doubts, is because they are idle, and labour not to grow in grace. Therefore we should labour to grow in knowledge and mortification, for in that way we come to assurance.

241. Whatsoever good is in a natural man, is depraved by a self-end. Self-love rules all his actions. He keeps within himself, and makes for himself: he is a god to himself: God is but his idol. This is true of all natural men in the world. They make themselves their last end; and where the end is depraved, the whole course is corrupted.

242. The sense of assured hope cannot be maintained without a great deal of pains, diligence, and watchfulness: 2 Pet. i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure,' insinuating that it will not be had without it. It is the diligent and watchful Christian that hath this assurance; otherwise the Holy Ghost will suffer us to be in a damp, and under a cloud, if we stir not up the graces of the Spirit. It is grace in the exercise, and love in the exercise, that is an earnest, and so faith and hope in the exercise is an earnest. If grace be asleep, you may have grace, and not know it. Therefore we should labour to put our graces into exercise.

243. Those that have assurance of their salvation have oftentimes troublesome distractions, because they do not always stand upon their guard. Sometimes they are lifted up to heaven, and sometimes cast down even to hell; yet always in the worst condition there is something left in the soul, that suggests to it that it is not utterly cast off.

244. He to whom this pilgrimage is over-sweet, loves not his country; yet the pleasures of this life are so suitable to our nature, that we should sit by them, but that God follows us with several crosses. Therefore let us take in good part any cross, because it is out of heavenly love that we are exercised, lest we should surfeit upon things here below.

245. In melancholy distempers, especially when there goes guilt of spirit with it, we can see nothing but darkness in wife, children, friends, estate, &c.

Here is a pitiful darkness, when body, and soul, and conscience, and all are distempered, Now let a Christian see God in his nature and promises, and though he cannot live by sight in such a distemper, yet let him then live by faith.

246. Though God do personate an enemy, yet faith sees a fatherly nature in him. It apprehends some beams of comfort. Though there be no sense and feeling, yet the Spirit works a power in the heart, whereby the soul is able to clasp with God, and to allege his word and nature against himself.

247. The reason why the world seeth not the happy condition of God's children is, because their bodies are subject to the same infirmities with the worst of men; nor are they exempted from troubles. They are also subject to fall into gross sins, and therefore worldly men think, Are these the men that are happier than we? They see their crosses, but not their crowns; they see their infirmities, but not their graces; they see their miseries, but not their inward joy and peace of conscience.

248. To walk by faith is to be active in our walking, not to do as we list, but it is a stirring by rule. Since the fall, we have lost our hold of God, and we must be brought again to God by the same way we fell from him. We fell by infidelity, and we must be brought again by faith, and lead our lives upon such grounds as faith affords.- We must walk by faith, looking upon God's promise, and God's call, and God's commandments, and not live by opinion, example, and reason.

249. In the exercise of our callings, when we think we shall do no good, but all things seem contrary, yet faith saith, God hath set me here; I will cast in my net at thy commandment, Luke v. 5. Let us look upon God, and see what he commands, and then cast ourselves upon him.

250. A Christian hath sense and experience of God's love, together with his faith. It is not a naked faith without any relish, but that sense and experience we have here is given to strengthen faith for time to come; and therefore when we have any sweet feelings, we must not rest in them, but remember they are given to encourage us in our way, and to look for fulness in another world.

251. There is a double act of faith: first, the direct act, whereby I cast myself upon Christ, and there is a reflect act, whereby I know that I am in an estate of grace by the fruits of the Spirit. It is by the first act that we are

saved. Feelings are oftentimes divided from the first act; for God may enable a man to cast himself upon Christ, and yet for some ends he shall not know it, because he will humble him. God gives the reflect act, which is assured hope, as a reward of exact walking, but we must trust to that closing act of faith as to that which saveth us. We ought to live by this direct act of faith till we come to heaven, but add this, that there is no man walks by faith that wants comfort. -

252. God oftentimes defers to help his children until they be in extremity, till they be at their wits' end, because he will have them live by faith and not by sight; as good Jehoshaphat, 'We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee,' 2 Chron. xx. 12. So St Paul received the sentence of death in himself, that he might trust in the living God, 2 Cor. i. 9. This is the cause of divine desertions, why God leaves his children in desperate plunges, seeming to be an enemy to them, because he will have us live by faith; and when we live by it, then he rewards us.

253. Howsoever things are in sight, yet we should give God the honour to trust to his promises. Though his dealings towards us seem to be as to reprobates, yet let us believe his word. He cannot deny it. Say, 'Lord, remember thy promise to thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to trust,' Ps. cxix. 49. Therefore wrestle with God, for thereby he doth convey secret strength to his children, that they may be able to overcome him.

254. The reason why many men at the hour of death are full of fears and doubtings, and their hearts are full of misgivings, is, because in their lifetime they have not been exercised in living by faith.

255. Confidence doth then arise from faith, when troubles make it the stronger. Therefore it is a true evidence, when confidence increaseth with opposition, great troubles breeding great confidence. Again, it is a sign a man's confidence is well bred, when a man can carry himself equal in all conditions, when he hath learned to want and to abound. He needs a strong brain that drinks much strong water. Now when a man hath an even spirit, to be content in all conditions, it argues a well-grounded confidence.

256. None can be truly confident but God's children. Other men's confidence is like a madman's strength. He may have the strength of two or three for a time, but it is a false strength; and it is when they are lifted up upon the wings of ambition and favour of men, but these men in the time of trial sink: 'The hope of the hypocrite shall perish,' Prov. xi. 7.

257. Wicked men depart out of this world like malefactors that are unwilling to go out of prison. But God's children, when they die, they die in obedience: 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word,' Luke ii. 29. To be in the body is a good condition, because we live by faith; but it is better to be with the Lord, because then we shall live by sight.

258. An ambitious man is an underminer of others, and if any stand in his way, he will make way through blood, he will tread upon his friends to get to honour, so a soul that is graciously ambitious considers what stands in his way. He hates father and mother, nay, his own life; he pulls out his right eye, he cuts off his right hand, he offers violence to everything that stands betwixt him and his God.

259. We should study the Scriptures, that we may find what is acceptable to God and Christ. Now that which most pleaseth God is holiness. So doth grace and mercy. Therefore we should study to be holy, and gracious, and merciful. 'This is the will of God,' saith the apostle, 'even your sanctification, that is, to be holy as God is holy,' 1 Thes. iv. 8. Those that will be acceptable to God must be good in private, in their closet, because sincerity supposeth that God sees all. They must be humbled for the rising of sin, because these things are seen of Christ with grief and hatred.

260. If in our recreations or other lawful things we be so religious as we should, we will then have Christ in our eye, and see how this may further me in his service, or how this may hinder me; for the most glorious actions of religion are no service at all if not done in faith, and with respect to Christ.

261. Let no man be discouraged in the doing of good actions, though otherwise they may be bad men, having no interest in Christ; for so far as any outward action is outwardly good it shall be rewarded. The Scribes and Pharisees had the promise of men for their reward. The Romans were straight in their civil government, and God so blessed them for it, that their commonwealth flourished for many hundred years. Let the people be what they will, if civil, they shall have their reward suitable to that good they do. As for heaven and happiness in another world, they care not for it; yet every man shall have his 'penny,' Mat. xx. 13.

262. It is a great art in faith to apprehend Christ suitable to our present condition; as when we are fallen into sin, think of the terrors of the law, but when we are broken-hearted, then present him as a sweet Saviour, inviting all

to come unto him; and thus neither shall Christ be dishonoured nor our souls wronged.

263. It is much to be desired that there were that love in all men to teach what they know, and that humility in others to be instructed in what they know not. God humbles great persons to learn of meaner; and it is our duty to embrace the truth whosoever brings it; and oftentimes mean persons are instruments of comfort to greater than themselves; as Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos, Acts xviii. 26.

264. He that seeks us before we sought him, will he refuse us when we seek after him? Let no man therefore despair or be discouraged. If there be in thee the height and depth, and length and breadth of sin, there is also much more the height and depth, and length and breadth of mercy in God. And though we have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again: Jer. iii. 1, 'For his thoughts are not as ours,' and his mercies are the mercies of a reconciled God.

265. When we are under a cloud of temptations, let us take heed of opposing our comforts; for it wrongs Christ's intention, who would not have us at any time to be uncomfortable; and besides, whilst we are in such a condition, we are unfit to glorify God, for fear doth bind up the soul, and makes it in a palsy temper. We are not fit to do anything as we ought without some love and some joy; and though we be at present under a cloud, yet the sun is always the same. We may therefore for a time want the light of his gracious countenance, but never his sweet influence.

266. Most men if they could they would always live here, but whosoever is partaker of Christ's resurrection, his mind doth presently ascend; and here we are always enlarging our desires, because we are under a state of imperfection.

267. Many men that make a profession are like kites, which ascend high, but look low. But those that look high as they ascend high are risen with Christ. For a Christian being once in the estate of grace, he forgets what is behind, and looks upon ascending higher and higher, till he be in his place of happiness; and as at Christ's rising there was an earthquake, so such as are risen with him do find a commotion and division between the flesh and the spirit.

268. Christ hath an especial care of his children, when by reason of the guilt of sin they have most cause to be disconsolate; and therefore, where the heart of any man is upright towards God, it is not to be expressed what indulgence there is in him towards such a poor sinner; for though Peter had denied him, yet in Mark xvi. 7, 'Go tell his disciples, and tell Peter, so that Christ took great care to secure him of his love, though he had most shamefully denied him.

269. God hath not in vain taken upon him the name of a Father, and he fills it up to the full. It is a name of indulgence, a name of hope, a name of provision, a name of protection. It argues the mitigation of punishment. A little is enough from a father. Therefore in all temptations it should teach us by prayer to fly under the wings of our heavenly Father, and to expect from him all that a father should do for his child, as provision, protection, indulgence, yea, and seasonable corrections also, which are as necessary for us as our daily bread; and when we die we may expect our inheritance, because he is our Father. But yet we must understand also, that the name of Father is a word of relation. Something also he expects from us. We must therefore reverence him as a Father, which consists in fear and love. He is a great God, and therefore we ought to fear him; he is also merciful, yea, hath bowels of mercy, and therefore we ought to love him. If we tremble at him, we know not that he is loving, and if we be over bold, we forget that he is a great God. Therefore we should go boldly to him with reverence and godly fear.

270. Those that are at peace in their own consciences will be peaceable towards others. A busy, contentious, querulous disposition argues it never felt peace from God; and though many men think it commendable to censure the infirmities of others, yet it argues their own weakness. For it is a sign of strength, where we see in men any good, to bear with their weaknesses. Who was more indulgent than Christ? He bore with the infirmities of his disciples from time to time. Therefore we should labour to carry ourselves lovingly towards them that are weak, and know that nothing should raise us so high in our esteem above others, so as to forget them to be brethren, inasmuch as those infirmities we see in them shall be buried with them.

271. Many men will make much of eminent persons, and men of excellent parts, but there may be a great deal of hypocrisy in that, and therefore the truth of our love is tried in this, if we bear a sincere affection to

all the saints, Eph. vi. 18., 272. We must take heed of coming to God in our own persons or worthiness, but in all things look at God in Christ. If we look at God as a Father, we must see him Christ's Father first. If we see ourselves acquitted from our sins, let us look at Christ risen first. If we think of glorification in heaven, let us see Christ glorified first, and when we consider of any spiritual blessing, consider of it in Christ first. All the promises are made to Christ. He takes them first from God the Father, and derives them to us by his Spirit. The first fulness is in God, and then he empties himself into Christ. 'And of his fulness we all receive grace,' &c.

273. God is said to be our God, or to be a God unto us, whereas he applies for the good of his creature, that all-sufficiency that is in himself. God is our God by covenant, because he hath made over himself unto us. Every believing Christian hath the title passed over to him, so that God is his portion, and his inheritance. There is more comfort in this, that God is our God, than the heart of man can conceive. It is larger than his heart, and therefore though we cannot say, that riches, or honours, or friends, &c., are ours, yet if we be able to say by the Spirit of faith that God is ours, then we have all in him. His wisdom is ours to find out a way to do us good. If we be in danger, his power is ours to bring us out; if under the guilt of sin, his mercy is ours to forgive us; if any want, his all-sufficiency is ours to supply, or to make it good. If God be ours, then whatsoever God can do is ours, and whatsoever God hath is ours.

274. God is the God and Father of all the elect, and he is also a God and a Father unto every one of the elect. God is every saint's solidum. Even as the sun is wholly every man's, so is God. He cares for all as one, and for every one as if he had but one.

275. There is not only a mystery, but a depth in the mystery; as of election and reprobation, so of providence. There is no reason can be given why some of God's children are in quiet and others are vexed, why one should be poor and another rich. In Ps. xcvi. 2, 'clouds and darkness are round about him.' You cannot see him, he is hid in a cloud; ay, but righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne. Howsoever he wrap himself in a thick cloud, that none can see him, yet he is just and righteous. Therefore when anything befalls us, for which we can see no reason, yet we must reverence him and adore his counsels, and think him wiser than we.

270. When we are diligent in our calling, keeping a good conscience and labouring for a carriage answerable; when these three meet together, calling, and standing, and wise carriage: then whatsoever befalls us, we may with comfort say, 'The will of the Lord be done.' We are now in his way, and may then expect a guard of angels without, and a guard of his Spirit within.

277. All the contentions between the flesh and the spirit lies in this, whether God shall have his will or we ours. Now God's will is straight, but ours is crooked, and therefore if God will have us offer up our Isaac we must submit to him, and even drown ourselves in the will of God, and then the more we are emptied of ourselves, the freer we are by how much we are made subject to God. For in what measure we part with anything for him, we shall receive even in this world an hundredfold in joy and peace, &c.

278. Whatsoever outward good things we have, we should use them in a reverent manner, knowing that the liberty we have to enjoy them is purchased with the blood of Christ, as David, when he thirsted for the waters of Bethlehem, would not drink it, because it was the blood of his three worthies, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, seq. So though we have a free use of the creatures, yet we must be careful to use them with moderation and reverence.

279. There is nothing of God can please the world, because the best things are presented to the heart of a carnal man as foolishness. Man's nature above all things would avoid the imputation of folly, and rather than he will be counted a fool he will slander the ways of God to be foolishness. Now the law of Christ constrains us, and makes us do many things for which the world doth think us out of our wits, and therefore we should labour to quit our hearts, and account of it a greater favour from God, when the Michals of this world scoff at us for our goodness, 2 Sam. vi. 22; for when they are offended at us God is delighted with us.

280. To discern of our estate in grace, let us chiefly look to our affections, for they are intrinsical, and not subject to hypocrisy. Men of great parts know much, and so doth the devil, but he wants love. In tire all things may be painted but the heat. So all good actions may be done by an hypocrite, but there is a heat of love which he hath not. We should therefore chiefly examine the truth and sincerity of our affections.

281. We may apprehend the love of God, but we cannot comprehend it. All the fruits of his love passes our common understanding, and therefore we have the Holy Spirit given to us to take away the veil, and to make report of

it to the soul; and then as soon as this love of Christ is apprehended, it constrains us to all holy duties, not as fire out of flint, but as water out of a spring. The love of a wife to her husband may begin from the supply of her necessities, but afterwards she may love him also for the sweetness of his person. So the soul doth first love Christ for salvation, but when she is brought to him, and finds that sweetness that is in him, then she loves him for himself.

282. It should be our continual care to manifest the sincerity of our hearts to God in our several places and callings, and this is done when we look at God in every action, and endeavour to yield our whole soul to the whole will of God, serving him in our spirits, and performing the works of our callings by his Spirit, according to his word, and unto his glory; and if we thus labour to approve ourselves to him, whatsoever be the issue, we shall be endued with a holy boldness, with inward peace and comfort, having carried ourselves as in the sight of God.

283. That a man may be fit to persuade others he must have love to their persons, a clear knowledge of the cause, and grace, that he may be able to speak in wisdom to their souls and consciences. As we are saved by love, so we are persuaded by the arguments of love, which is most agreeable to the nature of man, that is led by persuasion, not by compulsion. Men may be compelled to the use of the means, but not to faith. Many men labour only to unfold the Scriptures, for the increasing of their knowledge, that they may be able to discourse, whereas the special intent of the ministry is to work upon the heart and affections.

284. As we must approve ourselves to God and to our own consciences,, so also to the consciences of others,—not to their humours and fancies,— that they may witness for us, that we love them and deal faithfully with them. We should labour to do all the good we can, especially to the souls of men that are redeemed with the blood of Christ. If we deserve well of them, they will give evidence for us; but if we walk scandalously, they will evidence that we by our ill courses and examples drew them to ill courses, and hardened them in evil. It should be our care therefore to approve ourselves to the consciences of men, that we may have them to witness for us, that such men of whom we have deserved well may be our crown at the last day.

285. A man cloth then keep a good conscience in relation to others, when he makes it appear that he can deny himself to do them good; when

the consciences of other men shall think thus, Such a man regards my good more than his own; he seeks no advantage to himself; he lives so as that the world may see he is in good earnest; he speaks so as that he makes it good by his life. Now if our care be to walk thus, we shall approve ourselves to the consciences of men.

280. There are many that will give some way to divine truths, but they have a reservation of some sin. When Herodias is once touched, then John Baptist's head must off, Mat. xvi. O. Such truths as come near makes them fret, because their conscience tells them they cannot yield obedience to all. The lust of some sins hath gotten such domination over their affections, that the conscience saith, I cannot do this; and then that hatred that should be turned upon the sin, is turned upon the word and the minister. Like unto some vermin, that when they are driven to a stand, they will fly in a man's face, so these men, when they see they must yield, they grow malicious, so that what they will not follow, that they will reproach; therefore it should be our care at all times to yield obedience, according to what we know.

287. There is a generation of churlish people, such as watch for offences, because they would go to hell with some reason. They will not see who are weak, and who are hypocrites, but they cast reproach upon all; and therefore oftentimes God in justice to them suffers good men to fall, that such men may take 'scandal' at them to their ruin.

288. A man may know that the word hath wrought upon his conscience, when he comes to it, that he may hear and learn and reform. A man that hath a heart without guile, is glad to hear the sharpest reproofs, because he knows that sin is his greatest enemy; but if we live in a course that we are loath should be touched, it is a sign our hearts are full of guile. Corrupt men they mould their teachers, and fashion them to their lusts; but a good and upright heart is willing that divine truths should have their full authority in the soul, giving way to our duty, though never so contrary to flesh and blood.

289. It is the duty of ministers to labour to prevent objections that may arise in the hearts of the people, so as to hinder the passage of their doctrine; and that truths may more readily come into the heart, we should labour to relish the person, for secret surmises are stones to stumble at; therefore both ministers and people should be careful to remove them.

290. A man ought not to commend himself, but in some special cases: first, because pride and envy in others will not endure it; secondly, it

toucheth upon God's glory, and therefore we should take heed; thirdly, it deprives us of comfort, and hinders the apology of others. The heathens could say, that the praising of a man's self is a burdensome hearing; let us take heed, therefore, that we snatch not our right out of God's hand. But now, on the contrary in some cases, we may praise and commend ourselves, as when we have a just calling to make an apology in way of defence, and for the conviction of them that unjustly speak evil of us; secondly, we may speak well of ourselves in way of example to others, as parents to their children; and this doth well become them, because it is not out of pride or vain glory, because the end is discovered to be out of love unto them.

291. It is the duty of those that are God's children, when they have just occasion, to take the defence of others upon them: and thus did the blind man, John ix. 30; he defended Christ against the Pharisees; and Jonathan spoke to his father in the behalf of David, 2 Sam. xx. 30. Though he was the son of a rebellious woman, yet he knew that he ought this unto the truth. God hath a cause in the world that must be owned, and therefore when the cause of religion is brought upon the stage, then God seems to say as Jehu did, 'Who is on my side, who?' 2 Kings ix. 32. God commends his cause and his children to us; and therefore 'Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty,' Judges v. 23. So a curse lies upon those that, when the truth suffers, have not a word to defend it.

292. Usually the defamers of others are proud, vainglorious persons. If a man will search for the spirit of the devil in men, let him look for it amongst vainglorious teachers, heretics, and superstitious persons. The ground of it is from the nearness of two contraries. There the opposition is the strongest, as fire and water when they are near make the strongest opposition; and who are so near God's children as vainglorious teachers that are of the same profession? Pilate, a heathen, showed more favour to Christ than the Pharisees. And this use we should make of it, not to take scandal when we see one divine deprave another, for it hath been so, and will be so to the end of the world.

293. All things out of God are but grass. When we joy in anything out of God, it is a childish joy, as if we joyed in flowers, that after we have drawn out the sweetness, we cast them away. All outward things are common to castaways as well as to us; and without grace they will prove snares; at the hour of death what comfort can we have in them, further than we have had

humility and love to use them well. Therefore if we would have our hearts seasoned with true joy, let us labour to be faithful in our places, and endeavour according to the gifts we have to glorify God.

294. To glory in anything whatsoever, is idolatry, because the mind sets up a thing to glory in, which is not God; secondly, it is spiritual adultery to cleave to anything more than God; thirdly, it is false-witness-bearing to ascribe excellency where there is none. We have a prohibition, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches,' Jer. ix. 23. God will not give his glory to another; and therefore when men will be meddling with glory, which belongs to God alone, he blasts them, and sets them aside, as broken vessels, and disdains to use them.

295. A Christian joys aright, when it proceeds from right principles, from judgment and conscience, not from fancy and imagination; when judgment and conscience will bear him out; when there is good terms between God and him: for our joy must spring from peace: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace towards God.' The apostles begin their Epistles with mercy, grace, and peace: mercy in forgiveness grace to renew our natures; and peace of conscience here. These are things to be gloried in. If we find our sins pardoned, our persons accepted, and our natures altered, then we may comfort ourselves in anything, in health, in wealth, in wife, in children, in anything, because all come from the favour of God. We may joy in afflictions, because there is a blessing in the worst things, to further our eternal happiness; and though we cannot joy in affliction itself, as being a contrary to our nature, yet we may joy in the issue. So that we may joy aright, when having interest in God, we glory in the testimony of a good conscience; when looking inward we find all at peace; when we can say upon good grounds, that God is mine, and therefore all is mine, both life and death and all things, so far as they may serve for good.

296. The hearts of men, yea, of good men, are apt to be taken up with outward things: when the weak disciples had cast out devils, they were ready to be proud; but Christ quickly spies it, and admonisheth them, 'not to rejoice that the devils were subject to them, but that their names were written in the book of life,' Luke x. 20. Therefore, when we find the least stirrings of glory in anything, we must check ourselves, and consider what grace we have to temper them; what love we have to turn these things to the common

good; for whatsoever a man hath, if he have not withal humility and love to use it aright, it will turn to his bane.

297. It hath been an old imputation to lay distractedness upon men of the greatest wisdom and sobriety. John the Baptist was accused to have a devil, and Christ to be besides himself, and the apostles to be full of new wine, and Paul to be mad; and the reason of this is, because as religion is a mystical and spiritual thing, so the tenets of it seem paradoxes to carnal men: as, first, that a Christian is the only freeman, and other men are slaves; that he is the only rich man, though never so mean in the world; that he is the only beautiful man, though outwardly never so deformed; that he is the only happy man in the midst of all his miseries. Now these things, though never so true in themselves, seem strange to natural men. And then again, when they see men earnest against sin, or making conscience of sin, they wonder at this commotion for trifles, as if we made tragedies of toys. But these men go on in a course of their own, and make that the measure of all: those that are below them are profane, and those that are above them are indiscreet; by fancies and affections, they create excellencies, and then cry down spiritual things as folly; they have principles of their own, to love themselves, and to love others only for themselves, and to hold on the strongest side, and by no means to expose a man's self to danger. But now when men begin to be religious, they deny all their own aims, and that makes their course seem madness to the world, and therefore they labour to breed an ill conceit of them, as if they were madmen and fools.

298. God's children are neither madmen nor fools, as they are accounted. It is but a scandal cast upon them by the madmen of the world. They are the only wise men, if it be well considered; for, first, they make the highest end their aim, which is to be a child of God here, and a saint hereafter in heaven. Secondly, they aim to be found wise men at their death, and therefore are always making their accounts ready. Thirdly, they labour to live answerable to their rules. They observe the rule of the word, to be governed according to the same. Fourthly, they improve all advantages to advance their end; they labour to grow better by blessings and crosses, and to make a sanctified use of everything. Fifthly, they swim against the stream of the times, and though they eat, and drink, and sleep as others do, yet, like the stars, they have a secret course and carriage of their own, which the world cannot discern; and therefore a man must be changed, and set in a higher rank, before he can have a sanctified judgment of the ways of God.

299. Those that lay the imputation of folly and madness on God's children will be found to be fools and madmen themselves. Is not he a fool that cannot make a right choice of things? and how do carnal men make their choice, when they embrace perishing things for the best? Secondly, a carnal man hath not parts to apprehend spiritual things aright. He cannot see things invisible. Thirdly, in his heart he accounts it a vain thing to serve the Lord. Fourthly, he judges his enemies to be his best friends, and his best friends to be his worst enemies. Fifthly, the principles of all his actions are rotten, because they are not directed to the right object; therefore all his affections are mad, as his joy, his love, his delight. His love is but lust, his anger vexation; for his confidence he calls God's love into question; but if a false suggestion comes from the devil, that he embraces, and therefore is he not now a madman? And this is the condition of all natural men in the world.

300. True freedom is when the heart is enlarged, and made subordinate to God in Christ. A man is then in a sweet frame of soul when his heart is made subject to God; for he, being larger than the soul, sets it at liberty. God will have us make his glory our aim, that he may bestow himself upon us.

301. When the love of Christ is manifested to me, and my love again to Christ is wrought by the Spirit, this causes an admiration to the soul, when it considers what wonderful love is in Christ; and the Spirit shall witness that this love of Christ is set upon me; from hence it begins to admire, 'Lord, wherefore wilt thou show thyself to us, and not to the world?' John xvi. 22. What is the reason thou lovest me, and not others? When the soul hath been with God in the mount, and when it is turned from earthly things, then it sees nothing but love and mercy, and this constrains us to do all things out of love to God and men.

302. When Joshua cursed the man that should build the walls of Jericho, he was not in commotion and fury, but in a peaceable temper, Joshua vi. 26. So that, when cursing comes from such a one, he is a declaratory instrument, and the conveyer of God's curse. Therefore every man must not take upon him to curse, for men oftentimes curse where they should bless, which is an arrow shot upright, that falls down upon his own head; but those that come in the name of the Lord, and are qualified for that purpose, their cursings or blessings are to be esteemed, for they are a means oftentimes to convey God's blessings or his cursings upon us.

303. It is over-curious to exact the first beginnings of grace, because it falls by degrees, like the dew, indiscernibly; and further, there is a great deal

of wisdom as well as power in the working of grace. God offers no violence to the soul, but works sweetly yet strongly, and strongly yet sweetly. He goes so far with our nature, that we shall freely delight in grace. So that now he sees great reason why he should alter his course, God doth not overthrow nature. The stream is but changed, the man is the same.

304. When the soul desires the forgiveness of sin, and not grace to lead a new life, that desire is hypocritical; for a true Christian desires power against sin as well as pardon for it. If we have not sanctifying grace, we have not pardoning grace. Christ came as well by water to regenerate as by blood to justify. It should therefore be our continual care and endeavour to grow and increase in grace, because without it we shall never come to heaven. Without this endeavour our sacrifices are not accepted; without this we cannot withstand our enemies, or bear any cross; without it we cannot go on comfortably in our course; without this we cannot do anything acceptable and pleasing to God.

305. God will be ‘as the dew unto Israel, and he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon,’ Hos. xvi. 5. These are not words wastefully spent; for we have great need of such promises, especially in a distressed state, for then our spirits are apt to sink and our hearts to faint, and therefore we have need to have the same comforts often repeated. Profane hearts think, what need all this? but if ever thou beest touched in conscience for thy sins, thou wilt then be far from finding fault, when God useth all the secrets in the book of nature, and translates them, to assure us of his mercy and love.

306. God’s children are strengthened by their falls. They learn to stand by their falls. Like tall cedars, the more they are blown, the deeper they are rooted. That which men think is the overthrow of God’s children, doth but root them deeper; so that, after all outward storms and inward declinings, this is the issue, ‘They take root downward, and bring forth fruit upwards.’

307. A Christian in his right temper is compared to the best of everything. If to a lily, the fairest; if to a cedar, the tallest; if to an olive-tree, the most fruitful: ‘And his smell shall be as Lebanon.’ We should therefore make use of all natural things, and apply them to spiritual. If we see a lily, think of God’s promise and our duty; we shall grow as lilies. When we see a tall tree, think, I must grow higher in grace; and when we see a vine, think, I must grow in fruitfulness. When we go into our orchards or gardens, let the

sight of these things raise our thoughts higher unto a consideration of what is required of us.

308. As it is the glory of the olive-tree to be fruitful, so it is the glory of a Christian to be fruitful in his place and calling; and the way to be fruitful, is to esteem fruitfulness a glory. It is a gracious sight to see a Christian answer his profession, and flourish in his own standing; to be fruitful, and shine in good works. When ability, and opportunity, and a heart answerable to all, meet for doing good, this is glorious.

309. When we go about any action or business, let us always ask our souls this question, Is this suitable to my calling, to my hopes? But if not, Why do I do it? I that am a king to rule over my lusts, doth this agree with my condition? This base act, this base company, shall such a man as I do this? When a man brings his heart to reason thus with himself, it will breed Ephraim's resolution, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' And in walking thus circumspectly, we shall find a heat of comfort accompanying every good action; and a sweet relish upon the conscience, with humility and thankfulness, acknowledging all the strength we have to be from the dew of his grace.

310. In times of calamity, God will have a care of his fruitful trees; as in chap. xx. of Deut., ver. 19, the Israelites were commanded that they should not destroy the trees that bare fruit. So though God's judgments come amongst us, yet God will have a special care of his children that be fruitful, but the judgments of God will light heavy upon barren trees. And howsoever God may endure barrenness in the want of means, yet he will not in the use of means. It were better for a bramble to be in the wilderness than in an orchard; nothing will bear us out but fruitfulness.

311. It may be observed that old men seem not to grow, nor to be so zealous as many young Christians; but the reason is, because there is in young Christians a greater strength of natural parts, and that shows itself, and makes a great expression. But aged men they grow in strength and stableness, and are more refined. Their knowledge is more dear, their actions more pure, their zeal more refined, and not mingled with wild-fire; and therefore, though old Christians be not carried with a full stream, yet they are more stable and judicious, more heavenly-minded, more mortified. They grow in humility, out of a clearer sight of their own corruptions.

212. In true conversion the soul is changed to be of the same mind with Christ, that as he is affected, so the soul of such a one is affected; and as he loathes all ill, so upon this ground there must be a loathing of whatsoever is evil. But a carnal man is like a wolf driven from the sheep, that yet retains his wolfish nature; so these men that are driven from their sins only out of terror of conscience, they are affrighted with sin, but they do not hate it; therefore a loathing of evil is required as well as the leaving of it.

313. If we would make it evident that our conversion is sound, we must loathe and hate sin from the heart. Now, a man shall know his hatred of evil to be true, first, if it be universal; he that hates sin truly hates all sin. Secondly, where there is true hatred it is unappeasable; there is no appeasing of it but by abolishing the thing it hates. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger; anger may be appeased, but hatred is against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, it hates all ill in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, hates it most in his own bosom. Many, like Judah, are severe in censuring of others, but are partial to themselves. Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates it in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin, and not be in rage with him that tells us of it; therefore those that swell against reproof hate not sin; only with this caution, it may be done with such indiscretion and self-love, that a man may hate the proud manner. Therefore in discovering our hatred of sin in others, we must consider our calling. It must be done in a sweet temper, with reserving due respect of those to whom we show our dislike, that it may be done out of true zeal, and not out of wild-fire.

314. All love and associations that are not begun on good terms, will end in hatred. We should take heed whom we join in league and amity withal. Before we plant our affections, consider the persons what they are. If we see any signs of grace, then it is good; but if not, there will be a rent. Throughout our whole life this ought to be our rule. We should labour in all companies either to do good or receive good; and where we can neither do nor receive good, we should take heed of such acquaintance. Let men therefore consider and take heed how they stand in combination with wicked persons.

315. 'Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. He must have his nature changed, and carry his hatred against all opposite courses; and therefore to frame a religion that hath no trouble with it, is to frame an idol. But neuters in religion are like unto bats, that men

can scarce distinguish from mice, or flying fowl, because they have a resemblance of both. Take heed therefore of neutrality in religion. After the first heat many become lukewarm, and from that they fall into coldness; let us therefore look to our beginnings. Pure affection in religion must also be zealous.

316. Wise men will do nothing without great ends; and the more wise, the greater are their ends. Shall we attribute this to men, and not to the wisdom of God? Christ would never have appeared in our nature, and suffered death, but for some great end. Shall we think that this mystery of God taking flesh upon him, was for a slight purpose? Now, the end of his coming was to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15; he came to bring us to God, 1 Peter iii. 18; but he that will save us must first bring us out of Satan's bondage, therefore Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. It must needs follow therefore that the salvation of our souls is of great consequence, seeing for this only end Christ took our nature upon him and suffered for us.

317. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil in us, but yet he makes us kings under him, to fight his battles; and as by his Spirit in us he destroys the works of the devil, so he doth it in the exercise of all the powers and parts of soul and body, and by exercising the graces of his Spirit in us. 'He hath made us kings and priests,' not that we should do nothing, but that we should fight, and in fighting overcome. The chiefest grace that God doth exercise in overcoming our corruptions is faith. We fell by infidelity and disobedience. Now, Christ comes and displants infidelity, and instead thereof he plants faith, which unites us to him; and then by a divine skill, it draws a particular strength from Christ, to fight his battles against corruption.

318. Temptations at first are like Elias's cloud, no bigger than a man's hand; but if we give way to them, they overspread the whole soul. Satan nestles himself when we dwell upon the thoughts of sin. We cannot withstand sudden risings, but by grace we may keep them that they do not abide there long. Let us therefore labour as much as we can to be in good company and good courses; for as the Holy Ghost works by these advantages, so we should wisely observe them.

319. It is hard to discern the working of Satan from our own corruptions, because for the most part he goes secretly along with them. He is like a pirate at sea; he sets upon us with our own colours; he comes as a friend; and therefore it is hard to discern, but it is partly seen by the eagerness of our lusts, when they are sudden, strong, and strange, so strange

sometimes, that even nature itself abhors them. The Spirit of God leads sweetly, but the devil hurries a man like a tempest, that he will bear no reason; as we see in Ammon, for his sister Tamar. Again, when we shake off motions of God's Spirit, and mislike his government, and give way to passion, then the devil enters. Let a man be unadvisedly angry, and the devil will make him envious and seek revenge. When passions are let loose, they are chariots in which the devil rides. Some by nature are prone to distrust, and some to be too confident. Now, the devil he joins with them, and so draws them on further. He broods upon our corruptions; he lies as it were upon the souls of men, and there broods and hatches all sin whatsoever. All the devils in hell cannot force us to sin. He works by suggestions, stirring up humours and fancies; but he cannot work upon the will. We betray ourselves by yielding before he can do us any harm, yet he ripens sin.

320. There are some sins that let Satan loose upon us; as, first, pride; we see it in Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Secondly, conceitedness and presumption; as we may see in Peter, Mat. xxvi. 33. Thirdly, security; which is always the forerunner of some great punishment or great sin, which also is a punishment, as we see in David. Fourthly, idleness; it is the hour of temptation, when a man is out of God's business. Fifthly, intemperance, either in looseness of diet or otherwise; therefore Christ commands us to be 'sober, and watch,' and look to sobriety in the use of the creatures. Sixthly, there is a more subtle intemperance of passion, for in what degree we give way to wrath, and revenge, and covetousness, in that degree Satan hath advantage against us. Seventhly, when a man will not believe and submit to truths revealed, though but a natural truth; therefore God gave them up to vile affections, Rom. i. 26, because they would not cherish the light of nature, much more when we do not cherish the light of grace.

321. As Christ wrought our salvation in an estate of baseness, so in our way to glory we must be conformable to our Head, and pass through an estate of baseness. We are chosen to a portion of afflictions, as well as to grace and glory. God sees it needful also, because we cannot easily digest a flourishing condition. We are naturally given to affect outward excellencies. When we are trusted with great matters, we are apt to forget God and our duty to others. This should therefore teach us to justify God when we are any ways abased in the world.

322. There are a world of poor, who yet are exceeding proud; but God sanctifies outward poverty unto his children, so as it makes way for poverty

of spirit; that as they are poor, so they have a mean esteem of themselves. It makes them inwardly more humble and more tractable. Therefore when we are under any cross, observe how it works; see whether we join with God or no. When he afflicts us outwardly, whether inwardly we be more humble; when he humbles us and makes us poor, whether we be also poor in spirit; when God goes about to take us down, we should labour to take down ourselves.

323. Poverty of spirit should accompany us all our life long, to let us see that we have no righteousness of our own to sanctification; that all the grace we have is out of ourselves, even for the performance of every holy duty. For though we have grace, yet we cannot bring that grace into act without new grace; even as there is a fitness in trees to bear fruit, but without the influence of heaven they cannot. That which oftentimes makes us miscarry in the actions of our calling, is because we think we have strength and wisdom enough; and then what is begun in self confidence, is ended in shame. We set upon duties in our own pride and strength of parts, and find success accordingly. Therefore it is a sign that God will bless our endeavours, when out of the sense of our own weakness we water our business with prayer and tears.

324. It is not sufficient for a Christian to have habitual grace. There is no vine can bring forth fruit without the influence of heaven, though it be rooted; so we cannot bring forth fruit unless God blow upon us. Our former strength will not serve when a new temptation comes. It is not enough to have grace, but we must use it. We must exercise our faith, love, patience, humility; and for this purpose God hath furnished us with the Spirit of all grace. Let us therefore remember, when we have any duty to do, to pray unto Christ to blow upon us with his Spirit.

325. God doth not so much look at our infirmities as at our uprightness and sincerity; and therefore when we are out of temptations, we should consider and examine what God hath wrought in us. And then though there be infirmities and failings, yet if our hearts be upright, God will pardon them; as we find that David and others were accounted upright, and yet had many imperfections.

326. Watching is an exercising of all the graces of the soul, and these are given to keep our souls awake. We have enemies about us that are not asleep, and our worst enemy is within us; and so much the worse, because so near. We live also in a world full of temptations, and wicked men are full of malice.

We are passing through our enemy's country, and therefore had need to have our wits about us. The devil also is at one end of every good action, and therefore we had need to keep all our graces in perpetual exercise. We should watch in fear of jealousy, taking heed of a spirit of drowsiness; labouring also to keep ourselves unspotted of the world.

327. It may be asked, how we shall know the Scripture to be the word of God? For answer, do but grant, first, that there is a God, it will follow then that he must be worshipped and served; and that this service must be discovered to us, that we may know what he doth require; and then let it be compared what the word of God can come near to be the same with this. Besides, God hath blessed the superstition of the Jews, who were very strict this way, to preserve it for us; and the heretics, since the primitive church, have so observed one another, that there can be no other to this word. But now we must further know, that we must have something in our souls suitable to the truths contained in it, before we can truly and savingly believe it to be the word of God, as that we find it to have a power in working upon our hearts and affections: Luke xxvi. 32, 'Did not our hearts burn within us, when he opened to us the scriptures?' Again, it hath a divine operation to warm and pacify the soul, and a power to make a Felix tremble. It hath a searching quality, to divide between the marrow and the bone. We do not therefore only believe the Scriptures to be the word of God because any man saith so, or because the church saith so; but also and principally because I find it by experience working the same effects in me that it speaks of itself. And therefore let us never rest, till, when we hear a promise, we may have something in us by the sanctifying Spirit that may be suitable to it; and so assuring of us that it is that word alone that informs us of the good pleasure of God to us, and our duty to him.

328. There is in God a fatherly anger. After conversion he retains that; and this fatherly anger is also turned away when in sincerity we humble ourselves. There is one saith well, 'A child of anger, and a child under anger'. God's children are not children of wrath, but sometimes they are under wrath,—when they do not carry themselves as sons, when they venture on sins against conscience, &c. But if they humble themselves and reform, and fly to God for mercy, then they come into favour again, and recover the right of sons.

329. We may know that God loves us, when by his Spirit he speaks friendly to our souls, and we by prayer speak friendly to him again; when we

have communion and familiarity with him. Whom God loves, to them he discovers his secrets, even such secrets as the soul never knew before. He reveals them to us when our hearts are wrought to an ingenuous confession of sin, and when we have no comfort but from heaven. Even as a father discovers his bowels most to his child when it is sick, so God reserves the discovery of his love, especially until such a time when we renounce all carnal confidence. Therefore if we can assure our souls that God loves us, let us then be at a point for anything that shall happen to us in this world, whether it be disgrace or contempt, or whatsoever, because we may fetch patience and contentedness from hence, that God's love supplies all wants whatsoever.

330. After a gracious pardon for sin, there are two things remaining in us, infirmities and weaknesses. Infirmities are corruptions stirred up, which hinders us from good, and puts us forward to evil. But yet they are so far resisted and subdued, that they break not forth into action. Weakness is when we suffer an infirmity to break out for want of watchfulness; as if a man be subject to passion, when this is working disturbance in the mind, it is infirmity; but when, for want of watchfulness, it breaks forth into action, then it is weakness. And these diseases are suffered in us, to put us in mind of the bitter root of sin; for if we should not sometimes break forth into sin, we should think that our nature were cured. Who would have thought that Moses, so meek a man, could have so broken out into passion? We see it also in David, and Peter, and others; and this is to show that the corruption of nature in them was not fully healed. But there is this difference between the slips and falls of God's children and of other men. When other men fall, it settles them in their dregs; but when God's children fall, they see their weaknesses, they see the bitter root of sin, and hate it the more, and are never at quiet till it be cast out by the strength of grace and repentance. Therefore let no man be too much cast down by his infirmities, so long as they are resisted, for from hence comes a fresh hatred of corruption; and God looks not upon any sin but sin ungrieved for, unresisted; otherwise God hath a holy end in suffering sin to be in us, to keep us from worse things.

331. There is none that out of sincerity do give themselves to holy conference but are gainers by it. Many men ask questions, and are inquisitive to know, but not that they might put in practice. This is but a proud desire to taste of the tree of knowledge; but the desire of true-affected Christians is to know that they might seek Christ. We gain oftentimes by discourse with those that are punies in religion. St Paul desires to meet with the Romans,

though they were his converts, that he might be strengthened by their mutual faith, Rom. i. 12.

332. When once the Spirit doth fasten the wrath of God upon the conscience of one whom he means to save, then there follows these afflicting affections of grief and shame; and from hence comes a dislike and hate of sin; hence begins a divorce between the soul and the beloved sin; so that whereas there was before a sceptre of sin in the soul, now God begins to dispossess that strong man, and then follows a strong desire to be better, and a holy desperation, that if God in Christ be not merciful, then the soul saith, What shall become of me! and as the Spirit lets in some terrors, so he lets in also some hopes, as, 'What shall I do to be saved?' implying a resignation of the will to take any course, so he may be saved; and then all the world for one drop of mercy.

333. Christ never comes into any heart but where he is valued and esteemed; yet he delights not to hide himself from his poor creature. But when we are fit, when we truly judge ourselves unworthy of any favour, then he receives us. Here is comfort, therefore, for the worst of men; if they will come in, and submit to God's ordinances, they will be effectual to subdue our corruptions; and when once God hath taken up the heart of man for his temple, he will then bring into it all his treasures. There will be a mutual fellowship between God and the soul when we are once subdued.

334. God is so powerful an agent that he can overthrow all. He can overthrow the carnal principles of reason, which every natural man hath in the fort of his soul. He presents to men the condition they are in by nature, and lets in a taste of his vengeance. When God in his ordinances shows greater reasons for goodness than Satan can in his carnal courses, then all falls down. Those, therefore, that are not fully subdued, yet let them come to the ordinances, for then they are within God's reach. When the word of God discovers the baseness, vileness, and danger of sin, then the soul stoops. Therefore let none despair; for though thy heart be stone, yet God can work powerfully. Nothing is difficult to infirmities; but it is a divine work to pull down a wicked sinner.

385. However we take pains in our callings, yet the ability and blessing comes from God. We pray for daily bread, and yet he gives it, though we labour for it. There is a gift of success, which, unless it be given us from above, we shall, with the disciples, 'catch nothing,' Luke v. 5.

330. Gifts are for grace, and grace for glory. Gifts are peculiar to some men, but grace is common to all Christians. Gifts are peculiar to many, and common to such as are not good. Gifts are joined with great sins, but grace hath love and humility to take down the soul. The devil hath lost little of his acuteness, but yet he remains mischievous. So many men have great parts, but they have also a devilish spirit. Grace comes from more special love, and yet men had rather be accounted devils than fools. Account them men of parts, and then count them what you will.

337. It is a hard matter to find out the least measure of grace and the greatest degree of formality; for as painting oftentimes exceeds the thing, so doth an hypocrite oftentimes make a greater show; but the least measure of saving grace is from desires. And these are known to be saving, if they proceed from a taste of the thing, and not merely from the object; and therefore we must distinguish between affections stirred up and the inward frame; for those that are suddenly stirred up do presently return. The waters in the bath have a natural hotness, but water, when it is heated, will return to its former coldness.

338. Though we be sure of victory over our spiritual enemies, yet we must fight. The conquered kings must be fought withal. Christ, that fights for us, fights with us and in us, and crowns us when all is done. And the time will come, ere long, when we shall say of our enemies as Moses said of the Egyptians, 'Those enemies that we now see, we shall see them no more for ever,' Esod. xvi. 13; 'Be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10.

## The Knot of Prayer Loosed

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is thereof you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?—Mat. VII. 7-10.*

I hope it will not be offensive to any here present,—it may be profitable to some,—briefly to repeat what I have spoken in another place of this text. The whole contains an exhortation to prayer, Christ's exhortation to Christ's hearers. The parts are two.

1. The exhortation strictly taken, pointing out the duty.

2. The motives and arguments enforcing the same. In brief, The nail and the hammer.

The duty is laid down in these words, 'ask,' 'seek,' 'knock;' all of them whetting on our dulness; by which we may see, the pressing of these things in this manner imports diligence, that we should set on the same eagerly, yea, with an earnest desire of obtaining our suit, as we do with those we have occasion to speak with, whom by all means we importune for a despatch. Our Lord here would have us so to make haste, using all means and diligence for obtaining of our suit.

The motives are, 1. Ordinate, directly urging the duty.

2. Subordinate, standing as helps and supporters thereunto.

The motives ordinate are these: 'Ask, and receive;' 'seek, and find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' The argument is taken from a threefold promise, according to the threefold urging of the duty. In sum, the success they should have, that they shall speed.

The subordinate arguments follow the former, and they are of two sorts, simple or by comparison. The simple in these words, 'For every one that

asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' And this simple argument is drawn, as it were, from the common experience of others, as if our Lord should have said, Since it is found by sure and certain experience, that every one that asketh receiveth, why should not ye also, if ye ask, think to speed as well as others?

Lastly, There is set down an argument of comparison, from the lesser to the greater, from fathers on earth, endowed with a little of that pity and mercy, the greater fountain and ocean whereof is in God; from which the inference is, that if earthly and evil parents will be ready to hear their children, and give good things unto them, how much more will our good and heavenly Father be ready to hear and grant our requests, that is, give good things to such as ask in faith? This is the sum.

From the exhortation note, the duty of prayer is a common task, so that every Christian, who would be in deed and not in name so called only, he must be a man of prayer. Then, in the next place, from the exhortation and reason laid together, note the potent means by which we shall be best enabled to receive from God what we would; and what we have need of is prayer. There might be, but needs not, many proofs of this, whereof there was delivered many uses then; the last and main whereof was, that we should learn to make more reckoning of our prayers than formerly we have done, that as we reckon our states in bonds and bills, and that we have beyond seas in stock, as well as that we have in possession by us; so we should reckon in our spiritual wealth, not only what we have and feel, but also that stock of prayer we have long since adventured to a far country, as merchants do of that they have adventured to East India: so much the rather, because these may fail in whole or in part, and so that stock may perish; but the adventure and return of this stock of prayer is most certain to increase more, which, if we do, we shall be sure of a more quick and speedy return. Hence we came to a knotty and great objection.

Obj. Whether all men in prayer have this assurance to be heard, seeing Christ's promise is so sure and firm?

Ans. There are indeed a great many Christians full of complaints and discouragements this way. Oh, say some, I have prayed thus and thus long, and am worse and worse; I have prayed and am not heard; better leave all, seeing I am not the batter for it. I answer, Though our Lord do speak so confidently, yet God's charter must be interpreted to God's meaning, with such conditions and limitations as he hath revealed unto us out of his word,

which, though not named here, yet must be understood. We are undone, every mother's son, if we lose any part of that charter Christ hath made, to think we can make no certain return of our prayers sent to our heavenly country; for it remains always sure, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.' For the better answering of the objection, here comes two things to be considered, 1. Conditions on our part; 2. Limitations on God's part.

1. The first thing in the conditions on our part is concerning the party that must pray: he must be a free denizen in the state of faith and repentance. An outlawed man can put up no petitions with assurance to speed. St John saith, 'This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he beareth us,' 1 John v. 14. The will of God is, that he who prays be a man qualified; so all the promises of God are made, at least to such who hunger and thirst and desire to be in Christ. Faithless, godless, careless men are outlawed, as we see, Ps. 1. 15, 16, the promise is, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;' and then presently he makes a stop. 'But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my word behind thee.'

Obj. Here some may object, that even many heathens have been heard in their prayers who were not thus qualified.

To which I answer, It is not out of the privilege of this great charter here that such are heard; but out of his common goodness unto all whereby he would draw even the most rebellious to admiration of his divine abundant mercies, yea, and even teach us, if such prevail thus, much more shall we, being within the covenant.

2. The second is, Our prayers must be made to God alone.

3. Thirdly, They must pass under the seal of the Mediator.

For though all Christians may claim a part in the charter, yet the title must be pleaded in the Mediator's name only; no Mediator to thee, no hearing.

4. Fourthly, Concerning the things prayed for, they must be lawful in kind also; not fore-expected, nor under any general nor particular limitations forbidden. Not everything we desire is rightly asked, some of which may

cross his nature and will; some things also are ill for us, by general and special decree forbidden, as exemption from afflictions and sufferings with him. If God hear us not in this, Christ forfeits not his word, but we our prayers.

5. Fifthly, That we have a right end in prayer; as James iv. 3, the apostle speaks, 'You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.' If the end be naught, the prayer is confiscate.

6. Sixthly, The time; there be certain seasons and times wherein the Lord will be found; as Dan. ix. 2, when he knew the time of the captivity to be near expired, then he prays for the return of the people. If we wait and seek in season, we may obtain; but otherwise we may have a nap, and the door be knocked against our heads. Since then, 'there is a time that the Lord will be found,' as the prophet speaks, Isa. lv. 6, I would not have us omit our time, but now when there is a stirring of the Spirit, let us take the opportunity, lest we miss it when we shall have most need of it.

7. Seventhly, There is the manner, under which I comprehend the order of the things asked and desired. If we would speed in temporal things, we must first seek spiritual, saith our Saviour; 'But seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, Mat. vi. 33. If we miss of this, we may knock long ere we have entrance. To come to God and seek oil and wine, and the like things, and in the mean time to neglect the oil of grace, what a disorder is here. If in this case thou be crossed, it is not because he would put thee off without hearing, but because he would teach thee a better way to speed. For as when we eat our meat disorderly we want digestion, and for the most part buy experience at a dear rate, so many times God doth beat his dearest children, and put off their prayers for a long time, that he may teach them in due order what is first and principally to be desired; all these the party praying must carefully look unto for speeding in his suit.

Further, we have to observe in prayer, 1. The qualities. 2. The companions. 3. The attendants of prayer.

1. The qualities of prayer.

(1.) That it be the prayer of faith; not generally and confusedly of the Godhead only, but distinctly of the persons, and of the redemption purchased, and of the hearing of thy petitions, having interest in him, 'Believe and it shall be given thee.'

(2.) Humility; that a man go to God with a knowledge and a sense of his own insufficiency to succour himself. No man may come to God, but upon his knees. I speak not of the bowing of the knee, but of the heart; it is written, 'God will hear the desires of the humble,' Ps. ix. 12. In misery, affliction, sense of our necessity, and the like, we should assure ourselves to be heard.

(3.) The heat and fervency of prayer. Our God, which is a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29, doth not endure a cold prayer; the heart must be elevated, as Hannah, her heart spake unto the Lord, 1 Sam. i. 13; and Saint James saith, 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man- availeth much,' James v. 16. By the contrary, a cold prayer hath but a cold answer; that man is but a mocker of prayer, that would have God to hear him, when he hears not himself.

## 2. The companions of prayer.

(1.) First, Charity which extends itself toward all men, and a brotherly love toward the saints, joined with graciousness in ourselves; and it hath two things in it, giving and forgiving. He that would have mercy, must show mercy; rich men may do the one, and all men may do the other, but the other is harder, to forgive. He that is able to give, and relieve others as their need shall require, and yet will not, let him not wonder if God deny his suit; and so he that will not forgive others, let him not look to be forgiven. 'Blessed is he,' saith the Scripture, 'that judgeth wisely of the poor, the Lord shall deliver him in the day of trouble,' Ps. xli. 1. If thou ask, and speed not, in this case marvel not; thou hast denied him in his own members asking of thee, and therefore it is just with him to deny thee.

(2.) The second is, Thankfulness for benefits and blessings received and enjoyed, with forgiveness of the old debts; thanksgiving ere we beg more mercies. For this cause we speed not in our suits; because we forget him, he forgets us.

## 3. The attendants of prayer.

(1.) First, Perseverance, called 'watching with prayer;' as we see our Lord teacheth us by the example of the importunate widow, and the unjust judge, thereby intimating for our comfort, how much more certainly, in the like case, we may assure ourselves to speed with him, who is the most just judge of the world, and goodness itself. So that he that will be sure to have this

promise, 'Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find,' made good unto him, he must make a trade of prayer, not for two or three times, and so have done, but he must still ask, and so obtain. As he desires constancy in holding out in our suits, so he would have us ask constantly without fainting; and as he will give conveniently in the best time, so he shows we shall still be set on work in begging, as his mercy shall be in giving.

(2.) The second is, diligence in the means; we tempt him, to ask for that we labour not for. As we pray, so our endeavours must second our devotion; for to ask maintenance, and not put our hands to the work, it is as to knock at the door, and yet to pull the door unto us that it open not. In this case, if we pray for grace, and neglect the spring from whence it comes, how can we then speed? It was a rule in the ancient time, 'Lay, thy hand on the plough, and then pray no man in old time might pray without ploughing, nor plough without praying.

(3.) The third is, Expectation, waiting, perseverance in hope, until God hear us. The reason is, because the Lord, who hath promised the thing, hath not limited the time. In this we may see what patience brings forth, as the prophet's experience is, Ps. xl. 1: 'I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined to me, and heard my cry;' and in another place he saith, 'It is good for man both to wait, and trust in the Lord,' ver. 4; so, Rev. iii. 10, he saith, 'because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation,' &c. This waiting doth interest us in him, when we are so earnest that we will not away till we speak with him; as, when a man knows a party he desires to speak with to be in such a house, and that he will come forth, he waits at the door, and will not away till he speak with him, so, if we were earnest, and had faith and assurance that God would come, we would stand still at the door till he came, and not be gone and faint upon every light occasion. All of us fail in this, that we wait not constantly at the door of grace till we obtain. Gross sins indeed, these cause a man to faint, that he dare not look God in the face but with much ado; but if we strive and labour to hold out, God accepts of the truth, though the measure be small, when we cannot do as we would. But if there be gross failings in this kind, that we fall into the old bias of our sins, and so leave knocking, or are quickly weary, we obtain not by and by, as though we might limit him the time. If, I say, in this case, like the raven sent out of the ark, our prayers return no more, and we faint and sink comfortless in desolation, anguish, and sorrow of mind, let us not blame our Saviour, whose promise is firm and inviolable

without change. If we would learn to mend our prayers and wait, we should hear more from him. All these are limitations on our part.

Secondly, The limitations on God's part.

In general, we must be wary that our misunderstanding of providence make us not to fail: first, all such things are excepted, as God cannot give unto our prayers without crossing some part of his revealed will, or a secret government and providence of his, which we would not willingly cross, if we knew it, but rather submit ourselves unto the same, as Christ did in his agony, 'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,' Mat. xxvi. 39. I say then, God will so give, as may not cross himself in anything. There are some things God cannot grant, I speak with reverence, unless he forfeit his word. A man prays and says, 'Lord, forgive me my sins,' without a desire to leave them, or resolution of a new course of life, but goes on, swears and sins again; God cannot in this case hear such a one, because it is against his word to hear sinners, so long as with delight and without remorse they love the sin. The prophet saith, 'If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,' Ps. lxxvi. 18. Therefore, seeing God cannot he, repent, nor deny himself, such a one cannot be heard.

Again, an idle man in his calling, though he pray much and often to prosper therein, God, if he make his word good, will not grant his suit. As he hath said, 'the hand of the diligent maketh rich,' Prov. x. 4, so, on the contrary, he hath said in other places, 'that the sluggard shall be clothed with rags; that his soul shall desire, and have nothing; that because he will not plough in the cold, therefore he shall beg in harvest,' Prov. xx. 4, and thou, O sluggard, dost thou think then to obtain anything without painstaking? So in another kind the Jews bade Christ to come down from the cross, and save himself, if he were the son of God; when in the mean time for the very same thing, because he was the Son of God, and had undertaken and promised to finish then the work of our redemption, he might not come down from the cross and save himself from that hour. And further, when a man blesseth himself in sin, as it is Deut. xxix. 19, saying in his heart, that 'he shall have peace, walking in the imagination of his heart; adding drunkenness to thirst,' &c., God hath passed his word, that he will not spare such a man, but his wrath shall smoke against him, and all the curses that are written in the book of God shall he upon him. In this case, continuing and delighting in sin, God cannot hear such a prayer, unless he forget his word. Understand thou, man, God could never be held by such prayers that cross his will, and the manner

of his government, yea, such against which he hath so often protested in his word.

Secondly, In the things asked, he understands that such should be good for us in lawfulness of circumstances, as,

1. The quality of the same good things.
2. The time.
3. The means.
4. The manner.
5. The measure.

I. For the first, [‘the quality’]. We know the main promise, made to the faithful, Rom. viii. 28, is, that ‘all things work together for good unto them that love God.’ Therefore, that which cannot be unto thee for good it is not intended, nor ever shall be given, if God do love thee. See also in my text, the last part of Christ’s last argument is the same in effect: ‘how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?’ The physician knows better than the patient what is good for him, so that I say, for this cause many things are profitably denied us, which could not conveniently without hurt be granted: as we see fathers will keep from their children knives, burning sticks, and all such sharp and dangerous things, not because they love them not, but because they love them so much, therefore they will keep from them all things hurtful.

II. Secondly, For the time. God gives us his bill, but he will pay at his pleasure. There is a time, but when, that is concealed; not that it is uncertain unto God, but it is hid from thee, as in Ps. lxxxvi. 7, ‘He will hear,’ but it is ‘in the time of trouble;’ yea, of great trouble and sorrow; betwixt the cup and the lip, as the proverb is. It was Abraham’s experience: Gen. xxii. 14, ‘In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen;’ all things were there ready for a sacrifice, the wood was laid, the fire was ready, Isaac was bound, the hand and knife lifted up to kill and cut asunder the only son, and son of the promise; but at an instant came a stop unlooked for, which mercy being so great, it was then made unto us an instance for ever, that even in the most desperate cases we should not despair, but hope against hope, as he did. Now, why the Lord thus delays to help and hear us, there be divers reasons.

(1.) First, That our faith and dependence on him might be the better tried, which experience, though it be sore, yet we must be courageous, since the issue is joyful; though it be bitter, yet the victory obtained is great, as we may see in the woman of Canaan, a good suitor, having a good suit, yet how doth our Lord put her off a long time, that to others he might open the faith of this woman, and make her unto us a precedent for ever, Mat. vii. 6, et seq.

(2.) Secondly, Sometimes it is done to humble men, as Judges xx. In a good quarrel, having a good cause, we know what befell them. See what need we have of prayer to do all things aright. They consult with God what to do; they receive encouragement from him to go on, and yet are overthrown; the second time they weep, and mourn, and are beaten again. In such a case it seemeth strange to be overcome. Well, the third time they weep and fast, are humbled before God for their own sins, ere they seek revenge for other men's, then they prevail. Thus 'God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble,' James iv. 6. Till we be nothing in our own eyes, he never comes with comfortable deliverance till we come to that pinch wherein we cry. Up, 'Lord, how long,' &c., as Paul saith of himself, 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God which quickeneth the dead,' 2 Cor. i. 9. The Lord brought him out of hope of life, that he might be humbled, and learn to know where only life, help, and comfort in all extremities is to be found.

(3.) Thirdly, To quicken our appetite. God puts us off the longer; we are unwise and think he doth it to put us off for ever; in which manner of working the Lord in a manner fisheth for us. The fisher, we know, doth draw back the hook when he finds the fish is like to bite, that the fish may follow. So God gives back from our suits sometimes, not to make us give over, but that we may press him so much the more. The experience hereof once found is very sweet, though smarting in the beginning, as we may see in the spouse: Cant. v. 2, 'She slept, and lost Christ by her sluggishness.' She made some idle excuses hot to open unto him. Well, what came of it? When she would have opened to her best beloved her hands dropped myrrh; all her affection was not gone, for he had left so much with her as made her in love with him, but her beloved had withdrawn himself. Well, yet more. In search of him the watchmen 'beat her, wounded her, took away her veil.' Here she pays worthily for her sloth; she had all sweet words given her to open unto Christ: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled;' but putting him off, as I have showed, he departs and leaves her in the pursuit of him. And why goes he away? Partly to chastise her neglect of him, to whom she should

have gone out, and opened with all cheerfulness and diligence; and partly it was to quicken on her desires, as we see it fell out, ver. 8, wherein she chargeth the daughters of Jerusalem, that if they find her beloved, to tell him that she was sick of love.

(4.) Fourthly, He delays and puts off our suits, to enhance the price of those things he gives; for what lightly comes, for the most part, as the proverb is, lightly goes; but what we come hardly by, that we highly prize, and have in estimation, as we see in the chief captain, Acts xxii. 28, when Paul had pleaded he was a Roman, he replied, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom;' he bought it at a clear rate, and therefore he valued it highly. So if the things of God did not cost us sighs, tears, weepings, lamentations, watchings, strivings, earnest longings, and many prayers, we would think them easy, to be got at our pleasure, and so despise, contemn, or let them lightly pass as they came. God therefore, to enhance the price, doth keep them off till the bell ring, that we may know the rich value of these his commodities. All this is for the time.

III. The third circumstance is, the means and way. Here is all the strife. God would have it his way, and we would have it our way. Oh, saith Naaman, 2 Kings v. 11, 'Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.' But the Lord will not be tied to the means. When we see God, and fit means for effecting of such and such a thing, if then we grow secure therein, and think this is good, this is surely the way, and this will do it, herein we fail, because we see that alone, and do not principally and first of all see and seek unto God; and therefore in this case, because of our idolatrous conceit in lifting up the means beyond their places, God is forced many times to dash the means in pieces, and help us by some other way, of all others least expected, as we may see how God ordered the matter in Paul's shipwreck, Acts xxvii. 22. God did give unto him his own life, and the lives of all that were in the ship with him, but withal the ship must perish. A strange manner of-deliverance! How should they then be saved, this being in all appearance the only means of safety? By the wreck of the ship God did perform his promise, some by swimming, the rest on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, all get on land; and even so, I say, we many times escape on boards, and broken pieces of a ship; I mean those means we least thought of, or least trusted unto, because we should not set up unto ourselves so many gods before us. Again, we may remember, Gen. xxxix., when Joseph was advanced into Potiphar's house, a great man

and a prince of the state, then he might have thought he was likely now to rise, and that the accomplishments of his dreams were in fair way to speed; but this proved not the means. He becometh his enemy, and causeth him to be cast in a dungeon. Well, next a butler is made his friend by expounding of his dream; and now Joseph had good hope the butler would be a means of his enlargement, and no question he prayed also for good success, but God would not bless the same, because he will not have our means, and that we rest upon to speed. But at last God's means brings him out: Pharaoh dreams, is vexed, the butler then remembers; thus came his honour.

In France, the time was when their persecution was great, and their fears many; then they did trust on the king of Navarre, Oh what great matters he would do; but he failed them at their need. God indeed paid him home for disappointing the prayers and hopes of his people. Why did God suffer this? We may imagine this as a main cause, lest they should too much exalt the means, and say, the king of Navarre, the king of Navarre, the prince of Conde hath done this. God did cashier them, and set up another means of his praise. Judges vii., Gideon's army likewise is brought from thirty-two thousand to one thousand, and yet the Lord says they are too many, he will save Israel by three hundred only. Why? Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, 'My own hand hath saved me.' He knows how ready we are to attribute and sacrifice the fat of the offering unto man, and set up the means, forgetting him, the author and fountain of all the good things we enjoy; in all which and the like is verified, that which Saint Paul speaks, 1 Cor. i. 27, 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things and naught, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence; but all the praise be of him, and to him.'

These are the causes why God doth answer our prayers so often by those means we do not trust unto. If we send in a message at one door, what if we go about to another for an answer; let him appoint the means, and thy deliverance shall be so much the more speedy and comfortable. Many want comfort long for this cause, that they appoint unto themselves such and such means thereof. In afflictions, you shall have some say, Oh if I might speak with such and such a man I should be satisfied, he would ease my mind, when in the mean time, with this there is a sinful neglect of other men's ministry nearer, whose help we are bound to require. In this too much doating on the means, if we profit not, and our prayers remain unanswered,

in this case, let us blame ourselves, who have prescribed him how to do his own work.

#### IV. The fourth circumstance is, the limitation of the manner of granting.

We must distinguish of this,(1.) First, God will not be tied to the manner. Sometimes when we ask, God doth give just the same we ask for, as 1 Sam. i. 11, Hannah prayed for a man-child unto the Lord, and she was heard, obtaining Samuel. If not so, yet then the Lord may answer us in value, though not in kind, giving us as good as we have desired. This is all one, if one pay us a sum in silver, do we ask him why it is not in gold? Moses, he desired to see the land of Canaan, God brought him not in thither, but yet he shows him it, Deut. xxxii, from the top of mount Nebo, whence he saw more of it by probability than he could have seen in any place of the land. He had his desire in value, though not in kind. So 2 Cor. xii. 7, alluding to Judges ii. 3, where it is said the Canaanites should be as thorns in their sides. A thorn in the flesh was sent to buffet St Paul, called the messenger of Satan, against which he prayed and prayed again (for nothing doth more grieve the child of God than to be humbled and buffeted with base temptations), but it was not removed. God's answer was, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Paul had it in value though not in kind. So many times our prayers are heard when we least think and perceive the same, and the good we desire done us, as it were, against our will. As apothecaries and surgeons use to deal with us, so many times God deals with men; when the plaster smarts, men cry to take it off, when in the mean time, by holding it on, the cure is done; and so it is with us, we cry out unto God to take away this pain, that he would pull away such a plaster, such a corrosive from us. Why? Oh, say they, that we may serve him better, and yield him more obedience, when indeed, with holding thee to it, and by binding, as it were, this cross fast upon thee, the very same thing God worketh in thee.

(2.) Again, in prayer, you shall have many complaints of some. Oh that I had more life! oh that I had more sense and feeling! oh that this lumpish heaviness were removed! when indeed the holding them off and delaying them in this suit is the highway to help them to their suit.

(3.) Finally, When God hears us not in any of the foresaid ways, yet in effect he shows ire have sometimes far better things than we desired, as we see his promise is, Isaiah lx. 17, 'For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver,' &c. Thus, many times when we pray for brass, iron, wood, and stones, we have gold, silver, brass, and iron in place of them; for when men

labour in prayer, and have not the same things they have willed and asked for, God makes it up better another way. A man perhaps suffers poverty, loss, or wreck at sea, and is now driven nearer unto God by prayer, hath a more plentiful measure of the Spirit poured upon him, learns now to depend upon God, and know what true riches is: this man, if he could value grace, is a hundred times richer than before, having his eyes open to see afar off into things invisible. In this case, a man may come to complain, I have prayed thus and thus long, yet my prayers are not heard, yet this and this cross lies heavy upon me. But look if thou hast gotten patience, and canst see that God hath sent this upon thee; look if God have thereby driven thee off, and weaned thee from the world, and hath let in the oil of grace into thy heart, so as now thou art a new man, having thy conversation more in heaven than ever, remember in this, thy prayers are not lost, but double paid, and I hope there is no cause to complain when the payment is so good. Thus all God's promises, like rivers perpetuated, ending in the sea, do end in heaven, and to this tend all the comforts, promises, threatenings, and crosses to bring us thither. Unto all these I might also add this, that sometimes our prayers are not heard for others, when yet the reflex of that good we wish them comes upon ourselves, so that they are not lost; as we may see in the mission of the apostles, Mat. x. 13, they are willed in whatsoever house they come, to salute it, and if the house be worthy, that their peace be upon it. If there be a son of peace there, that peace be upon him, otherwise, our Lord saith, 'let your peace return to you.'

V. The last circumstance is, the measure of proportion. He hath set forth to no man any proportion of the things promised. To one he gives five talents, to another but one. Must every one have as much faith, hope, love, humility, honour, riches, and other qualities as others? Where then is that order which God hath appointed, to give the greatest and most eminent graces unto those he hath fitted for the greatest works and places. He gives thee not so much grace as another, because he hath not so much work for thee to do as for him unto others, or there is not so great trials and temptations appointed for thee to buckle with as is for such a one. It is a wonder to see how restless a great many are when they see others outstrip them in grace. They think nothing of that they have; unless they could pray as well as such a one and such a one, thou all were well; but I say unto thee, content thyself if thou have any portion of grace, and be thankful for it. If God will open his hand in the use of the means, and give thee an increase, receive it joyfully; but fret not with thyself, or quarrel with him; if he keep thee of thy small measure, it shall serve thy turn to salvation as well as the

greatest if he will give thee no more. Even as it was in the gathering of manna, Exod. xvi., he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little at the meeting had no lack; so he that hath most grace, it shall bring him but to heaven, and thy small measure shall lead thee thither also. Say not, Oh I shall never come thither unless I have such and such a measure of grace, and can do as such and such a one. What if thy God will have thee contented with a little? His allowance shall suffice, the least measure shall bring us home. If in this case thou pray long and he hear thee not, blame thyself, striving thus to be thine own carver, not contented with allowance.

So there is a measure of the dispensation of things, as I touched before. He hears us going on in a course and trade of prayer, his grant includes a continual trading; as rain comes not all' at once, but by degrees, that we might still have dependence for more, so God will give grace but by little and little, so as we shall still through the course of our life have cause to depend upon him and pray for increase. Thus, and many other ways, our Lord's promise is most sure. It stands always good. 'Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' If the fault be not in ourselves, prayer shall bring down a blessing at one time or other, and we shall find the effect and fruit of it.

Now I come to the reasons, which are two: first, 'every one that asketh receiveth;' as if he should say, for the Lord exempts no man that doth not disable himself. This promise, we must understand, is not a thing chained to some function, as most promises are, but this is as the Lord's common. All must and may pray, and are heard, always reserved the former. exceptions.

The second is taken from fatherly compassion, so raising us up unto God, in and from whence these small streams we have flow, being much more abundantly merciful than any bowels of compassion which may be in us. But chiefly I would have you consider how here in this place our Lord doth press this matter again and again, assuring us we shall be heard in our prayer, of purpose, as it were, to hold up our heads above water, which in this our weary journey are so ready to sink. One would have thought this a very large charter, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;' and yet because he knew the difficulty of the same as well as the necessity, that it is a hard and a great task to pray in faith aright, and yet a thing absolutely needful, he follows it therefore, and presseth it home with several supporting arguments, which, God willing, we shall come to in their places.

First, we must consider of the necessity of faith in prayer. For he that comes to God must believe that he is a ‘rewarder of them that diligently seek him,’ Heb. xi. 6; and St James shows us, that he who asks must ask in faith, or else we speed not, James v. 15. Thus Jehoshaphat encourageth his fearful army to believe in God, but first he was encouraged himself. It was told him, and he told it them, that they should not need to fear; God was on their side, he would fight for them; and yet after this, Jehoshaphat shows how they must come by this deliverance: ‘Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper,’ 2 Chron. xx. 20.

Brethren, it is true, the glory of God is put into our hands, as it were, to extend the same in obedience to every precept we are enjoined to observe; that so others, ‘seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father.’ But most of all in believing we glorify him, and set forth his praises, because hereby we seal unto the truth of all the rest; where by the contrary, if we believe him not, it is the greatest dishonour and disgrace that may be; yea, John saith, ‘Such a one hath made God a liar,’ 1 John v. 10. Will you see an instance, how heinous this sin was in one of the best saints, in whom frailty no question for our comfort was suffered? Moses, Num. xx. 10-12, was bidden to speak to the rock, that water might come forth to that murmuring multitude; but in anger he smites twice on the same, uttering these words, ‘Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch ye water out of this rock,’ as though if it came not, he was excused; and if it came, so, there it was. But for this, we know, he was not suffered to enter into the land of Canaan. We must trade in faith in all our actions, or we shall suffer loss in all; when by the contrary, if we go on in this, we shall have mercy unto mercy.

We read, Acts xvi. 9, that Paul, as he preached at Lystra, seeing an impotent cripple look on him steadfastly, in whom he saw faith to be healed, that by and by he made him stand up, and cured him; this was bred, no question, in him by the Spirit of God, but the special means thereof was his attending on the word preached. This attention, prizing, and valuing of the word, is a near way unto it; when by the contrary, the infidelity of men doth, as it were, bar up the way against themselves, that the power of the Spirit is not so lively in working amongst them: as we see Christ says of those he conversed amongst, that because of their unbelief, he could not do any great works amongst them; the infidelity of these, as it were, hindering him, bound his hands in a manner, they being uncapable thereof. Lo! what a necessity there is of faith in prayer, and how loathsome that stain of infidelity is! If our faith fall, all doth fall to the ground; if this abide, all goes well. Wherefore, as

in war men take others' bonds and promises without further specialties, so do thou with thy God; take his bond, and go boldly unto him: believe his promise; there is a necessity thereof, it stands thee on thy life so to do.

Secondly, for the difficulty of prayer with faith; our Lord saw that there was no work more difficult to be done, and therefore he so presseth it with arguments.

The causes of the difficulty of prayer I take to be these:—

(1.) First, Because our profaneness and natural corruptions do most show themselves in this action. Hence herein are those many and often complaints of our deadness, dulness, and hardness of heart in prayer, and of those world of things which violently, we know not whence, and suddenly thrust themselves into our minds. The devil helps also, and thrusts on, incensing our corruptions.

(2.) Besides, this puts us down and out of heart from praying with assurance to be heard. The conscience of guiltiness gives stabs to our prayers. In this combat, the Egyptian or Israelite must die. If a man let loose himself to some gross sin, he shall be sure to find it in his prayer, sometimes to terrify him: sometimes to deaden his spirits, to weaken his faith; yea, at the best he shall be found not to pray with any life: as Mr Perkins tells us of a man who had stolen a sheep, who for all this, though he went on in his devotions, found no rest until he had confessed the same; till then the beast was ever in his way. Yea more, what checks and reproaches are then in the heart, sent close home by the accusing conscience! As, what! Wilt thou go unto God, and think to be heard; thou, so wretched and profane a creature; thou, that hast so often broken thy vows and promises; thou, that knowest so much of thy master's will, and doest so little; thou, that hast sinned against conscience and knowledge; that art so soiled and defiled with wallowing in the mire of sin?

Thus, though a man have prayed earnestly and often, it is not an easy matter to wash off the stain of sin, and quiet the conscience. As after a storm on the sea, though the tempest be gone, yet there is not by and by a calm, there will be a rolling and tossing of the waves up and down a long while after; so, to believe that God will hear our prayers, and that he hath done away all our sins out of his sight, it is not by and by done, there is a rolling and a stain of sin, that will toss up and down a long time after our prayers are done. Will you see the proof of this in one of the best saints, who was tossed

thus for our comfort? The prophet David, after his great sin, and that he had confessed the same, 2 Sam. xii. 18, he had an absolution pronounced unto him by the prophet Nathan: 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.' What could be more, and what now may hinder his joy? 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered,' Ps. xxxii. 1. But yet you see how the waves roll, and are troubled, though the storm be over; as Ps. li., how is he vexed! how earnestly doth he pray for mercy!—that 'his iniquities might be blotted out;' that his sin might 'be cleansed;' that he might 'hear the voice of joy and gladness;' that 'the bones which he had broken might rejoice;' that God would not 'cast him from his presence, nor take his Spirit from him;' that he would 'restore unto him the joy of his salvation,' &c.

What was the cause of all this stir?

(1.) The filthiness of sin discovered, the Majesty offended, the punishment due, the scandal which came to others, to the dishonour of God by the party offending, together with the odious stain and filth which that sin left behind upon the soul, was such, that the greenness and yet smarting of the wound did not suffer him thoroughly to apprehend and fetch home the consolation. As we see, if a wound be raw, though suppling oil be brought unto it, and though it be applied with a light hand, which is commendable in that art, yet being touched, because of that rawness it smarts still; so the conscience being wounded, and the sore raw still, sin appearing like a monster in his colours, the punishment due apprehended, and the bitter belches thereof yet arising, though the comforts of God be like suppling oil applied by the hand of the skilful surgeon, to allay and cure the same, yet the comforts not being digested, nor able so soon to expel the former impressions, the Spirit being but raw in them, and the conscience of their own unworthiness being great, no comfort can fasten, but many fears remain in them for a long time.

(3.) Thirdly, Because there is a marvellous ignorance in us of the nature and dealing of God; not that we can be altogether ignorant of him, who is so glorious in all his creatures, filling heaven and earth with the majesty of his glory, yea, and is so good unto us; but as it is one thing to give rules of war, and another to practise the rules, so it is one thing to speak of God bravely, and another thing to practise those things we know and speak of. For when we have need to ask and beg of God those great and rich mercies to salvation, which should support and help us in all storms, diving into the use

and depth of his attributes, in place thereof we draw unto ourselves a narrow scantling, and false image of God, judging of him not as he is, but as we conceive him to be, like one of us. Which we see the Lord reproveth, Isa. Iv. 7: there God saith, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' And then it follows: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' Is there sense in this? Dost thou ask what the sense is? As if he should say, alluding to thy senseless ignorant objections, What man could pass by these and these things! what father could pass by these offences in his child! how then shall I look for pardon of God? Unto this he answers, Measure not my working by scantling the same after the proportion of any creature, or anything in his imagination, unless, I say, he have had his light from God, for my mercy outstrips all your conceits. Hence our prayers are weak and cold, because we make false images of God. But this point I shall meet with anon, therefore I let it pass.

(4.) Fourthly, Because we take a delay for a denial, and so are discouraged; that if we be not heard by and by, we throw down our armour and run away, or sit still astonished, so disabling ourselves.

(5.) Fifthly, The hardness and difficulty of the things we pray for hinders our prayers; as John xi. 38, when Christ came to Lazarus's grave, and called to take away the stone, that he might raise him up, Martha cries out, 'Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.' This hinders our prayers, when we cry out it is too late, or the thing is so great, how can it be done? She was reproved, you know, and so must we be in this case. Another instance we have, 2 Kings vii., where, after Elisha had prophesied of that sudden plenty should be in the gate of Samaria after so great a famine, a lord, on whose hand the king leaned, answered the prophet, 'Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?' He had an answer suiting his unbelief, and lived to see his infidelity punished, being trodden under foot by the people in the gate, as they went forth into the forsaken camp of the Assyrians. So, I say, these and the like things stand in our way, because they seem hard to be done. As in the East India adventures, a time was when men were quick and ready to buy other men's shares, because the returns were good; but when the business went in show backwards, many have been as busy in selling their parts again. So we seem rather to go back

than forward in our prayers, because of the difficulty of the things we pray for. We are ready to leave all, and sell our adventure.

(6.) Lastly, The sixth impediment is Satan's opposition to our prayers, which he labours by all means to interrupt. For it stands him on it to bestir himself to quench our faith if he can, because it gives vigour, force, and life to prayer. It troubles not the devil the saying of a thousand Paternosters and we Ave Marias without faith. If a man know not what he says, or cares not whether he pray or no, all is one to him, if there be no faith in prayer. Satan knows if faith lay not hold on God, God does not lay hold on us, and therefore his policy is to deal with us as Scanderbeg is reported to have used his enemies in fight, still to aim at the general; or rather like that stratagem of the king of Syria, 2 Chron, xviii. 30, neither to fight against great or small, but against the king of Israel; so Satan's special charge is to fight against faith and prayer, the special man; the which his subtile and cruel dealing towards us is much like unto that tyranny Pharaoh used toward the children of Israel in Egypt, Exod. iii. 18; he put them into extreme toiling servitude to make brick; so he commanded to slay the children; but when none of these succeeded to his mind, he then determined to kill all. So, many times before prayer, the devil puts men to make brick, by filling their hearts with many cares or temptations, or by their own sins, deadness, dulness, hardness of heart, or other things to be done, with a world of discouraging, and confused thoughts of God,— his mercy, justice, and the like; and all this to keep a man from prayer. But if the mercy of God help a man through these difficulties, that because of the command of God, that knowledge he hath of his will, and his own necessities, he will yet break through all, and go to prayer, notwithstanding all impediments; then, in the next place, he labours to make us kill the children in the birth; that is, whereas our weaknesses, and many wants and imperfections that way, should be as fuel to our prayers, and inducements to make us hold on, and in reverence contain ourselves, still begging and waiting at the throne of grace for what we want or desire, he turns the same into horrors, fears', and flying away from God. Yet if this will not serve the turn, but that our God doth allure and draw us unto his presence again, and that we resolve to pray, though with many tremblings, fears, and weaknesses, because we know not whither to fly from his presence; then, when our prayers are done, and we have striven as we are able, be persuades us to despair that our prayers are not beard, are nought, that our persons are abominable, that God loves us not, and that since Christ so turns us off still without comfort, we shall never, therefore, have any, &c.

The uses are, Use 1. First, Against the profaneness of such persons who make a mock of prayer. But some may object there are none such. I wish there were not. But we know there are too many of this strain. I speak not of prayer established by law; none will, none dare meddle with that; it is dangerous. But for praying in houses, it is strange to see the profaneness in this kind. You shall have some say, Lo now these hypocrites; see what a stir they make; and he that doth keep some form of prayer in his own house constantly, though it may be but coldly done, yet he cannot escape, but is branded with the name of Puritan, when it may be, of all others, he least deserves it. But I will pass by this.

2. The second use is, for reproof to such as think it an easy matter to pray. Ask a beggar wandering through the country how he thinks to come to heaven, and he will answer, By my good prayers. So the dissolute and profane man, ask him how he thinks to come to heaven, he will say, By my good prayers. I confess, if you mean saying of a prayer, it is easy; but to pray aright, to pour out thy heart and soul before God, to believe he hears, and will come to help thee, to pray in faith, to rend thy heart before him, to lay hold of those things in him which are for thy humiliation and consolation, to wrestle with him, and strive for a blessing, to hope above hope, and, being delayed, to wait for him till he come, this is exceeding hard to be done. What then, profane man, hast thou not heard what is written? Zech. xii. 10, 'And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication,' &c.; so, hast thou not read what is written? Ps. x. 17, 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their hearts,' &c. Hast thou not read what is written, Rom. viii. 16, 'Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' And dost thou, a lump of flesh, wallowing in thy sin, think to prevail by and bye in prayer? Those who are most forward thus in little esteeming and talking of prayer, many times are most to seek in sore and hard trials; as you shall have fencers, who make bravest flourishes when they play at blunt, are put most to their shifts when they come to the sharp; so, if such a one as I speak of fall into distress, he cannot draw out his sword, it rusts in the scabbard. It is a wonder to see grave and wise men to come so far short of this, that in the sorrows and discomforts of themselves or others, they cannot pray; a minister must be sent for to say somewhat unto them; they cannot themselves pray. I deny not but that God's dear children may be driven to this need upon divers occasions of sickness, sorrows, and temptations, to crave the help of others,

that they may be humbled. Neither deny I but that book prayers may be good and profitable, and that there is a good and holy use of them, in which all our necessities may be included, if they be well and rightly penned; but yet for all this, it is a shame for men to be so ignorant that they cannot tell their mind to God in prayer, and plead for themselves and others in necessity, being more unfit to pray than David was to march in Saul's armour.

3. The third use is for comfort. To whom? To such as are good in prayer, and yet are out of heart with their prayers. I would have such see how Jacob wrestled, wept, and prevailed with God in prayer. In some sort we must be contented to go away halting; there will be defects and imperfections in our best prayers, do what we can. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh,' and will be so; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' John iii. 6. You shall have those who are fullest of grace most complain, like rich men whining most when their bags are fullest, you shall have them complain, Lord, help me, I cannot pray; what shall I do? It is all to no purpose; better leave than go on in such a formal course. I am worse and worse. Surely, if I could pray aright, I should speed better. But I ask thee how? Dost thou not pray at all? Yes, will they say, I pray, but I pray not as I should, with faith, fervency, constancy, and feeling. I faint, and am discouraged in my journey. Hear me; thou seest a man go under a great burden, and perhaps so sinking under the same, that he must stoop and rest him often; and yet thou pitiest him, and thinkest for all this that he carrieth this burden, though he rest himself. So may it be with thee in prayer, seeing it is one of the hardest tasks of the world to pray with faith and feeling. If in this thou find stops and failings, be not discouraged; thou seest what a hard thing it is to go upright under so great a burden. Yet be not out of heart, though thou must sit down by the way; but know thy striving and endeavour shall bring thee through at the last. The bringing forth of a right prayer through so many oppositions, it is in a manner like the bringing forth of a child, in which there is much pain, anguish, and sorrow; so that we had rather do anything else; but when the child is born, then there is joy. Though with the remembrance of the throes of prayer thou art astonished, be comforted in this, the work is done, and thou hast made thy prayers known; the issue at one time or other shall be comfortable.

4. The fourth use is for advice. If the Lord have given us liberty at any time this way, that our hearts have been opened and enlarged, our faith strengthened, our eyes cleared, our consciences eased, so that our confessions have been large, bless God for this, and reckon it a most singular

mercy. We fail all herein for want of thanksgiving. We can complain in wants, strivings, deadness, and senseless hardness. Oh my wants! Oh my ignorance! Oh my blockishness! Oh my hardness of heart! Oh my infidelity! But when our suit is granted, where is our thanksgiving? If thou bring forth a right prayer, let God have a sacrifice. It is a great matter.

5. A fifth use is, for exhortation, to set on prayer as a work of great difficulty. We must learn to whet and sharpen our tools first. As the prophet David out of meditations thus made prayers, thus must we prepare matter ere we pray. As the blood runs to the veins from the liver, made of the best and purest food concocted and digested; so we should prepare and digest fit matter, and not set on the same rashly and unpreparedly, as some think they may. Hear me: What will not men do in great important matters to compass them? So doth it much behove thee to consider what may humble thee, what may raise thee, what may encourage thee, and draw thee on before thy God, that thou mayest in thy distress make a right and proper use of the nature of God, and all these excellent things considerable in him. When we set on it slightly, it is no marvel though our return of consolation be of the same stamp. So in our general prayers we should have a fellow-feeling to set on edge our desires; but specially if we would be men of prayer. Christ would have set our faith on work that this might fly to heaven, to fetch from thence whatsoever is good for us. Now in this case it is a marvellous cunning to dung our faith, as men dung the root of a tree to make it fruitful; though I confess somewhat else is to be done to the body, as the pruning and lopping of the branches, such as the increasing and scouring of our hope and love, with other graces, by the Spirit, which, as it hath an office in the branches, so doth it also descend into the root and help us there; so that the root of all prayer is the Spirit, but the root to thee is faith.

Now by what means should this be done, to dung our faith?

As in war they use a double help for their further security and strength.

1. The main; 2. The auxiliary helps; So is it with our faith. The helps are divers.

(1.) First, To labour to know and make clear our title to God, as a Father: which is here implied: 'How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?' To this, two main things belong: first, to consider the right how we come to this title? Only by faith in the Son of God: as it is John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them

gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' Nothing can make them become the sons of God, but by faith in the Son of God. To clear this, it must be by the sign as well as by the cause. The apostle tells us, Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Dost thou think thyself now in a blessed estate? Art thou one of the sons of God—for all his children are sons and daughters by adoption? Dost thou say thou art one of his sons and daughters? And dost thou say thou believest, being one with Christ, and so art justified by him? Take this also with thee; then he hath 'sent forth the Spirit of his Son into thy heart, to cleanse and sanctify thee: and hereby,' saith the apostle, 1 John iii. 24, 'we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' If we make claim to justification, and omit sanctification: if no Spirit, we have no title of sons; for we know the same apostle saith, 'Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God,' 1 John iii. 9.

(2.) Next, To be careful to keep the evidences of our adoption always in repair: I mean that we keep those graces which build us up hereunto, as fresh and flourishing as may be, that we read them fair in the time of trial. A man that in the country lays up his deeds and writings in the smoke, may find them so eaten and darkened, that when he should use them they cannot be read; so I doubt many of our evidences are smoky, and so blotted, that in our need we cannot read them. Our care hath not been to lay them up safe, and keep them in repair, by which it comes to pass that now we are to seek in those things which belong to our peace.

(8.) Lastly, as it is in Col. iii. 17, 'Whatsoever we do in word or in deed, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' We do no honour to God, but through Christ; and so in the particular of our prayers we have the less joy, living in discouragements, not giving the beginning of all unto him, and the riches of his grace. When because we have nothing of our own to put in, whereupon we may build and rely, we go away heartless and discouraged, as though we should not be so bad, but somewhat should be in us to procure his mercy, never all this while having sufficiently seen our nakedness, that there is nothing in us, and that we must be covered altogether, and wholly in his presence, that no filthiness be discovered. We read, Exod. xxviii. 42, that the high priest going about his sacrifice must have on his linen breeches, from the loins even unto his thighs, that he might not bear iniquity, and die, discovering his nakedness.

What! Such a high priest? so holy, so gloriously attired, so covered with rich robes? yet he shall die for all this if he want his linen breeches. I fear many of us come thus to God, not having soundly seen our own nakedness, and where only all our comfort is to be found. The apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 21, says, 'Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours to wit, with the former limitations, to do us good. 'All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, things present or things to come, all are yours but a man's title must be in Christ: for it follows, 'And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' So Rom. viii. 32, the apostle's argument is, 'He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' If Christ be once given thee, Christ is more than heaven, and earth, and all; if he be given, God will deny thee nothing.

The auxiliary helps are as foreign soil to barren grounds, marl, lime, and the like, which make fruitful; and herein consider these things,(1.) The general graciousness of God to all his creatures. This is a great help that he feeds the young ravens; yea, as it is Mat. vi. 20, that he feedeth all the fowls of the air. Whence from his general goodness the inference is, 'Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' The consideration of his graciousness unto all the sons of men, and especially to many evil men, when they have called upon him, of which God hath showed us many instances that they have been heard, should make us not keep off, but hope to speed well; yea, and in this also to consider the graciousness of God in receiving great sinners unto mercy, which the prophet, admiring, thus speaks of: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his inheritance? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy,' &c. I doubt many wrong themselves in this, because they erect before them a false image of God. If one should see a picture of God before him, as the papists do make him, like an old man with a cloak and a staff, and a great many about falling down before him, frowning on some, beating of others, kicking of others away, what an absurd thing would we think this! What difference is there betwixt a false picture and a false image of God in thy heart? When thou canst not conceive of him but as terrible and incensed against thee, assure thyself, thou dost not prostrate thyself with right thoughts before him, if being a sinner thou thinkest he will smite thee down.

(2.) Secondly, His all-sufficiency and omnipotency, being in heaven above, and overruling all, who is excellent in knowledge, wonderful in working, all-sufficient to save, and powerful to put down the mighty from their seats, and to exalt the humble. He is beyond all fathers. They see but a little, they are not always present, they are not always able to help when they would, but he doth see thee at all times, is ever present, and able to help thee in all distresses; he is greater than all in breadth, in depth, in height, in length, in mercy, in power, as being in heaven above all; fathers are not so. These be two special helps.

(3.) Thirdly, The promises, the faithfulness of God. The precedents of them in former times to thyself, or others. As Ps. lxxvii. 5, David was in great and sore distress, yet, saith he, 'I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times,' &c. And in another place the church pleads, Our fathers trusted in thee, and were delivered;' and so from thence raiseth a ground of confidence. Thus the prophet David he reasons the matter with Saul, when he was to go forth and fight with that great and terrible Philistine: 1 Sam. xvii. 84, 'Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.' The danger was now the same, wherefore having the like faith and protection, he looks for the like deliverance. So look what experience thou hast had of that which God hath done for thee, and make thy advantage thereof. Withal remember how even good men, where they have been bountiful, delight to give more and more still. Though it be not so always with men, yet it is so always with God; if once he have heard thee in mercy, he will hear thee always.

(4.) The last and principal one for this purpose, is that which lieth in the text, the first main reason which now fitly proffers itself, the universality of the grant, which is as a common, every commoner having interest therein, some more, and some less, yet all have interest less or more. As princes have masters of requests, who as grand officers have access unto them at all times, and are familiars, yet every man may deliver a petition to the king. Abraham we know was a holy man, and the friend of God; others there be inferior. Saint James wills those who are sick to send for the elders of the church, that they may pray over them, &c., James v. 14. Thus though all be not officers,

yet all men have an universality of the grant: 'Every one that asketh, receiveth.'

Some may here object, What is that to me? I am not in the covenant. I answer, If thou be an outlaw, get thee in as soon as thou canst; but if thou art such an one that art not outlawed, then thou hast a title in the common, do as thou canst in carrying thyself as a commoner. Let us remember in the common cause we have need to be ready with our help, as we would be glad of help in the like case. In this let us ask ourselves, What have we done for others with our prayers? What for the church at home and abroad? It shall be heavy upon us if we shall omit to help them now with our prayers at their need. In the city, when men have entered freemen, they use to pay scot and lot; so in Christianity, if we be entered as freemen, where is our scot and lot? Where are our prayers offered up for king, our country, for religion, against masses, the sins of the time, the judgments threatened, and the like?

Here some may object, and say, Alas! I am a poor servant, I cannot pray, let others pray that can; I am a poor ignorant man, with such like.

I answer, What if thou be! Thou art a citizen in Christianity; thou, must pay scot and lot. How do men strive with their landlords for their commons? They will raise a mutiny, do anything, keep somewhat on it for possession's sake, rather than lose it, if it were but to keep one poor cow upon it. So, whatever thou be, maintain thy title in this common, do somewhat for it.

The last argument is taken from the lesser to the greater, from fathers on earth, declaring that if so much mercy, pity, affection, may be, and is in them to their children, how much more pity, love, mercy, and the like may we expect from our heavenly Father. I will go over but a few of these things, and so make an end, wherein I will not dispute all things, how fathers do and should do to their children, but limit myself within the compass of two examples only.

1. Of a good father to an ill son.
2. Of a good father to a good son.

1. That of 2 Sam. xviii. 33 shall be the first, where when Absalom had rebelled against his father, cast him out of the kingdom, abused his concubines, and was in pursuit of him for his life, yet when that battle was lost, wherein his son died, and the victory now on his side, how doth the

king mourn, as though all had been lost! and though he was a magnanimous king, yet this made way to his passion, so that he went up and down weeping and crying, 'O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son!' Oh the love of a father to his son!

2. The second is that of Jacob, who when he had thought Joseph had been dead, it is said he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, mourned for his death many days, which sorrow was so great, that when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, but said, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning,' Gen. xxxvii. 35. So Gen. xlii. 30, when Benjamin was like to have been stayed prisoner by Joseph behind the rest, with what earnest affection doth Judah plead for his enlargement many ways! amongst which this was the chief, that Jacob's life was bound up in the life of his children.

Now, it is to be considered, that though fathers be thus good, yet some may fail; but the thing is, they know how to be good, and are so ordinarily, unless it be when some, like monsters, prove unnatural in distemper of temptation, necessity, or some other sinister way. This dear affection the Lord excellently shows us, Isa. xlix. 15, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, but I will never forget thee.' A father may prove unnatural to a son in a fit of temptation and distemperature, as Saul, who threw a javelin at his son Jonathan; sometimes necessity will cause unnaturalness, as 2 Kings vi. 28, in those women who consented to seethe their sons, one of them complaining to the king that she had done so, but the other would not. A miserable complaint, and most woeful misery, to hear of a woman who had buried her son in her own bowels. But this is rare and not usual. So a father may forget himself, and pass all affection in jealousy, as that Turk who made one strangle his own son out of a conceit he was too well beloved of his subjects. Thus with many the like occasions, parents may become churlish and unnatural to their children; but still this stands firm, they know at least how to be kind unto them. Our Lord would have us learn from hence, that he can do much more, and far surpasseth them all in whatsoever kindness can or may be in them.

See this last help to stay up our hands, to wit, that little picture of the great God in the dearness of affection which he hath placed in parents. If thou be a father or a mother, thou knowest it; but no man can know it but a father or a mother. Also, hast thou not seen what affection may be in a son

to the father? As we read of the son of Croesus, who, though he were dumb, yet when he saw the murderers to come in, who were ready to kill his father, violence of affection suddenly burst forth into these words, as the story shows, 'Oh, spare my father!'. If so much may be in a son unto thee, how much more may be in thy God for thee?

Now for all this, thou art afraid of thy imperfections, weaknesses, and manifold infirmities, that these shall stay good things from thee; and therefore thou criest out, Oh my prayers are lost, they are to no purpose! oh my sins, weaknesses, and infirmities, these stop the way to my prayers! What, man! Hast thou a son, and perhaps he marries without thy permission, or doth some other shrewd turn, which grieves and vexeth thy spirit, and this child, perhaps, comes home wounded unto thee, with blood about his ears, and so falls down before thee, freely confessing his wandering and misdemeanours, and prays for thy favour and forgiveness; tell me, wouldst thou not embrace him, and cry out, 'Oh my son, my son!' all the rest should be forgotten and forgiven? What then, O man, thinkest thou of thy God, when thou sayest thou canst have no comfort in prayer? Thou beast, what wilt thou make of thy God? What! is he a God of cruelty, anger, and revenge only? No, no; in this case thou feignest unto thyself false and abominable conceits of God, and thence the returns of thy comforts are answerable unto thy wretched fancies. But if ever he hath turned thy heart unto him, and dealt graciously with thee, or hath allured thee unto him by his graciousness and kind dealing with others; or if thou findest in thyself how much thou canst pass by in thy child, though there be many great faults and omissions, make thy advantage of this, and go unto thy God; whatsoever thy case be, thou shalt find him more exceeding merciful, as the church doth, Micah vii. 9, and therefore she comes to triumph: ver. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his inheritance? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again,' &c.

We are all much to blame in this, even those who have the greatest measures of grace, that we do not aright make use of the nature of God. Sometimes melancholy, temptation, and want of judgment are causes of our error, wherein our understanding, fancy, and other powers of the soul are disordered, until light come in to dispel these clouds. It is strange to think that when we were enemies to God, with our backs to him in our natural blindness, and in sin running from him, then to think he should receive us, and now to stab us with our faces towards him in the state of reconciliation.

To conclude, if it be such a hard thing to pray so as to obtain, if we have need of such and so many helps to lift and hold up our very hands, which are ready to fall down, the Lord teach us to know our faults, and tell us what is yet further to be done, that we may learn to wrestle with God, and prevail in prayer! If we have been faulty in times past, let us mend; and among other things, now when the ark is like to be in danger, let us not prove injurious unto God in forsaking his cause. Hear me; hath God brought the church in divers places now into such dangers, yea, and some great ones also, environed with fears and crosses, and shall we now prove so injurious to God as to retire from them (at least not to have the benefit of our help and prayers)? Was it accounted such a foul offence to cause Uriah to be left in danger in the foremost rank, and then command that the troops should retire; and shall we not now be much more faulty to leave them in this danger? Let us aid them, then, with our prayers, until God, who is wonderful in working, and excellent in power, bring light from this darkness. We know not what the issue may be; but in the mean time, if we pray, this remaineth always sure, that ‘if we ask, we shall receive.’ Our Lord hath said it; it is so, it must be so.

## The Rich Pearl

*And again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, &c.—Mat. XIII. 45, 46.*

St Paul expresseth in the Epistle to the Philippians what this parable typifies. There he teaches all is ‘dung in comparison of Christ,’ Philip, iii. 8. Here the Spirit teaches that all must be parted with to gain this pearl spoken of in this place; and as St Paul, so Christ, his thoughts were all heavenly. He came from heaven; and while he was on earth, his thoughts and speeches showed whence he was. All his discourse is of heaven, sometime in plain doctrine, other whiles in parables; as in this chapter is manifested, comparing the kingdom of heaven to a sower, ver. 24; to a grain of mustard seed, ver. 31; to leaven, ver. 33; to an hidden treasure, ver. 44; and in these two verses to a merchant of pearls, beginning the verse with the word ‘again,’ to show that he insisted upon the former matter. His love to mankind admits of no weariness in repetitions, and often inculcating the same things, thereby to work a strong impression in our minds, as knowing that they are above our understanding, and that we are indisposed to them naturally. And it should teach us not to be weary of hearing the same things; as also St Paul admonisheth us, in telling us it is safe for us: Philip, iii. 1, ‘Though in itself it be tedious to the minister.’ And indeed it is the unhappiness of ministers to be often pressing the same thing; and yet they must not neglect it, seeing Christ stooped so low to take up this duty, for the benefit of our souls.

In the next place observe, Christ teacheth by parables, helping the soul by the body, the understanding by the sense; teaching us, out of objects of our sense, to raise up our souls to divine meditations, so as the soul is beholden to the body as well as the body to the soul, though not in so eminent a measure. But it may be questioned, Are not parables hard to be understood? I answer, It is true, if they be not unfolded they are hard; but if they be once manifested, they are of excellent use; and like the cloud, lightsome towards the Israelites, to give to them light, but towards the Egyptians a cloud of darkness. And carnal men are earthly in heavenly matters; and, on the contrary, those that are spiritually-minded are heavenly disposed in earthly matters. And it teacheth us our duty, viz., to be of a holy disposition in the use of these outward things; for the creatures have a double use, one for the good of the body, another for the good of the soul, as Rom. i. 20, seq. The Godhead is so manifest in the creature, as it alone is

sufficient to leave us without excuse; and therefore as we daily use them, so should our souls, by way of meditation, make them as a ladder to ascend on high. But for the parable itself, in it first we will expound the terms, and then pass to the observations. And, first, by the 'kingdom of heaven' is meant sometime the company of men that are under Christ's regiment, that acknowledge him for their king; as we say it is not the walls that make the city, but the body of men united and governed by one law, custom, and privilege. But here it may be well taken for the blessed estate that doth belong to such, together with the means that bring them to this estate, and the prerogatives annexed to it, as peace, joy, grace, and the like; but most especially for the glorious estate of a Christian, begun here and perfected hereafter, for where this is supposed, it doth suppose the means and prerogatives also formerly spoken of. And therefore if we ever think to come to heaven, it must be begun here in this kingdom of grace. And hence it is that the word is sometimes called the 'kingdom of heaven for Christ will rule in those here by his Spirit that think to reign with him hereafter. And it should also comfort those that find in them the first-fruits of this kingdom, for they shall assuredly have the harvest at length. Fear not trials nor troubles; grace once begun, though as a grain 'of mustard seed,' will not leave growing till it ends in glory. And yet it must be supposed that our carriage here must be as if we were in heaven; our thoughts must suit with our estates. We are kings, our thoughts must be high; and take heed how we disesteem the gospel. If we neglect it, we neglect the kingdom of heaven; if we contemn it, we refuse also, and contemn grace, and so disclaim all title to heaven. It is further said that it is with this 'kingdom' as with a merchantman that seeks pearls. This merchant is every Christian. Our life is a continual merchandising of something, and taking other in exchange, and taking such as are better than the things we have part with, else will our trade be soon at an end, and we never a whit the better. And therefore the Christian, like a good merchant, trades for pearls. A Christian life therefore is a life of trading, a venturing life; and therefore a life of danger, being ever as it were in danger of death, as the merchant is at sea, yet ever sure that his God will not forsake him, but assist and defend him off from the rocks of Satan's temptations, and accusations, and terror of conscience, and despair on the one side, and from the alluring waves of the world, that he falls not into that dangerous whirlpool on the other side.

His life is also a life of labour, labouring in his particular calling with faithfulness, having ever an eye on his other calling; and thus by an holy use of the things here below, his mind is ever climbing up the hill, to see the end

of all his labour, and to aim at it in all his thoughts, words, and deeds. And as it is a life of labour, so it is not fruitless. It is for pearls of honour, pleasure, or profit; but the Scripture counts these but dirt and thorns, although in our childish esteem we count them goodly jewels, being indeed but counterfeit glass. Yet there is a sort of higher spirit, that do indeed seek a pearl, having purposes to serve God; but they in seeking meet with counterfeits, with false teachers, that make glorious shows, yet indeed are but mountebanks, who show and sell them much counterfeit pearl, and thereby seduce them from the right way. But such as God intends good unto, he informs them by his Spirit that this is not the right orient pearl; and this they find by experience. It quiets not their hearts nor their consciences; it gives them no comfort. Briefly, it stands them in no stead; nay, it hinders them. And this makes them cast about anew for other treasure, as the woman of Samaria, a 'Messiah that will show them all things,' John iv. 25; and at length they meet with this rich and precious pearl. And thus Augustine, a Manichee at the first, fell to doubting of his estate, and at length met with God indeed, which he formerly sought in vain. To proceed: this merchant seeks, then finds, then sells all, to get the pearl that he thus found, wherein we will show what this pearl is.

First, therefore, by this pearl is meant Christ Jesus, with all his graces and prerogatives derived to us, by the means of his ordinances. Christ is the great pearl; all the rest are pearls, but no otherwise than as they lead us to Christ, the peerless pearl. Now, we know that pearls are bred in shell-fishes, of a celestial humour or dew; and like hereto was Christ, by heavenly influence formed in the womb of the Virgin. And as pearls, though formed in the water, yet originally are from the heavens, so the graces of God's Spirit are from heaven, though placed in earthly hearts. And again, as pearls, though here below, yet are like the heavens in clearness, so Christians by this gracious influence from this pearl Christ Jesus, though they live here on earth, are more like heaven than earth, wherein they are bred; and thus is Christ also. Though he took the flesh of man upon him, yet he hath the lustre of the Godhead, in whom all the attributes of God do plentifully shine. Again, a pearl is of great value and worth; and so Christ, one Christ of infinite value, and therefore became a ransom for many millions that were in bondage, so as all the whole church hath interest in him, and every particular Christian hath such a part in him, as if one only man had been in the world to have been saved by him, Christ must have died for him. He was given by God to purchase our redemption; and not only to purchase our deliverance, but also to make us acceptable, and to fill us with other things that are good in him. We have all that we stand in need of here and hereafter; all our grace

and comfort ariseth from him. In him are the treasures of wisdom and counsel hid; 'and from his fulness we all receive grace for grace,' John i. 10. Furthermore, it is such a pearl as frees us from all ill; nay, it is powerful to turn all ill to the greatest good. It makes life out of death; it makes joy out of affliction; it makes the devil, our enemy, to be a means of hastening us to heaven. Lastly, this pearl makes us good. Like the philosopher's stone, it turns everything into gold. So this makes us God's jewels; and our High Priest doth now in heaven bear us in his breast, as the precious stones that were in Aaron's breastplate. It makes us kings and priests to God, and a spouse fitting for him our Husband. It adorneth us with all graces, it makes all ours, and entitles us to heaven, which we lost in our fall. Christ then is this pearl.

But now, in the second place, let us see how we may come by this pearl. We must therefore know that this pearl may be had; and we must have hope thereof, else there is no venturing for it; and therefore God, to prevent all excuse, he offers this pearl in his word. The pearl is sent from heaven to come to us. The ministry layeth open the riches of Christ, to make us long after him. He desires us to be good to our own souls, to receive the pearl thus offered. He entreats us to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20: 'Oh that my people would hear,' Deut. v. 29; 'O Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens!' Luke xiii. 31. What can we have more? We see it is no desperate matter, therefore it may be had. The ministry, though never so vile in account of men, yet hath made men rich: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'Yet making many rich.'

In the next place, what must we part with? We see in this text the merchant parts with all, so must we give all that we have; and if we have nothing, then we must give ourselves, and God will give us ourselves again, but far better than we were when we gave ourselves to him. But what! may some say, doth God require we should forsake all indeed? I answer, not as the papists do, that vow wilful beggary,

1. But, in the first place, we should part with the estimation of all. We may keep them and use them, for God gave us these things to that end; but yet let us so use them as though we did not use them. Let them not have our chief affections, nor chief seats in our hearts.

2. Secondly, So we are to part with all things, that we must have a heart prepared to part with all, if we cannot enjoy them, and this pearl too. If the question be whether we had rather have this world than Christ, we must

resolve to part with father, mother, lands, yea, with a man's own self, rather than with Christ. Without him honour shall be no honour, pleasure no pleasure. To us all things should be dung and dross in comparison of Christ; nay, 'the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with that glory we shall have,' Rom. viii. 18. So as there is no proportion between them.

3. Thirdly, We must so part with these things as we must be ready to sell all without constraint, to honour Christ in his poor members; sell all for ointment for Christ's feet, part with anything that we may stand for Christ. Especially we must part with all sins. He that retains any one sin can never get this pearl; he that keeps in his heart but one beloved pleasure or profit of this life, let him read, pray, hear, profess never so much, the devil hath him sure by the leg or by the wing, and as sure as if the whole man were in his hands; for he will willingly suffer a man to go to, and use any good exercises, knowing they add to a man's damnation, so long as he retains a secret delight and liking to any lust, let it be never so small. And further, we must not part with sin only—for every sin hath some one good or other for its object, as covetousness of riches, ambition of honour, and such like; we must therefore 'sell all,' part with our affections, with all their branches and objects, if they will not stand with Christ; part with honour, riches, yea, our own lives, for they are far inferior to this precious pearl. Take heed of reservations of this one thing, this Zoar or that Rimmon, as Ananias and Sapphira. For who would not have Christ, if he might have pleasure, or profit, or honour with him? No, Christ will have all; and therefore this is the first lesson in Christ's school, deny ourselves, our reputation, the conceit of our own wisdom.

In the next place, let us see what the gain of this trade will be. We shall think ourselves no losers. We shall have Christ, and with him all things. What we give to him, he will return back, if they be fitting for us, and with them he will give us grace to use them, teaching us to want and to abound; and when we are come to give all for this pearl,—though indeed we have nothing here at all but only in our own esteem,—Christ will be worth all to us. Witness Moses, that chose to suffer affliction with the people of God before the pleasures of Pharaoh's court, Heb. xi. 25, seq.

And therefore Christ in this life promiseth a return of a hundred fold, which consisteth in abundance of comfort to our full satisfaction and content, which all the world cannot give, and that makes all things here to be 'vexation of spirit;' and therefore David, when he was a king, counted the

testimonies of God better than gold, Ps. xix. 10; and St Paul counted these things here, notwithstanding his many privileges, to be 'dross, and dung, and loss in comparison of Christ,' Philip, iii. 8. And it stands on God's honour not to make its losers when we trade with him. If we part with riches, pleasures, and honours, life, world, we shall have better riches, better and more enduring pleasures and honours, eternal life, and 'a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,' if we part with these for conscience' sake; whence we may learn who are the true rich men, even the Christian, that hath abiding riches, that will continue with him so long as his soul continueth, and such riches as make us good and acceptable in God's esteem, that in our extremities will stand us in stead, supporting and commending us to God, and in death doth not forsake us, but goes with us to heaven. But a worldling 'walks in a vain shadow, and disquiets himself in vain,' Ps. xxxix. 6, in heaping to himself riches and pleasures which he must part with, for he can carry nothing with him when he dies but a load of sins, which he commits in gathering this worldly pelf. All this gay clothing he must put off when he goes to his long home.

See, in the next place, who is the right fool. Is not he that in his judgment preferreth counters before gold, and the baubles of this present life before that enduring substance in the heavens. We condemn Adam, Esau, and Judas for their foolish choice, when, alas! there is no worldling but is as ill as the worst of them, if not worse, if worse may be. Are there not many that sell Christ for less than thirty pieces? Are there not many that cast him away for nothing? What doth the common swearer and blasphemer but sell Christ, nay, cast away him, and all hope of happiness, for a mere presumptuous daring of God? And the best worldling sells Christ for a very thing of nought, a toy, a pleasure of sin, or a little profit. Such strongholds hath the king of this world in the hearts of the children thereof. But how shall we know when we have this pearl? We should examine our hearts, what we could part with for Christ. Many that make profession of Christ in this life show that they affect nothing but a bare title of profession; for their hearts tell them they never yet could find in their heart to deny pleasure or profit, no, not anything for Christ's sake; and yet are fully persuaded they must needs have this pearl. No, no! Christ is not to be had, neither is he to be kept upon such poor easy terms. Men 'cannot serve God and Mammon,' Mat. vi. 24.

Secondly, If we have this pearl, we shall have a wonderful admiration at the excellency of the value thereof: Ps. lxxxvi. 1, 'How beautiful are thy

dwelling places;’ Ps. cxix. 97, ‘Oh how do I love thy law;’ 1 Peter i. 8, ‘Joy unspeakable;’ and chap. ii. 9, ‘Marvellous light.’ What says the worldling? Oh, this or that marvellous rich man, goodly living, stately house, ancient family! Are these things for a Christian to wonder at, who entitles himself to glory in the highest heavens? No. Worldly respects fall down where heaven is advanced. When Paul is a convert, ‘those things that were formerly gain to him, he counteth loss for Christ,’ Philip, iii. 7.

Thirdly, Whosoever hath this pearl, it works in him a wonderful joy above all worldly joy whatever, ‘above the joy of harvest,’ Isa. ix. 3. Zaccheus and the eunuch rejoiced; yea, in adversities this joy forsakes us not. It made St Paul sing in prison. But men will say, Who are more heavy and dejected than Christians? I answer, that God’s Spirit appeareth not always in joy, but sometimes in mourning; for the want of the assistance of God’s Spirit, which is an evidence of a taste and interest in the blessed estate of regeneration.

In the last place, if we have this pearl, our affections and speeches will be busied evermore about it, and our whole course of life will show that we have it. In the next place, if we have this pearl, how shall we improve it to our most advantage? First, therefore, let us be as laborious in keeping it as Satan is laborious in striving to deprive us of it; and to that end we are to watch over our especial and particular corruptions, and then most especially when the devil proffers us a good; for we may be sure it is to deprive us of a better good. He gives an apple, but he looks to deprive us of a paradise. There was never man yet escaped from him a gainer; and therefore in such temptations, examine his offers by the light of sanctified reason, and we shall find ever he offers us loss. In the next place, let us look that we preserve the vessels of our souls in purity, that we may be fit for the pearl that must be set in gold. And in the next place, let us make use of Christ and our interest in him. If we be in bonds under sin, offer Christ to God. O Lord! Christ which thou gavest me is the righteousness which thou canst not but accept, seeing his righteousness is infinite, and thou hast made it mine. I am a beggar of myself, but thou hast made Christ all in all to me, to that end that thou mayest esteem of us all in all to thee. Oh how quiet and peaceable is that soul that is in this estate!

‘How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob? who is like to thee, O Israell!’ Num. xxvi. 5. Saved by the Lord, happy art thou! In less temptations, as afflictions, or death, that king of terrors, if that should seize on us, then consider, What do we lose? Nothing but that which we must one day leave of necessity. If

we then have laboured formerly for this invaluable jewel, we are then most near it; our salvation then is most near even at that instant while we are labouring. Are we enjoying our treasure? shall not we be as desirous of the rich things that grace affordeth us as we are of the riches of this life? If the promises of such things do quicken us, how much more the things themselves. If we be troubled with losses, what lose we? Not our pearl, not grace, not our God, in whom is ever fulness of content. If he fills us with content, it is more than all this vain counterfeit world can afford us. What if we be robbed of pins, so long as we keep our jewels and hid treasure. Are we troubled with solicitations of Satan? are we subject to be drawn away of ill company? We should reject such things with scorn, and say, 'Away, Satan!' Your offers are loss to me; loss of peace, loss of comfort. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, godliness is profitable to all; nay, it is above all other riches. The time will come when nothing besides it will comfort us; nay, all other things will charge us with greater account, and load us with bitterness at the latter end. Let us therefore learn to be good husbands for our souls. What is the glory of our nation? Is it not that we have mines of this invaluable riches, that we have ministers to draw out of this deep well, and to reveal this precious water of life to all, and that we may buy without money. Therefore let us take heed how we trifle away these privileges. The time will come when we shall want them, and then wisdom will laugh at us as if we have not been wise to lay up durable riches.

## Sin's Antidote

*For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.*—Mat. XXVI. 28.

I have already noted three things in the text.

1. The name or title that is here given to the sacrament: it is called 'the blood of the new testament.' I have showed the reason of it, and how all our good is made over to us by a new covenant which is sealed with the blood of Christ.

2. I have showed also how this testament is confirmed, ratified, and established by the blood of Christ.

3. I have showed the fruits and benefits by this covenant thus established, in the extent of it, which we spake of the last day, 'It is shed for many,' where I proved that many shall reap benefit by it; and not few, but many; and again, not all, but many; though many, not all.

Now it remains that we come to the main benefit itself, and that is, the remission of sins, which, that you may the better understand and make use of, I will first open the phrase clearly, what is meant by this same 'remission of sins.' Secondly, We will answer some doubts about the sense. Thirdly, We will gather the main conclusion, collect the main point intended, make application of it, and so conclude.

First, for the phrase that is here used, the great benefit that we have by the covenant, and by the blood of Christ, it is remission of sins: 'Shed for many for the remission of sins.' The word in the Greek, *apsaw*, 'remission,' properly signifieth the sending of a thing back again to the place from whence it was taken; so remittere is retromittere, to send a thing back again, as old Jacob in his prayer, 'The good Lord be merciful to you, my sons, and give you favour in the sight of the man, that he may send back again that my other son, and Benjamin also,' Gen. xliiii. 14; there, to 'remit,' is to send them back again to the house from whence they came.

So likewise Paul sent Onesimus back again to Philemon, in this sense, when he came away; that is the proper sense of the word, ver. 12. And if it

should be taken properly, then to remit sin is to send it back again from whence it had its first being and beginning. Satan, the devil, tempted man, it is to send sin back from man to him, from whence it came first. But we need not tie the word so strictly. I say therefore the word is a metaphor, and so here only alludes to that same custom of releasing captives, or of releasing servants that were bound, in the year of jubilee, and the like; to release them from that yoke, bondage, and subjection to which they were tied: and so remittere is as much as relaxare, so it is used, to release and to free one from a yoke and bondage. Thus we have obtained remission of sins, when we are released from that bondage under which sin held us. That you may yet more clearly understand this, you must consider what opposition sin hath—

1. Against God.

2. Against his law.

1. By discerning of these tee shall know what it is to have sin remitted to a man, howsoever these in the thing are but one and the same. There is no man transgresseth the law, but he sins against God, and there is no man that sins against God, but he transgresseth the law; yet, for doctrine's sake, and for your understandings, we will distinguish them, and show you what that is that sin doth more directly against the majesty of God; and then what it doth against the law of God, and how it is said to be remitted in both these.

Every sin is an injury and wrong offered to God. Now, when God remits sin, he passeth by the wrong done to himself. In point of his honour and sovereignty, the creature is bound to his Creator, to give all his strength to his service. Now, when a man employs any of his strength, either of soul or body, in the service of anything against God, God is so far wronged, and therefore sometimes God takes this as a dishonour to himself, sometimes he accounts it as a rebellion against himself; so that in sin there is an enmity against God, and a dishonour to God. There is an enmity: so Rom. viii. 7, 'The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God and he shows the reason why he calls it enmity against God, 'because it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be that is, it doth not yield that orderly subjection to God which the creature should to the Creator, that subjection to the Lord that children should show to their father; and therefore David, when he comes to confess his sins, Ps. Ii. 4, says, 'Against thee, against thee have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.' He notes two things there in sin that aggravates it, and makes the sense more grievous, that it was before God, and done in his sight; and then, it was against God, 'Against thee have I sinned, and against thee

have I done evil.' So that, when God doth remit sin, he doth as it were forgive that rebellion; he doth not account a man longer a rebel against himself; and though he have rebelled before, and have rebelled never so much, yet now he accounts him as a loyal subject, and now he recounts him a faithful servant, and an obedient child, because his rebellion is pardoned. That is the first thing.

Another thing in sin is, God is dishonoured. Why? 'If I be a father, where is my honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?' saith God in that same Mai. i. G. He accounts obedience his honour, therefore disobedience is dishonourable to him. 'He that offers me praise, glorifies me,' saith he, 'and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of the Lord,' Ps. 1. 23. Now the ordering of a man's conversation, which is an actual and real praising of God, this is a glorifying of God; when a man orders his conversation amiss, when he disorders his conversation, and walks in a sinful course against the rule and against God, he dishonours God. Now, when God forgives sin, he doth put up all injuries done to his honour, and accounts him now as a man that had never dishonoured him at all. And that is the first thing.

2. Secondly, Consider sin as it is a breach of the law. So it is said of sin, 'It is a transgression of the law.' The law is the bond that binds all men; sin leaves a man in this bond. Now the law laps a twofold bond upon a man.

1. A bond of duty; 2. A bond of misery; if he shall neglect and fail in his duty.

(1.) The first is, a bond of duty, that is, a bond of obedience. Every man is bound by the law to obedience, to obey God according to that will which he hath manifested and revealed in his law. Now when a man fails, the bond is forfeited, he remains now under this bond, to expect all the danger that will follow upon the neglect of obedience; and therefore sin is called a debt: 'Forgive us our debts,' Mat. vi. 12. So that when God forgives a man's sins, he deals with him as a merciful creditor doth with his debtor, that though he were indebted to him, yet when he forgives him, he accounts it as if he were not in debt; and him, as if he had paid all, and there remains no more reckonings between them: so that God releases the bond now in respect of obedience, in the first sense, that is, in respect of that obedience, that should have been performed in time past; as it is, Rom. iii. 25, 'he is our reconciliation through faith in his blood, to declare the righteousness of God in the remission of the sins that are past;' that is, those sins that were

committed before, they are now forgiven, and a man is acquitted even from that obedience that is due to the law for the time past. That is the first thing, that whereas he failed in the breach and transgression of the law, his disobedience is not imputed, it is not accounted, and he remains as if he had obeyed the law for the time past, though he had not obeyed it all.

(2.) But then, secondly, there is something wherein a man is bound for the time to come; that is, he is bound now to the curse of the law: 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all that is written in the law to do it,' Gal. iii. 10. Now when God remits sin, he frees a man from that curse; all that should have followed upon his neglect or failing in his obedience, 'He hath freed us from the curse of the law,' saith the apostle, 'inasmuch as he was made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13. So that, put all this together, and you now see what it is to have sin remitted. It is, for a man to be released and freed from all that guilt under which he was held, by which he was bound over to judgment for dishonour done to the majesty and glory of God; for rebellion against the sovereignty of God, for transgressing the law of God, and that curse under which he was bound; he is freed from all, so that God beholds a man now as one that had not at all dishonoured himself, or rebelled against him; God looks upon a man now, as a man that had not transgressed his law, or been under the curse and censure of the law in any point. So that you see there is a perfect and total forgiving and passing by of all sin, and a releasing of a man of the punishment of sin. When a man obtains this favour, to have his sins remitted him, this is that we call remission of sins. But now for the sense, there be two questions that must be answered.

Quest. 1. The first is, Whether this remission of sins be all the benefit we have in this new covenant by the blood of Christ? So it seems to be here, as if there were no other benefit but this: 'This is the blood of the new testament, shed for many, for the remission of sins.' There he names nothing but remission of sins.

Ans. 1. I answer, This is not all the benefit, though this include all the rest, and therefore it is only named. You shall find sometimes that this is left out: Jer. xxxi. 14, 'This shall be the covenant,' saith the Lord, 'that I will make with them; I will be their God, and I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me:' and there is no mention of remission of sins there. There sanctification is mentioned without justification; here again remission of sins is mentioned without the working of fear in their hearts; here is justification without sanctification, and so in that place of the Acts, x. 43.

Ans. 2. Secondly, We are said to be ‘baptized for the washing away of sins.’ There the washing away of sins is put for all the rest.

Sometimes again you shall have them both mentioned: and so in Jer. xxxi. 32, ‘This shall be the covenant that I will make with thee, in those days,’ saith God: ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will forgive their iniquities, and give them a new heart, and I will take away their heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh,’ &c. Here is all put together now; sin remitted, and the new heart given, and all expressed and mentioned in the new covenant.

Quest. 2. How conies it then that remission of sins is here put for the rest?

Ans. 1. I answer, first, Because that this is the first mercy; and, secondly, This is the chiefest mercy, and the chiefest benefit in the new covenant, and therefore it is put for all the rest, by a figure usual in the Scriptures.

(1.) First, I say, it is that which God first doth, it is the first mercy which he shows. It is no hoping that he will bestow any gift on a man, until he receive him to favour. All those other gifts, those gifts of grace, they follow the gracious accepting of a man. First, God receives the person of a man, accepts him to favour, and then he bestows upon him all those gifts that are bequeathed by Christ in this testament. A king first receives a rebel to favour, forgives him his offence before he bestow any honour, any other privilege upon him. Now, because this is the first, therefore it is put for the rest, the rest follow it.

(2.) Then, secondly, because this is the chief, and so it includes all the rest under it; for, if this be once obtained, if this favour be once bestowed on a man, that God have forgiven him his sins, then he gives him everything else. So the apostle, Rom. v. 9, 10, saith he, ‘If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more now, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.’ If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of Christ, that is the first thing; and the greatest of all the great works of mercy was to remove and take away the impediments, the obstacles, the blocks that lay in the way. Sin, the conscience of sin, to purge the conscience from that, to forgive all that which laid a man open to the wrath of God, this is the greatest work; if this be done, it is an easy matter to obtain all the rest. And this may be noted the rather for the comfort of weak Christians, that doubt so much of strength of grace to subdue any

corruption, for assistance and grace to persevere in an holy course. Hath God done the first work? Hath he forgiven thy sins? All the rest are less works than this; it is a less mercy, after sin is forgiven, to increase grace, to continue grace, to subdue corruption, and the rest; all will follow upon this, they are all included under this: therefore, I say, let a man make sure this to himself, first, that he hath forgiveness of sins, and then from thence let him raise arguments to strengthen his faith, and to encourage himself in asking another mercy at the hands of God; and so in any outward thing, in any outward want, distress, or difficulty, if God have done the greater, he hath forgiven thy sins. You know the apostle reasons from the giving of Christ, 'If he ave given us his Son, with him he will give us all things,' Rom. viii. 32. Now the first and greatest gift, in the Son, it is this, to have our sins forgiven, and therefore he will certainly give all the rest with it; if a man can make good this one thing to his soul, all the rest will follow upon it. be much for the second question.

Quest. 3. Again, there is another, and that is this, How can it be said here that this blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins? It seems somewhat contradictory and opposite one to another; for, if sins be forgiven, How comes Christ to shed his blood for them? And if Christ shed his blood for them, How are they said to be forgiven?

Ans. 1. The shedding of Christ's blood supposeth merit. It was by the merit of his death that we obtained this mercy. Now where there is merit, what mercy is there in it? Forgiveness supposeth a free gift, a free grace; but where there was such a merit, as was procured by the blood of Christ, what free gift was in it? These two seem to fight one against another, and therefore we must reconcile them; for these two may well stand together, remission of sins, and yet the obtaining this by the blood of Christ, To this purpose you must consider in God, Justice and mercy.

He is exactly just, and exactly merciful. He so shows mercy, as it must be done without injury to his justice. Justice must be fully satisfied, that mercy may be fully and comfortably manifested. Now there is the blood-shedding of Christ to satisfy justice, there is forgiveness of sins to declare mercy; for that is the common speech of people. Ask them how they hope to be saved? They will answer, They hope to be saved by the mercy of God. It is upon a mistake, for they do swallow up justice in mercy, as if God could not remain exactly just in showing mercy; now tell them again, that God is as perfectly

just as he is merciful. Ay, but they hope to find better than so, they hope they shall find mercy.

And therefore know, that there is no man that receives this mercy in the forgiveness of his sins till justice be satisfied even to the utmost. If the justice of God were not fully satisfied, I say, the infinite justice of God in the exact rigour, and in the perfect righteousness of it, if it had not been satisfied to the utmost, it had been impossible that any flesh should have been saved.

Ans. 2. And therefore, secondly, consider another thing, and that is, the comparison between Christ and us. Look upon Christ, and there is justice fully satisfied; look upon us, and there is mercy fully showed. In us there is no merit, nothing but the guilt of sin; that if God would receive sinful men to favour, reckon, it must proceed from the tenderness of the bowels of his mercy, from the freeness of his love, by whom we have redemption through his blood, even the remission of our sins in his rich grace in the same, Eph. i. 7, 8; it is the tenderness of mercy, and the riches of grace, if he look on us, because there is nothing in us.

Now look upon Christ, who hath indeed satisfied the wrath of God to the utmost, and therefore he is declared to be a Saviour by the resurrection. If Christ should not have remained in the prison, as he was in the prison of the grave till he had paid the utmost farthing, God had not been just; he was indeed our surety, and there was no possibility of our being released from the debt, unless our surety had paid the utmost farthing. But now therefore, when Christ rose out of the grave, and was now released of the bonds of death, and was freed out of prison, into which he was cast as our surety, it is evident the debt is fully discharged, the creditor is fully satisfied, and now our peace is fully made, because Christ hath purchased us, and therefore in respect of Christ we are said to be bought: 'You are bought with a price, and therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits.' And you are redeemed, saith the apostle; that is, you are bought, 'not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter i. 18. So that there was a price upon the blood of Christ, a value, a worth. Consider the person that shed that blood; it was one that had two natures: he was God, able to satisfy the wrath of an infinite, offended majesty, and therefore it is said that God purchased the church with his blood, Acts xx. 28; that is, because he that purchased the church with his blood was God as well as man. Now by this it comes to pass that his blood was meritorious, of an infinite value, worth, and price, and so he merited the favour of God. It was merited on Christ's part,

but not on our part. Every way it is free to us. The gift of Christ is free, for that it comes from the free grace of God. 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given,' Isa. ix. G. It is a gift, Christ was given, and then the application of Christ to us, the acceptance of us through Christ; this is a gift, and a gift of grace, as the apostle calls it in that same Rom. iv. 4. It is of free grace that God accepts us; he might have chosen others. We know that angels fell, and fell irrecoverably; Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham, and so he became a Saviour, not of angels, but of men, Heb. ii. 16. The angels that fell are fallen for ever, but Christ died that he might save men. So that every way it is free. It was free that God gave his Son to this abasement, it was free that God gave his Son for men, it was free that God should give men faith to lay hold upon his Son: 'Through faith you are saved by grace, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,' Eph. ii. 8. So that remission of sins, though it be by the blood of Christ, it is an act of free mercy, an act of mercy whereto God is no way bound, but did it freely of his own love and mere motion, and of his own good pleasure. Thus you have the words opened. I have showed you what remission is. I have showed you also how these things stand together, the shedding of Christ's blood, and yet remission of sins by free grace.

Now let us come to the main point intended, and that is this, that Doct. All the benefits that believers have by the new covenant, and so by the death of Christ, they are all of them given them in the remission of their sins. And therefore remission of sins is here put for the whole covenant, for all the privileges of the covenant, because all the rest are given in this and with it. Look what time God forgives a man's sins, at that time he gives him all other things, sanctification, and whatsoever else, as we see at large in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, the Lord speaks there of the intention of his goodness to his people: ver. 26, he shows what he will do, he will cleanse them from all their idols, and forgive all their sins, and then he will give them a new heart, he will cause them to walk in his ways; and then he comes with outward mercies too, as far as shall be good for them; he promiseth them deliverance from their enemies, and other good things, in the rest of the chapter, but all other things come in with remission of sins. A man that hath his sins forgiven, he hath the other things given with it. This point we are to prove and apply, it is a point of great weight, it is the very key of the gospel, which requires great attention in the hearer, and great care in the speaker; there is much in it, for the very not distinct and clear understanding of this causeth a world of doubts and scruples, and gives advantage to Satan for many temptations, as we shall show when we come to open certain cases about this.

1. First, We must open the point, and make it appear to be a truth, that all other privileges and benefits of the new covenant are given to believers in, and with the remission of their sins, so that a man may conclude, he that hath his sins remitted and forgiven, he hath, and shall have all the rest of the promises of the new covenant; and therefore David, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, saith, 'Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin.' The apostle, Rom. iv., expounding that text in the point of justification, he shows wherein the blessedness of a man consists; that is, in that he may appear before God without his sin, without his filth, without that that makes him abominable to God. And therefore such a man is truly blessed, for he hath with this all that can make him blessed. Look whatsoever a man would have to make up his blessedness, and to prove to his own soul that he is a blessed man, he hath all that here with remission of sins; you know, that other things, sanctification and the rest, are part of our blessedness, and therefore they must go along with this remission of sins. And so in another place of Scripture that speech of the apostle, Acts x. 43, is for us, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name we have remission of sins.'

Now the prophets gave witness concerning Christ of many other things besides remission of sins. That we have in his name, that we have by him, but all other things come with this, and therefore he would have them chiefly to mark, that that which all the prophets would have the church to understand to be the great benefit they have by Christ, is the remission of sins. They all join in this, that this is the general benefit, as it were, the great gift of all, that supposeth and includeth all the rest in it, that 'whosoever believes in him shall have remission of sins;' 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sins.' God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, a marvellous great mercy! This consists in this, that their sins were not imputed. Ay, but there are many other things that a Christian would desire besides this; for what man that hath, in truth, his sins forgiven, that hath his faith working by love, by love to Christ, but he would desire also, that as his sins past might be pardoned, so he might walk before God in newness of life; and therefore that is that which David so much prayed for: 'Oh that my ways were so direct, that I might keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. -5. Now we have this into the bargain, we have this into the agreement, as it were, in with the rest, that our sins are not imputed. When this is granted we have this also with it, that they shall not condemn, as we see, Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' there is no

condemnation to them. This is a great mercy, and this is one mercy that we have by Christ; but this is not all, for, saith he, 'they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' to show that this walking after the Spirit, it is a thing that the Spirit of grace works in them, that is given to them by Christ; for 'the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and of death.' So that now you see plainly there is something else given when sin is not imputed, and so a man is free from condemnation; all the rest comes in with it; that the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and of death, and so by degrees perfects holiness and sanctification with it; and so in divers other places of Scripture I might allege for this purpose, but I intend not to dwell upon it. I will make it appear to you by some reasons, and so come to the uses. You see it is so, you shall see also it will be so, and it must be so when we have remission of sins, when this great mercy is bestowed on a man, that his sins are forgiven, all the rest are given with it.

Reasons. 1. The first reason is taken from the nature of sin. Consider that if sin be taken away once, that which hinders all our good is taken away, as Isa. lix. 1, 2, it is said, 'The hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot help; nor his ear is not deaf, that he cannot hear: but your sins separate between you and your God, and hide his face and keep good things from you.' Good things are kept from us when God's face is hid from us. That which keeps good things from us, it is sin; saith the prophet, 'your sins separate between you and your God;' take away that now, take away sin that makes the separation, break down that partition wall, break down this distance between God and us, that keeps us from God, that we have not that access unto his presence, and keeps God from us, that there is not this free influence, as it were, of grace upon us. I say, take away that, and then a man is settled in all the other benefits, whatsoever comes by communion with God. Therefore this is the first thing, that remission of sins pulls down the wall, and brings a man into communion with God. Now by communion with God we have all good, we have all in him, all from him. There is no good denied to man when God hath received him to favour, and God never denies his favour to a man when he hath forgiven him his sins; for indeed that is the great act of his love, the great act of his favour and goodness, that he forgives sins to as man; that is the first thing.

2. Again, secondly, it will appear yet further, if you consider the entireness of Christ, his perfectness. How perfect a Saviour he is in every way! He is the head of the church, able to fill all his members, to fill the whole body, and therefore the church is called 'the fulness of Christ, that fills

all in all, that fills all things,' Eph. i. 23. There would be some emptiness in a Christian if Christ should not fill the heart of man, fill the desires of the soul, if he should not also give something else with remission of sin. And therefore, 1 Cor. i. 30, saith the apostle, 'He is made to us of God the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' He is an entire perfect Saviour every way; he is made redemption to us; he is made, besides that, righteousness to us; besides that, he is made sanctification to us; besides that, he is made wisdom to us. Mark, if a man would have redemption, it is Christ; 'By him we have redemption, even forgiveness of sins,' saith the text. Now a man that hath redemption in Christ, that hath forgiveness of sins, he hath other things with it. He hath wisdom by Christ too, righteousness by Christ, and sanctification by Christ too. And so he hath everything, because he is an entire and perfect Saviour. And that is the second reason.

3. There is a third reason, and that is this, it is taken from the chaining and tying of all the privileges of the new covenant together. They are inseparably knit; they may be distinguished, but they are not divided; they are in the same subject. Where God gives one, he gives all; and therefore, Rom. viii. 30, it is said, 'Whom he predestinated, them also he called; and whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them also he glorified.' They go all together. If a man be a justified person, he is effectually called too; if he be effectually called, he was predestinated, and he shall be glorified. So that now there are many links in the chain, when all are joined together. If a man pull but one part of it, he takes all; they all follow, they are all chained together. The privileges of the new covenant they are coupled together. In the new covenant God doth not say, I will do this or thus, and so speak of them disjunctively; he will do one or another. I will give you a new heart, or I will forgive you your sins, or you shall be my people. He doth not do so; but the new covenant delivers them coupled so, that they are linked together; 'You shall be my people, and I will forgive you your sins, and I will give you a new heart,' &c., Ezek. xxxvi. 26. They are all joined together, and coupled together, and may not be divided asunder. If God give remission of sins, the rest goes with it, for they are coupled together in that grant, in the main grant; that is, in the covenant of grace itself. Thus then the point is opened and proved: I come to make some use of it. This is a point of great weight; the greatest work is to bring it home to the hearts of Christians.

The first use we will make of it shall be for instruction and exhortation, and we will come after to comfort, and to resolve certain cases, if time serve. The cases are many, and rise from mistake of the covenant.

Use 1. First, for exhortation and instruction, and that shall be to persuade every one, if they would make themselves happy in the enjoying of all things that are good, what course they should take for it. Get this, their sins forgiven. Let that be the first thing. If a man would make all comfort sure to himself, let him make this sure first to himself, that his sins are forgiven him. Therefore I beseech you consider this, and take it to heart, that we may persuade you to get the knowledge of the remission of your sins. We persuade you not to anything that is impossible or unnecessary. It is a thing that may be had, and it is a thing that is necessary you should have, if you will have any good. Make this first sure to thyself, that thy sin is pardoned.

I. I say, first, it is possible. It is that which the papists deny, and that which others question, and which natural reason is against; and therefore, because it is a point of faith, the Scripture is more large in it, and we must be more express in clearing of it, to make it appear to you that it is possible that a man may have the knowledge that his sins are forgiven him; that he may not only conclude that sins are forgiven to some, or, it may be, I may hope that my sins shall be forgiven to me; but he may conclude resolutely that my sins are forgiven me, and as truly and as certainly, and more certainly, than if an angel from heaven should tell a man so. A man would think when an angel shall come and tell Cornelius that his prayers and alms-deeds were accepted, there could be no certain knowledge than that. When an angel shall come and tell Daniel that he was a man greatly beloved, there could not be more certainty of it by any means. All that Dives required was but that one might arise from the dead, that his brethren might certainly know the things in another world. But we will make it appear to you that there is a way to make it more certain to us than the voice of any that should rise from the dead, or the report of an angel. Men have been deluded by apparitions, and Satan may transform himself into an angel of light; but this way of making it known to a man's self that his sins are forgiven cannot deceive him, as we shall now show to you. But that there is such a certainty,(1.) First, Else how is it possible that the servants of God should have peace of conscience till a man may know that his sins are actually pardoned him? But to settle a man's conscience in quiet and in peace there must be an act in the court of heaven; and somewhat must be done in the court of conscience. Something Christ doth in heaven with God his Father, and something like that he doth in the heart of a man, he makes peace with God his Father for us. Now God is reconciled to a man; then again he doth by his Spirit give to a man the knowledge of this reconciliation with God by clear evidences out of the word, and then a man is at rest, then a man is at peace, and therefore a man

may know it. Suppose a malefactor had a pardon granted in the court, as long as he knows not of it, he is full of trouble still, when it is brought home to his chamber, to his lodging, to the prison, or wheresoever he is, now he hath peace. The soul of a man is not at peace till the pardon be brought home to the consistory, to his chamber, to a man's own conscience. Now where there is one of these manifested evidently to him, that he may read it, and take notice of it, then he is at peace. Now it is possible for a man to have peace in this life: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.' It was not only Paul's case that he had peace with God, but it was the case of the believing Romans, and therefore he joins the rest with himself, 'We being justified by faith, have peace with God.'

(2.) Again, it appears a man may know that his sins are pardoned by another thing, else how could a man pray for the pardon of sin We are bound to pray for it; but what we ask we must ask in faith, and waver not, James i. 5, and whatsoever you ask, believe it shall be granted, and it shall be done to you, Mark xi. 2-4. A man must pray in faith; in praying for the particular thing, faith applies it to a man's self, applies it to his own soul, not in a wavering, suspending, doubtful manner, but that upon knowledge: 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' There is a knowledge in faith; that is, such a knowledge as is grounded upon divine revelation, upon the truth of the word, whereupon faith looks, which, when a man knows and applies, now he hath peace; by this he knows that his sins are pardoned.

(8.) Again, to what use else is the sacrament, if it be not to make known to a man the forgiveness of sins? for that same giving to every particular man with the intent of it, to remember me, as Christ speaks, that which Christ did, as the end of it, that he died for sinners, and died for those particular sinners to whom he offereth himself, to whom he is given in the sacrament. All this is but to bring the knowledge and application of this forgiveness of sins to my own self.

(4.) Again, other of God's servants have known the forgiveness of their sins, that their sins have been forgiven, why may not we also? Doth the Spirit of God work diversely in the saints? did he work one way in David and another way in us? did he work one way in Paul and another way in us? It will appear otherwise: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said, I will confess against myself my sins,' saith David; 'and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' David knew it was forgiven.

Ay, may some man say, David did it by some extraordinary revelation.

No, saith he; 'for this shall every one that is godly seek to thee,' &c. For this shall 'every man;' it is every man's case as well as mine, and they shall seek it the same way that I have done, that they may obtain the same mercy that I have found. And so the apostle Paul saith, I was a persecutor, and a blasphemer, and an oppressor, but I was received to mercy;' Paul knew he was received to mercy.

Ay, but Paul might know it by some extraordinary revelation.

Nay, saith the apostle for the comfort of those that shall believe hereafter to eternal life, 'God hath showed on me all long-suffering and patience for the comfort of those that hereafter shall believe to eternal life.' This mercy manifested to Paul was for the comfort of others of God's servants that should afterward believe to eternal life. So it is not a thing impossible.

II. Again, secondly, when we persuade you to the knowledge of the forgiveness of your sins, we persuade you to a thing that is as profitable as possible; as it is possible to be had, so it is profitable, useful, and necessary for us. When a man will come and ask any mercy at God's hands, how shall he lay a foundation now of hope and faith, that he may speed with God in obtaining it, but in this first, that his sins are forgiven? And therefore it was even David's course, whensoever he came to beg any great mercy at the hands of God, he begins with this confession of sins, to beg pardon for sins. So, Dan. ix. 4, when he comes to beg a mercy for the whole church at the time in those times of sorrow, what course doth he take? First, he confesseth the sins of the church, he begs forgiveness of the sins of the church, as the great hindrances of mercy to the church. And therefore here is the thing, if a man would beg any good thing at the hands of God, begin here first, remove that which hinders. Till sin be done away, there will be hindrances of all our prayers. Every prayer is lost, whatsoever petition a man puts up, he shall never speed and obtain it till his sins be pardoned. Consider in the time of our Saviour Christ, whensoever he would bestow any special mercy upon men,—many came to him in several cases with several diseases,—the first speech of Christ is, 'Thy sins are forgiven;' when he healed their bodies and other particulars, or cast out devils, &c., it went along with this still, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' And therefore, of all things, it is most necessary that we may know how to speed in prayer, that we may know what right we have to

come before God, and to make our requests known, that we know that our sins are forgiven and pardoned.

Quest. But how may I know that? Now I come to the main question, how a man may know that his sins are forgiven in particular.

Ans. I answer, It is known by the testimony of the Spirit. That which they stand so much upon, which is extraordinary revelation, it is not needful for this business; but yet a revelation from the Spirit is needful, and therefore it is called 'the Spirit of revelation,' Eph. i. 17; that is, the Spirit reveals to a man the things that are given him of God; and the apostle proves strongly that any believer may know the rich privileges of the new covenant, because any believer hath the Spirit; as, 1 Cor. ii. 9, &c., 'The things,' saith he, 'that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, are they that God hath laid up for those that love him.' What things are these? They are things that are laid up in heaven, though that be not denied; but the chief thing, the meaning there is, the great privileges that we have in the gospel, which God hath prepared for those that love him, and are laid up in the gospel; as in a rich treasury, there they be; and therefore the promises are called 'precious promises,' because they contain these jewels and pearls, and these spiritual riches of a Christian in them. It is a rich cabinet that hath rich jewels in it, so they are precious promises that have such precious mercies in them. Thus these are such things as 'eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,' &c.

Obj. But some man will say, If no man ever saw them, if no man ever knew them, how shall we ever get the knowledge of them?

Ans. But, saith the apostle, 'God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit.' The eye of man, that is, the natural eye of man, can never see them, the natural heart of man can never conceive them, &c., yet, nevertheless, God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; and so he goes on, ver. 14, 'The natural man knows not the things of God, but the spiritual man discerns all things.' Why so? Because the Spirit of God, who now causeth the light of the gospel to shine in his heart, reveals to him those things, that without that light can never be discovered or discerned by any man.

Quest. But now the great question is, How the Spirit of God reveals to a man that his sins are pardoned in particular? Every man will doubt of it.

‘The same Spirit bears witness with our spirits, that we are the sons of God,’ Rom. viii. 16. So there is a witness of the Spirit with the spirit of a man in the heart and conscience of a man, that he is accepted in the sight of God.

Quest. Oh, but now how doth the Spirit witness this? and what is the testimony that the Spirit gives of this, or by what way gives he it?

Ans. I answer, briefly, by alluding to that expression that you shall find John xvi. 7, 8: ‘I will send,’ saith Christ, ‘the Holy Ghost. And when he is come he shall reprove the world; he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.’ He shall convince the world, but of what shall he convince the world? ‘Of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they have not believed in me: of righteousness, because I go to the Father: and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.’ I say I allude to that, for there is such a work in this business that now we have in hand, as there is in that convincing the world concerning Christ; I say, there is such a work of the Spirit convincing a man ‘of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,’ that he may reveal to him the pardon of his sins; there are certain works of the Spirit that we may express by these:

1. First, I say, He convicts of sin. The Spirit that testifies to a man that his sins are pardoned him, doth it first by convincing a man of his sins. Now, you know, there is more in conviction than bare discovery. It is a full and thorough discovery of the thing; and not only so, but an effectual discovery, such as works upon the soul; there is not only a light in the understanding, but some heat in the affection and in the will. Now, when the Spirit convinceth a man of sin, here is the first thing now whereby he knows that his sins are pardoned. You shall see this the better in the effects of it, and that is, (1.) First, It wakes a man to see that there is no sweetness in sin; it makes a man to find that sin is the greatest burden, the greatest misery, of this life. For that which makes a man delight in sin, is because it is presented to him in false shapes; but now when the Spirit of God comes to manifest sin, to discover sin in its own shape in the soul, and makes a man to look upon it in its own nature, as it is, then he finds it to be the most unprofitable burden that ever he bore in his life. Upon this comes that work upon the heart, which is that oppression of spirit, that a man comes laden and heavy burdened. You know this ever goes with forgiveness of sins: Mat. xi. 28, ‘Come unto me, all ye that are laden and heavy burdened, and I will ease you.’ That if a man would be eased of his sins he must be laden and heavy burdened first, that is, he must find a need of ease; and when he is laden and

heavy burdened, that he may be assured he shall have ease if he come to Christ. That is the first effect.

(2.) Secondly, There is another thing that goes along with this, that sin being discovered thus to a man, he comes to seek, above all things in the world, to be rid and to be eased of it; as the apostle in that same 2 Cor. vii. 11 saith, 'Behold, what clearing of yourselves,' &c. He will get to be free from it rather than his life. Now, there is no clearing of a guilty parson but by confession; for how shall a malefactor get to be cleared before the judge but by confessing his fault? If he sue for mercy, it may be he may obtain it; but if he stand out till it be proved against him, he will be cast. It fails with men many times, but it never fails with God; and therefore saith David, 'I said, I will confess against myself my sin, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,' Ps. xxxii. 5, G. So it is said, 'He that confesseth his sins, and forsakes them, shall find mercy,' Prov. xxviii. 13.

(3.) But, thirdly, it is not a bare confession of sin, that may proceed from common knowledge and illumination; but there goes more in it, and that is, there is a loathing and a detesting of it. By that the Lord describes the repentance of the people of Israel: Isa. xxx. 22, 'They shall defile the rich idols, and their apparel,' &c.; 'and shall cast them out, and shall say, Get you hence; they shall cast them out as a filthy thing, as a thing that they cannot endure to look on, and to have in their sight.' There is such a loathing of sin in the soul where God intends to forgive that sin.

(4.) Fourthly, There is yet a fourth thing in this conviction of sin, and that is this, that all the care of a man is how he may free himself from the actual committing of sin, how he may set himself in a right state again, how he may be right set; as Gal. vi. 1, 'If any be fallen by infirmity, you that are spiritual, set him in joint.' He is now like a man whose bones are out of joint, and he is in pain with it; therefore all his care is how he may be set in joint again, how he may be set into the estate that he was in before; for every time a man commits a sin, the soul is disordered by it, and a man is now much distempered. With that he is forward to commit other sins, he is backward to any good. And now the greatest care of a man is, when God hath thus fitted him by his conviction, by this work of the Spirit convincing him of sin, how to get his sin off, and how to get his soul rid of it; as Isa. i. 16, 18, 'Wash you, make you clean,' saith God; 'take away the evil of your works from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, and learn to do well; and then come and let us reason together: Though your sins were as crimson, they shall be as snow;

though they be as scarlet, they shall be as wool. He doth not mean that he would not at all forgive a man's sins till he have gotten such a victory over all his sins that he shall not at all commit any sin; but the meaning is thus, There should be in the soul such a contention, such a strife against sin, that it may appear that he endeavours nothing so much as to be rid of it. All his care is to be washed, to be made clean, and to have the evil of his works took from the eyes of God. Now, when a man sees the evil of sin, as it is contrary to God's holiness, and contrary to his word, and to his law, &c., seeing the evil of sin in himself, and the effects of it, he hates nothing so much, he strives against nothing so much, he desires not so much to be rid of anything as of sin; that is the first thing.

2. But then, secondly, there is a conviction of righteousness: 'He shall convince the world of righteousness;' that is, that a man now, when God hath forgiven him his sins, he is to look up to seek after righteousness. And this is certain, that God forgives no man his sins but by Christ, and through Christ, and for Christ; and he draws the eye of the soul, and the bent and the inclination of the heart, towards Christ; that now a man sets a price upon him, he prizeth him above all things: he prizeth him in his desire, till he may get assurance that he is his; and after he prizeth him in his estimation, walking in Christ, after he hath got assurance. There, I say, is the first thing then, he prizeth Christ before all things, he seeks nothing so much. You see the Lord works this disposition in the church in the Canticles, when the church had sinned by neglecting Christ; and now he withdrew himself from her, what doth she do? She comes and seeks him by the watchmen, and they smite her; she comes to those that kept the tower, and they mock her; she comes to the daughters of Jerusalem, and they slight her husband, him whom her soul loves; she goes on seeking still. This is the case of a Christian after relapse into sin, that he is not set again in his peace and comfort till he be made to prize Christ at an higher rate than before. So likewise he describes the church, Jer. 1. 4, thus seeking after Christ: 'They shall go weeping as they go; and shall seek the Lord God, and shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards.' They shall go; their end is to find out God, that God that was in covenant with them; to find out God, and they shall go weeping, and their faces towards Zion. This is the disposition of the soul of that man whose sins shall be forgiven him; he seeks nothing so much as Christ.

Again, he prizeth Christ at so high a rate, having forgiveness, that he will not part with him. The church saith, 'If she could get Christ, she would keep him in the chamber of her mother that brought her forth.' And when she

hath him, what is her desire? 'Set me as a seal upon thy hand: for love is strong as death, and jealousy is cruel as the grave. Much water cannot quench love,' Cant. viii. 6, 7. She so loves Christ now, that she will never part with him again, but will continue with him for ever. So we see Mat. xiii. 44, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field; which when a man hath found, he hides it, and for joy of it he departeth, sells all, and buys it.' When a man hath found Christ, and the benefit of remission of sins by Christ, there is nothing that shall answer Christ in the esteem of his soul. Thus faith works by love, love to Christ; as we see the apostle Paul, Philip, iii. 8, he accounts 'all things as dung in comparison of Christ, that he might be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ.' So then thus we see every way there is an high esteem of Christ, a seeking of him till he be found, and a keeping with him when a man hath gotten him, in prizing of Christ at a high rate, nothing in comparison of Christ; this now is because he is convinced that there is a righteousness to be had in Christ, and a righteousness that can be had nowhere else but in Christ, and such a righteousness as can make him perfectly righteous. It is the great thing that he desires above all the world, and that is the second thing. The Spirit doth this; as it draws, so it links a man to Christ.

8. There is a third thing, the conviction of judgment; such judgment as wherein 'the prince of this world is judged.' That a man falls now in condemning the motions of sin in his heart, and to condemn himself for the actions of sin before. That you may understand these things clearly,(1.) First, I say, a man condemns the actions of sin he hath committed; he condemns them and himself for them. This disposition is in all those whom Christ receives to forgiveness, whom he forgives these sins. 'Thou shalt judge thyself worthy to be cut off,' saith God, 'when I will be reconciled to thee,' Jer. xxxvi. 3. When God will be reconciled to his people, this is one thing, they shall judge themselves worthy to be cut off; and therefore, 1 Cor. xi. 31, 'if you would judge yourselves,' saith he, 'you should not be judged of the Lord.' So that this is that now which frees a man from the judgment of God; when he begins with his own heart, and judgeth himself for sin, he shall not be judged. It shall be judged once; and if a man will not judge himself, God will judge him; but if a man will judge himself, he shall not be judged of the Lord. Now, therefore, you have the conviction of judgment, when a man is now brought to judge himself, that is, to set himself against himself, as a judge sets himself against a malefactor: he arraigns him before him, he brings in evidence against him; he lays upon him the sentence of the law, he condemns him, and takes order that execution be performed upon him. Thus

it is when a man sets himself to judge himself: he arraigns himself, he sets himself to a serious consideration before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, who is the judge of the quick and the dead, to consider how the matter stands between God and him, and he brings in evidence against himself, the testimony of his own conscience, the witness of the law; the books that shall be opened then are now opened to prevent that judgment. He looks upon the law, and it shows him what he should have done; he looks upon his conscience, and that shows him what he hath done; and, when he hath thus done, he comes to confess himself guilty; he proceeds now upon this conviction to condemn himself, and to acknowledge that all the curses in the law are due to him, and he wonders that God should bear with such a one as he to live upon the face of the earth thus long; he subscribes to the righteous judgment of God, if he should cast him into hell for his sins, for he judgeth himself worthy to be cut off; he extenuateth not any sin, he lessens not any sin that he hath committed; he desires nothing so much as to feel the weight of it in his heart, that he may indeed see the ugliness of sin more and more, and be brought to be more out of love with it; and thanks any man that will help him to aggravate his sins to himself, and to see the ugliness of them. When he hath done thus, he comes to execution, that is, he comes to that revenge upon himself; there is an indignation against sin, and a revenge upon himself too, because of sin; he judgeth himself unworthy of those liberties that he hath abused, and sometimes he ties and limits himself in those particulars, and denies himself of those things that by reason of his corruption he cannot tell how to use without sin; or otherwise he takes revenge upon himself for particular ills. I say, thus a man judgeth himself for his sins past. That is one thing.

(2.) But now secondly, he judgeth the prince of this world, as well as himself; that as he judgeth himself for his actions, so he judgeth all the motions of sin in his heart: that for the present, if any motion be rising from his own corruption, drawing him to a new act of evil, he judgeth and condemneth the sin in his heart, and this is the very original, and the root of that conflict in his soul, this work of the Spirit, a conviction of judgment, that now hath made a man as a judge against himself; and therefore now he sits as a judge doth, to prevent sin by all means; he sets himself against the motions of sin, which was the case of the apostle Paul: Rom. vii. 19, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' But what, doth he let this go on? No, he strives against it, that as the flesh lusteth against the spirit, so the spirit lusteth against the flesh; there is a seed, there is a work of grace striving to work out the corruption in his heart. This is in all the servants of God, in

all those whom God bestows this mercy upon of the forgiveness of sins, to condemn the motions of sin, and therefore, he sets against them. 'O wretched man!' saith the apostle, 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?' He calls for help as it were against the body of death; he looks about to see if it be possible by any means to get it rooted out. When a man hath a thief gotten into his house, he calls for all his neighbours to help him, that he may take him there; so there is a thief got into the soul, for now sin is not in his heart as a lord, but as a thief, and therefore he calls for help, that seeing it is gotten in, he may get it out again. But this, I say, beloved, is in all the servants of God that shall have remission of sins, there is this conviction of judgment; that is, they are brought to this pass, that now they judge themselves and their sin, and condemn it in themselves. Now, upon this follows reformation and amendment of life, because they judge the prince of this world; they judge all the works of Satan, and all the motions of sin in their hearts; and therefore now they set themselves into a contrary way, to works of obedience, and amendment of life. So the promise is made that, 1 John i. 9, 'If you walk in the light, as he is in the light, the blood of Christ shall cleanse you from all your sins.' Thus you see now how a man may know and prove that his sins are forgiven. Put all this together, and let every man now examine his own heart; I know no man but would desire to partake of the comfort of this doctrine; and I told you already, there is great reason why every man should labour after it, to get the knowledge of this, that his sins are forgiven. We are yet but upon that point, how a man may know that his sins are forgiven. Now for this purpose, I say, consider what hath been said. It is a thing that is revealed to a man by the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God doth manifest in the word those grounds and texts upon which a man may gain this assurance to his soul. Now look on this threefold conviction of the Spirit, whereby it manifests this work, conviction of sin, conviction of righteousness, and conviction of judgment, for they all go together in that heart whose sins are forgiven. I say conviction of sin: first, it makes a man see the loathsomeness of his sin, the ugliness of it; it makes him account it a burden that he would fain be eased of it, and therefore he confesseth it; therefore he sets against it with all his might, and therefore he loathes and detests it. That is the first thing.

Now try yourselves by that, whether you yet apprehend your sins in that manner or no; not for a man to say generally, I am a sinner, &c., and to send forth some few sighs, slight and short, to no purpose, in a cursory and formal manner,—as the manner of many is,—but it is another manner of work. And therefore, I beseech you, consider seriously what is that inward secret work

of the Spirit upon the heart; what effects it hath upon the affections of the soul, that is, upon the discovery of the filthiness of sin, to make a man weary of it, to loathe it, to hate it, to desire to be rid of it, to strive against it, to confess it, &c.

Whither hath this consideration sent thee? Hath it made thee to set a greater price upon Christ, and upon the gospel offering Christ unto thee; such a prizing of him as that thou lettest all go to seek him, that is, thou seekest Christ above all things; and if thou hast indeed gotten him, thou wilt not lose the comfort of him, but daily walk in him, that thy life is now a living in Christ. I beseech you, consider this, the walking of a man that hath received Christ, in the Scripture, is called a walking in Christ: 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him and the living of believers is said to be a living in Christ: 'Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Gal. ii. 20; that is, in his whole life he lives to express the virtues of Christ; express Christ in thy life. I beseech you, consider this, that the affections are now set wholly on Christ, and that a man now gives himself to Christ, as a servant to his Lord, to be commanded and to be guided by him. So that nothing now sways in a man, nothing now carries him in his actions so as Christ shall, when he knows what is agreeable to the will of Christ, that shall most of all draw him to perform it. When he knows a thing is contrary to Christ, that shall make him set most of all against it.

Besides this, when he hath done this, there is a conviction of judgment; that now thou art the sharpest judger of thyself for thy sins past, and art the most watchful judger of the motions of sin present. This is thus in every one. I beseech you, take this home with you; consider of it now in the preparation to the sacrament that you are to receive; for the sacrament is a seal, as we shall show you after, because it seals, as among other things, this, 'forgiveness of sins.' Now, that you may seal this comfort to yourselves, consider that the sacrament is a seal to none but to them that are sealed with the Spirit: 'In whom, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,' Eph. i. 18. The Spirit, the inward seal, gives virtue to the sacrament, and to everything else that are seals of comfort, and nothing can seal comfort to a man, but the Spirit within, that makes everything effectual for that purpose; and therefore if the Spirit doth it, it doth it by this means; consider of this, therefore, seriously. There be in this divers cases that should be answered for the further opening of it, and for the settling of weak-hearted Christians in a settled estate, and somewhat for the casting off of presumptuous persons that are in the height of their pride, that we may give

every one their portion; that the weakest may see against many particular temptations and doubts, that even his sins are forgiven; and that the other should see that they had but a false plea, a false claim all this while to the pardon of sins, when they cannot make it good by the testimony of the Spirit. But the work would be very large, and I have been already more large than I Intended.

## The Success of the Gospel

*Whereto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and what are they like?*—Luke VII. 31-35.

Christ in the former verses had commended St John's ministry, and in the verse next going afore he speaketh of the different success it found in the publicans, from that it found in the Pharisees, who rejected the counsel of God. Now in the verses following he shows what success his own ministry had amongst them, and thus he doth by way of comparison or parable. And this he brings by way of asking a question, which implies admiration and indignation, both showing a deep passion, as it is in Isa.: 'What shall I do for my vineyard?' Isa. v. 4; and this shows in general, that the refractory disposition of man is a matter of indignation and of admiration, especially if we consider what it despiseth, and whom.

First, They despise the word of God, the saving word, the counsel and wisdom of God; nay, secondly, they despise God clothed in flesh, that was born and died for their sakes, and thereby offers salvation to them, and life everlasting; yet all this to the obdurate heart of man is as lightning that dazzleth the eyes and helps not the sight a whit; and therefore, Isa. vi. 10, the prophet is bidden 'to make the heart of the people fat.' Go tell this people, hearing they shall not understand, &c.; and therefore no marvel if God bears indignation against such. 'Whereto shall I liken the men of this generation,' Luke vii. 31; this generation of vipers, that are worse than any of the generations fore-passed, by how much they have had more means to be better.

Ver. 32. 'They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.'

The comparison is to little children that, at marriages and times for feasting, piped and danced, and at funerals and times of mourning did mourn and use some fitting ceremony. Now there were some among them that were froward, and would neither be content with mourning nor piping, and playing, and to these Christ compares these great doctors; the scribes and Pharisees; a froward generation, neither pleased with Saint John's austere course of life, nor with Christ's affability and meek carriage, and thus he

crosseth their proud, froward disposition. For the custom itself, for that it is only related, and no whit censured, therefore I forbear to speak further thereof, but come to the rendition of the comparison.

Ver. 33. 'For John Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, he hath a devil.'

Ver. 34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!'

Where observe God's gracious dealing with man. He useth all kind of means, sendeth men of several natures, austere John, and meek Christ, and they use all means to convince the judgment, all methods to work upon the memories, all reasons to work upon the affections and wills. He turns himself into all shapes to gain wretched man unto him.

Secondly, Observe the order God useth; first, John, then Christ. John prepares the way, throwing down hills: 'O ye generation of vipers,' Mat. iii. 7. Oh, say they, this man is too harsh, I think he hath a devil. Then Christ comes with blessed: 'Blessed are the poor, blessed are you that weep,' &c., Mat. v. 8, seq. So he sent the law first, then the gospel; first he threatens, then promises.

Thirdly, Observe that the manner of their teaching is double, by doctrine and life, and these agree, wherein observe it is good that life and doctrine should suit; for John's life was austere and retired, his doctrine was also tending to beat down the proud conceits of man. Christ came to all, conversed with all meekly and lovingly; and the reason of God's making use of men of severe dispositions is, because of the different natures of men, whereof some can better relish one nature than another. Some love the hot and fiery nature, others delight in the meek spirit; and though there be diversity of gifts, yet they come from the same Spirit. Even as the diverse smells of flowers comes from the same influence, and the diverse sounds in the organs comes from the same breath, so doth the Spirit diffuse itself diversely, as it meets with diverse natures. Yet all tendeth to the perfecting of one work. We may hence therefore gather, that to converse fruitfully and lovingly is to be preferred before austerity, and commendable above it, because it is the conversation of Christ himself.

And the papists shall never be able to prove their foolish austere vows of a solitary life, &c., to be preferred before communication and society,

unless they will prove John better than Christ. And again, this should teach us to moderate our censures of the diverse natures and carriage of men, as knowing that God in wisdom hath appointed it for excellent use, and that all agree in the building up of the spiritual temple of the church.

In the next place, observe that where grace doth not overpower nature, no means will prevail over the obdurate nature of man. Neither John nor Christ could work anything upon these Pharisees. Thus was it in the wilderness and Egypt. What admirable wonders did God work, yet how incredulous and stiff-necked were they! And the reason is, God gave not a heart, and in the conversion of a sinner there must be another manner of grace than only offering and exhortation to accept of Christ; nay, the Spirit itself must do more than exhort, for it may lay open to us many motives, tell us of God's goodness, truth, and strength sealed to us; it may tell us of wrath and judgment, and on the other side of kingdoms, everlasting joys, perfection of happiness, yet all not work any remorse in the heart of man if the Spirit leaves him there. And the reason is, man is dead in sin by nature, and that 'strong man' having gotten the possession, cannot be cast out but by the 'stronger man,' which must quicken and give power, that may change every part of the soul, the understanding, will, and affections, else all means is to no purpose but for to make us inexcusable at the day of judgment. Hence therefore we may see the shallowness of those that conceive of the word of God, as if it did only persuade the will. No; it must alter the will and change it quite, else arguments are to no purpose; and in the second place, it teacheth us to come to the ordinances with holy hearts, begging God's power to soften our hard and stony hearts, and desiring him to join the powerful work of his Holy Spirit with the outward means, and that his word may be like to that word at the beginning, that no sooner commanded light, but 'there was light.'

And lastly, it teacheth us to conceive of the word, together with the goodness and power thereof, with admiration and wonderment.

In the next place, observe, from the calumny of the scribes, that rebellion and opposition against goodness is never without show of reason; and men they will never go to hell, but they have reason for it. They will countenance rebellion by defaming and scandalizing the people of God; and to that end they will be sure to take things with a strong hand. Austere John 'hath a devil;' sociable Christ 'is a wine-bibber.'

And the reason is, the pride of man, that will not be thought so foolish as to speak, or do anything without reason, and therefore when it is wanting they will feign one. In every calumny they do so, and the calumny and scandal here was the greater, because it was raised by the scribes and Pharisees, the great doctors and the wise rabbis, whose word must carry such credit with it, as alone to condemn Christ: 'We would not have brought him to thee were he not worthy of death,' Mat. xxvi. 66; and whose life must be a rule to others: 'Doth any of the Pharisees believe in him,' John vii. 48.

For use therefore of this doctrine, let us account it no strange matter if we be traduced, disgraced, and scandalized, for it was Christ's and John's lot. Great slanders must be maintained from great men, such as them that sit in Moses's chair, the Pharisees and scribes. John's holiness should have procured reverence, and Christ's sociableness should have been rewarded with love; but it is the lot of them and all Christians: 'The disciple is not above his master,' Mat. x. 24. They may do well, but must look to hear ill. Wicked men when they learn to think well, they will learn to report well.

Let us grieve at their estate, and comfort ourselves in Christ, who will maintain our cause.

Thirdly, Be innocent as doves, and be ever doing good, that our lives may give them the lie, and stop others from giving credit to their malicious aspersions.

Fourthly, Let it look that we approve ourselves to God, who shall judge us. Stand or fall to him, and pass not for the judgment of man, and of such as shall be judged themselves.

Lastly, Let us take heed we take not a thing in the wrong sense and of vain prejudice. Men are witty to lay stumbling-blocks in their own way to heaven. This preacher is too strict, that too mild; this too plain, that too poor. Like the children Christ speaks of here, nothing will please them: hence, in the last place, we may learn from the example of Christ, that it is not ill to speak ill of ill men, in case of apology and prevention of scandal; for Christ's example doth warrant it. But to proceed.

Ver. 35, 'But wisdom is justified of all her children.'

From the connection of these words with the former, by this word 'but,' we may observe, that it is the lot of God's truth to have diverse

entertainments in this world. Some will be children of wisdom, and justify it; others, as the Pharisees, will scandalize it; and the reason is, from the diversity of men's natures in this world, wherein are contrary seeds and contrary servants to contrary kingdoms. Some will flock after Christ; others will say, 'he deceiveth the people,' John vii. 12. Yet as there is 'a generation of vipers,' so there is a generation of children belonging to the kingdom, that swim against the stream, like the stars that have a retrograde motion to the residue. But for the meaning of the words, by 'wisdom' here is meant the doctrine of the gospel, not only as it is in books, but as it is in the ministry. And briefly the ways of God laid out in his ordinances, and taught by weak men, all this is understood in this word 'wisdom,' and this word 'justified,' that is approved and received 'of her children,' that is, of her followers, being such as wisdom begets to a new life. In these words let us consider, first, that there is a doctrine which is wisdom; and this teacheth what God intends to us, and we should return unto him. This reason will evince that God being so good unto man, he should have some thanks at his hands, and some acknowledgment of duty to him, by way of worship, which it is most fit God himself should institute; and the rule hereof, joined with practice, is that wisdom here meant, for there is diverse wisdoms: first, as it is in God, and so it is a depth unsearchable. 'Man knoweth not the price hereof,' Job xxviii. 13. Secondly, there is a wisdom communicated to Christ, who hath a twofold wisdom infinite as God, and finite as man; and a wisdom as he is God and man joined together; and this is called wisdom of union. In the next place, there is a wisdom of vision, and this the saints and angels have in heaven, and we shall have hereafter; and there is a wisdom of revelation, which is revealed in the Scripture to us by the Spirit, and this is the wisdom meant in this place, as it is comprehended either in principles laid down in the gospel, or in conclusions inferred necessarily from them, or in our improvement of them, to the right and best end, which is God's glory and our salvation. This is wisdom; and called so here by way of emphasis, showing it is the only excellent wisdom, which will further appear in these respects.

1. First, It doth arise from a higher beginning than all other wisdom whatever; for it comes from God's goodness and mercy.

2. Secondly, The matter. It is a deep mystery. Christ, God-man; his nature, offices, and benefits.

3. Thirdly, It is more powerful than all other wisdom; for it transforms us. It makes us wise, and changes us from wicked, and makes us good.

4. Fourthly, It is better than the law, which was a killing letter. This gives life.

5. Furthermore, this wisdom is everlasting, and it is ancientest: intended before the world was. It is also inviolable. God will change the course of nature for his church's sake; and sooner will he break covenant with the day and night than this covenant, which shall be for ever, Ps. xix. 9.

6. The end of it is to bring us home to God, 1 John i. 3.

This wisdom hath the same name with Christ, who is the Wisdom of the Father. He gives his power to the word; and what reproach is done to it, he accounts it as done to himself.

Use 1. This serves, therefore, to convince the atheists, who cannot choose but acknowledge there is a God, that it is fit the creatures should depend upon him, and show it by way of service; and that this service should be prescribed by God rather than by man. Let them know this is the wisdom and the word of God. No word like it in the convincing power it hath in purity and holiness; none so powerful to transform us from death to life, from nature unto grace.

Use 2. Secondly, it serves to exhort us all to attend upon the commands of this wisdom. Men are admired for their deep wisdom in policy, whereby they come to be great. This without grace is enmity to God; and the devil dwells in the heads of such as makes honours, ambition, or pleasures their sole aim. The wisdom of arts and sciences goes beyond that, yet comes far short of this; that being but temporary, and perishing with the things themselves, but this everlasting and eternal; and indeed policy and civil learning at the most do but civilize and make men morally wise; to which, if nothing else be adjoined, the life of such is but a smooth passage to hell.

Use 3. Lastly, this should teach us to consider, magnify, and admire at God's goodness, that hath given such a wisdom to us as this, to be a lantern to light our way in this dark world, and to be as manna to feed us, that we faint not in the way, till we attain to everlasting life.

The second general thing is, that there are children of wisdom, and that the word it is fruitful and able to beget; for it hath the Spirit of God accompanying it, which is fruitful. We see the sun and the rain beget herbs; trades makes men tradesmen, and arts artists; and shall we not think this

wisdom should make men wise, and this trade make a man fitting for work? Yes, verily. No wisdom hath this begetting and operative spirit but this; for the law finds us dead, and leaves us dead. Again, this wisdom is the arm of God to salvation. By it 'we are begotten to be sons of God by it we are children 'made like to God,' holy, pure, heavenly, begotten to his image; and therefore as children we ought 'to obey the word' in performance of all duties; of prayer, hearing, reading. Furthermore, in that we are scholars in Christ's school, which is wisdom itself, we may be said to be 'sons of wisdom,' as those were called the sons of the prophets that were disciples to them. Now our teacher is a mighty teacher. It is no matter for the dulness of the scholar, this teacher can put wit and capacity where none was formerly, Ps. cxix. 12. Moreover, if this were not thus, then it would come to pass, that there should be a time when there would be no church; that Christ should be a king without subjects, and likewise a doctor without scholars.

1. From the doctrine we may observe, therefore, that those that follow the best rule, which is God's word, and intend the best end, which is their own salvation, these are the most wise, for they provide for the worst times, as the ant for winter; and with the wise steward they provide themselves of friends, and like Joseph they lay up for dear years. These are wise that procure shelter for themselves against all dangers, and are fruitful in doing good.

2. And, in the second place, let this persuade us to attend upon wisdom, be we who we will be, a publican, an extortioner, a persecuting Saul. This wisdom will 'of stones raise children up unto Abraham,' Mat. iii. 9.

3. In the next place, observe the children of wisdom do justify it; that is, they receive it, approve it, defend it, maintain it; for it is fitting that children should stand for their mother, and take to heart any wrong that is done to her; and therefore the child of wisdom privately believes it, and loves it; and openly, if the truth or any ordinance of God or holiness of life be spoken against, he will defend and maintain it, yea, to the death; for wisdom, though with the loss of all things, is rich enough. So Moses esteemed the rebukes of Christ more than the pleasures of a king's court, Heb. xi. 25.

Quest. But must we maintain it, so as to speak for it always, and in all companies?

Ans. I answer, No, but when we are called to it. Wisdom dwells with the prudent; and where it is, it will teach when to speak, and what, and in what

manner. And the reasons of this observation are, first, it is fitting that God's children should concur in judgment with God, who justifies his wisdom in his children, and admires his graces in them, 'O woman, great is thy faith,' Mat. xv. 38; as contrarily he doth admire the stubbornness of the heart of wicked men. Secondly, wisdom in itself is justifiable; for it justifies itself; for it carries a justifying spirit with it. It hath a power able to change. In all estates it justifies itself; in trouble and anguish it comforts. Yea, in death, when all other wisdom perisheth, this raiseth up. It is powerful above the power of nature. It pulls down the proud heart of man in prosperity.

Quest. But it may be said, if it be thus, what need is there that the children of wisdom should justify it?

Ans. I answer, in respect of itself, it needs not our help to justify it; but in regard of others, to draw them on to the loving and embracing thereof, and in respect of ourselves, to manifest the truth of grace in us.

The church also justifies it by proposing it, and declaring the goodness thereof by defending it and commending it. Yet is it not above the Scriptures, no more than we are above the truth of God, when we are said to 'seal it.' Children we are of the truth, and desire to be ruled by it, not to judge it, and all children agree herein to justify it, as it is said here, 'Wisdom is justified of all her children.' Though there be of divers countries, of divers nations and natures, yet all agree in commending and embracing this wisdom; and thereby are they known to be children of wisdom, for hereby may we know what estate we are in, even by our carriage of ourselves towards wisdom. How many, professing to be the children of wisdom, do notwithstanding condemn it. Diverse abroad, whom wisdom shall not judge, but they will judge wisdom, and are indeed the children of human tradition. And among ourselves, are there not many that reject the ordinance of God? Is not, say they, reading of good books at home as good as going to church? Do not such confess that the rivers of Damascus are as good as Jordan; whereas, if ever we come from this spiritual Egypt into the land of promise, we must go over this Jordan. We must come to heaven by the foolishness of preaching.

Again, are there not many, because they see there is diversities of religions, they will be of none, till it be decided which is the truth, and this is the way to die in no religion. These are bastards. They cannot be children of wisdom, for they know it not; as likewise they are such that justify ignorance, making it the mother of devotion. They profess they are the children of ignorance and error, and not of wisdom. Another sort there are that in word

justify wisdom, saying it is the word of God, but in their life and conversation do deny it. Let such know, he that lives against the faith shall be damned, as well as he that believes against it. Good meat is commended more by eating and cheering than by talking. If such did truly believe the wisdom of God, it would purify them; and not to believe is madness; but to live so as if they believed not is desperate madness. The sinner denies God's presence, the covetous man denies God's providence, the despairing man denies God's mercy and Christ's merits, the sinner against conscience denies God's justice, else the terror of the Lord would move him. Yet if we see these things in us, and allow not of them, but condemn ourselves for them, God will be merciful and spare us.

This should encourage us, in the next place, to proceed on in a resolute course of Christianity. What though the wicked world laugh at us, and scorn us, God the Judge justifies us, his children justify us. As for other men, the Scripture calls them fools, for God hath given them over to a reprobate judgment in things that concern a godly life, and therefore if we be censured by such, let us account it our crown.

Moreover, this is a ground of exhortation, to move us to this duty of justifying the ordinances and ways of God in life and conversation. Justify Christ to be our Saviour by relying on him, and let the justified soul justify him to the world by repairing to him and depending on him. Justify God to be our Father, by repairing to him in all estates. Justify truth to be the best riches, by esteeming all other wisdoms dross and dung in comparison; and let us admire the goodness of wisdom, else wisdom will not lodge with us. Let it rule in our hearts, and it will abide with us; else it is a stranger, and will not tarry, In our days the voice of wisdom is heard. It uses all means. It hath sent men of all manner of conversations and gifts. Of all others, we are inexcusable if we entertain it not, and justify it not in our lives and conversations.

But it will be asked, How shall we justify wisdom?

I answer, Let us strive first to empty ourselves and souls of corruption. As a vessel full of bad liquor must be emptied before good can be put in, so we by nature are full of folly, and must empty ourselves before we can be enabled to justify wisdom; and in what proportion this folly is overruled in us, in the same proportion do we justify wisdom; for where wisdom is, it must dwell largely and purely; for itself is pure, and will endure no mixture. And therefore those that justify themselves in any ill course cannot justify

wisdom; for when it once comes to cross him in his beloved course, let his words be never so good, his folly will discover itself. 'How can you believe, when you seek for glory one of another?' saith Christ, John v. 44., Secondly, Beg of God that he would take away the veil of our hearts, that we may know and love the best things in the best manner; that he would open to us the wonders of his law.

Thirdly, Labour that all our knowledge may be spiritual, for if it be acquired out of books, and not written in our hearts, in time of temptation we shall never justify wisdom. This is evident out of the history of the martyrs. Many illiterate men stood out stiffly for the truth, and justified it with their blood, when many great clerks gave over their profession; for when the Spirit teaches, it teaches to obey, to want, to abound, and to despise the glory of the world. Spiritual wisdom brings humility, other wisdom puffs men up with pride.

Fourthly, Therefore we should pray for the Spirit of God, that it would settle and seal truths into our hearts, and teach us to obey and practise the things it enjoins us.

Fifthly, We should also condemn ourselves, and grow poor in spirit; for what justifying is there like to that of those that, being abased by outward afflictions, are likewise inwardly humbled; so, condemning themselves, they justify God's wisdom; and therefore those that either trust to intercession of saints or their merits, in vain they think ever to come to the performance of this duty.

Sixthly, Attend we on wisdom; for what is more excellent than it, and without it all are fools. Wise they may be for the world to get riches, while their end is condemnation and perpetual beggary in hell. Many are wise to get high places here, and witty to get a deep place in hell. They study for wisdom in the creatures, and when they die, their wisdom perisheth with them, and they want that true wisdom that should support them in death.

Seventhly, And endeavour we to be rooted in it, that we may be able to speak out of the power thereof in our souls, and to resist the temptations of Satan, with sound resolutions against them; and then when that day of revelation of all things shall come, Christ will own us, and justify us, when the children of this world shall tremble to hear that truth and wisdom condemn them perpetually, which here they hated and slandered.

Lastly, In all our wants and distresses, so carry we ourselves that we may show we have a Father to provide, a King to defend us in our desertions, that we have a Priest in heaven to make our peace, and in all temptations that we have a Prophet that will direct us in the right way unto heaven, in spite of the malice of hell itself.

## Mary's Choice

*Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, &c.—Luke X. 38-40.*

This history is absolute of itself. Christ having despatched business elsewhere, went from place to place to do good, it being his whole aim and office. And now divine providence and holy love directs him to these two women, who formerly had entertained him in heart, and now in their house; yet did he feast them more liberally than they could him. And yet so studious they were in his entertainment, that they fall out in a manner about it. Mary she sat at Jesus's feet, knowing his custom, that his lips did ever drop down sweet-smelling myrrh in his gracious words, as it is Cant. v. 13; and therefore she forgot all other things. But to come to some observations.

First, From the coming of Christ to these women observe, that where God hath begun grace, he will not discontinue, but will be perfecting of it till the day of the Lord; directing by his providence continually for their good, and sending his servants the prophets to that end; for God's providence extendeth to the least things, even to the hairs of our head, and to sparrows, Mat. x. 29. The use is to teach us to endeavour to be fruitful in communion one with another, if we profess to be led by the same Spirit that Christ is guided with. The lips of the righteous are pleasant, and their tongues are refined silver. Sometimes the sin of man makes instruction unseasonable, and to swine it is pity to cast pearls, Mat. vii. G. And many times men are deluded with a vain despair of not profiting by their speech, when no doubt if they did but trust on God in performing such duties, their exhortations or admonitions would take more effect than they look for, as oftentimes it falls out; for in man there is naturally a desire of good and profit. Sometimes a spirit of dryness possesseth good men. Christ had the fulness of the Spirit without measure, men have it according to their measure; and so through multitudes of occasions and businesses are overcome with a dryness, so as they can distil no grace as they should.

Against these we should study and consider beforehand what occasions we are most like to meet with; and study discourse fit for such occasions which we may best profit by. Study for sufficiency, that we may be like full

clouds, or as paps that do pain themselves with fulness, till they be eased of their milk.

Secondly, And lament over our deadness, and beg spiritual influence, that may make us willing.

Thirdly, And let all take Christ's example for a pattern, to draw others to heaven, and to be ever busied in our calling.

Fourthly, And we should also imitate Mary; be wise to draw from other men, when they are not disposed to enlarge themselves. The wise man saith he is a fool that regards not the price in the hand of the wise. There is none but excels in one gift or other; and it is part of the honour due to such to take notice of them, and to make use of them; and it is unthankfulness to let such persons go without regard of those gifts. Many no doubt are dead, and their gifts with them, which had men been wise might have saved others much labour and increased knowledge much, if they had been displayed to others. Furthermore, it is said that Mary sat at Jesus's feet, implying her composed and settled demeanour, which helps to a quiet mind and attentive heart; 'but the eyes of a fool are in the corners of the world,' Prov. xvii. 24, which hinders attention. But Martha was troubled about serving. Mark as in this good woman, so in many of her sex, goodness troubled with passion. She chides with Mary. The grounds of it in her were either a mistaking of Christ's disposition, whom she thought looked for much entertainment; though she was therein much deceived, for that Christ came to feast them, not to feast with them. And for this she is gently rebuked of Christ, as if he would have told her that it concerned the glory of God more nearly to receive and take notice of his diffused mercies; and God requires it rather than performance of any outward duty of love to him. But for the words.

Verse 41, 'And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha.'

These and the ensuing words contain, first, a reproof of Martha; secondly, an instruction of her; thirdly, a justification of Mary, with the reason thereof. In the reproof of Martha, consider the compellation, wherein observe the ingemination, 'Martha, Martha.' It implies lore that Christ bare to her. He calls her gently by her own name. Christ saw in her good mixed with ill, and therefore is not over-sharp or hitter to her. It implies also seriousness; and therefore Christ doubles her name, even as Pharaoh's dreams. Two aiming at one end argueth the thing is sure; and as 'Lord, Lord' in prayer argues vehemency, so he reprov'd Martha for her inconsiderateness, and

brought her thereby more seriously to ponder what she did. And Christ's example should be a rule to us, namely, in our reproofs, to imitate him who had all the parts of a good reprover.

And, first, we should be sure to reprove out of love to the party, else the proud nature of man will not endure it.

Secondly, It must be done in wisdom; first advise, then speak, else shame will return on us, and the other will be hardened.

Thirdly, It must be with liberty of speech. We must conceal nothing; and thus disposed was Christ. In him was the fountain of love and the treasures of wisdom; nay, he was wisdom itself, and he took liberty of speech. Though he was entertained, he doth not therefore sell his liberty; and though we say he that receives a benefit sells his liberty, but it was not so with Christ. Some there are if they give entertainment to a minister, they think they are bound to silence, and not to tell them of anything they see amiss in them; and therefore it was St Paul's wisdom not to take the offered kindness of the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 14, seq., lest he should be engaged to them. These things should be precedents to us, that we should be friends upon no other terms than to speak what is for their good; for some proud persons there are that think none friends but flatterers. Let us take heed of base engagements to such; for Balak will engage Balaam with gifts, if he can win him no other way to his humour. And it is reason that we should maintain this liberty of speech, for friends suffer disgrace for the folly of their friends. He that keeps company with adulterers shall be defamed, and therefore it is reason a man should have liberty of speech to reprove such.

'Thou art careful and troubled about many things:'

Not that Christ mislikes domestical business and hospitality; but by this Christ shows his pity of his troublesome cares and distractions, which might have been passed over with far less burden to her, and hereby therefore he took occasion to heal her error in judgment, who thought Christ came to be feasted when he came to feast them; as also that he might free her from that hard opinion that she began to carry towards Mary her sister, whom she thought either negligent or proud in not helping her. It is therefore a ground to be supposed, that hospitality becomes both men and women. It is a part of that calling God commits to us, and it is commended to us from the example of Abraham, and the event of it, that he thereby entertained angels into his house, Heb. xiii. 2; and in this place it is implied under the words

care and trouble, as if he had said, Thou dost trouble thyself too much, and more than there is need, giving us this lesson, Doct. That in things that are lawful excess is easy in holy persons, for what more lawful than a calling? What more commendable than hospitality? Yet in this Martha is too much troubled.

The reason is, because there is little or no fear of sin; and where there is least fear there is most error; and security breeds neglect, and therefore it is the common plea, for excess in recreations and apparel, is it not lawful? Yes; who denies it? But is there not a mean? Nay, in their calling here may be excess for there must be measure observed in them, and that is the reason no doubt.

And again, in lawful things defect in any one circumstance makes the thing ill, though in itself never so good, and therefore reformation of the state is good, but not by private persons. So here hospitality is good, but not when we should be hearing Christ speak. To a good action there is required not only that the nature of it be good, but that it be well done in every circumstance, for, failing, many, one makes it vicious.

Use. And therefore we should have a principal watch over our affections, and that in lawful things; for good meanings do not always justify actions. Christ was crucified, and the martyrs burnt; and the actors in it thought they did God good service, and shall this excuse? Peter had a good intent when he would have persuaded Christ from going to Jerusalem, yet received no better thanks than 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' Mat. xvi. 23. Therefore let us look in all our actions, how lawful soever they be, in the matter. It is not enough, but they must be lawfully done, according to the rule of the word of God, else it is sin to the doer, whatever his intent be.

In the next place observe from the translation of the words, which is more exactly thus: 'Thou troublest thyself', and true it is, that we bring upon ourselves oftentimes more trouble than God lays on us; and those that have lived any long time, if they advisedly consider of their labours past they shall find they may thank themselves for most of it; and in truth, without God's Spirit, we are self-tormentors, and our error is double in this kind; for either we pull too great burdens on us, or they being laid on us, we make them too grievous to be borne by our careless laying them on us, or by our unhandsome and unseemly carriage under them, as it is in ordinary burdens. Those that are skilful can carry a burden with a great deal less pain than another man can that wants skill, though it may be he be the stronger.

Secondly, And another reason hereof is in our froward pettish natures. An unmortified nature is like a sore, everything pierces to the quick, besides that it vexeth itself.

Thirdly, And this is caused partly by too much passion in us, and partly by want of judgment, and ignorance or not remembering the end and issue of them. Where these causes are, there cannot choose but be such effects. In the darkness everything scares us.

Use 1. Therefore let us take heed of this infirmity and never excuse it, saying, men need not care for me, I trouble none but myself; for thou sinnest against God, and thou art a sinner against the sixth commandment by self-murder in troubling thyself as well as by troubling others.

Use 2. Secondly, Let us not be over much troubled at troubles. Poor souls are much troubled this way. If they find but a little dulness of spirit, then they conclude they want grace, they are none of God's children.

Censure not yourselves, nor vex not yourselves. It made Jonah almost quarrel with God; and patient Job complain of his mother, of the day, of the night. Alas! what hurt did they him. And if we see others in this estate of censuring, vexing, or troubling themselves, censure not them rashly. The children of God are not always alike, nor always in tune; for a calm mind is a grace that God gives according to his good will and pleasure, and it ebbs and flows as he pleaseth. But to proceed; in the next place, observe that the things of this life, meeting with a nature not mortified, are subject to trouble it, and the reason is, they are inferior in themselves, empty and vain, giving no content, but bringing vexation, and are subject to mutability, and therefore not able to give the soul content, being of an higher nature, and more constant enduring, and therefore requires comforts and contents suitable, which these things, not able to afford, when they fail, as ever they do, the soul is vexed and offended.

For use thereof we should take notice of the nature of these things, and take heed of troubling ourselves about the things of this life. For it divides and weakens the soul; and the dividing of a river must weaken the force of the streams; and so Cyrus diverted the streams of Euphrates, and thereby took Babylon. And the soul, when intent upon one thing, though then it be strong, yet being turned to many things, is much weakened, and the forces thereof scattered. And therefore we should meddle only with things that concern us, and so much with them as is fitting.

Ver. 42, 'But one thing is needful.' Christ doth not only reprove, but he doth instruct. He shows the disease and the remedy, to show his love, and that his mind was not to gall or vex, but to heal and make peace. And this he doth by way of information, telling her these businesses are full of trouble, and not necessary, and therefore she was not to spend herself in them, but turn her to that one thing which is necessary, which is to communicate with God in the use of all sanctified means of grace. It is necessary to come out of our natural estate, and to be settled further into communion with God; and because holy means discovers our misery, opens a remedy, works grace in us to lay hold on Christ, therefore it is necessary also to attend on the means.

Quest. But it may be asked, What, are not meats and drinks, clothes and government in a commonwealth, are not these necessary? Wherefore serve callings? Nay, this whole life is a life of necessities, how then is there but one thing necessary?

Ans. I answer, It is true these things are necessary in their compass and sphere, for this present life, but this life itself is nothing without a better being, and we had better not be than be and not be translated hereafter to a better life, and therefore Christ applies himself to these means, as to that which conducteth us to that better life, which is only absolutely necessary.

Obj. But, it may be urged, is not Christ's righteousness, faith, God's Spirit, more than one; and yet are they not all necessary?

Ans. I answer, though they be diverse, yet they run all to one end. Even as many links make one chain, so all these tend to make a man one, that is a Christian; and therefore a wise soul considers them as one thing, and runs over them all at one view. He considers the word and the Spirit as that which, by working faith in him, brings him to Christ, who brings him to eternal glory; and therefore he doth not hear, to hear, but to be renewed inwardly, and so to have communion with Christ, and to attain to salvation; and therefore the word is called the kingdom of God, the word of reconciliation, of grace, of the kingdom, for by it we are conducted thither; and therefore, Acts xiii. 46, they that did neglect the gospel, which was the power of God to eternal life, are said to neglect eternal life. 'And therefore if we will ever profit by holy means,' consider them as chained to salvation; hear the word, and with it receive the Spirit, and with it faith, with it Christ, with him heaven and happiness. This is the one necessary thing, others are but accessory, and so we should esteem them. What is skill in reasoning, and not to be able to know the subtle sophistry of Satan? And to what purpose is

skill in healing of sickness of the body, and to have a soul sick to the death? Tongues are but the shell of knowledge; what good will deep skill in the law do us, if we be not able to make our title to salvation sure? What profit in ending controversies if we be not able to answer Satan's accusations and quarrels that he picks with us? And the reason is, all these are but for this life, short and uncertain. It would make the best of us ashamed, if we did but consider how little we live to God, or our own comfort, knowing many impertinent things, and yet are ignorant of this our only main thing, and die before we live as we should. But, for the avoiding hereof, let us carefully observe these directions.'

And first, Consider in everything what reference it hath to this one thing, what reference it hath to grace and glory. So long as we neglect this, the devil cares not what we have, whither we go, in what company we are; all is one to him.

Secondly, Carry ourselves respectively according to the necessity of the things that we are to be busied about, whereof some are more, some less necessary, according as they have more or less good in them. Those that cannot stand with this main one thing, cut them off, for other things that are necessarily required for our well-being in this life, as our daily bread, our callings in these, and the like.

Thirdly, Take heed of faithless cares, and beg wisdom to despatch business so as they prejudice not the main, and look still how they aim at the main end. As travellers and warriors do unburden themselves of things less necessary, so let us take heed of entangling ourselves in the cares of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. The covetous man labours for riches, others for pleasures, that they may live sensually, wherein they never can come to the degree of that happiness that brutish creatures do, that have them without care and enjoy them without fear; but for a Christian this is the whole, 'to fear God and keep his commandments,' Eccles. xii. 18.

Fourthly, In all business we should observe what the main end is, and labour to direct them to that main end. In baptism, the one thing there, is the covenant; in funerals, the one thing is a work of charity, to commit the dead body to the ground. Yet in these and such like things, all the time is taken up in ceremonious preparations. In our buildings and dwellings we look for good air, good soil, good neighbours, but where is the main? Who inquireth what minister have we? What means of salvation? Tush! this enters not into their thoughts; and thus do they invert God's order. So, in bringing up of

children, men look to teach them to read and to be fit for the course of life they intend they shall follow, and how to leave them enough to make them rich and great; but who desires and endeavours to have the image of God engraven in their hearts, and to provide an eternal inheritance for them.

Fifthly, Every morning we should consider what is most necessary for the day. Have we renewed our covenant with God and renewed our repentance? Have we armed ourselves by prayer against all occasions of temptations, and provided to avoid such as are likely to meet with us? Alas! how few trouble themselves this way. 'What shall we eat, drink, how shall we spend the time?' These things take up the minds of most; how to uphold a short troublesome life. And yet all their care cannot add one inch to their stature, or change the colour of a hair. 'But seek thou the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' this one thing, 'and all other shall be added,' Mat. vi. 33.

'And Mary hath chosen the better part,' and yet censured we see by Mary's example. It is the lot of God's children sometimes to undergo the censures of those that are good, for their forwardness; and thus did David's brethren censure David: 'We know the pride of thine heart; thou art come down to see the battle,' 1 Sam. xvii. 28. But let us be comforted, for as it often falls out that we suffer rebuke with Mary, so we shall have Christ to justify us as she had; and therefore, Use. Let us resolve with Saint Paid not to pass for the censure of man, but remember that day when God will justify those that are his. Here we pass through a hidden eclipsed glory, but the time will come that we shall be approved; and it shall appear then what we are. Let us learn innocency, that though we undergo their censure yet we may not justly deserve it, and then whatever men do deem of us, we should be encouraged to bear it, in regard our witness is in heaven, in our own hearts, and in the hearts and spirits of good men.

But to proceed: Christ takes Mary's part, and justifies Mary's choice to be the best; in handling whereof we will lay down, in the first place, some grounds that I will go upon, as first that there are diversity of parts, and diversity of ranks of good things; and of these some concern this life, some concern the other life; and of either of these God gives to some more, to others less. Some have the goods of this life in plenty, others are endued with the gifts fitting them for a better life, and thus God sets forth his free rule over all creatures, and his free liberty to dispose them as he thinks best; and

God exercises his children in the use of all sorts of things, and in discerning of things that differ.

A second ground is that there is a spirit of discretion planted in man, to discern of the difference of things, and this he is enabled to by the word especially, for man hath not this wisdom of himself.

Thirdly, The best things in our minds must challenge the chiefest choice and first place in allowing them, then trying them, and lastly choosing them. The good part here meant is grace and glory. This is that which Mary chose, to hear Christ speak for the strengthening of the graces in her, and that thereby she might assure her salvation to herself; and grace is good, because it makes us good. Outward things are snares, and makes us worse, but grace commends us to God. All other things are temporal, and death buries them, but grace and glory are in extent equal to our souls, extending to all eternity. Grace and the fruits thereof is our own; all other things are not ours. Grace brings us to the greatest good, and advanceth us to the true nobility of sons and heirs of God, and grace makes us truly wise. It makes us wise to salvation; it makes us truly rich with such riches as we cannot lose. Grace is so good, it makes ill things good, so as afflictions with the word and grace are better than all the pleasures in Pharaoh's court in Moses's esteem, Heb. xi. 25. Seeing it is thus, let us be animated by this example of Mary; and to that end, first, beg the Spirit of revelation to open our eyes to see the high prize of our calling, the happiness thereof; and to get a sense and taste of the pleasures thereof, that we may judge by our own experience. For the meanest Christian out of experience knows this to be the good part; and this it is which the apostle prays for, Philip i. 10, that the Philippians may approve the things that are excellent. The word signifies in all sense and feeling, to approve the things that are excellent, or do differ.

Secondly, Let us endeavour to balance things, by laying and comparing them together. For comparison gives lustre; and thus shall we see the difference and the excellency of some things above others, and the sooner be able to choose. Thus did David; and the effect thereof was this, 'I have seen an end of all created perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad or large,' Ps. cxix. 06.

Thirdly, Labour for spiritual discretion to discern of particulars. This is as it were the steward to all actions, teaching what to cut off, what to add. In all particular affairs of this life, what time and what place fitteth best, tells what company, what life, what way is the best. And when we have done this.

Fourthly, Proceed on and make this choice. If we do not choose it only, but stumble upon it, as it were, it is no thank to us. Though it be the fashion now-a-days; men read the word, and go to church; why? Not that they have, by balancing and the spirit of discretion, made choice of this as the best part, but they were bred up in it; and they went with company, and custom hath drawn them to it; they happen on good duties it may be against their wills; and this is the reason of those many apostates that fall off to embrace this present world, as Demas did, 2 Tim. iv. 10; for they not being grounded, must needs waver in temptation.

Fifthly, In the next place, when we have made this choice, we must resolve with a deliberate resolution to stand by this choice. It is not enough to make an offer, or to cheapen, as we say, but come with resolution to buy, to choose. So David, Ps. cxix. 30, 31, 'I have chosen the way of truth, and have stuck to thy statutes and ver. 57, 'I have said,' that is, sot down with myself, 'that I would keep thy words:' for the will rules in our souls. If we be good, our will is good. There are many wicked men that understand and are persuaded what is best; but for want of this resolution and will they never make this determinate choice; and many rail at good men and persecute them. Let such know that God will not take men by chance. If they choose the worst part, they must look for to reap the fruit of their choice. Assuredly God will not bring any to heaven, but such as have chosen it here, as the best part before they die; and therefore it is no matter what the world think or speak. Let us take up that notable resolution of Joshua, 'I and my house will serve the Lord,' Josh. xxvi. 15.

If we go alone it is no shame; but to such as should accompany us, let them flout at us, and call us singular. If there be any way to heaven, the straightest, and hardest, and least frequented is the right way. Let them take the delightful frequented broad way. Let us with Mary choose the better part. Though our choice be singular, it is Mary's choice. And take this as a sign that we are in the right way with Mary, if with her we still desire more and more growth in grace and knowledge, and never think that we know enough, that we are good enough, or faithful enough, and diligent enough in our ways.

Sixthly, In the next place, come we often, and sit at Christ's feet, as Mary here came to the ministry. 'He that heareth you heareth me,' saith Christ. Live under a powerful plain ministry.

Lastly, Labour to draw on others to this choice. By so much the more earnest endeavour, by how much the more we have been a means to draw them to ill heretofore, and this will seal up all the rest, it being a sure sign of our perfect and sincere choice.

‘Which shall not be taken away from her.’

The best things are diversely commended unto us, and here that good part is commended by the continuance, that it shall be ours for ever. The moans indeed shall end, for that time must come when Christ shall be all in all, but the fruit of them shall continue for ever in eternal glory; for hereby have we interest in the covenant, and the promises which are for ever assured to us, and the marriage between Christ and his church is an everlasting knot. We are an immortal seed. The image of God in our souls lasts for ever, and cannot be blotted out.

Secondly, Our choosing this good part is an evidence God hath chosen us; and once chosen, ever chosen. Our actions are but reflex. He chose us, loved us, knows us, and therefore we choose, love, and know him; and these being the gifts of God to us, are without repentance on his part. And who can take this part from us? God will not, for he is unchangeable. Enemies cannot, for, as Christ said, ‘My Father is greater than all,’ John x. 29, and Christ is Lord of hell and death. ‘What shall separate us? Not life nor death, principalities nor powers,’ Eph. i. 21. Nothing can be able to separate. By grace are we kept to salvation, ‘and by the power of God,’ 1 Pet. i. 5; so as we shall not depart from him,’ Jer. xxxii. 40. ‘The peace of God preserves us,’ Philip, iv. 7; and this should comfort us and establish us. We may lose wealth, friends, honours, health, by death. Those that have this ‘good part’ cannot lose it in all the changes that possibly can happen.

This also may justify a Christian in his labours. It is for the best part, that is everlasting, that which will accompany him in death. The wicked men of this world they labour and spend themselves in getting that which, as far as they know, the next hour they may be constrained to part with. They vex themselves with care in getting, with care in keeping, and with vexing grief in the parting from them.

In the next place, this should content them that are poor and despised in this world. If they have chosen this good part, they have that which will make them amiable in God’s eyes; and this riches shall no man be able to take from them; and hereafter their enemies shall be ashamed, when they

shall see these poor contemned ones to reign with Christ as princes a thousand years for evermore, and when they shall see those that were the rich men here to howl in perpetual misery. And therefore the consideration of this should encourage us to set ourselves upon the best things, and give no liberty to our consciences to rest till we have found that we have made this good choice; give our souls no rest till we have made an habitation for the God of Jacob in our hearts. In death we all look for comfort. Is it a time then to look for a choice? No. Men may show a desire to repent, but few do it in earnest. They then send for ministers, but it is in fear. Few such ever die with comfort. However God in his mercy dispose of them, it must not be thus. If we look for comfort in death, we should now get oil in our lamps, now get the means of salvation; be at charges for it; spare no cost or labour. It will quit our cost, and we shall find it. Use prayers privately by ourselves with our families; care not for the jesting of men. He that shall judge the 'quick and the dead' will justify us in that day, and will give us that good part that shall never be taken from us. But how shall we know whether we have chosen this good part? I answer, we may gather divers signs from what hath been said; as first, our affections and esteem will testify what is of greatest esteem with us, and beareth the highest place in our hearts. That thing we have chosen; and therefore, if we love the means of grace principally, if we can say, with David, 'that we love God's testimonies above silver and gold,' Ps. xix. 10, and admire at the value of them, oh! how wonderful are thy commandments! how sweet! how do I love thy law! as if we count the feet beautiful of the messengers of peace, and the communion of saints sweet, this is a sign we have made this choice. Otherwise, if we count basely of the ministry, of the saints as of vile persons fit for scorn, whereas they are 'precious in God's eyes,' Ps. cxvi. 15, whatever we say, we are proud, empty, and vain persons. Peter was of another mind, John vi. 68; and let not men think, because Christ is in heaven, they go not from him when they turn from the word, for Christ saith, 'He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me,' Luke x. 16. And because he would honour his ministers' and apostles' doctrine, he did accompany it with a more large portion of his Spirit working effectually than his own immediate ministry, as appeareth by the multitudes that his apostles did convert at one sermon. In the next place, examine we ourselves if we be willing to part with anything for the means of salvation; for if we love anything, and choose it, rather than we will part with that we will part with anything. If we love the pearl, we will sell all to gain it. Far from the humour of some, that will sell the pearl, sell the word, sell the care of the souls of men, to men of corrupt conversation for filthy lucre.

Thirdly, If we have made this choice, we will have confidence to justify it against all depravers Michal's scorn cannot put David out of conceit with his dancing before the ark of God: 'I will be more vile than thus,' said he, 2 Sam. vi. 22. In vain we think to scorn usurers out of their trade. No. They find it is sweet. Their purse comforts them against all scorns. Thus it is with the child of God. Let men scorn, censure, rebuke, they comfort themselves; as Job, 'their witness is on high,' Job xvi. 19, and that makes them not pass for men's censure.

In the next place, if we find that when all things fail us, we do retire ourselves to this as our stay, that, our good part shall not be taken away, nor ever will fail; and thus David, Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'My flesh and heart fail, but thou, Lord, art my portion for ever;' and make that use of it that David did: 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' As a man robbed of all his money, if his jewels be saved, he solaceth himself in them; and as Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 8, if we can appeal to God in witness of our sincerity, 'Lord, remember how I have lived, how I have served thee in uprightness.' Then shall we find the comfort of this will never be taken away from us, else if we cannot thus appeal to God, we may call and cry to him but he will give us but a comfortless answer: 'Go to the gods which you have chosen,' Judges x. 14, let the world help you, let pleasures and riches deliver you; you would not choose me while I gave you all blessings of life and health, now, 'Go, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41.

## The Christian's Watch

*Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*—Luke XII. 37.

These words are part of a sermon that Christ made to his disciples concerning worldly cares, and concerning mercy to those that stand in need. Now in the last place he gives directions concerning watching: 'Blessed are those servants that shall be found watching when their master cometh.'

It was the custom of servants in those times to stand at night to watch for their master's coming.

Here Christ compares himself to a man that is lately married, solacing himself, and preparing a place for his spouse, and leaving a servant at home to wait for his return. Christ is gone into heaven to solace himself, and to prepare a place for us, and will come again to receive us into heaven. In the mean time we are to watch: 'Blessed are those servants that are found watching when their master cometh.'

In these words we are to consider, first, our relation, that we are 'servants.'

And then our condition, we are servants appointed 'to watch for our master's coming,' for our Lord is not yet come.

This life is a condition of waiting. We are always waiting for something, till we are taken up to Christ.

'Blessed are those servants that their lord shall find watching.' And then there is the relation and condition of them also, they wait for the return of their master. And their carriage is suitable, to wit, watching.

And then the encouragement, 'Blessed are those servants, that their Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.'

1. Concerning the relation of servants, in a word, some are so by office, as magistrates and ministers; but all are servants as Christians. It was the best flower in David's garland to be a servant to the Lord; and it is so for every

one, be they never so great in dignity, to serve God; for to serve him is to rim into the most noble service of all; for all God's servants shall be kings, nay, they are kings.

And then it is a rich and most beneficial service; for we serve a Lord that will reward to a cup of cold water. It is not such a service as Pharaoh's was, to gather stubble ourselves; but he will enable us to do, and where we fail he will pardon, and when we do anything he will reward, and when our enemies oppress us he will take our parts.

Observe here how the Scripture speaketh, when we are servants, but do not our duty, and when we do it. When David had committed that sin in numbering the people, he said to Nathan, 'Go tell David,' 2 Sam. xii. 1; but when he had an intent to build a temple to the glory of God, then he said, 'Go tell my servant David,' 2 Sam. vii. 5. When we are doing our duty towards God, then we are his 'servants,' but when we are about other service, God will not own us. Israel were the people of God when they were good, but when they committed idolatry, then, 'Go tell thy people,' saith God to Moses, 'that thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt,' Deut. ix. 12. Let us therefore remember that we are God's servants, and if servants, then God will own us.

2. Now to go on: 'Blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.'

We see here that there must be a constant waiting and watching for the coming of the Lord; whence we may learn that it is the duty and office of every Christian constantly to watch and wait for the masters coming.

Watching, you know, presupposes life; and hence first waking and then watching.

Sense springs from spiritual life, and then waking. All that have spiritual life are not all watchers, and all that wake do not watch. Waking is when the spirits return into the senses, and are in exercise. You know sleep binds up the senses; but when the spirits return the obstruction is dissolved.

And then there is waking when all the powers are in a readiness, and when there is a discession of vapours that stopped the senses before.

So, then, waking is the return of the spirits, either by some motion, as stirring up the body, or by some great shining light. So it is in the spiritual life. The vapours causeth sleep, but the Spirit of God, scattering a light, awakens us. By this light is meant either the light of his judgments, or the light of his mercies, or the light of divine truth; for by all these sometimes we are awakened.

There is first a waking condition, and then we watch. I intend to speak of watching. Now waking is a preparation to this.

‘Watching’ is when upon waking all the powers and graces are in exercise, preparing for good and avoiding of evil.

Now, for bodily watching, we have nothing to do with that here, because here it is spiritually meant; but yet taken so far as the body is an instrument of the soul in the action both of soul and body. As, when the body is surprised with any inordinate affection of the blessings of God, then the soul is unfit for watching; and therefore it is specially meant of spiritual watching.

In the primitive church, they had watchings bodily and spiritually; for, being under the tyranny of the heathen emperor, they had not liberty to serve God in the day. But afterwards they had their vigils, watching times, called vigils, preparations, which were before the word and sacraments, or when there was any great business in hand. And when superstition grew, they had their vigils too; but they made laws to bind the people to observe them three times in a night; but their prayers were in Latin. It was a perverse imitation of David, that rose at midnight to praise God; that was when he was stirred up upon some extraordinary occasion, when there was some danger or some other occasion near, not that he did it ordinarily. But we are fallen into a contrary course than the ancient church was, to spend whole nights in prayers; for we have those that spend whole days in sleep. We cannot watch one hour with Christ; but we can spend whole nights in vanity.

Duct. That which I mean to stand upon at this time shall be this: that the carriage of a Christian in this world is an estate of watching till Christ come home.

I will show this by some reasons why it should be so, and give some directions how we must be in a waking condition.

Reason 1. The first reason is this: because we are in danger of sin, and in danger by sin. This occasions watching, especially being ever in danger of sin; and besides many other sins, that sin of drowsiness, deadness, and heaviness of spirit; for every man by experience finds this spiritual drowsiness hanging upon him sometimes more than other. Therefore we ought to have the soul in a better condition.

And then we are in danger by sin, and that is more than I can express; for by drowsiness oftentimes we fall into sins whereby we offend God and the good angels, and give Satan advantage, and grieve the good Spirit of God, and put a sting into all other troubles. Yea, sin makes the blessings of God which we enjoy, no blessings, and hinders us from praising God as we ought for his blessings. So that thus we may see we are in danger to sin and by sin. Therefore we have need to keep a spiritual watch.

Reason 2. Again, consider in what relation we are in this world, and what the life of a Christian is compared unto. We are travellers through our enemies' country. This is Satan's place where he reigns, being 'god of this world;' therefore we had need to have our wits and senses about us.

And then again, the worst enemy is within us, our own hearts; which joins with Satan to betray us to the world, he being the god of this world.

Now carrying an enemy in our own bosom, therefore we need to watch, for that is the condition of travellers through their enemies' country. We also carry a jewel, a soul, a precious jewel in a brittle glass. If once the vessel break, all is lost.

Reason 3. And then again, we run in a race. Now those that run need have the goal in their eye, the price of their high calling; they had need look upon that which may encourage them. And of all men runners need be watchful. We are all runners; therefore you see the necessity of a watch.

Reason 4. Again, our whole life is not only a race but a warfare. And of all conditions a warfare needs watching; for we have enemies to fight against that never sleeps. Satan our enemy never sleeps, 'but goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter v. 8. We sleep, but Satan sleeps not, nor those that are his instruments. The poor disciples slept, but Judas slept not. The traitors of the church sleep not, the poor disciples they fall asleep, and suffer Christ to manage his own cause. They have a time, and

they will be sure to take it. We being therefore not only runners in a race, but born fighters, for every Christian is born so, therefore we must needs strive.

Now the strongest enemy is in our own bosom. Satan is said to depart from Christ for a time, but he never departs from us. We have an enemy, that is, corruption, which hinders us from good, and taints that good we do. We carry corruption in us that seeks to betray us, and will give us no rest at all.

Reason 5. Again, not only thus, but we are all also stewards, and we have all of us ‘talents,’ of which we are to give an account. Now an estate of account ought to be a watchful estate.

We are all subject to give an exact account of that we have done in the flesh. Being therefore to give a strict account, we ought to be watchful.

Reason 6. Again, men that are under observation need be watchful. Now there is no Christian but is in perpetual observation, for there is in him a conscience. Though it be asleep for a time, yet that conscience will awake and stare him in the face. You know what is said in Genesis of Cain, ‘Sin lieth at the door,’ Gen. iv. 7. Conscience, like a sleepy dog, lieth at the door, and will fly in our face when we are going out of this world, and then it will be a heavy time. Thus we are in observation of conscience within us.

We are likewise in observation of Satan, that watches all whatsoever we speak or do.

And then God observes all that we do. All our sins are written with a ‘pen of iron,’ that they can never be gotten out of the soul without repentance.

If conscience fail, yet God will not fail. Therefore, being under observation, we had need be watchful.

I hope there is none that will deny this, but that they ought to watch.

Now, beloved, since our life is a vigil, a watching time, a warring time, and a race, we are therefore to stand in perpetual watch.

Let us now consider how we may be stirred up to watch. I will not speak all that may be said, but only give you a few things to show you how we may keep the Lord's watch.

1. And that we may keep it the better, let us labour to have waking considerations, that we may preserve our souls, because consideration is a help to watchfulness. Know and believe that there is a God that watches, and an enemy that watches, and that conscience will do his office first or last; to know and believe also that there is a day of judgment wherein we must answer all that we have done.

2. Again, consider the end wherefore we live here; and let us also consider how 'suitable our actions are to that end, and whether they be for our good and the salvation of our souls.

3. And then to have a waking consideration of the presence of God, as Job had. 'Shall not God see if I do thus and thus?' Job xxxi. 4. And so Joseph, 'How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God,' Gen. xxxix. 9. The eyes of the Lord goes through the world, seeing the good and bad. He hath an eye that never sleepeth. His eyes see into the dark thoughts of our hearts and sees our inward thoughts. All is naked to his eyes. Now the consideration of this may make us watch over our secret sins. What saith the heathen by the light of nature? What if thou hast nobody to accuse thee? Thou hast a conscience and a God that sees thee. Think then when thou art in secret, that thou art in the presence of God, who is a judge. Consider of this, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. St Paul was kept in a watching condition by the consideration of this: 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;' knowing also that it will be a terrible day, 2 Cor. v. 11. And when Solomon would study an argument to startle young men, 'Go to, young man, take thy pleasure; but for all this, remember God will bring thee to judgment,' Eccles. xi. 9.

To this waking consideration add some further considerations.

4. The fearful condition, to be found in an estate wherein we are not fit to die.

A man is not in a good condition that is not fit to die. Add this also, that our life is short and uncertain. Now for us to live in an estate that we are not fit to die in is a fearful condition. Let us therefore take heed of promising mirth and jollity to ourselves to-morrow, for that may be the time of God's

striking of thee. And that which he hath done to some may be done to thee. Ananias and Sapphira were stricken suddenly. The same may befall thee, and that resolution of thine in vain and sinful courses may be the time that God will take thee.

I might add many more; I only give you a taste of things. In a word, 5. Labour for such an inward disposition as may dispose us to watchfulness.

Now, there are two affections, when they are raised, will much help us, to wit, fear and love. See Jacob, when he was afraid of his brother Esau, he spent the night before in prayer and watching. Let us therefore labour to preserve the affection of fear, and in fear, the fear of reverence to offend so gracious a God. And let us watch over our hearts and lives, and labour for the fear of jealousy, because we have hearts subject to betray us.

‘Blessed is the man that feareth always,’ Prov. xxviii. 14; and ‘make an end of your salvation with fear and trembling,’ Philip, ii. 12. What fear? The fear of jealousy and reverence; for there is a great use of this fear.

Now if these will not prevail, then fear the day of judgment, and fear hell, if we will fear nothing else.

It is the atheism of these times to stand in awe of nothing; but he who hath a fear of reverence and jealousy is fit for all things. Besides, fear stirs up care, and care stirs up duty; for he that is afraid to offend will be careful to avoid offence and also to please.

So the affection of love; for as the soul is raised to the love of God and Christ, so it will be watchful.

This is a sweet affection, and keeps the soul watchful over any thing that may displease the person whom we love.

And then it is full of invention, how he may give content to the person that is loved, and how to keep the soul in the presence of God. We never sin till the soul is drawn away from this, and we never have the soul in a better tune than when we are thus. We need therefore to wind up our affections every day. An instrument, though it be never so well in tune, let it but alone, it will be out; therefore it must be tuned every day. So we should deal with our souls, and when we find our affections to be down, wind them up with waking considerations; and let us do this daily, because they are ready to sink

to present things, we are so nusselled up in them. Those, therefore, that wish well to their souls, had need to wind them up, because they are for another world. And withal, labour to be wise and foresee; that is, to know ourselves both in good and evil, to know what we are naturally prone unto, and wherein we are subject to be overtaken, and then what hath done us good, and wherein we have been overcome. There is no creature will be taken in a snare if he see it. The dull ass, you cannot drive him through the fire. But man, since his fall, though he hath been caught, yet such is the pleasure of sin, that he will fall again thereinto, whereas he should be wiser than a dull beast.

Add hereunto, to have a soul fit for all advantages of doing good; let us labour for this, whereby we may know how to judge everything in its own worth, that so we may affect it. Oh that hereby the soul may be raised up, otherwise it will fall. To know God in his greatness, Christ in his goodness, the world in its vanity, and sin in the danger thereof, will be means to stir up the soul to watchfulness. So long as the judgment is in a good frame, so long the soul will be fit for anything. And when we have advantages to anything, let us study how we may turn it to God's glory; and let us redeem those advantages, for this is one exercise of watching to observe all advantages tending to the glory of God. It will grieve us one day, when we shall see at such a time we lost such an opportunity of doing good, and at such a time neglected such a duty; let us therefore labour to have such a disposition fit for all advantages, considering that this is our seed time. But, alas! how many advantages do we lose in not taking good and doing good!

And let us be wise to see what hinders us from doing good. As, too much business about the things of this world, as if we were born for them, whereas the Scripture limits our care for earthly things, telling us that we 'should use this world as though we used it not,' 1 Cor. vii. 31, but that we may enjoy these things here; but we must use them so as we may be wise unto salvation. Take heed 'of surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this world,' saith Christ, Luke xxi. 34. For when men are plunged in the cares of this world, they have their hearts eaten up, and thereby they lose many advantages of doing good and taking good. We should therefore labour to be in such a disposition that we may take heed of all hindrances. And we ought to do this, because our life is a warfare. We should therefore divide the day, and keep a daily watch.

First in the morning begin to awake with God before the world or the flesh thrust in, and bethink of all that may befall us that day, of all the dangers, of all the troubles; and we should likewise think with what armour we need to encounter with those accidents that may befall us. And then get provision, that whatsoever happens unto us, all may be for our good; and then let us consider how we stand prepared, and where we are like to be surprised strongly, there to prepare. And withal, before we set upon any good thing, let God have the first fruits of our time, and the first fruits of our hearts; let him have the first of the day by prayer, that when at any time we fall into any sin or affliction, we may not have cause to say, we have not commended ourselves unto God, and therefore this evil hath befallen us.

And this will be a comfort to us in all the actions of the day with this resolution. This is my comfort, I have commended myself and my prayers to God, and have set upon the day with this resolution, to do nothing that may offend God or a good conscience, and to regard no iniquity in my heart, but to pass the day under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty. We should labour to be in such a disposition as this; and afterwards in the day let us do nothing wherein we conceive God will not protect us; as in any evil way, for it is a fearful condition to be in any such, God not being in that place.

And then upon occasion be sure we carry a heavenly mind in earthly businesses, whereby we may serve God better, and fear him more; for there is nothing falls in this life, but a gracious heart may draw out somewhat of it to make his heart more religious. And to think with ourselves God hath set us in this place, and therefore we do this work.

Many other things may be given, but I name but some. So for recreations, in those whettings be watchful, especially above all things where we are ready to be surprised, as in prosperity. Therefore the Lord commands his people, take heed when thou art in the good land that floweth with milk and honey, that thou forget not the Lord thy God, Deut. iv. 9. Job knew this; therefore when his children were feasting, he offered sacrifice for them, lest they should dishonour God in their hearts, Job i. 5. It was a gracious heart in holy Job so to do. We should in like manner be watchful over ourselves, especially in that we are most prone to be overtaken in; and we should be watchful over ourselves when we are alone, for every man cannot use privacy well. Therefore our sequestration from company we should use in holy meditations. We should be watchful in that, because the devil is busy still. Oh

when we are sequestered from others, our thoughts are a fit shop for the devil. Take heed, therefore, of privacy and idleness.

And so for company, by which we may either do good or receive good; for that is a great help to our watch—company—for one strengthens another, as stones in an arch. God hath sanctified the communion of those that are good for the strengthening of others. And therefore the Scripture saith, ‘Stir up one another, and exhort one another,’ Heb. iii. 13.

If we could account religion a serious thing, as it is, we would not hear these things as strange things, but we would think of them seriously, and practise them affectionately.

And so likewise, when we are to pass the occasions of the day, we should make use of that time we have spent, and go over all that we have done that day again. As God did when he created the world, he viewed all that he had done again. And let us not suffer our bodies to rest till our consciences are assured our sins are forgiven. Oh, it is dangerous to go to bed with a guilty conscience; for what do we know whether we shall see the world again or no? Let us therefore be sure to watch over this, and let us renew our resolution for the time to come. And if we find God’s assistance and blessing upon our labours, then let us watch unto prayer, together with praising of our good God, observing all advantages of prayer and praises.

Now when we have observed in some measure that God hath been with us, then it is good to watch that God may have the honour by it.

3. Beloved, if this be so that we must take this course to watch continually, then mark what Christ saith, ‘Blessed is he that is found watching so that blessing goes along with watching. And by this blessedness, Christ encourageth us unto watchfulness. Those that keep their souls in a watching frame are blessed. Who saith this? Christ. He speaks and says, ‘Blessed are those servants that he shall find watching when he cometh.’ They shall be blessed in their life, and blessed at their death especially. Then we should give our souls to watching, because there is a meeting of all when he comes to us in death; for then we give ourselves to him.

Besides, look we to our former course of life, and to the glory that remains for us, and to Christ that is in heaven ready to receive us, and then to commit our souls to him; and to take heed of Satan’s temptations, that we despair not thereby; and then to watch, for then Satan must have all or lose

all, and so to end our days. Christ came to some in the first hour of the watch, to some the second, and to some the third hour of the watch; but happy is he that, when Christ shall come, he shall find watching. It is therefore good for young men to watch; but especially when men are in a declining age. It is good for them to watch for Christ's coming, because it cannot be long before he comes to them. Christ may come to the young and middle age, but those that are in the declining part, they should watch especially.

Beloved, Christ is come to us, and we every day go to him, for every day takes away part of our life. We should therefore every day fit ourselves for going to him by death. Our life should be nothing but a fitting ourselves for him; and what is good at the hour of death is good now. We have no security of our life. There is not the worst man but will then wish he had abstained from such and such courses. Do it now.

Beloved, I exhort you to nothing but that which is fit for us, namely, watchfulness; and what is watchfulness but a frame of soul fit to meet Christ. When our faith and hope, and our love about the object, and all the graces of the soul are fit, a man is as he should be.

It is the happiness of a man to be in an estate of well-doing; for what is the estate of heaven? Nothing but so; and to be watchful is the most excellent of all. Therefore as we ought to be watchful at that time, so now.

Now for preparation to the sacrament, let us consider with whom we are to deal. We are to receive Christ; we are to feast with Christ. Natural wisdom teaches us, when we have to deal with great persons, to labour to have a suitable carriage, not only to speak that which is good, but to do it in all the circumstances exactly and comely. Let us so labour to come as we should do, by preparing our hearts, hungering and thirsting after this blessed means, and to come with hearts kindled with the love of God and Christ, because he gave himself for us; to come with hearts enlarged with thankfulness, and with holy resolutions for the time to come; and look better to our walking in the strength of that receiving. Now forty to one but Satan will set upon us: let us therefore especially watch afterwards; for when the devil knows we have gained any thing in the word and sacraments, by base thoughts, by base company and loose carriages, he seeks to overthrow us; let us therefore not only watch before, but after we have received, that we lose not the fruit. It is not the action that saves us, but the well-doing. 'Let a man therefore examine himself, and so let him eat,' 1 Cor. xi. 28: for as blessed is that servant whom

his Master, when he cometh, shall find so doing, so blessed is that receiver whom the Lord shall find holy in preparation, holy in person, and holy in carriage.

## The Coming of Christ

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments close, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*—Rev. XVI. 15.

We spake the last day concerning watching, out of the 12th of Luke and the 37th verse, ‘Blessed are those servants whom their Master, when he shall come, shall find watching.’ We will now go on in the argument a little, to add somewhat to that which hath been spoken, out of this 16th chapter of the Revelation, the 15th verse, being my present text.

‘Behold, I come as a thief in the night. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments close, lest he walk naked, and be ashamed.’ After the sixth vial was poured out upon the enemies of the church, these words are brought in somewhat abruptly, out of Christ’s care and love to his poor church in times of danger, ‘Behold, I come as a thief in the night.’

You have in the words a prophetic premonition of watching and keeping our garments close, lest men walk naked, ‘Behold, I come as a thief.’ Beloved, Christ’s coming is compared to the coming of a thief:

How comes a thief? He comes secretly and unexpectedly; secretly, lest he be discerned, and then with all advantages of surprisal, that he may not be taken himself while he is taking others. So Christ is said to come to judgment. He comes suddenly, and unexpectedly, and with a purpose to surprise. When people will take no warning, he watches the time of their destruction, so that here you have ‘the goodness and the severity of God,’ Rom. xi. 22; first, his goodness is showed in that he will give warning in all dangers; but here is his severity also: when warning will not be taken, then he comes with judgment. The scripture runs thus, ‘Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,’ Amos iv. 12; but when nothing will do, neither judgments nor mercies, then it is just with God to come with all advantage to our overthrow, as a thief in the night.

Comparisons usually are to be taken from that which is usually done, whether good or evil; for the goodness or badness of a thing is not regarded in comparisons.

The Spirit of God makes use of all things, ill things and good things. You see the diligence of the devil and the Jesuits, those old Jews and Pharisees that go about sea and land to make a proselyte. Why should not we be as diligent as they? A gracious heart will take good of them from their industry.

Christ here says 'he will come as a thief in the night,' and this his coming is by reason of our unfaithfulness. And his coming is sudden, unless to some of his children that he prepares by warning.

When he came into the world at his first coming, there were but a few 'waited for the consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25: the rest did not. So when he shall convert the Jews and judge the world 'Shall he find faith upon the earth?' Luke xviii. 8. When he comes to any man or nation in his judgments, doth he find faith? No; he finds them blessing themselves that to-morrow shall be as to-day. Beloved, let us take heed; for there be divers degrees of Christ's coming. He comes to a person, and comes to a nation. We here in this nation bless ourselves when all the world is in combustion and we are safe; as the three children in the fiery furnace. We bless ourselves, and cry, 'The temple of the Lord! Oh the temple of the Lord! but go to Shiloh, and see what the Lord hath done there,' Jer. vii. 12. Go to Bohemia, go to the Palatinate, and see what God hath done there. Oh, how should our hearts be awakened with the consideration of this, when we have such fair warning, and when the judgments of God are abroad.

But mark the prophecy spoke by Enoch, which was a thing to come—he was the seventh from Adam—'Behold, he comes in the clouds, with thousands of his saints,' Rev. i. 7. This prophecy was five thousand years ago, yet 'Behold, he cometh in the clouds.'

It is the nature of faith to answer all relations of God's dealings. That which God prophesies of, it is as sure as if it were past; so faith is affected with it. In matter of judgment, faith is affected with sorrow, and affected with a waking heart; in matter of joy, it is affected with delight. Alas! what is the difference of time between us and the last coming of all? what is this little distance? It is nothing. Therefore, 'Behold, I come as a thief in the night; blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments close.'

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, here makes use of this his coming to stir us up to watch.

All that have spiritual life, labour to be waking Christians and then watching Christians. That which usually awakens is the noise of a trumpet, or some shining light. Now, living in the light of the gospel, and under the sound thereof, this should awaken us; if not this, the noise of the judgments round about us should. If ever we will be waking Christians, now is the time. And it is not enough that we be waking, but watchful Christians.

What is the difference between men, but that carnal men are sleepers, and spiritual men are waking? And what is the difference of Christians that are good, and that are not? The one is a watchful Christian, and the other not so. Wherein is one better than another? As the one is more careful to avoid sin than another. A weak Christian being watchful is better than a strong that is not so. See the difference between David and Joseph. Joseph was a servant tempted to folly, yet in the midst of his youth he avoided the temptation. David was a grown man, a holy man, a man of many experiences of God's mercies; yet you see with how small a temptation he was overtaken, because he was not watchful. So that thus Christians differ from themselves and others, as they are more or less watchful.

To come therefore to some directions how to carry ourselves, and among others remember this: we should have this waking and watchful consideration, that we have a soul immortal, and that we are for eternity; and whatever we do in the flesh, that shall be ever with us; and how that shortly we are going to the tribunal seat. In all these respects we should labour to be watchful at all times, because that time in which we take liberty to ourselves may be the time of our surprisal. We should therefore watch at all times, in prosperity and adversity. We should watch against all the sins of our persons, and the sins of the state we are in.

Moreover, we are not Christians indeed but when we are waking and watchful Christians, and we never live indeed but when we are watchful; neither can we give so good an account of our time.

Besides, if we use this course, we shall bring our souls to that awe as that they shall not dare to offend God, by reason they must come to be examined. And how will our souls be willing to be judged before Christ, when we are unwilling to set ourselves before ourselves? If we use this, it will bring a holy awe upon our souls, because they know they must come to examination for every sin.

But mark what follows: 'Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments close, lest he walk naked.'

Watchfulness is for action; as 'Watch unto prayer,' Mat. xxvi. 41, and 'Watch unto thanksgiving,' 1 Peter iv. 7; as he saith here, 'Watch to the keeping of your garments close.' Now, this keeping of our garments close, is somewhat alluding to the ceremonial law; as if their garments were spotted, or as if they had touched some unclean body.

By garments here is meant, first, the keeping Christ close to the soul, and together with Christ all that is in him; for as a Christian is clothed with Christ, so also with his satisfaction, obedience, and righteousness, for Christ is given of God. Let us therefore keep our garments close; and not only so, but apply Christ for our sanctification. Put on the Spirit of Christ, and keep the soul in a holy frame. And keep not only the righteousness of Christ, but the holiness of Christ; and put on Christ, with the expression of his life in our life and conversation; as we are said to put on a man, when we express him in our life and conversation. And then keep Christ with his obedience, and keep him with his Spirit, with a holy desire to express him, keep all things close; and with Christ all the good we have by him, by using all means. Keep truth and our profession; keep the obedience of Christ and the graces of Christ; keep the Spirit of Christ and the truth of God, whereby all good is conveyed, and the profession of that truth keep unspotted. The danger is, 'lest you walk naked, and you be ashamed.'

You know sin and shame came in together. Adam was not ashamed of his nakedness till he saw it, and then he was loathsome to himself when his conscience was awakened; so it is sin that makes us ashamed. Therefore 'keep your garments close.' To come to that I mean to speak on, the words being clear, 1. First, Know we have no garments of our own. No man is born clothed; but God gives him wisdom to make use of all creatures for ornament for. him, notwithstanding we are born naked.

Now, it is thus in spiritual things. We have no garments of our own since the fall; but before we had. We have none now but original corruption, that spreads over the soul. Besides that, men living unto years have another nature worse than the leprosy, custom. Here is all the clothing we have of ourselves; but for any spiritual good, we must fetch it from Christ. Since the fall we must have all our garments out of another wardrobe. That is here supposed that we have no garments of ourselves; and therefore 'Buy of me,' saith Christ, Rev. iii. 18.

2. Now, the second thing is this, we having none of ourselves, therefore we must have garments; and when we have them, we must keep them clean and close: 'Blessed is he that keeps his garments close.'

For the first, being born naked, there is a necessity for modesty to have garments to cover our shame. When God saw Adam naked, he would make him garments himself rather than he should be naked. There must be garments for defence; so in spiritual things there must be garments to defend us from the wrath of God, else we be as naked to God's wrath as a man in a storm being naked lies open to the storm.

We must have garments of amity and friendship now. Being to entertain friendship with God, we must have something applied to us and wrought in us by the Spirit of God; for whatsoever is of Christ is amiable, because he is the only beloved.

Again, we must have garments for distinction. Now, garments do distinguish Christians at the day of judgment, for then God looks upon us to see what we have of his image; and if he find us in ourselves and not in Christ, then we are condemned with the world.

Garments that are coverings must be all over of equal extent. They cover the whole man. So head, hands, and heart, all must be sanctified as well as justified. So that those that look upon a Christian should see nothing in him but somewhat of Christ, his words, his callings, his thoughts. And as a man sees nothing of another man outwardly but his apparel, so the whole conversation of a Christian should be nothing but the expressing of Christ. He should speak by the Spirit of Christ, do all that he doth by the Spirit of Christ. We must labour to be 'wholly sanctified,' as the Scripture phrase is, 1 Thes. v. 23. There is an expression of this in the 2 Chron. xviii. 33: 'A certain man drew a bow, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.' There was some small place open, and that cost him his life. Let a man's profession be never so great, and let him have good expressions thereof, if there be any place for Satan's entrance, he will be sure to wound him in that place. So that by this you may see there must be an universal clothing.

And we must be clothed not only with garments, but armour, because we live in the midst of our enemies; by which we may perceive the necessity of the putting on of the one as well as the other.

Now, as we must have garments, and must keep them close, so also we must keep them from stains. The persons where these graces are, may be defiled, but the graces are pure. We should therefore labour to keep our actions unspotted. The reason why we should do so, among many other, is this, we live in a soiling age. The holy prophet could say, 'I am a man of polluted lips, and live among men of polluted lips,' Isa. vi. 5. We are defiled with corruption, and that soils all our actions; and therefore we ought, as much as in us lies, to keep our nature unspotted. We are polluted ourselves, and we live among men that are polluted. We live in an infected air, therefore we ought to keep our garment close, unspotted, and safe. Beloved, nothing will do us good but the application of things. All the virtue of things without us is conveyed unto us by application; therefore as the garments of a Christian are precious, so they must be applied. We must keep them close, and we must labour for the spirit of faith and of all graces. The truth must be engrafted into our spirits, that the word may be an engrafted word; for being from without us, we never have them to do us any good without the application. Therefore watchfulness is put before: 'Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments close.'

The righteousness of Christ is an excellent garment, but it must be put on; and if we have Christ we have all. We will speak a little to show you what is the reason men are tempted to despair, viz., because they keep not the garment of Christ clean, and close to their souls by the spirit of faith, for then the devil gets in between them and Christ. When garments are not close, the wind gets between them, or else perchance they fall off. So here we must labour to keep our garments close, and to renew our right in Christ every day, that we may not fall away utterly; and that is the reason we so often take the sacrament to strengthen our faith, by which we are ready against all despair, and against all the temptations that Satan can administer; and so we have all necessary graces ready. We have our hope ready to set our souls quiet; our preparation to endure is ready; our meekness and our love is ready. 'Put on love,' saith the apostle, because it is the uppermost, the largest, and the richest garment; and set all other graces on work, as meekness, patience, &c., Col. iii. 14. "We should therefore labour to have these graces ready, that is, by watching; for watchfulness is nothing but to have grace in readiness. And we have opportunity every day for one grace or other; but when we have them, we must keep them close by watching.

And so for truth, by which all comfort is conveyed unto us. When that is ready we are able to withstand temptations, but when that is to seek, mischief

is ready to surprise us. Now if the word were engrafted in our hearts, then we should have some divine truths upon every occasion, and we should be ready against every sin, as Joseph was. We should therefore labour for this spiritual leaven, to season all other truths, that we may savour of them in all our thoughts and actions, and so shall our garments be close about us. There is another thing intended in this Scripture. These are dangerous times, and there are spiritual cheaters abroad in the world. Therefore we should keep our profession close, and keep our truth and our judgments close, and get love into our affections; for we shall be set upon, and if we walk at large, then heretics and seducers will come between us and salvation, because our garments are not close. What a deal of loose profession have we! Were it not for authority that establisheth it, how many thousands have we would fall off? and all because they keep not their garments close. They fasten not truth to their souls. Their garments are loose about them, that so hereby the Jesuits have some points ready to fall upon by reason of unready Christians for so they are taken. Therefore, 'Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments close.'

So it is in the life and conversation; for in all men sin and corruption are ready, and where truth is not invested grace is not in the heart, but only in the brain. Some have some knowledge of things, but it is not ready, and hereupon they yield unto any temptation.

Now you have many halts in religion between God and Baal, between Christ and Belial. Our religion, beloved, must be our house. It is that with which we must cover our souls. We must build upon a rock, and our profession is our building, and the soul must not be so unsettled or loose, as not to know whether it should serve God or Baal.

If a man will have any good by religion he must cleave to religion. No loose profession shall ever come to heaven; for with the mouth we must confess, but we must believe with the heart to salvation. You have a company that think they may be saved in any religion, but the Scripture is directly for those that follow the best. Therefore we must take heed of unsettledness in religion.

And so in conversation men think they may be ambitious and unjust, and good Christians too. This loose profession never doth a man good; for we cannot join Christ and Mammon together. God will not be served with others. He will be served alone. He must be set up in our hearts and souls, and nothing with him. 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thee

safe,' 1 Timothy vi. 20. Even so that truth that is committed to us, and that sacred depositance, let us keep safe and close; for if we keep truth, truth will keep us: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I will keep thee,' Rev. iii. 10. Oh but, saith some, if I keep truth I shall fall into this danger and that danger. No; but because thou kept the word of my patience, of all others thou shalt be safe. Therefore keep that as a jewel.

'Lest they walk naked, and men see their shame.' All shame arises from this, that we do not keep our garments close. So long as truth and Christ by truth have a place in the soul, so long we are safe. You see Adam could not be prevailed over till he wrung the truth from him. Then he stripped him of all God's image. When the children of Israel had cast their earrings into a calf, it is said the people were naked, Exod. xxxii. 25. So people when they keep not their garments close are naked. What make men loathsome to themselves? He hath in the eye of his soul his sin and his base courses. He hath not kept grace close in his heart, and that makes him naked. A man that hath grace in exercise he is a lovely object to himself, when he shall think with himself of his courses, how he hath abstained from such temptations, he is refreshed in the remembrance of them, as good Hezekiah said, 'Remember, Lord, how I walked before thee in truth of heart,' Isa. xxxviii. 2, seq.

A gracious man is lovely to himself, and sin makes him loathsome to his soul, and afraid of his own condition.

Now to give some directions how to keep our garments close.

1. First, Labour for convincing knowledge, because all grace comes into the soul by the light thereof. Grow therefore in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and often propound queries to our judgments about the word and sacraments. Am I able to maintain this truth I have been brought up in? And do I find them true to my soul, &c.

There is scarce any point of religion but hath this savour in it. And who finds not this, that our nature is prone to the contrary? But when a man finds this, that he can justify things from experience, he resolves with himself, I know this, not because I have been taught it, but from experience I know it.

And so peace and joy that ariseth from judgment. I know I have found peace and joy in believing. When I was in a desertion, and when my conscience was awakened, I found this a comfortable point upon experience.

By this means a man shall not easily fall from this truth. As for example, 'All things work together for the best to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28. Few can by experience speak this, I have found God at such a time making this good unto me. But a Christian man can absolutely say this is true by experience. Wherefore we should beg of God that he would engraft his truth into our soul; for this is the promise of grace, that he will teach our hearts, not our brains.

Christians are taught of God to love one another, therefore we should beg this of God. If that we will keep our garments close, we must labour every day more and more to grow in all grace, and then we shall have graces ready upon all advantages, and we must desire God to bless the words and sacraments for this end, and to use our profession as it should be, not to have an upper garment, to cover a naughty heart, but to labour more and more to put off the old man, and not to make religion a cloak and veil of hypocrisy; for besides all the sins we have, to make religion serve our turns, it makes our sin the greater.

When a man's religion shall be a cover to his sinful courses, that increases his sin, and makes his sins abominable.

'What hast thou to do to take my word into thy mouth, and hatest to be reformed?' Ps. 1. 17. 'Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness,' Mat. xxii. 13.

It is a good phrase that is used in the sixth of the Romans: 'Let us be cast into the mould,' Rom. vi. 17. We must fit ourselves for the word. That is the mould we must be cast into. If we hear any duty, say, 'Lord, fasten my soul to this duty, and when we are fastened to divine truths, then who shall come between truth and us, when truth is engrafted in us? But when it lies loose in the brain it may be removed, but when it hath gotten into the affections, who shall get Christ thereout.

A good conscience is a casket to keep divine truths in, and when we have gotten soul-saving truths, let us keep them by a good conscience.

Do nothing against the truth. Keep it in love. The affection of love must keep it.

If we have religion only in the brain, and not in love, we shall be stripped of all. Satan will rob us of any truth. Therefore it would be a great

advantage for the putting on of Christ, if those that are young would labour to know all the points of religion betimes, that so they may get them rooted in the soul, that they may over sway our lusts, and strengthen the soul against temptations.

What is the reason many begin not to be religious till they be old? They have not divine truths engrafted into their hearts. They have a great advantage that are seasoned from the beginning; for that strengthens the soul against temptations. And if they fall into any sin they can recover themselves, because they have truth within them, and they are the readier to give way to any good counsel, because there is somewhat therein that will answer.

We must earnestly labour that the soul may be open to all divine truths, and then our hearts must close with them, so that thereby we may have comfort in all temptations, that when sickness, Satan, and the hour of death approaches, our knowledge fail us not, being rooted in our hearts.

And then we shall keep it in our affections, whereof love is the seat. In the Thessalonians, because they 'kept not the truth in the love of the truth,' they fell into gross errors, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Whatsoever, therefore, we know to be good, we should get it into our affections. Love all that is supernatural, keep all graces, and be in love with every one of them, as you have it, 2 Peter i. 5, seq. There is a furniture of graces, that if a man have one he must have another. We must keep all our graces, we must not lose one. Every part must be clothed. We must be clothed in our understanding with knowledge, and in our will with obedience, and in our affections with love. Our tongue must not only be clothed with good words, but we must labour that our hearts may be clothed also.

2. Those that will have good gardens will have flowers of every kind, so a Christian must have graces of every kind. When Ahab was killed there happened a weapon to strike through the joints of his harness, and killed him; to what purpose was it for him to have harness with loose joints? He should have had it complete. So we must have complete armour, and not any grace in part. We must not be right in opinion, and loose in action; not hot in affection, and weak in judgment. We must put on whole Christ for justification and sanctification, and we must add grace to grace; and when we have put on every grace we must keep them clean, and not defile our profession. Beloved, Christian religion is a pure religion. We must therefore keep our judgments pure, and we must take heed that we be not tainted with errors.

And as we judge, so we must affect and practise. If our judgments be naught, all is naught.

A Christian owes a due to truth; his understanding is a spouse to truth; he must not therefore cleave to this opinion and that opinion, but he must keep close all graces. In our place we must stand for the truth; and as Jacob's sons strove for the wells, so we should strive for the truth, and not incline to any schismatical or heretical opinion. What a poor thing were it for a man to drag an excellent garment through some sink-hole! Sure every man would say he were mad. Now, we have an excellent profession, and shall we suffer it to be stained? What is religion, but to keep ourselves unspotted of the world? We should therefore hate the garments spotted with the flesh, Jude 23. We should do with religion as we do with our clothes; he that is a neat man will not endure a spot upon his clothes. Beloved, shall we have such a garment, and care no more for it? Shall we care for our outward garments, and shall we endure spots in our profession and in our understanding?

We live in a leprous time, wherein men are spoiled in their affections, and are of a devilish disposition, hating God; whereas we ought to be of holy profession and conversation. A Christian should be glorious, for he hath a dignity above angels. Now, for a man that is a Christian to be failing in justice, what a shame it is! The very heathens abhorred this; and shall a Christian be no better than a pagan? Let us take heed of this our profession. And when we do anything, let us reason thus, Is this becoming my religion? and say thus to ourselves, I should walk worthy of Christ, and as it becometh the gospel; for what is the ornament of a Christian but the graces he hath? All the beauty we have is to be religious.

You know if a man be clothed we can see no deformity within him; so a Christian should be pure, that we may see no deformity in him, but all things that are pure; we should see Christ in his conversation. Indeed, we should all labour that the Spirit of Christ may speak and act; for every Christian hath the same Spirit that Christ hath to clothe his soul withal; therefore nothing should appear in him but Christ; the Spirit should so shine in him that all might appear glorious...

Shall that man look to have benefit by religion, who is a deceiver, a liar, a loose speaker? Is this to be clothed with the Spirit of Christ? Some men are of malicious minds, hating God and goodness; and yet they will take it as a great indignity to them if they should not have the title of Christians. But you see what they aim at; they know they should keep all their garments close,

and that they should labour to fasten them upon their souls; that they may say of themselves as the church in the Canticles, 'My beloved is all fair,' v. 16; and as the mould gives the true impression of the print, so he may be all fair, not only having the righteousness of Christ, but may have some grace in all the parts of his soul.

We are clothed when we have the love of all grace and a desire to some of all grace; and when we complain that we are no better; and when we endeavour after all that is good, that wherein we fail we may comfort ourselves with this, that though our sanctification be imperfect, yet we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is the evangelical clothing.

This is a point of great consequence, that we have some evidences. We have put on Christ for our clothing, else there is no grace. Where there is faith to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, there is likewise grace suitable; and as our souls desire both, so he gives both: he gives the righteousness of Christ and the Spirit of Christ. And then we may know we are clothed, if we have the righteousness of Christ.

And again, if we have a high esteem of that above all, as Paul had in the Philippians, iii. 8, 'I account all things dung and dross in comparison of Christ,' for all our righteousness is but as a 'polluted cloth,' Isa. xxx. 22.

A Christian hath put on Christ when he admires the righteousness of God-man; it is a righteousness of his own appointing and sending; what a high esteem therefore should we have of this!

And then we may know we are clothed when we love Christ, because our sins are forgiven. In the 7th of Luke, ver. 47, it is known that Mary put on Christ, her love being such unto him because her sins were forgiven by him.

And then, when we have faith to believe this, that Christ is ours, and when we have boldness to go to God in our mediator's name, and can triumph over all our enemies, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's people?' Rom. viii. 33. Out of the knowledge of this, that Christ died for me, and is now in heaven making intercession for me, I can triumph over all enemies. Alas! Satan will pick a thousand holes in our righteousness; but when we can look upon death and the day of judgment, and not be

discouraged, it is a sign we are clothed. Let us therefore keep our garments close.

And let us make this use of our daily sins. Every day let us renew our right in Christ by repentance, saying thus, This day I have forfeited all, but now I will regain my right; there is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1.

The 'second Adam' takes away all sin; and therefore when we can make daily use of our justification, it is then a sign we live by faith. This is to feed upon Christ, when we feed upon his obedience.

The life of a Christian should be to live by faith. This use we should make of our daily infirmities, afflictions, and sins, to keep our garments close.

How doth Satan draw the souls of many to hell? When Christ is loose in their understanding, then the devil comes between them and their garments; and when conscience feels the weight of sin, and hath nothing to support it, then Satan robs them, because they want the spirit of faith.

They which walk in white here, shall walk in white in heaven; they which go on constantly here, they shall at the length walk in heaven with more white eternally with Christ.

Now let us see our danger. If, on the contrary, we keep not our garments close, 'we shall be found naked.' Now, nakedness is a woeful condition; it is a curse. Therefore, when we are to appear before God, let us labour for the Spirit of Christ, that when Christ shall come to judge us, he may see his own stamp upon us.

And let us consider what a shame it will be unto us at that time if he shall find us naked.

What a shame is it to be a worldling! that when Christ is not upon our affections to turn Demases, as Demas followed Paul but afterwards embraced the world, 2 Tim. iv. 10; or, at the hour of death, what a shame is it that whereas many men went for religious men, but for want of keeping their garments close they then want comfort; and at the day of judgment shall be ashamed before God, angels, and men.

Let us therefore labour to make Christ ours, that then we may live clothed and die clothed; and then we shall be blessed: 'For blessed is he that hath Christ upon him here; he shall be blessed for ever hereafter.'

## The General Resurrection

*Jesus saith to her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. — John XI. 28, 24.*

Having formerly spoken of the communion of saints, now we come to speak of the other two blessings and benefits which the Lord doth give and grant to the church in the life to come. The one whereof is, 'the raising of our bodies at the last day,' the other, 'life everlasting;' which be the blessings he hath reserved till the day of judgment, wherewith he closes up and makes an end of all, and yet not a final end with them, because they shall have no end, for the Lord will bestow eternal happiness on them; which day, though to some it shall prove a doleful day, yet it shall be joyful to the church of God, even a day that they have many a time looked for and desired.

In handling whereof, we are first to consider the order of God's distribution, who giveth us first the blessings and the benefits of this life, and then those of eternal life. Now that which is the order of God's distribution, must be the order in our intention. We must labour to have communion with the saints here in this life, to have our sins pardoned, and then the Lord will raise up our bodies at the last day, and give us life everlasting; which, if we omit, we can have no hope to rise to everlasting life, but to perpetual shame and contempt. Therefore we must labour to entertain the communion of saints here. It is said, Rev. xx. 6, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath his part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death shall have no power.' Thus he is a blessed man that in this life rises out of his corruptions and sins, for on such a one 'the second death hath no power,' otherwise one must be held captive of the second death: for if one make a bargain, and giveth somewhat in hand, having received earnest, he looks for the bargain; even so the Lord hath made a bargain with us, to give us heaven and happiness, whereof, if he give us earnest in this life, the communion of saints, and the forgiveness of sins, then we may look to have our bodies raised to life everlasting: otherwise raised unto the second death.

Now in this great point of faith we are to consider divers particulars: the first whereof is, Point 1. That we believe, although we shall be laid into the grave, and dissolved into dust, yet one day we shall rise again by the power of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection. This is the proper faith of a

Christian only; for heathens believe that they shall die and turn to dust. The Christian goes further, and believes to rise again; which is clear and manifest, both 1, By Scripture, and 2. by reason.

1. First we will prove it by Scripture, John v. 28, where Christ having spoken of that great work of raising up dead souls from the grave of sin to the life of grace, by his quickening and powerful word in the ministry; lest it should seem strange unto them, fetches a comparison from the resurrection of the body to life everlasting. 'Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation.' So Dan. xii. 2, 'And many of them who sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and perpetual contempt.' So 1 Cor. xv. 19, St Paul says, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable;' and then adds, ver. 21, a strong reason, 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order,' &c. And Acts xvii. 31, he shows why all men are commanded to repent, everywhere: 'Because,' saith he, '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.' In another place he says, Acts xxvi. 15, making it the issue of his believing of all things in the law and prophets, 'And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.' Christ's threatenings to Chorazin and Bethsaida, Mat. xi. 22, show that there shall be a day of judgment: so he threatens, Mat. xii. 86, 'But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' And he proves the resurrection from an instance of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he being their God, 'who is not a God of the dead, but the living,' Mat. xxii. 32, which also made the prophet Isaiah comfort the people: Isa. xxvi. 19—in that desperate estate of theirs, wherein they appeared as dead men without hope of recovery—from the similitude of the resurrection, 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my body shall they rise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' Many other strong proofs there are, both direct and by similitudes, besides the proof thereof in Christ, Enoch, Elias, and others. But I will pass them over, and end only with that one of St John's vision, Rev. xx. 12, 'And I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was

opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.' And, therefore, seeing all things are come to pass which the Scripture hath foretold, and shall come; and seeing God is true, faithful, and almighty in power to do whatsoever he will: we may then also be sure of this, that God will raise again the dead at the last day.

Secondly, Thus much is proved by reasons of divers sorts, five in number.

1. From the power of God. 2. From the justice of God. 3. From the mercy of God. 4. From the end of Christ's coming. 5. From the resurrection of Christ.

(1.) [Power of God.] For the first Tertullian says well, 'It was a harder matter for God to make a man, being nothing, out of the dust of the earth, than now, being something, to raise him up and repair him again'. And he who spake the word, and made this great frame of heaven and earth, is able also, by his power, to raise up the dead at the resurrection; which made Christ, in that disputation with the Sadducees, Mat. xxii. 29, reprove their ignorance in this point: 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.' Now of this, when we are once soundly convinced, then we can believe, and say with Job, 'I know thou canst do everything, that no thought can be withholden from thee; who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?' &c., Job xlii. 3.

(2.) The second is drawn from his justice; for it is agreeable with his justice, that those who have been partakers in good and evil actions should participate in suitable rewards and punishments; but the bodies of men are partners in good and evil actions with the soul; therefore the Lord will raise up both, to reward and punish them, according as they have done good or evil. Tertullian saith, 'We must not think that God is slothful or unjust; 1, We may not think that God is unjust to reward the soul and destroy the body, or punish the one, and not the other; but he will raise up both, to reward both together, according to their sufferings and misdeeds. Again, we must not think him slothful, that he will not take pains to raise up dead bodies; no; he is indefatigable, not subject to any weariness. It is but for him to speak the word, think the thought, will it to be, and all shall be done.'. So, in regard of his justice, the body must rise also.

(3.) The third is drawn from the mercy of God, which is infinitely more in him than in us, extending itself in a large measure unto all. Now this mercy is in men, that, if they could raise all the dead bodies of their friends, they would do it. But the mercy of God being infinitely more than all our compassion can be, extends therefore itself to all the souls and bodies of men, to raise them up again, and perpetuate them; wherein, if the wicked had not forsaken their own mercy, they might have had joy and comfort with the rest. For this cause Christ tells us, Mat. xxii. 32, 'that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' not the God of the dead; for if it were so, then he should be only a God of one part of Abraham, and not of the other; but he is the God of both, therefore he will raise both soul and body at the last day, and the dead shall rise.

(4.) Fourthly, From the end of Christ's coming, as it is 1 John iii. 8, 'For this purpose appeared the Son of God, that he might loose the works of the devil;' for the devil first brought in sin, and sin brought death. This was the great work the devil aimed at, to bring in sin and death; and therefore Christ coming to dissolve this great work, amongst the rest, which is not done unless there be a resurrection of the dead. Therefore the dead shall rise again.

(5.) The fifth is drawn from the resurrection of Christ; for Christ did not rise as a private person, like unto the widow's son, and as Lazarus did, but he rose as the public head of the church. St Paul says, 'that he was the first fruits of them that slept,' 1 Cor. xv. 20. So, in the rising of Christ, all the people of God rise, and that which went before in the head shall follow in the members, as Augustine speaks. And Cyril saith well, 'that Christ entered into heaven by the narrow passage of his sufferings and death; by his death and resurrection to make a wide passage for us unto heaven'. So in Christ's rising we rise. Here one may object, Oh, it was an easy matter for Christ to rise, because he was God. I answer, true; but as God-man, sustaining the burden and weight of all our sins, it was not so easy; for when we are laid in the grave, we have but the weight of our own sins to keep us down. Christ, he had the sins of all the elect people of God upon him, and therefore it was a harder matter for Christ to rise again than we suppose; and yet he broke through all, and rose again; therefore do not thou doubt but that he will at length raise thee again. So Christ's promise is, 'When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me,' John xii. 32; only our care must be to have communion with Christ in our life and death; to live as he lived, die with him, he in the grave with him, be as near in life, and lay our dead bodies as near his as may be, and then, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, as it

is in Col. iii. 1, 'then shall we likewise be raised up, and appear with him in glory.' Otherwise, we shall be raised, but unto all sorrow and misery in eternal torments, not as unto a head, but unto a terrible judge; where, when one hath lived a thousand years, they are as new to begin again; and so be tormented world without end. Now divers objections are made by atheistical persons against this main point of faith.

Obj. 1. The first is a common one, How is it possible, say they, that a body which hath lain rotting a thousand years in the grave should rise again, so turned into dust?

Ans. I answer, Though it be above reason, yet it is not against reason; for we see that the flies that be dead all the winter time, when the summer cometh, with the heat of the sun, they live again; so the corn rots in the ground, and revives again. Now if with the heat of the sun the one may be done, much more is the power of God able to raise up those who have lain in the grave a thousand years, to live again.

Obj. 2. Secondly, say they, It is impossible for men to rise again, because their dust is so mingled one with another, and with the dust of other creatures, as in a churchyard, where dust is mingled, one cannot well say This is the dust of my father, or This is the dust of my mother, things being so mixed; as, take a quantity of milk, and put into the sea, there both remain in substance, but so mingled, as that they cannot be parted one from another; and so, say they, it is with dead men, whose dust is so mingled together, as it is impossible to part them.

Ans. To this I answer, 1. In general, though it be an impossible work for man to do, yet it is not impossible for an Almighty God, unto whom all things are possible, it being an easy matter for him to give to every man his dust again, and sever it one from another, even as a man who hath a handful of divers seeds in his hand can easily distinguish and take one from another, putting each sort by itself again. We see that there be some men so cunning and skilful, that they can draw out of an herb or flower the four elements, fire, earth, air, and water. Now if so much cunning and skill may be in a man, how much more able is the Creator of men, who is only wise, of an all-seeing eye, to sunder every man's dust, and to bring them together again?

Obj. 3. Oh but, say they, what say you to this? When one man eats another, then that man's flesh becomes one with another man's flesh; in which case, if the one rise, the other cannot. To this I answer, Ans. It is true

indeed, one man eating another becomes a part of the other for the time; but yet he was a perfect man before he ate of the other, and the other a perfect man before he was eaten. Now it is a truth in divinity, that every man shall rise with his own flesh; but a man shall not rise with everything that was once a part of him. As, for instance, if a man have a tooth beaten out, and another come in the room of it, he shall not rise with both these; so likewise a man hath a piece of flesh stricken off with a sword, and new flesh comes in the room of it, he shall not rise with both, but with so much as shall make him a perfect man. Even so, though one man eats of another man's flesh, he shall not rise with that, but with so much as shall make him a perfect man; neither shall he who was eaten want anything of his perfection at the resurrection.

Obj. 4. Lastly, They bring one Scripture in show against us, and but one, which is this: 'That flesh and blood,' as the apostle speaks, 'cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,' 1 Cor. xv. 50. To which I answer, Ans. The meaning is figuratively spoken; that is, flesh, as it is corrupted and sinful, clothed with infirmities, and subject to mortality and death, so it shall not enter in. So this is expounded, Heb. ii. 14, 'Forasmuch, then, as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through the fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' Therefore it is meant of flesh and blood in this transitory life, subject to infirmities; thus it shall not enter into heaven. And thus have we despatched the cavils of the atheists, against all which this point stands sure and firm, that the dead shall rise again.

Use 1. Seeing the dead shall rise again, therefore though we die as others do, and are dissolved into dust, yet to be comforted, in regard that this is the worst our sins and the "—world can do unto us, to take from us a frail natural life,—which, when they have done, it shall be restored unto us again in a far more excellent manner,—this, in all distresses and troubles, must comfort us, as it did Job, xix. 25, 26: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' This also supported David, Ps. xvi. 9: 'Wherefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices; and my flesh also resteth in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave: neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' And so Christ himself says, Mat. xx. 19, unto his disciples: 'The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to scourge and to crucify: but

the third day he shall rise again.' Now that which comforted Christ, Job, and David, must also comfort and support us in all crosses and troubles that befall us; for death, the seeming worst of things, shall prove advantage unto us. It was a comfort unto old Jacob that the Lord said unto him, 'Fear not, go down into Egypt; behold I will be with thee,' &c., Gen. xlv. 3. So faith in death hears this comfortable voice of God, Fear not to go into the ground, to sleep in the grave a while; for behold I will go down with thee, keep thy ashes there, and raise thee up again; for death dealeth no otherwise with us, than David did by Saul when he was asleep: he took away his spear and his water-pot, which he restored unto him when he was awake. Even so death, he takes away our spear and our water-pot, our strength and a weak frail life, and when we awake again it is restored at the day of refreshing in a more excellent and more abundant manner.

Use 2. Secondly, Seeing the dead shall rise again, this must comfort us in regard of our dead friends departed, that although death have sundered us for a time, yet. we shall all meet together again. So Martha here: 'I know that my brother shall rise in the resurrection of the just;' and, 1 Thes. iv. 14, the apostle saith, 'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;' and then he adds, ver. 18, 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.' Chrysostom says well, 'If a man take a long journey, his wife and children do not usually weep, because they expect his return ere long home again'. Even so it is, our friends who die in Christ, they are gone but a long journey, we must comfort ourselves that we shall meet again.

Use 3. Thirdly, Seeing the dead shall rise again, this must make us careful therefore to spend our time well whilst we are here; for if a man did not rise again, he might live as he list; but because we shall rise again with these bodies which have sinned, therefore we should be careful to pass our time here in holiness and righteousness, which is the use St Paul makes of it, Acts xxvi. 16, that because there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, 'herein,' saith he, 'I endeavour myself to have a clear conscience towards God, and towards man.' So should we in this case do. When Peter heard it was the Lord who was near him on the water, he girded his coat unto him, for he was naked. One would have thought that rather he should have put off his garment and have laid it aside; but Peter had this consideration, that when he came on the other side he should stand before his Master, and therefore he girded himself, that he might stand seemly and comely before him. Even so, seeing when we have passed the glassy sea of

this world, we are to stand before God, therefore we are to have this consideration, that we gird ourselves and make everything ready, that we may come seemly and holily before God at the last day.

Point 2. The second main point is, that we believe that we shall rise again at the last day with the same bodies. So Job xix. 25, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the last on the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.' And Ezek. xxxvii., there is showed that life and sinews came into the same dry bones, and flesh grew upon them; which, though it be a parable, yet it enforceth that that which falleth being dead, shall rise again, because the strength of comfort therein set forth unto his people, is taken from the similitude of the resurrection. So Revel, xx. 12, John saith, 'And I saw the dead both great and small stand before God,' &c. Thus Tertullian says, that 'he will pray that the same body may rise again; for the resurrection is not of another body, but of the same that falleth: not a new creation, but a raising up'. St Jerome says, 'that it cannot stand with equity and right that one body should sin and another body be punished'. Neither will a just judge suffer a victorious person to die and another to have the crown of his deservings. Therefore the same body that sinned shall be punished, the same that hath gotten the victory shall be crowned, and that same body shall rise again. We see in Christ's resurrection, the same body that was wounded, the same body did rise again; he could, if he had pleased, in three days have cured his wounds, seeing that he could heal all sicknesses and diseases with a word, or a touch, but he let them alone to confirm his disciples, and to show that he had the very same body which was crucified. Thus Thomas was bid, John xx. 27, to reach his finger and behold his hands, and reach his hand to put in his side, whereby appeared the same body and wounds remaining. Therefore, as in the head the same body which died rose again, so shall it be with all his members. Against this doctrine there be some objections.

Obj. 1. The first is out of 1 Cor. xv. 44, where it is said, 'that it is sown a natural body, but is raised a spiritual body,' so it is not the same body that riseth again. To this I answer, Ans. That it is not spiritual in regard of substance, but in regard of the estate and condition which they shall be in; for a natural life is upheld by the use of meat, and drink, and sleep, physis, and rest, but then our bodies shall be upheld by the power of God, without the use of these means. Now our bodies are heavy, but then our souls shall

be full of agility and nimbleness to move upwards or downwards at pleasure swiftly, so that it is a spiritual body, not in regard of substance, but in regard of quality and operation.

Obj. 2. Secondly, Say some, if the same bodies shall rise again, then they rise with a number of needless parts; for what shall a man need teeth, seeing they shall eat no meat? What shall they need a stomach, seeing there shall be no concoction or digestion? and what, shall a man need bowels, seeing there shall be no redundance to fill them?

Ans. Augustine shall answer for me: saith he, 'Concerning the teeth, they shall be needful and useful then, for we have a double use of them: they serve to eat with, and they are to further our speech, and therefore, though we shall have no need of teeth in regard of eating, yet we shall have need of them to speak with, for in heaven we shall praise God, and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. And as for the other parts of the body, they are, saith he, for sight and comeliness; for though there be no need of the stomach to concoct, nor of the bowels because there is no redundance, yet these shall be as ornaments to the body, to adorn and beautify it. For as there be some things not needful now save for ornament, as a man's beard and his breasts, which have no other use save this, even so, though we shall not need a stomach to concoct, nor bowels for redundance then, yet shall they be for an ornament to man.

Obj. 3. Thirdly, It is objected, the same bodies do not rise, because they be heavy and ponderous; for how, say some, should heavy and weighty bodies stay above the clouds in the pure heaven, which is purer and thinner than the air? To this I answer, Ans. (1.) That if a man may fill a great vessel of lead, and make it swim above the water, by drawing the air into it, why then may not God draw his Spirit into us, and fill us so with it, as to make our heavy bodies abide above the clouds, as well as a man to make a vessel of lead swim above water?

Ans. (2.) Again I answer, that everything abides in his own proper place at God's appointment. As, for example, the clouds are heavy and wet, and therefore would fall down to the ground, but that God hath appointed the air to be the proper place of them, where therefore they abide; so likewise the water would be above the land, but that God hath limited the proud waves to a confinement, where it must rest and advance no further. So, it being God's appointment which makes anything to remain where it doth, though contrary to the nature thereof; therefore, because heaven is the proper place of a

glorified body, and earth of a mortal body, the same bodies shall remain here until the day of judgment, after which, being made glorified bodies, they shall remain for ever in heaven, the proper place of their assignment. The uses are, 1. First, That seeing we shall rise with the same bodies, therefore we must be careful to keep them well, that they be pure and unspotted, without sin. It is Paul's conclusion, 1 Cor. vi. 18, 'Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body: but he who committeth fornication sinneth against the body.' So, because our bodies shall rise again, let us fly every sin and corruption, and keep our bodies unspotted, that so they may be presented before Christ holy and pure at that day. For what a shame will it be to stand before God in judgment, when we have wronged and grieved God by our sins; when our heavenly judge shall say unto us, Are not these the eyes wherewith you have let in lust and looked after vanity? are not these the tongues that ye have told so many lies with? are not these the mouths wherewith you have sworn and blasphemed my name? are not these the hands you have wrought wickedness with? are not these the feet which have carried you to sin, vanity, and disorder? And then how shall we be able to answer the Lord! Therefore let us be careful to live well, and keep our bodies unspotted, that we may have comfort at that day. We read, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8, when Jehoiachim was dead, there was found the characters, marks, and prints of his sorcery; howsoever during his life he, being a king, bore it out, and kept it close; yet, being dead, there remained the prints of his abominations found on his body. So, howsoever sinners may hide and conceal their sins here, and deceive the world, yet when they be dead there shall be found the marks and prints of the foul sins that they have committed; therefore keep we our bodies pure and unspotted against that day.

2. Secondly, Seeing the same bodies shall rise again, therefore we should depose and lay them down well at the day of death, to die in faith and repentance. We see if a man put off his garment, and means to put it on again, he will not rend and tear it off his back, but pull it off gently, brush and lay it up safe, that so it may do him service again, and grace him before his friends. So, seeing our bodies are as a garment for our souls, when we put them off, let us labour to depose and lay them down well at the day of death, that they may do us credit at the day of judgment. We read, 2 Peter i. 14, saith he, 'I think it meet, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in mind; seeing I know that the time is at hand that I must lay down this my tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus hath showed me.' So Saint Paul, 2 Cor. v. 1: 'For we know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building given us of God,' &c. Thus is he careful of a

better building, in pulling down of the old. There is great difference between a soldier destroying of an house, and one that only dissolves it. He that destroys a house pulls down the timber and stones, and flings everything he cares not where, because he doth not purpose to use them again; but a man that dissolves a house, he will take it down piece by piece, laying up carefully every several parcel, because he intends to build with it again. Even so, because we know our bodies shall rise again at the last day, we must not therefore destroy them, but labour to dispose of them, and lay them down well at the day of death.

3. Thirdly, Seeing the same bodies shall rise again, this should make us live with fear, so to lay them down well at the day of death. Here this great question may be answered: whether we may know one another at the day of judgment? But this needs be no question, seeing we shall rise again with the same bodies that we lay down here, therefore we shall know one another in heaven. The reasons are, Reasons. 1. First, Because our knowledge shall at that time be more perfect than ever Adam's was in the time of innocency, in which state he did know his wife as soon as she was brought unto him, though he never saw her before; therefore much more we shall then know one another, seeing our knowledge, rising with the same bodies, shall be perfecter.

2. Again, The disciples in the mount, at Christ's transfiguration, had but a glimpse or taste of the heavenly glory, and yet Peter knew Moses and Elias, though they were dead many hundred years before. Wherefore, if he, having but a taste of heavenly glory, knew them, he being unglorified, much more we shall know one another, when we have fulness of glory.

3. Because our happiness shall be greatly increased by the means of the mutual society one with another; as, Mat. viii. 11, Christ says, 'But I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.' And therefore, seeing our happiness shall be greatly increased by mutual society, we are not to think that we shall go to a strange people, where we shall know nobody; but we shall go to all our godly friends and acquaintance, and to such as we know.

4. We shall hear the indictment of the wicked at the day of judgment; when, if we hear the same, we shall know the persons indicted of wicked men, such as oppressed the people of God, Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, Nero, and the like. And as we shall know the wicked, so we shall know the godly too,

when they shall be rewarded. This, methinks, may be a motive to quicken us in our care to live holily and Christianly, seeing we go not to a strange country, or people, but to our friends and acquaintance, and to such as we know.

The third general point is, the time when we shall rise.

Point 3. At the day of judgment, then, and never till then, as John xi. 23, Martha confesses, 'I know my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' So, 1 Cor. xv. 51, Saint Paul says, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (for the trumpet shall blow), and the dead shall be raised up.' Of which there be four reasons.

Reasons. 1. First, Because there might be a proportion betwixt Christ and his members; for, when he died, he did not by and bye rise again, but he lay a while trampled and trodden under foot of death. So must we. Irenaeus with this shuts up his book, saying, 'Even as our heavenly master did not fly to heaven by and bye, but did remain under death and in the grave for a time, even so all his servants must be contented to be in the grave, and to be trampled under foot of death for a time before we go to heaven.

2. Secondly, Because the saints might meet the bodies of all the faithful which are gone before them together, they shall not rise to prevent one another in glory, but shall all go together; as it is 1 Thes. iv. 14. This is an excellent comfort unto us who live in the last age of the world, that the saints departed before us shall not rise to heavenly glory till we also be ready with them. Until this time they wait for our accomplishment in their graves; as 1 Sam. xvi. 11, when Samuel calleth all Jesse's sons before him, there being yet one of them wanting, said, Fetch him, we will not sit down till he be come, so all the people of God he in their graves, and cannot rise till our time also be accomplished.

3. Thirdly, For the further declaration of the power of Christ; for it seems a greater matter that Christ should raise men who have been lying rotting in their graves a thousand years, than it is to raise men when they are newly dead. Therefore, when Christ was about to raise Lazarus from the death, Martha said to Jesus, 'My brother stinketh already, for he hath been dead these four days;' therefore she inferred, it was not so easy a matter to raise him then as at first, being new dead, and as it was to raise Jairus's daughter, and the widow's son. So Ezek. xxxvii. 3, when the Lord demanded

this question of the prophet, 'Can these dead bones live?' he answered, 'Lord, thou knowest;' as though he had said, It is not impossible to thee, but it is a hard matter to be done, or bring to pass.

4. Fourthly, For the further confirmation of our faith; for look how many there be of the dead bodies of the saints amongst us, so many pledges and pawns there are for our redemption; for although we might in ourselves doubt of our own bodies rising in regard of our sins, and of the badness of our lives, yet because there be so many bodies of the dead saints among us, we need not doubt but he will raise them up one day to glory. There are three bodies already ascended into heaven: Enoch before the law, Elias in the time of the law, and Christ in the time of the gospel; and for these three bodies he hath left many thousand of the dead saints' bodies remaining in the grave, to be pledges and pawns to us of our resurrection; to this purpose Saint Paul says, Heb. xi. 40, that God provided 'better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.' The uses are, 1. First, Seeing that the bodies of the saints do not rise till the day of judgment, therefore we must be contented to be under affliction and trouble till God deliver us; as the saints' bodies are trampled upon, and rest quietly till the day of deliverance.

2. Secondly, That seeing the bodies of the saints rise not till then, that we should therefore desire and long for it, yea, and wait; as it is said, Rom. viii. 21, both the creatures rational and irrational do groan and travail in pain towards that day of redemption, and glorious liberty of the sons of God. We see if a man have broken an arm, or put a leg out of joint, if one have promised him that he will come to set it in joint at such an hour, he will still be looking and longing for his coming; even so, seeing at the day of judgment the Lord will restore us again to our former integrity, we should long for that day, and be looking for it.

3. Thirdly, This should moderate the delicate and too much pampering of our bodies, which must ere long be so trodden under and rotting in the grave, to be so careful about them, but to take care for our soul's good, and then both body and soul shall be raised up unto glory for ever.

Quest. Now here ariseth a question: Seeing our bodies must be so many years and ages rotting in the grave, what may be our comfort to uphold and sustain us in the mean time?

Ans. 1. That God will be present with us, that he will not fail us nor forsake us, but will go to the grave with our dead bodies, watch over our ashes with the eye of his providence, to keep them, and raise up all again.

So that look how God encouraged Jacob, Gen. xlv. 4, 'Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go with thee, and I will bring thee up again,' so God will go down into the grave with our dead bodies, watch over them, and bring them up again.

2. Secondly, That though our bodies be rotting in the grave, yet that our souls shall be happy and blessed, which was Paul's comfort: 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building given us of God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.' So Rev. vi. 11, the souls which lay under the altar, crying, 'How long, Lord?' were comforted with the long white robes given unto them; the present blessed estate of their souls.

3. Thirdly, This may comfort us, that although we be in the grave a long time, yet that Christ hath sanctified and sweetened it unto us, by lying therein himself; so that the grave is now become a sweet bed to rest in peace in: as Isa. lvii. 2, he speaks of such, 'Peace shall be upon them, they shall rest in their beds, every one that walketh before me;' so that Christ hath now made this the plain way to heaven. Wherefore, as the children of Israel marched through the wilderness, where were fiery serpents, enemies, and many discouragements, overcoming all, because it was their way to Canaan, so the grave, being our way to heaven, let us overcome all doubts, and not fear to march that way unto it.

4. Fourthly, That although we be a long time in the grave, that we have assured hope that we shall rise again; as David says, Ps. xvi. 9, 'Wherefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoiceth; my flesh also rests in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;' as it was true thus of Christ, so is it of all the members: when they are laid in the grave they are not gone and past hope. Though like Jonah, for the time swallowed up of a whale, the grave receive them, yet the Lord will in due time speak to the grave to cast them out again. Therefore it should teach us to live comfortably in this life, to encourage others; and when the time of our death cometh, then to depart in peace, seeing God will be with us, and our bodies shall rise again, heavenly glory in the mean time being appointed for our souls.

The fourth point is, the consideration by whose power we shall rise.

Point 4. That is, by the power of Christ; no power else can do it. It cannot be done by the power of nature; as Job xvi. 14, 'If a man die, shall he live again?' meaning, that if a man die he cannot rise of himself; so David says, Ps. xlix. 7, 'Yet a man can by no means redeem his brother, he cannot give his ransom to God.' So Ps. xlix. 15, 'But God shall deliver my soul from the grave; for he will receive me;' so all shall rise by the power of Christ, but with great difference: the godly with boldness, joy, and ravishment; the wicked with fear, shame, and astonishment.

The uses of which are, Use 1. First, To magnify and rely upon this mighty power of Christ, by which we shall rise again out of the grave, and from the belly of rottenness.

2. Secondly, Therefore to labour to feel the power of Christ here in this life to thy conversion and conscience quieting, or else thou shalt feel the power of Christ to thy terror at the day of judgment.

3. Thirdly, Seeing all shall rise again at last, through the power of Christ, therefore let us not doubt but that the Lord will raise us out of all troubles whatsoever in the best time, as we see, Ezek. xxxvii. 3, the Lord there asks the prophet, 'Son of man, can these dead bones live?' then he bade him prophesy upon those bones, and bone ran to his bone, and the flesh and sinews grew on them again, so that there stood up a great army. Now God applies this, ver, 11, 'Son of man,' saith he, 'these bones are the whole house of Israel, which did he in captivity and bondage;' wherefore God showed the prophet that as he was able to raise these dead bones, so he was able to bring his people out of captivity and bondage again; therefore doubt not but thy God will raise thee out of thy troubles, whatsoever they be. So Ps. lxxxvi. 13, David confesseth, 'Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul out of the lowest grave.' This the saints have found, and this thou shalt find to thy comfort, therefore make a right use of the power of Christ.

The fifth point is, in what estate our bodies shall rise again.

Point 5. That is, into an estate of glory. Now our bodies are mortal and mutable, subject to a number of infirmities, hunger, cold, nakedness, sickness, and pains; now they are lumpish, dull, and heavy in the service of God, but at the resurrection then our bodies shall be made immortal, without

subjection to any infirmities of nature, having strength to perform our own actions; in this goodly estate shall our bodies rise in.

If a physician should out of his art and skill give us such a potion that we should never hunger nor thirst after it, and to be freed also thereby from all griefs, pains, infirmities, and diseases, how would one strain to his utmost to buy such a potion? Yet such a potion the Lord hath freely provided for us at the last day, when he will give us such a cup to drink of as we shall never hunger, thirst, or feel any more pain, how should we therefore long and desire after the coming of Christ! We see what our Saviour says, Mat. xviii. 8, 'It were better for a man to enter heaven hurt and maimed, than otherwise to be cast into hell in never so great perfection of parts.' But thanks be to God, we may enter into heaven, and have all things in the state of perfection. Therefore how should this make us strive to be God's people, that we may attain unto this so excellent an estate?

But this question which St Paul propounds, 1 Cor. xv., in what estate our bodies shall rise at the last day, cannot be answered but with a distinction. The bodies of the godly rise in an estate of glory, the bodies of the wicked rise in an estate of shame and disgrace; so both rise, but in a different estate, as Gen. xl. 20, we read Pharaoh's two servants were both delivered out of prison, but in a diverse manner, the one to stand before the king, and give the cup into his hand, as formerly, the other to be executed and hanged. Even so it is with the godly and wicked at the last day, both of them shall be raised out of the grave, but the one to honour, to stand in the presence of God, the other to shame and perpetual contempt. So the bodies of the saints, though now weak, shall be glorious then; as Paul shows, 1 Cor. xv. 37, of corn, which, when it is sowed, it is but bare corn, but God giveth it a body at his pleasure; so, saith he, is the resurrection of the dead. Our bodies are sown in corruption, but raised in honour; it is sown in weakness, and is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, and is raised a spiritual body. So St Paul shows, 'Christ shall change our vile bodies, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;' for look, in what estate Christ's body rose again, in the same estate shall all the bodies of the saints rise in; for the members must be conformable to the head; but Christ's body did rise in a far more glorious estate than ours are now. Therefore, when we look on our bodies, and see them weak, and poor, contemptible, crooked, and deformed, we should live well, and then comfort ourselves with this, that in the kingdom of God our bodies shall be made glorious and beautiful, and all deformities taken from them. One says well, that as the goldsmith melts his

gold, and so frames a cup to serve the king, so the Lord only melts and refines us by death, to fit us to be vessels of glory hereafter. Therefore it is an excellent meditation to think often of the glory to come, to strengthen us against the terrors of death; as Job doth, chap. xix., when he was covered with griefs and sores; 'I am sure,' saith he, 'that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at the last on the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet shall I see God with my flesh,' &c. So must we comfort ourselves in the like extremities. Now this glory shall not be from the redundance of the spirit only, but it shall be also in regard of the blessed and happy estate that the body shall be in at that time; which appears in Six things, wherein the glory and excellency of the body shall consist after the resurrection.

1. First, That all the parts of the body shall be then perfect and entire, and shall want nothing. Howsoever now a man may be maimed and deformed, wanting a hand, eye, leg, arm, finger, or the like, yet all shall be supplied unto him then at that day; and that for two reasons.

(1.) First, Because all things then shall be reduced to their former estate; as Peter shows, Acts iii. 21, speaking of Christ, 'Whom,' saith he, 'the heavens must contain until the time cometh that all things shall be restored.' But in the beginning, man's body was made perfect and entire, wanting nothing either for beauty or comeliness; therefore to this estate it shall be restored again.

(2.) Secondly, Tertullian fetches it from another ground, Rev. xxi. 4, where it is said, 'There shall be no more death then.' 'Always,' saith he, 'in the greater is inferred the lesser. Now the lameness or deformedness of any member is the death of that member. Now if death be expelled from the whole man, so also must it be from every particular member; therefore the bodies of the saints shall rise again perfect and entire at the last day'.

Use 1. Therefore, in any of the wants and imperfections of ourselves or our friends, we must labour to live a holy life, draw them on also in goodness, and then be comforted. Whatsoever our imperfections are, God will help all at the last day.

Use 2. Again, seeing at the day of judgment all parts shall be perfected and restored, we should not now be afraid to give any of them for the name of Christ; for he that did restore the ear of Malchus, who was his enemy, much more will restore any part which his friends shall lose for his name's

sake. Therefore we read, Heb. xi. 35, how those holy men there mentioned endured, and would not be delivered from those pains and torments which they endured of wicked men, that they might receive a better resurrection.

2. Secondly, The glory of the body consists in this, that it shall be beautiful and lovely, though now deformed and ill-favoured; being dead especially, which made Abraham desire to buy a place to bury his dead out of his sight, Gen. xxiii. 4; for these reasons:

Reason 1. First, look what estate Adam was in in the time of his innocency; in the same estate shall the bodies of the saints be at the resurrection. But in the beginning, the body of man was so beautiful, glorious, full of brightness and splendour which came from it, as all the beasts of the field came gazing, and stood looking on him; therefore the bodies of the saints shall be in the same state at the resurrection.

2. Secondly, Because all deformities, blackness, and ill-favouredness are punishments and penalties for sin; but when our sins shall cease, and our corruptions, then the penalty and punishment of them shall cease also. Oh how should this quicken up our care to repent us of our sins, to get faith in Christ, and to walk holily before him, that we may have our portion with the saints at last. Men cannot help deformedness, but God can. Both the temples were built, and defaced again, the last not so glorious as the first; but God will raise up all his, and make them more glorious than ever.

3. Thirdly, The glory of the body shall then consist in this, that it shall be filled with brightness and splendour. Now our bodies are dark and obscure, but then the bodies of the saints shall be like so many bright stars and shining lamps, when the wicked shall look dark and ugly to behold. We read, Dan. xii. 3, 'That they who be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.' So Mat. xiii. 43, Christ enlargeth the same their shining, where he saith 'that the just shall then shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Therefore what glory they shall have is unconceivable of us. We see, when Moses had talked with God forty days, by the reflection of God's glory upon him, his face did so shine, that the children of Israel were not able to behold it; therefore how much more glorious shall the saints be to behold, when they shall stay, not forty days only with God, but for ever and ever? If in this case a spark was such, what shall the flame be? and what shall be the inward glory of the soul?

Use 1. The use hereof is, that we should much and often solace ourselves with the meditation hereof, abstracting our minds from this world; and, as Gen. xiii. 17, when the Lord had made a promise to Abraham of the land of Canaan, he bid him to arise and walk through the land in the length and breadth thereof, so seeing God hath promised us heaven, though we be not in actual possession, as we shall be, yet we should arise often, and walk through this land in the length and breadth thereof; that is, meditate and think of the surpassing glory and excellence of the place.

Use 2. Secondly, Let us then be careful to live well, and spend our time in holiness and righteousness whilst we live here; for how can we expect that God should honour us then, when we are not careful to honour him with our bodies now? It is a rule in art, that they who would finish their colours in brightness must lay light grounds; even so, if thou wouldst have Christ to finish up thy life in glory, never lay the sad grounds and black colours of sin and corruption, but repent of thy sins, purify thy heart by faith in Christ, wash thyself often in the blood of Christ, that so he may present thee pure and unspotted in that day.

4. Fourthly, The body shall then be immutable and immortal. Now our bodies are subject to many alterations and changes; as it is Job xvi. 2, 'Man shooteth forth as a flower, and is cut down: he vanisheth away as a shadow,' &c. Now our bodies are subject to hunger, and thirst, and many diseases, but then they shall be brought to such an estate of pre-eminency as they shall never hunger or thirst any more, nor have any alteration. So Rev. xvi. 7, it is said, 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, neither any heat.' So Rev. xxii. 4, he shows God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, neither crying, neither shall there be any more pain,' so they shall have rest. And as this is clear by the Scripture, so is it also by reason; for it is a ground in nature that all things labour to attain to their last perfection, so to rest in it. We see in nature, if the shipman's needle be touched with a loadstone, it turns, and shakes, and never is at rest till it stand against the north pole, when, if it be hindered by anything, it stands trembling as discontented, resting when once it cometh there. So is it with the bodies of the saints that are touched with the loadstone, that is, who have touched Christ by faith; they be not in rest and quiet here, but subject to many sorrows and infirmities of nature, until they be brought to Christ, where they securely rest, and be immutable and unchangeable. Therefore, when we feel these diseases and decays of nature, let us take Peter's counsel, mentioned

Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and turn to the Lord, that our sins may be put away, when the time of refreshing shall come out from the presence of the Lord.' It is a world to see what means men use to keep their bodies from putrefaction, to embalm them, keep them in lead with sweet spices, lay them in marble, yet none of these will serve, for all must stoop and yield to the grave and rottenness. But if we live a holy life, and get faith in the Lord Jesus, then at the last day the body shall be brought to such an estate as shall be immortal and immutable.

5. Fifthly, They shall be spiritual bodies. Now they are natural bodies, but then they shall be spiritual; as it is 1 Cor. xv. 44, 'It is sown a natural, and is raised a spiritual body.' Now, it shall not be a spiritual body in regard of substance, for it shall have breadth, and length, and thickness, parts and dimensions, as our bodies now have. So Christ told the disciples, Luke xxvi. 39, when entering the house, they supposed to have seen a spirit, but he says, 'Behold my hands and my feet, and handle me, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones.' Now, in two respects, our bodies are said then to be made spiritual.

(1.) First, Because then they shall be upheld and maintained by the Spirit. Now our bodies are upheld by meat and drink, sleep and physic; but then the Spirit of God shall quicken them, and they shall have no need of these helps. We know that Moses was forty days in the mount, where he was so filled with the glory of God, that he was neither thirsty nor hungry, nor desired to rest or sleep. Now if Moses was thus upheld with the glory of God in the estate of mortality, without the use of meat and drink, much more shall the bodies of the saints be upheld in the state of glory, where God shall be all in all unto them.

(2.) Secondly, Because the body shall attend the spirit in all good duties, and shall be subject unto it; as Augustine speaks, 'It is not called a spiritual body, because, as some think, the substance of the body is turned into a spirit, but,' saith he, 'it is called a spiritual body, because it shall be subject to the spirit, and attend it'. The schoolmen, as Thomas Aquinas, confess thus much. It is a plain case that in glory the spirit shall not depend on the body, but the body shall be led by the spirit and attend it. For in the best there is now such reluctance betwixt the flesh and the spirit, as Gal. v. 17, that they being contrary to one another, we cannot do the things that we would; so Mat. xxvi. 40, when the disciples should have watched and prayed, Christ found them asleep; so Rom. vii. 22, 'For I delight in the law of God as touching my inward man: but I see another law in my members rebelling

against the law of my mind, and leading me captive unto the law of sin which is in my members;' so Ezek. iii. 14, 'I went,' saith he, 'but it was in the bitterness of my spirit.' Thus the wrestling is great in us betwixt the flesh and the spirit, but one day it is our comfort, the spirit shall have a final victory, and we shall be led by the spirit. When Rebecca had conceived, Gen. xxv. 22, she felt so great striving and struggling in her, that she was much perplexed, until she went to God, and had this answer, that two nations were in her, and that the elder should serve the younger. So must this be our comfort, that though now we be troubled with the flesh, which is the elder, yet that the time shall shortly come that the flesh shall submit, attend, and be subject to the younger, which is the spirit, last bred in us, in all things. If one bring a little spark of fire to a great heap of gunpowder, the fire will dissolve it and bring it to nothing; so, although there be a great heap of sin and corruption in us, yet if a man get but a little spark of the Spirit of God into us, it will dissolve our sins, and bring those purposes to nothing. Therefore now we must comfort ourselves with this, that though now our bodies be not ruled by the spirit, yet that one day they shall be subject unto it.

6. Sixthly, In that it shall be a powerful body; as 1 Cor. xv. 43. Now this power of the body appears in two things.

(1.) First, That it shall have power to perform the actions of the body without defatigation or weariness. Now we cannot do any action but in time we shall be weary of it, weary of going, sitting, standing; as it is said of Christ, John iv. 6, that being weary, he sat down upon the well; so Exod. xvii. 12, Moses's hands waxed weary in holding them up for Israel. So the best Christians are weary in the best duties, but at that day all duties shall be performed without any show of weariness, which should comfort us now amidst our imperfections, making us long for that day when we shall be enabled to serve God without ceasing.

(2.) Secondly, In that the body shall then move any way with ease, being able to walk in the air, on the water, even as now we can walk on the ground. Though now our bodies be heavy, yet then they shall have strength, as they shall be able to mount upwards, downwards, or forward or backward with as much ease as a man lifts up his hand; which should stir us up to live a holy life, that we may one day be partakers of these excellent privileges. Pliny reports of the little bees, that in a great wind or tempest, they fetch up little stones in their claws, to ballast themselves against the wind, that they be not carried away in it. So should we do in the time of temptation or trouble;

ballast ourselves with the promises of God and hope of blessedness, that so we be not carried away with the wind of temptation and trouble. Thus far of the godly.

Now for the wicked, in what estate they shall rise in; it consists in two things.

1. First, They shall rise in an estate of shame and disgrace. ‘And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcass of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh,’ Isa. lxvi. 24. We see in sickness and pain, or a great fear, how our countenances alter and change; much more shall they then, in so great vexation and anguish of spirit.

2. Secondly, As the godly shall be free from hunger, cold, thirst, and all diseases and pains, so the wicked shall be subject unto all these in much extremity for ever, insomuch as if they should but, like the rich glutton, desire a drop of comfort to refresh them, they shall not have it. Wherefore seeing all the necessities and pains of nature, yea, and all the vengeance that the anger of an angry incensed God can inflict upon them, shall torment them for ever, let us now stir up ourselves to strive more than ever to shun this woeful miserable condition which the wicked shall then be in, and hearken unto the good counsel and advice of God’s word, of the ministers, and of our godly friends to help us on in the good ways of God, which leads to heaven and happiness.

Thus I have done with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; yet there remains some questions to be answered, which for mine own part I could be contented to pass over; because as David says, Ps. cxxxii. 1, ‘I have not walked in great matters and hid from me.’ And in the law, Exod. xix. 23, the priests as well as the people had their bounds set them, which they might not pass beyond. Yet, notwithstanding, because some are desirous to hear what further may be said, I will answer your desires, and make a further supply of them as far as the light of God’s truth will lead me.

1. The first question is, Whether such as were born monsters and misshapen shall rise so at the last day?

Augustine answers, that they shall not rise monstrous deformed bodies at the last day, but corrected and amended in all parts. The reason he shows in another place is this, ‘Because if a workman cast an ill favoured piece of

work at first, he takes it and melts it again, until he make it an excellent piece; therefore much more God can and will melt these deformed bodies by death, and make them glorious, entire, and perfect'. Now to this judgment I assent thus far, that all the deformed bodies of the godly shall rise, melted by death, glorious and perfect in all parts; but that they who be wicked shall have the same deformities upon them at the day of judgment. My reason is, deformedness and misshapeness is a punishment of sin; but at the day of judgment the punishment of sin shall not be repealed unto the wicked, but shall be further increased. But the Schoolmen say, unto which I assent, that if a wicked man lose an eye or a hand for his offence, by the command of the magistrate, they shall be restored unto them at the day of judgment, to their further increase of torment. Lo, then the way to shun deformity, if thou be misshapen any way, live in the fear of God, believe in Christ, repent thee of thy sins, and then at that day all thy deformities shall be done away, and thy body made like unto Christ's glorious body for ever.

2. The second is, In what sex we shall rise, whether men shall rise men, and women women, or not?

I answer, They shall rise in the same sex; as Mat. xxii. 8, we see by the Sadducees' question propounded to Christ, of a woman who had seven husbands, whose wife she should be in the resurrection? Christ doth not say there shall be no women in the resurrection, but he says they shall not marry; so that the sexes shall not cease, but they shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And Saint Jerome upon that place affirms, that 'Christ gives us thereby to understand, where he says they shall not then marry, nor give in marriage, that both shall rise again in their proper sex, men shall rise men, and women shall rise women;' and the Greek text bears so much, though the Latin do not. So 1 Peter iii. 7, the apostle exhorts both men and women to live together as heirs of the grace of life. And Mat. xii. 42, there it is said that 'the queen of the south shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it,' &c.; so it is clear that both sexes shall rise again.

3. The third question is, In what age we shall rise, whether children shall rise children, and old men rise old men?

Augustine, unto whom the Schoolmen agree, answers, 'That all shall rise at the age of Christ, of thirty-three years of age'. But I dare not assent unto this opinion, because there is no warrant for it out of the Scriptures; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and that which hath not its warrant from the word cannot be of faith, which must be grounded on the Scripture. There is

one place which seems to confirm the former opinion, that of Eph. iv. 13, 'Till we all meet together in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, into a perfect man, and into the age of the fulness of Christ. Now by a consent of most of the fathers, they understand this place in another sense. Chrysostom saith, that in this place by the fulness of the age of Christ,' is meant not the full age of Christ, but the gifts and graces of Christ. So some others say to the same sense St Jerome says, that 'by the age of Christ is not meant the grounds of the bodies of the godly, but the inward man, of the gifts and graces of the soul'. Again Tertullian differs from his judgment another way; saith he, 'Let Christians remember that our souls shall receive the same bodies from the which they departed; and therefore look in what stature and in what age they departed, in the same they shall rise again. And in my judgment there be some reasons to prove the contrary.

1. First, there is nothing in a child more than in a man to hinder him from the kingdom of God; for Christ saith, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God' And I make no question, if in innocency Adam had had children, they should have been blessed; much more are they capable of blessedness in heaven.

2. Secondly, Children may perform the chiefest act of our work in heaven namely, to praise God; as Ps. viii. 2, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise.'

3. Again, all those whom Christ raised, being upon earth, were raised in the same stature they were in when they died, as the maid, the widow's son, and Lazarus; and those who were raised at the resurrection of Christ how should they else have been known of their friends if they had not risen the same they were? So that the imperfection of children is only in regard of labour and travail, not in regard of capacity to live a spiritual Thus have I satisfied your desires in delivering my judgment in these weighty points, which I tie no man to believe further than the Spirit of God shall direct him. We must not be too curious in this great point only stir up yourselves to the love and fear of God, to walk with him according to the prescription of his word, and then let it suffice us we shall be raised up in a wonderful manner to everlasting glory and happiness, beyond all that we are able to think or speak; unto which, God of his mercy bring us all in due time. Amen.

# Sibbes's Last Two Sermons; From Christ's Last Sermon

## Preface

Gracious and holy Father! which hast sanctified this day for thy own service and worship, and for the furthering of us in the way of salvation; and hast made a most gracious promise, that when two or three be gathered together in thy name, thou wilt be there in the midst of them vouchsafe, then, we beseech thee, the performance of this thy promise unto us, now gathered together in thy name, to pray unto thee, to hear and speak thy holy and blessed word, and so sanctify our hearts by thy Holy Spirit at this time, that we may perform these holy services as shall be most to thy glory and our own comfort. Unworthy we are in ourselves to appear in thy most holy presence, both by reason of the sins of our nature, and the sins of our lives, even since that time that we have had some knowledge of thy blessed truth; which holy truth we have not entertained nor professed as we should have done, but oftentimes against the light that thou hast kindled in our hearts by thy Word and Spirit, we have committed many sins; and, amongst the rest, we confess our sins against thy holy ordinance; our not preparing our hearts unto it, nor profiting by it as we should and might have done; giving thy Majesty hereby just cause to curse thy own holy ordinance unto us. But thou art a gracious and merciful Father unto us in Jesus Christ, in the abundance of thy love and mercy. In him we come unto thee, beseeching thee, for his sake, not to give us up to these inward and spiritual judgments; but vouchsafe us a true insight into our own estates, without deceiving of our own souls, and from thence, true humiliation. And then we beseech thee to speak peace unto us in thy Christ, and say to our souls by thy Holy Spirit, that thou art our salvation. And for clearer evidence that we are in thy favour, let us find the blessed work of thy Holy Spirit opening our understandings, clearing our judgments, kindling our affections, discovering our corruptions, framing us every way to be such as thou mayest take pleasure and delight in. And because thou hast ordained thy holy word 'to be a light unto our feet, and a guide and direction to all our ways and paths,' and to be a powerful means to bring us more and more out of the thralldom of sin and Satan, to the blessed liberty of thy children, we beseech thee, therefore, to bless thy word to these and all other good ends and purposes for which thou hast ordained it. And grant, we beseech thee, that now at this

time out of it we may learn thy holy will; and then labour to frame our lives thereafter, as may be most to thy glory and our own comfort, and that for Jesus Christ his sake, thine only Son, and our blessed Saviour. Amen.

### The First Sermon

*Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*—  
John XIV. 1.

Holy men, as they be ‘trees of righteousness,’ Isa. lxi. 3, and desire to be fruitful at all times, so most especially towards their end; having but a short time to live in the world, they be willing to leave the world with a good savour. So it was with Jacob. So with Moses, as appears in his excellent Song made before his death. You may see it in King Solomon and David before their deaths. But especially in our Saviour. The nearer to heaven, the more heavenly-minded. When grace and glory are ready to join, the one to be swallowed up of the other, then grace is most glorious. All the passages of Christ are comfortable; but none more comfortable than those sermons of his, that were delivered a little before his death. Of all words that come from loving men to those they love, such are most remarkable as be spoken when they be ready to die; because then men are most serious, they being about the most serious business. Then they be wisest, and best able to judge; for the consideration of their end makes them wise. And therefore, saith God, ‘O that my people were wise to consider their latter end!’ Deut. xxxii. 29. And, ‘teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart to wisdom,’ saith Moses, Ps. xc. 12. And indeed there is no wisdom to that; for it teacheth men to pass a right judgment upon all things in the world. They be no longer drunk with the prosperity of the world; they be no longer swayed with opinion, but they pass an estimation of things as they are.

Besides, love at that time is especially set on work. Therefore our blessed Saviour being now to offer himself a sacrifice on the cross, he sweetly delivereth these words before his departure, ‘Let not your hearts be troubled.’ Let us hear them therefore, as the dying words of our Saviour to his disciples, and in his disciples, to us all, as in the 17th of St John. ‘I pray not for them only, but for all such as shall believe in me, through their word,’ ver. 20. For his comforts concern us all, as his prayers did.

This chapter is sweetly mixed of comforts, counsels, and gracious promises; but especially it affords matter of comfort. Mark who it is that

gives this comfort,—our blessed Saviour. And at what time,—when he was to sacrifice himself.

What admirable love, and care, and pity is in this merciful high Priest of ours, that should so think of comforting his disciples, as to forget himself, and his own approaching death! It is the nature of love so to do; and we should imitate our blessed Saviour in it. You see how he laboureth to strengthen them, especially towards his end. He knew they would then need it most, and therefore he endeavoureth by all means to strengthen them, both by counsel, as here; by the passover, and by a newly instituted sacrament, 1 Cor. xi. 23.

But what need we wonder at this in our blessed Saviour, who so regarded us, as he left heaven; took our nature; became man; put himself under the law; became sin?

The words contain a dissuasion from over-much trouble, and then a direction to believe in God, and Christ. Comforts must be founded on strong reasons. For we are reasonable and understanding creatures; and God works on us answerably to our principles. He stays our spirits by reasons stronger than the grievance. For what is comfort but that which established and upholds the soul against that evil which is feared or felt, from a greater strength of reason which overmastereth the evil? If the grievance be but even with the comfort, then the consolation works not. But Christ's comforts are of an higher nature than any trouble can be. For he not only dissuades from trouble, but also persuades to confidence, 'Be of good comfort, I have overcome the world,' John xvi. 33.

The occasion of this comforting them, and of removing their discouragements, was this. In the former chapter, he had told them, that he should leave them, and that they should leave him; the best of them all, even Peter, should take offence at him, and deny him, and that all the rest should leave him. From whence they might gather, that the approaching trouble should be great, that should cause Peter to deny him, and them all to forsake him. And thence must needs arise great scandals. Our Saviour saw by the power of his Godhead into their hearts, and like enough, in their looks he saw a spirit of discouragement seizing on them, for his departure, and Peter's fall, their forsaking of him, and the persecutions that would follow. And therefore Christ discerning this dejection of their spirits, he raiseth them by this, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' The heavenly Physician of our souls applyeth then the remedy, when it is the fittest season.

There was some good in their trouble; something naturally, and something spiritually good. There was ground of natural trouble at the departure of such a friend, at the hearing of such persecutions. For we are flesh, not steel; and in that sense, Christ was troubled himself, to shew the truth of his manhood. Nay, trouble is the seasoning of all heavenly comforts, so as there were no comforts, if there were no trouble; and therefore this natural trouble was not disallowed by Christ. There was likewise something spiritually good, in this trouble. They loved their Master, who they saw was going away, and they knew it was a shameful thing for them to forsake him. There was love in them towards him all this while. Christ could discern gold in ore, some good in a great deal of ill; and therefore loved them again, and manifested it by comforting them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' They were right in this principle, that all comfort depends on the presence of Christ. And so the main ground of the sorrow was good. For as all heavenly light, and heat, and influence comes from the sun (it being all gathered into that body); so all heavenly comforts are-gathered into Christ, and therefore must come to us from Christ's presence, bodily or spiritually. Their error was in tying all comfort to a bodily, a corporal presence; as if it were necessary for the sun to come down and abide upon the earth, to bestow its heat and influence. And therefore he tells them, that though he was to go away, yet he would send another comforter, the Holy Ghost.

And then they were overcome by an opinion that it would go worse with them when Christ was gone. Therefore Christ telleth them that it should be better for them; and indeed it was better. Christ did not take away his blessed presence for their disadvantage, but for their good. God never takes anything from his children, but he maketh it up in a better kind. If Christ takes away his bodily presence, he leaveth his spiritual presence, and more abundantly.

So that, though they were led with sensible things, and what they saw not they could hardly believe, yet Christ looks to what is good in them, and accepts it. He saw what was naught in them, with a purpose to purge it; what was naturally weak in them, to strengthen it; and therefore he counsels them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

The thing that I will first observe out of the words is, that the best Christians are subject to be troubled, to be pensive, and dejected more than should be.

Indeed our Saviour Christ himself was troubled, but his trouble was like the shaking of clear water in a crystal glass. There was no mud in the bottom. But our trouble is of another kind, and apt to be inordinate.

We may carry this truth through the whole Scripture, and shew how Hannah was in bitterness of spirit, which exceeded so, that Eli, a good man, mistakes her, supposing that she was overcome with drink, 1 Sam. i. 13.

Hezekiah, a good king, was in such bitterness that, like a crane or swallow, he did chatter, Isa. xxxviii. 14. And David complained that his spirit was overwhelmed within him, Ps. lxxvii. 3; and Jonah cries out that he was 'in the belly of hell,' Jonah in. 2.

And God will have it so, partly for conformity to our Head, and partly that we may be known to ourselves; that we may discern where our weakness lieth, and so be better instructed to seek to him in whom our strength lieth.

He suffers us, likewise, to be troubled for the preventing of spiritual sins, pride and security, and the like.

And partly in regard of others, that we may be pitiful. Christ was man for this end, that he might be a merciful High Priest; and we have much more need to know and feel the infirmities that are in ourselves, that we may be merciful to others; that we may not be harsh and censorious upon the troubles of others; from want of which consideration proceeded Eli's rashness in passing that censure upon Hannah.

But how shall we know that our hearts are more troubled than they should be? For I lay this for a ground: That we may sin in being over much troubled at things for which it is a sin not to be troubled. If they had not been at all affected with the absence of Christ, it had been a sin, and no less than stupidity; yet it was their sin to be over much troubled. In a word, therefore, for answer, a trouble is sinful when it hinders us in duty or from duty; when it hinders us in duties to God or to others; or from duty, that is, when the soul is disturbed by it, and, like an instrument out of tune, made fit for nothing, or like a limb out of joint, that moves not only uncomelily, but painfully, and becomes unfit for action. When we find this in our trouble, we may know it is not as it should be.

There be some affections especially, that are causes of over much trouble; fear of evils to come, sorrow for evils that at present seize on us.

Now, when these do hinder us from duty, or trouble us in duty, they be exorbitant and irregular.

Naturally, affections should be helps to duty, they being the winds that carry the soul on, and the spiritual wings of the soul. So that a man without affections is like the dead sea, that moves not at all. But then they must be regulated and ordered; they must be raised up and laid down at the command of a spiritual understanding. When they be raised up of themselves, by shallow and false conceits and opinions, they be irregular. When they be raised up by a right judgment of things, and laid down again when they ought to be, then they are right and orderly.

Now, besides the hurt that is in such affections themselves, Satan loves to fish in these troubled waters. The affections are never stirred and raised up irregularly and exorbitantly but Satan joins with them. And therefore we have need to keep our affections of grief and fear within their due bounds. Satan is a curious observer of any excess in our passions; and in just correction, to speak the mildest of it, God lets loose Satan to join with that excess. And therefore the apostle saith wisely, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil,' Eph. w. 26, because as soon as ever we give way to any excess of affection, Satan fishes in these waters, and joins with that excess. He being a spirit of darkness, loves to dwell in the soul when it is in darkness. And therefore, when it is clouded by passion, as all passions beyond their due measure are as clouds that darken the soul, Satan, that works in darkness, then seizes on the soul presently.

That was Saul's case. He was envious at David, being of a proud and haughty spirit, that could not endure competition; and Satan took his time to work on him. And therefore it is said he was troubled with an evil spirit, 1 Sam. xvi. 23.

But trouble of spirit is too large an argument. I will not now stand upon it; only I will shew that we should not yield to excess of trouble any way. And the reasons are:—

First. We wrong our own selves when we give way to grief and sorrow, that is immoderate and inordinate. The soul is, as it were, put out of joint by it. We make actions difficult unto us. The wheels of the soul are thereby taken off. Joy and comfort are, as it were, oil to the soul. And therefore Nehemiah saith, 'the joy of the Lord is your strength,' chap. viii. 10. When, therefore, we give way to fear and grief, and such passions, it weakeneth the

soul in action. And then again they are, as it were, a cloud betwixt God's love and us; and so the soul is hindered of much comfort and enlargement. Joy enlargeth the soul, but grief straiteneth it. Comfort raiseth up the soul, grief and sorrow weigh down the soul. A Christian should be of a straight, upright, and enlarged spirit. When, therefore, the spirit is straitened, when it is pressed down and dejected, a Christian is not in his right mind, in his due and proper frame.

Second. Besides, if we regard God himself, we should take heed that the soul be not thus distempered; for by over-much sorrow and grief, what a great deal of dishonour do we to God, in proceeding from a mistake of his goodness and providence! And with over-much fear and sorrow, there is always joined murmuring and discontent, and a spirit unsubdued to God, and his Spirit. There is a wronging, as of his care in providence, so of his graciousness in his promises. There is a grieving of his good Spirit; a questioning of his government, as if he did not dispose of things as he should; when we will have it one way, and God will have it another way. There is likewise a great deal of pride in dejections and discontent. The most discontented spirit in the world is the devil, and none prouder. It argues a great deal of pride and sullenness to be affectedly sad, and dejected; as if such worthy and excellent persons as we should be so afflicted: or there were greater cause for us to be dejected than raised up. "Whereas if we balance our grounds of comfort, being Christians, as we should do, they would appear incomparably above the grounds of our discouragements. So it is a wrong to God, and his truth, and his gracious sweet government, to yield to a dejected sullen disposition.

It is likewise a wrong to others. For it maketh us unfit for any office of love to them, when we plod and pore so much upon our discontentments, and drink up our spirits, and eat up our hearts. It disables the soul, taking away not only the strength, but also the willingness of the soul; besides the scandal that it brings on religion, and the best ways; as if there were not enough in religion to comfort the soul.

But you will say, religion breeds a great deal of trouble and pensiveness. It is indeed the speech of the shallow people of the world, 'religion makes men sad.'

And it is true, that as our Saviour Christ here had made his disciples sad, by telling them that he would leave them; and that a great scandal would be taken at his cross, and shameful suffering; but yet withal, bids them not be

troubled, and gives them grounds of comfort; so religion will make men sad; for it discovers truths, and sad truths. Aye, but the same religion will cheer them up again, yea, it casts them down, that it may raise them up. The sun in the morning raiseth clouds; but when it hath strength it scatters them. God intending solid and substantial comfort, doth first beget troubles, and discovers true grounds of trouble; he lets us see that all is not well. But still as religion brings any trouble, so it brings with it great remedies against these troubles; and that God that raiseth a soul to see just matter of grief, will by his Spirit shew its due and right portion, in comfort. Thus, to be sorrowful and sad, in some measure is from religion; but that which will prevent the excess and over-measure of it, is from religion likewise.

So that it is a scandal to religion to be overmuch dejected.

Third. Besides, though we should be troubled for sin, yet to be overmuch troubled for sin is a dishonour to Christ, and to the love of God in Christ; for it is as if we had not in him a sufficient remedy for that great malady. As, be it grief for the troubles of the church; as not to be troubled at the affliction of Joseph, is branded for a sin; so to be too much cast down, as if Christ had cast off the government from his shoulders, or had not the name of the church on his breast in heaven (as the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes in his breastplate); to be so cast down as to be taken off from prayer, and from the use of all good means to help the church, this is sinful. So also when grief for sin makes us forget the mercies of God in Christ; to forget the healing virtue of him our brazen serpent; to neglect to search our grounds of comforts, and to yield to Satan, to temptation. Overmuch sadness, even though it be for sin, or for the church, it is hurtful and scandalous.

Joshua was much cast down when he saw it went not well with Israel; but 'Get thee up, Joshua,' saith God, 'what dost thou lying here?' Up and do thy duty; consider what is amiss! There is an Achan in the camp. And so when things go not well, let not your thoughts be conversant about the matters of trouble, so much as about your duty. So we see it is incident to God's people to be overmuch troubled, and we see also the reasons why it should not be so, because it is injurious to God, to ourselves, and others every way.

And after all this, there is much reason in this, that Christ hath forbidden it, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Obj. But Christ could as well have cured it, being God, as easily as forbidden it.

Ans. It is true, but he cures it by forbidding it. With the words, there went forth a spirit of comfort into their hearts; an influence of grace accompanied his commands, for the word and Spirit go together. Christ deals with men by men. The Spirit of comfort is a spirit of truth; and therefore God comforts by truths. He gives us sanctified understandings and affections; and then works on them by sanctified truths.

And sometimes Christ cures it by real comforts; for comforts are either rational, which are fetched from grounds, which faith ministers; or real, from the presence of anything which comforts; as the sight of friends, or the accommodating of us in anything wherein we see the love of God conveyed. How many real comforts doth God bestow, when he fitteth us with conveniences in our way to heaven, so that we may read the love of God in them! God doth not only comfort us by his gracious promise, by his word and sacraments, administering heavenly comforts by them; but also by the conveying of himself and his love, by outward comforts that we enjoy in the world. Howsoever carnal men abuse them (making all things to work for the worst); yet that love, that intends heaven, sweetens all things in the passage to heaven, to his children; because they see the love of God in the least comfort.

Again, observe from this here, 'let not your hearts be troubled,' what is the seat of comfort, the heart. The seat of comfort is the seat of grief. There must be an application of comfort suitable to the grief, and the heart must be comforted.

And therefore in Isa. xl. 1, 2, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak to the heart.' As the grief sinks and soaks to the root of the heart; so do Christ's comforts, like true cordials indeed, that go as deep as the grievance. If the grief goes to the heart, the comfort must go as deep. Now God, the Father of spirits, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, knows and searches our spirits. They know all the corners of the heart. They can banish fear and sorrow out of every cranny; and bring light, heat, and influence into every part of the soul. And therefore Christ saith, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Now for the ways whereby we must labour to comfort our hearts (amongst many that I might speak of), I will name a few.

First of all, there must be a due search into the heart, of the grounds of our trouble; for oftentimes Christians are troubled, they cannot tell wherefore; as children that will complain they know not why. I speak not of hypocrites, that will complain of that which is not a true grief to them; like some birds that make greatest noise, when they be furthest from their nests. But of some poor Christians that are troubled, but distinctly know not the ground of it. But search the heart ingenuously and truly to the bottom of it, and see if there be not some Achan in the camp; some sin in the heart (for sin is like wind; when it gets into the veins, it will have vent, and a troublesome one; and so will sin, if it get into the soul). It is that indeed which causeth all trouble. And therefore search your hearts thoroughly; what sin lieth there unrepented of, and for which you have not been humbled.

2. And when you have found out your sin, give it vent by confession of it to God, and in some cases to others.

3. And when we have done so, consider what promises, and comforts, in that word of God are fitted to that condition. For we can be in no condition but there are comforts for it, and promises fitted to yield comforts for every malady. And it will be the wisdom of a Christian to accommodate the remedy to the sore of his heart. And therefore we ought to be skilful and well seen in the word of God, that we may store up comforts beforehand. Our Saviour Christ tells them beforehand of the scandal of the cross, and of Peter's denial, that they might lay up strength and spiritual armour against the day of trial. Those comforts do not, for the most part, hold out in the day of adversity, which were not procured in the day of prosperity. Non durant in adversis qua non in pace quasita. It is not wisdom to be to learn religion when we should use it. And, therefore, let us be spiritual good husbands\* for our souls, by storing up comforts out of the word of God; and then we shall have no more to do, than to remember the comforts that we did beforehand know.

And there be some promises of more general use, that are catholica, fitted for all sorts of grievances. And of these we must make use when we cannot think of particular ones, as the promises that concern forgiveness of sin. Think of God's mercy in pardoning sin with admiration; because sin will be presented us in such terrible colours, that if God be not presented in as gracious colours, we shall sink. And, therefore, set out Christ in his mercies, and all-sufficiency, when sin is aggravated to be in its heinousness, and out of measure, sinfulness; as the prophet Micah doth, 'Who is a God like our God,

that pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin?' vii. 18. Likewise, how many promises and comforts are there in that one promise, 'He will give his Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke xi. 13. And here our Saviour promiseth to send the Comforter. All graces and all comforts are included in the Spirit of grace and comfort. His Spirit is a Spirit of all grace; and, therefore, our Saviour thought that he promised enough when he said he would send them the Comforter. And so what a world of comfort is in that promise! 'All things shall work together for the best, to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28. Yea, those things that are worst shall work together. Though they be hostile, and opposite one to another, yet they join issue in this, they be all for the good of God's people; as in a clock the wheels go several ways, but all join to make the clock strike. And so in the carriage and ordering of things, one passage crosses another, but in the issue we shall be able to say, 'all things work together for the best;' I found God turning all things for my good; and I could not have been without such a cross, such an affliction. And so for present assistance in your callings or straits, remember that promise made to Joshua, which is repeated in Hebrews xiii., 11 'I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,' verse 5: a promise which is five times renewed in Scripture. And how much comfort is in that, that he will vouchsafe by his Spirit a gracious presence in all conditions whatsoever! And likewise that of David, Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill, for thou art with me.' It was a terrible supposition made, that 'though he should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet he would fear no evil.' These promises, well digested, will arm the soul with confidence, that it shall be able to put any case of trouble; as in the 27th Psalm, 1-3, David puts cases, 'The Lord is my strength, the Lord is the light of my countenance, of whom shall I be afraid? Though thousands shall rise against me, yet in this I will be confident.' If our hearts be established by the word of God, settled in the truth of such promises by the Spirit of God, we may set God and his truth against all troubles that can arise from Satan, and hell, and the instruments of Satan, or our own hearts. And, therefore, it is a great wrong to God, and his truth, if we know not our portion of comfort, and use it as occasion serves. More particulars I omit, leaving them to your own industry; the Scripture being full of them.

4. When we have these promises, let us labour to understand them, thoroughly; to understand the grounds of our comfort in them, and to believe the truth of them, which are as true as God, who is truth itself. And then to love them, and digest them in our affections, and so make them our own, and then to walk in the strength and comfort of them.

5. Labour likewise to have them fresh in memory. It is a great defect of Christians, [that] they forget their consolation, as it is in the Hebrews, xii.

5. Though we know many things, yet we have the benefit of our comfort from no more than we remember.

6. But, above all, if we will keep our hearts from trouble, let us labour to keep unspotted consciences. Innocency and diligence are marvellous preservers of comfort. And, therefore, if the conscience be spotted and unclean, wash it in the blood of Christ, which is first purging, and then purifying. It first purgeth the soul, being set awork to search our sins, and confess them; which maketh us see our need of Christ, who died to satisfy divine justice. Then, God sprinkles our heart with his blood, which was shed for all penitent sinners; by which, when the heart is purged, the conscience will be soon satisfied also, by Christ's blood. And when it is purged and pacified, then keep it clean; for a foul soul is always a troubled soul; and though it may be quiet, yet it is sure to break out afterwards.

7. And because there can be no more comfort than there is care of duty, therefore, together with innocency, let us be careful of all duties in all our several relations. Let us consider in what relations we stand, and what duties we owe, and be careful to satisfy them all. Neglect of duty is a debt, and debts are troublesome. When the soul reflects upon the omission of a necessary duty; I owe such a duty to such a person; I should have done such a thing, in such a relation, but I have omitted it, it is a disquietment, and that upon good grounds; and if you have been negligent, there must be an actual renewing of the covenant, and a setting upon the duty, with fresh endeavours to make amends for former negligences; or else the soul shall have no comfort, nor will God suffer it to admit of comfort. And, therefore, 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' Philip, in. 12. The reason that men do still tremble, and are troubled with this doubt and that fear, is, because their salvation is not wrought out; something is left undone, and their consciences tell them so.

8. But above all, that we may receive comfort, let us labour for a spirit of faith. Therefore here it is said, 'You believe in God, believe also in me.' Christ brings them to faith for comfort. And he sets down a double object of faith,—God, that is, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and Christ, considered as Mediator; and Christ brings them to himself, 'Believe also in me,' John xiv. 1, because he would fence them against the future scandal of his suffering. As if he should say, You will hereafter, when you see me so handled, and

upon the cross, doubt and call in question whether I am God and the Messiah of the world or no. But if you believe in God, 'believe in me.' For howsoever, in love to you and mankind, I took man's nature on me, and am abased, yet, in my greatest abasement, remember this, that I am God. And surely there is nothing can stay the soul more, especially when it is deeply humbled, than to consider God in the second person incarnate, and abased and crucified, and made a curse and sin for us; to see the great God of heaven and earth, whose excellencies we cannot comprehend, to take our nature, and in our nature to suffer for us those things which he did endure. This will establish the soul indeed. Can the soul think that this was done for any small or to little purpose? Or can there be any grief or sin that should hinder comfort, or persuasion of the possibility of pardon, when the great God became man on purpose to die for sin? We may set this against all discouragements whatsoever. And therefore, 'believe in God, believe also in me.' Howsoever you see me abased, yet you may have comfort in my abasement, for it is for you. And therefore, saith Paul, 'I rejoyce to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. in. 2. That which proud and atheistical heathens took scandal at, that he rejoiceth in, 'God forbid that I should glory in anything but in the cross of Christ,' Gal. vi. 14. Peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, reconciliation, and title to happiness, is all founded upon Christ crucified.

And then, again, you see he joins both together, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,' to shew the distinction of persons in the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. All our faith is resolved at length into one God, but yet withal into three persons in that divine nature, because, as there is God the Father offended, so there must be a God to satisfy that God, and there must be a God to reveal and apply that satisfaction. The soul is so full of doubtings, that nothing can set it down but that which is above the soul and above the devil. And therefore, for our salvation, and to give us comfort, there is a necessity of three persons in the Godhead. The Father is offended, God in the second person must satisfy offended justice, and God in the third person must reveal and apply that satisfaction for comfort. And therefore he names them distinctly, 'Ye believe in God,' &c. And because we cannot believe in God the Father but by believing in Christ, therefore he joins them together, 'Ye believe in God, ye believe also in me.' 'No man comes to the Father but by the Son,' John xvi. 6. God the Father dwells in the light that no mortal eye can approach unto; only he hath manifested himself in his Son, who is the engraven image of his person. God shines in the face of Christ, and as he comes down and makes himself known to us in his Son, so we

must go up to him in his Son, as he saith afterwards, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John xvi. 6. There is no going to the Father but by me. Nothing is more terrible than to conceive of God out of Christ, for so he is a 'consuming fire,' Heb xii. 29. Therefore think of God as ours in Christ. Carry Christ our elder brother with us, and desire God to look upon us in his Son.

Quest. Now, how doth faith in Christ ease the soul in trouble?

Ans. Many ways. I will name a few.

1. Faith in Christ banisheth troubles, and bringeth in comfort, because it is an emptying grace. It emptieth us of ourselves, and so makes us cleave to another, and thereby becomes a grace of union. It is such a grace as brings the soul and Christ together. Now, Christ being the fountain of comfort, God having treasured all comfort in him (\* for the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ,' Col. i. 19, and faith causeth Christ to dwell in us), brings the soul and Christ together, and so must needs make way for comfort. For it makes us one with the fountain of comfort, and by its repeated acts derives fresh comfort.

2. Again, faith established the heart. Now, to establish the soul there must be a solid basis, as in building there must be a foundation, and a planting upon that foundation. Now here is a foundation, God and Christ; and there must be a grace to found and bottom the soul thereupon, and that is faith. And so the soul is established. The chain and connection of causes herein is this. God the Father in Christ, and by the Holy Ghost, conveys comforts, through the word laid hold upon by faith. It is not the word alone, for that is but as the veins and arteries that convey the blood and spirits. So the Spirit being conveyed by the promises, helpeth the soul to lay itself upon Christ by faith, which is a grace of union, by which union with him the soul is established.

3. And then, again, faith stirreth up such graces as do comfort the sold, as hope in all good things promised. Arid therefore in the next verse he adds, to comfort them, 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and faith is the grace that apprehends the joys thereof; and hope expects that which faith believes, and that hope becomes an anchor to the soul, and stayeth the soul in all the waves and troubles of the world. And what is the ground of that hope but faith? Faith stirreth up hope, and hope pitcheth on the promise, especially of life everlasting. And thus faith becomes a quieting and a stilling grace, because it raiseth the soul, by representing and making real to it better

things than the world can give or take, as it doth also at other times present heavier things than the world can threaten. Faith makes things present to the soul; and because it lays hold on divine things, greater than anything here below, therefore it overcomes the world, and all things in the world, yea, hell itself, because it lays hold on heaven and happiness, upon the power of God, and the mercy of God in Christ, and upon those rich promises. "What is in the world, or in the rank of good things, but faith outbids it by setting heaven against it! and what evil is there but faith overcomes the fear of it by setting hell against it! I shall have such a good if I yield to such a lust. Aye, but what is that to heaven? saith faith. For faith being the hypostasis, the substance of things to come, makes them substantial and evident to the soul, as if they were already subsistent, being looked upon in the certainty of the word; and so it affects the soul deeply, and upholds it strongly, even as if the things themselves were present, and so it banisheth and dispels all discomforts. The 11th chapter to the Hebrews is a comment upon this truth in the example of Moses and many others. What greater object of fear might be presented to a man than the angry face and countenance of a terrible tyrant? Yet when by the eye of faith he saw him that was invisible, and then looked upon Pharaoh, what was Pharaoh to God? When Micaiah had seen God sitting on his throne, what was Ahab to him? And when the soul hath entered into the vail, and sees the glorious things of heaven and happiness, what are all things below? Faith sets the soul on a rock, above the reach of waves, upon the love of God in Christ. And therefore set the grace of faith on work, keep it on the wing, preserve it on exercise; and faith exercised will be able to comfort the most dejected soul in the world, and to raise it above all the troubles that can be imagined or befall us.

## The Second Sermon

*Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—*  
John XIV. 1.

The words of dying men departing out of the world, as being the most serious and weighty, are most to be regarded. The children of God, the nearer they are to heaven, the more suitable they are to their heavenly condition. So was our Saviour Christ; and therefore he labours to furnish his disciples, and in them us, with good counsel to establish their hearts against the troubles and scandals to come. [This will appear] if you consider the time when he spake these words. It was when he himself was to be troubled more than ever was any creature. Yet he forgets himself and his future troubles, and thinks how to raise up and comfort them. He foresaw that Peter would

deny him, that the rest would leave him; he foresaw that they would be dejected when he was gone. Yet 'let not your hearts be troubled.'

Oh, what a blessed and sweet Saviour have we, that thinks more of us than of himself, that he forgets his own troubles, and sufferings, and extremities, and thinks of the supporting and upholding of his disciples!

This came from the same love that drew him from heaven to earth, which moved him to take our nature, and in that nature to die for us. And what may we not expect from that sweet and large love? Out of the same bowels of pity and compassion was it (that they should not be overmuch dejected) that he saith, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

He knew his disciples were in the state of grace already, yet he foresaw they were such as would sin; nay, that Peter would deny him. Yet the foresight of Peter's and their unkindness did not take away his love, and pity, and compassion towards them. Yet, notwithstanding, he gives them sweet counsel; nay, after they had dealt unkindly with him, and denied and forsook him indeed, he took no advantage of their weakness. He knew they had a secret love to him, that they had in them a root of affection; and he was so far from taking advantage for it that presently after he saith, 'Tell my brethren that I ascend to my God and their God,' yea, and 'tell Peter so too,' John xx. 17, that hath dealt most unkindly of all with me. What a gracious and merciful Saviour have we, that foresees what ill we will do, and when we have done it, takes no advantage against us, but is careful to keep us from too much dejection, though he knew we would deal so unkindly by him! And, indeed, he did of purpose take our nature, that he might be a merciful High Priest.

Christians must distinguish betwixt dejection and grief. It had been a sin for them not to have grieved, as well as it was a sin for them to be overmuch troubled. None are more sensible than a Christian. *Sentit dum vincit.* He feels troubles whiles he overcomes them.

Christ speaks to the heart, because the heart is the seat of trouble, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Christ could speak to the ears and heart at once. His words were operative, and conveyed comfort with them. Together with his words, he let in his Holy Spirit, that comforted them. God's commands in the ministry of his word, suppose not that we have any ability to execute them, but together

with his word there comes forth a power. As when Christ said, 'Lazarus, arise!' there went forth a power that caused Lazarus to arise; as in the creation he said, 'Let there be light for the word and the Spirit go together.'

Having taken them off from trouble, he shews a way how to raise them, which is by faith, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

The object in believing is God, and Christ Mediator. We must have both to found our faith upon. We cannot believe in God, except we believe in Christ. For God must be satisfied by God, and by him that is God must that satisfaction be applied, the Spirit of God, by working faith in the heart, and for the raising of it up when it is dejected. All is supernatural in faith. The things we believe are above nature; the promises are above nature; the worker of it, the Holy Ghost, is above nature; and everything in faith is above nature. There must be a God in whom we believe; and a God through whom. If God had not satisfied God, the conscience would never have been satisfied; there would still have been misdoubtings. And yet if the Holy Ghost sets not down the heart, and convinceth it throughly of the all-sufficiency of that satisfaction, it would never believe neither. And, therefore, as 'ye believe in God, believe also in me,' for I am God too.

We may know that Christ is God, not only by that which Christ hath done, the miracles, which none could do but God, but also by what is done to him. And two things are done to him, which shew that he is God; that is, faith and prayer. We must believe only in God, and pray only to God. But Christ is the object of both these. Here he is set forth as the object of faith, and of prayer in that of Saint Stephen: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' Acts vii. 59. And, therefore, he is God; for that is done unto him, which is proper and peculiar only to God.

That which I shall now touch upon is this: We must remember what a strong foundation, what bottom, and basis, our faith hath. There is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and Christ the Mediator. That our faith may be supported, we have him to believe on who supports heaven and earth, as in Heb. i. 2, and Col. i. 16, 17. He created all things as well as the Father. He is honoured of all as well as the Father. He that supports the pillars of heaven and earth is able to support the pillars of thy soul.

But how doth, faith in Christ ease the soul of trouble?

In a word, as it carrieth the soul out of itself unto God in Christ, and unto Christ, uniting and making us one with him, and so sets the soul above all trouble whatsoever. For, being one with Christ, we are already with him in heaven. And again, faith is a grace that presents things to come, as present, and so established the soul. It is the hypostasis of things, it gives subsistence to them in the promise, and it doth never leave to do it till the things subsist indeed. It is a grace that accompanieth the soul to heaven, looking upon things in the word of him that is truth itself, and so giving a kind of being to them, throughout all the way to heaven, till they have a being indeed. And then faith is out of office, yielding it up to sight, and the full enjoyment of all.

Quest. But did not the disciples believe already?

Ans. Yes, they did. But they had need to renew their faith, as occasions were renewed, and as troubles were to increase. 'Believe in me.' It is as he should have said: 'Now there is occasion for you to use your faith. I must be taken out of your sight. You must see me suffer. And you had need of an extraordinary measure of faith to see me in such abasement, and yet to believe that I am God.'

We must grow from faith to faith, that we may live by it continually; and we must increase with the increase of God, that as our difficulties do increase, our strength to go through them may increase also; as they prayed, 'Lord, increase our faith,' Luke xvii. 5.

I give some directions how we might not be troubled.

And first, we must labour to have our part and portion in Christ, else there is nothing belongs to us but trouble. There are two sorts of men in the church, some that usurp a peace and exemption from trouble, as if joy and comfort were their portion. Satan is wise enough not to trouble them, and they take an order with their\* consciences, that they shall not trouble them till needs must, till the hour of death, or some dismal accident. The only way for such is to be troubled, that their trouble may be a foundation of their comfort. For to such as live in their sins against conscience, apparently \* so, that every man may see it, and yet are not troubled, they have no interest in comfort. Nothing but woe and misery belongs to them. Indeed, Christ came to save sinners, but it is broken-hearted sinners, penitent sinners, that are weary and heavy laden under the burden of sin. And, therefore, though they speak peace to themselves, yet we dare not speak any comfort to them from Christ. As Jehu said to Joram, 'What hast thou to do with peace, as long as

the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel are so many?’ 2 lungs ix. 22. Dost thou talk of peace as long as thou art a swearer, a profane liver, a malicious person, against all that are truly good? What hast thou to do with peace?

Now, in the visible church, there is another sort that Satan laboureth to trouble. Since he cannot keep them in the state of nature, but they break from him—Christ pulling them out of Satan’s kingdom by the power of his ordinances and Holy Spirit—he labours to trouble them in their peace all he can. Because they be, in the world, above the world, he envies their condition, that they should enjoy that paradise which he left, the comforts that he once had; and, therefore, he labours to disturb them in their comforts.

The estate of such is mixed here in this world. They have that in them, and without them, which will always be a cause and occasion of trouble. They have corruption in them not altogether subdued; and they have without them Satan taking advantage against them; and the world opposing them. These, although they have something in them that must be subdued, yet something also that must be cherished and strengthened. And therefore these are the persons to whom comfort properly belongs.

In heaven we shall have no need of being comforted, for there our peace shall be to have no enemies at all. Our peace here is to have comfort in the midst of discomfort, and an heart enlarged in troubles.

He speaks this to them here who were believers already; (‘Ye believe in God’), who he knew should not be troubled, ( ‘Let not your hearts be troubled’). So that to the end we may be subjects capable of comfort, we must be such as by faith are one with Christ; and so reconciled to God. All motion ends in rest, and all the rest of the soul ends in God,—the centre of the soul. And therefore before the soul can settle itself, it must be brought to God, through Christ. That must be laid as a ground.

Now there is a threefold malady that troubleth us, and there must a threefold peace, and ground of comfort against them.

First, it is a trouble to the soul (when once it is awakened), that God and it should be in ill terms; when the soul looks upon God as angry, and displeased with it.

Secondly, Again, the soul is troubled, when it looks upon itself, and sees nothing but turmoils and seditions there.

Thirdly, when it looks upon the affairs of the world, and accidents here below, it is full of confusion for the present; and it is full of fears for time to come, that things will be worse and worse. Thus the soul, whilst it is in the world, is troubled about its peace with God, and with itself, and about this evil world.

Now before the soul can yield to any quiet, all these quarrels must be taken up.

First, a peace must be made betwixt God and us, by the great Peacemaker, who is also called 'our peace,' Eph. iii. 14; and when we be justified and acquitted from our sins by the blood of Christ, sprinkled on our souls by faith, that blood of Christ speaks peace to the soul in the pardon of sin; 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. v. 1.

Then secondly, there must be another peace settled in some degree, and that is the peace of government in the soul; grace must be above corruption. They will be together in the soul whilst we are here, but sin must not have the dominion. This is such a peace, not as will admit of no conflict, but a peace wherein grace may get the better; and where grace gets the better, it will keep corruption under. And God gives his Spirit to whom he gives his Son; that as we be in good terms with God, so our natures may be like his; that we may love and delight in what he loves and delights in; and so may be as friends, enjoying acquaintance and communion together.

Aye, but thirdly, there is confusion in the world, and many accidents may fall out, that may disquiet us for time to come. Now before the soul can be at peace in that respect, it must know that, being once in Christ, reconciled to God, and having the Spirit of God, it is under a gracious government and providence, that disposeth all things to good, and maketh everything peaceable. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia.* When God is at peace, all is at peace; yea, so far at peace, that they have a blessing in them. The curse and venom is taken out of them by Christ, who took the curse on himself, and satisfied the wrath of God; and now they be not only harmless, but medicinal, and helpful, so that they be all ours, and made in some sort serviceable to further our spiritual good.

When our husband hath all things committed unto him in heaven or earth, will he suffer anything to befall his dearly beloved spouse, that shall be disadvantageous, and prejudicial to the main? No, no; he will not suffer anything to befall her, which he will not rule, and order, and overrule for the good of the church; and so there comes to be that third peace.

And, for the time to come, a Christian knows, that whom 'Christ loves, he loves to the end,' John xiii. 1; and 'the good work begun shall be perfected to the day of the Lord,' Philip, i. 6. He knoweth he is in heaven already in his head. 'He that believes in Christ hath everlasting life,' John iii. 86, and is triumphing in glory in his head.

And, therefore, nothing can dismay a Christian that is truly in Christ. Grant the first, grant all. Stand upon good terms with Christ; be reconciled to God, and nothing can do thee hurt.

But when we at any time come to comfort such as have comfort for their portion, it sticks here. If I were a child of God indeed, or if I did believe, it were something. These be good comforts indeed, and certain, and true, for they be the word of God; but what is this to me? I find universally, that comfort sticks there, and therefore we must labour to remove that objection.

First of all, therefore, labour to have a good judgment of main truths; that these comforts are the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and that the word is the word of God. By a general knowledge of the truth of the promises, thou shalt be better able to apply them. If thou stick in the principles, so as not to know them, nor to believe them, there is no talking of the application of faith upon them. We must make that our own in particular, which we believe first in general. And therefore Christians must first be well seen in the Scriptures, and in the promises there, that they may know what belongs to them, and apply them to themselves.

Aye, but my faith is weak.

1. I answer, The office of faith is to knit to Christ, and the weakest faith will do that, as well as the strongest: and when we are once one with Christ, then our perfection is to be found in him. It is the office of faith to bring us to Christ; and then to look to him for all perfections and for thy title to heaven, and not to faith; and true faith is faith even in the least degree of it. As we say of the elements, every drop of water is water, and every spark of

fire is fire. And, therefore, the argument will not hold, if we have not much faith, we have no faith; or if we have no feeling, we have no faith. There are many common errors which we must remove, that they may not hinder us in the application of Christ, by distinguishing between strong grace and true grace; and, above all, labour to know and understand the covenant of grace; the tenor of which requireth no set measures of grace; but 'if we believe, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life,' under so gracious and merciful a covenant are we.

2. But this is not sufficient to satisfy the soul. The very cleaving to Christ is indeed a sufficient ground of comfort, but yet to obtain actual comfort, there must be a knowledge that we do cleave to Christ, and believe. There may be adherence without evidence; and there must be an act of reflection to cause faith of evidence. It must appear to ourselves that we do believe before we can have comfort, though we may be true Christians, and go to heaven without it. Therefore, let us labour 'to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. i. 10; that is, in ourselves, and in our own apprehension. Though it be never so sure in itself, and in God's breast, yet we must labour to make it sure in our own breasts; that sin may be pardoned in our own consciences; that all may be reconciled in our own hearts; that what is done in heaven may be done in our own hearts also being cleared to our own assurance. You see what advice the apostle gives: 'Give all diligence.' It is not got without diligence, nor without 'all diligence, to make our calling and election sure,' that is, to make our election sure by our calling, and to that end 'to add grace to grace,' 2 Pet. i. 5. It is the growing Christian that is the assured Christian. Whilst we are yet adding to every heap, 'we shall get more abundant entrance,' 2 Pet. i. 11, and further into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, as the apostle there speaks.

3. And when we have attained any evidence of true faith, labour to keep that our evidence clear. Let it not be spotted or defiled by any sinful acts. You have many a good evidence that is so blurred with negligences, and daily errors in speeches and conversation, that when they reflect upon themselves they conclude, Can such a wretch as I, that have so loose a tongue, that have no more watchfulness over my heart, have any faith at all? And thus God doth suspend their comforts so, that though they may be in a good estate for the main, yet they shall not know it; and all because they are not careful to keep their evidence, which we should preserve clear and bright, that it might be seen and read upon all occasions. And we should so keep them bright, that our consciences may witness with us, and that the Spirit and the word

may join their witness with our consciences. The word saith, 'that he that loves the brethren is translated to life,' 1 John ii. 10, and he that hears the word, as the word, is Christ's sheep. Now, doth thy conscience tell thee, that though in weak measure, yet I do so? Then, here is the word, and thy conscience for thee. And doth the Spirit witness with thy conscience that it is so indeed? Then it is well. Thou keepest thy evidence to purpose.

4. And when we have done this, let us make conscience not to yield to any base doubts, and fears, and objections of Satan, and our own hearts. When we find any work of grace, deny not the work of God, lest we grieve the Spirit of God; as some melancholy Christians, that though every man may see the work of God in them, yet yield so slavishly to the misgivings of their hearts, and the temptations of Satan, that they conclude they have no faith, no love; though other Christians that can read their evidence better, see that they have these in them. What dishonour is this to God and his Spirit, when a dark humour shall prevail more than the word, the truth itself? This is a great bondage which Satan brings the soul into: that when there is evidence of faith in the fruits of it, yet men will believe a peevish humour, before the word and testimony of conscience, enlightened by the Spirit. Take heed of it as a great pride in the heart, when we yield more to a sturdy, dark, unsubdued humour, than to evidence itself.

Therefore in such cases hearken not to what fear says, or humour saith, or Satan saith, or what the world saith, but hearken what truth itself saith, and what conscience saith, when it is enlightened by the Spirit, as in good times when we are at the best. True Christians, though more remiss, shall have so much comfort as shall support them from falling into despair, yet not so much as shall strengthen them, and carry them into a vigorous life, fit for Christians.

5. When we have found any work of grace; and thereupon that our faith is true, we ought to comfort ourselves, and to maintain our comfort by all means. Every grace is but faith exercised. When our Saviour saith, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,' he might have said also in particular, Be patient, be contented, be comforted. But he names the root of all—Faith—wherein all graces are radically; which is therefore discerned in the fruits of it. So that if any grace be found, as love to the brethren, hope of life everlasting, or the like, there is faith. For the root and branches be together, though the root is not always discerned. And therefore when we discover any true faith in the fruit of it, let us support and comfort ourselves with it.

For when a man is in Christ, and by Christ an heir of heaven, and a child of God, what in the world can befall him, that should deject overmuch, and cast him down? What loss, what cross, what want of friends? Hath he not all in God, and in Christ, and in the promise? Do not the promises weigh down all discouragements whatsoever? Surely they do.

And therefore we must strive against dejection. For besides what I spake the last day, it is a dishonour to the profession of religion, which is in itself so glorious; a dishonour to God, and to Christ, that when we have such glorious prerogatives and privileges, which the angels themselves admire, yet every petty cross and loss that we meet withal in the world should cast us down. We should take heed exceedingly of this, and should labour every day to have a more and more clear sight of the promises that belong unto us, and to know the privileges of Christianity, and renew our faith in them continually, that they may be fresh to us in all temptations, and occasions whatsoever.

I beseech you, do but consider any one grand promise; which if it be rooted in the soul, how it is able to support the soul against all troubles whatsoever. As that, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,' Luke xii. 32. Or that other, 'If God spared not his Son for us, how will he not with him give us all things else?' Rom. viii. 32.

Labour to have these things fresh in memory, together with the privileges belonging to Christians. Think what it is to be a child of God, and an heir of heaven!

We must not look only to the blind and dark side of our condition. Christians have two sides, one to heaven-ward and God-ward; and that is full of glory, certain and immovable. Another towards the world; and that is oftentimes full of abasement, full of disgrace, and dejection. That is moveable; sometimes better, sometimes worse, as God pleaseth to dispense his government in the church. Let us look to the grace, to the comforts that belong to that grace; to the promises; the best side; and not to be carried away with the darkness of the other.

It is a terrible sight to look upon sin, and misery, and hell, and judgment to come; but what are these to a Christian that is in Christ, that seeth them all subdued, and overcome to him? The afflictions of the world, and the crosses of the world, what are they to a soul, that is already in heaven by faith, and seeth them all overcome in his head Christ? 'Be of good comfort, I have

overcome the world,' John xvi. 33. And therefore we must not be so malignant, as to look all upon one part of a Christian, and that the worse part, which is the object of sense. For shame, live not by sense! But if we be Christians, let us live by faith, look to the best part; look upwards and forwards to that which is eternal.

6. And withal labour to keep the graces of the Spirit in continual exercise upon all occasions. For grace exercised, brings certain comfort. It may be with a Christian in his feelings as with the worst man living; but he may thank his own negligence, his own dulness; his not stirring up of the graces of God in him. For therefore it is that he hangs the wing upon every petty cross, on every occasion. Labour to have an heart ready to exercise grace suitable to that occasion. For then grace will reflect sweetly, where there is sincerity and grace in exercise. Sincerity alone will not comfort a man, unless it grow up to fruitfulness; and fruitfulness which springs from the exercise of grace, hath a sweet reflection upon the soul. 'Remember, Lord, how I walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart,' saith Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 3. He stood then most in need of comfort; and this comforted him; this his reflection upon his former sincerity. So when a man can appeal unto God, as Peter did, 'Lord, thou knowest I love thee,' John xxi. 17. So much sincerity, so much boldness with God. And therefore let us keep grace in exercise, that we may be fruitful in our lives and conversations, and then we shall be always comfortable.

And to add a little, there is no grace in a Christian but, if it be exercised, there is a suitable comfort upon it even here in this world. There is a premium, ante premium, a reward before a reward. Nay, the heathen men, Socrates and the best of them, so far as they exercised the natural goodness that was in them, their consciences reflected peace; so far as they were good, and did good, they had peace, much more peace than bad men had. God gave even them some rewards upon discharge of their duties. He will not be beholden to any man that exerciseth any degree of goodness that is in him. Much more therefore shall a child of God enjoy it, when he exerciseth his graces in any temptation. When he overcomes any unclean, earthly, vainglorious, vindictive, or any other base lust, he shall find peace of conscience suitable. And the more he grows in strength and resolution for the time to come, the more he groweth in inward peace. Righteousness and peace go together; not only the righteousness of Christ and our reconciliation before God, but also the righteousness of an holy life and peace in our own consciences.

The righteousness of Christ entitles to heaven; and the righteousness of an holy life sheweth my title unto comfort. As faith in Christ's righteousness brings peace, so sanctification also. Christ is first 'King of righteousness,' and then 'King of peace,' Heb. vii. 1. And therefore where there is no righteousness, there is no peace. But, on the contrary, as heat followeth the fire, and as the beams have an emanation from the sun, so doth comfort arise from grace, especially from grace exercised.

Therefore they that would have inward peace, let them labour to be gracious; and that not only in the inward frame of the heart, but in the exercise of grace upon all occasions. 'For they that walk according to this rule,' that is, of the new creature, 'peace be to them, and the whole Israel of God,' Gal. vi. 16. An exact and careful life will bring constant peace.

Therefore let us labour first for interest in Christ's righteousness, and then for the righteousness of an holy life; for a conscience to justify us, that we have no purpose to live in any sin; and a not accusing conscience will be a justifying conscience. What a blessed condition shall we be in, to be in Christ, and to know that we are so! O the heaven on earth of such a man as is in that condition! For which way soever he looks, he finds matter of comfort. If he looks backward, to the government of the Spirit that hath ruled him in the former part of his life, he may say with St Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have run the race that God hath set before me,' 2 Tim. w. 7. And what a sweet reflection is this! He is not afraid to look back to his life past as other men. If he looks forward, he seeth a place prepared for him in heaven, and there he sees himself already in Christ. Henceforth 'there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day,' ver. 8; and all that love his appearing, saith he, there. When there comes ill tidings of the church abroad and at home, it doth not much dismay him. His heart is fixed; he believeth in God and in Christ, and that keeps him from being like a reed shaken with every wind. For reproaches and disgraces that he meets withal in the world, he wears them as his crown, if they be for religion and goodness' sake. For his witness is in heaven, and in his own conscience. And God in heaven, and his conscience within, do acquit him; and if he suffer for his deserts, yet in all afflictions God dealeth with him as a correcting Father. He knoweth he hath deserved them, but he looks on them as coming from a Father in covenant with him. And what can come from a father but what is sweet? He sees it moderated and sweetened, and in the issue tending to make him more holy. The sting is taken out, and a blessing is upon it, to make him better. And therefore what can make a Christian

uncomfortable, when he hath the Spirit of Christ, and faith, the root of grace?

These comforts being warmed with meditation, will stick close to the heart. Comforts that are digested are they that work. Let them therefore not only enter into the brain and flit there, but let them sink into the heart, by often consideration of God's love in Christ, and the privileges of Christians here and in heaven, where our Head is, and where we shall be ere long. Warm the heart with these, and see if any petty thing can cast thee down!

## The Saint's Privilege

*When he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Especially the 10th verse. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you shall see me no more.—John XVI. 8-10.*

Our blessed Saviour descending from heaven to earth for the redemption of man, after he had accomplished that great work, he ascended thither again. And knowing his disciples would take his departure very heavily, he labours to arm them against the assaults of all grief and sorrow that might otherwise oppress them; and that by many arguments. Among the rest, this is not the least, that when he is gone away he will 'send the Comforter unto them.' God never takes away anything from his children but he sends them a better. And this Comforter whom he promised to send shall bear them through in all their ministry, all function; and in effect he thus bespeaks them. You my disciples are to encounter with the world; be of good comfort, my Spirit shall go along with you, and 'he shall reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.' Of yourselves you are too weak, but the Spirit shall strengthen you, and make way into the hearts of those that shall be saved, by convincing them of 'sin, righteousness, and judgment.' So that be not discouraged; the Spirit shall breathe courage into you, and make way for your doctrine. 'When the Comforter is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and judgment: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.'

There are three main parts of salvation.

Knowledge of our misery, knowledge of our deliverance, and a life answerable. The Holy Ghost shall work all these. He shall convince the world of their own sin, of righteousness by a mediator, and of a reformation of life. So that the Holy Ghost shall go along with you in the carriage of the whole business of man's salvation. Where he begins, he makes an end. Where he convinces of sin, he convinces of righteousness, and then of a necessity of a reformation. He bears all afore him, and he doth it in a spiritual order.

1. First, He ‘convincing the world of sin,’ then ‘of righteousness,’ then ‘of judgment;’ because it were in vain to convince of the righteousness of Christ unless he hath before convinced of sin. For who cares for balm that is not wounded? Who cares for a pardon that is not condemned? Therefore he convinces of sin first. I have spoken heretofore of convincing of sin.

Here is a threefold convincing; of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and every one of these hath a reason added thereto. ‘Of sin, because they believe not in me;’ ‘of righteousness, because I go to my Father;’

‘of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.’

The Holy Ghost begins with convincing of sin. What is this convincing? It is a clear and infallible demonstration of our condition. It brings a commanding light into the soul. It sets down the soul and takes away all cavils, all turnings and windings. To ‘convince’ is to make a man, as the psalmist’s phrase is, ‘lay his hand upon his mouth.’ Light is a convincing thing. Now we see the sun we see it is day. Though ten thousand men should say it is not day, we would not believe them, because the convincing hereof is undeniable, that he must be an unreasonable man that gainsays it.

So then, the Spirit of God brings a commanding light into the soul undeniable. Thou art thus and thus; here no shifting, no winding and turning will serve the turn when the Holy Ghost comes with this light. I do but plainly unfold this.

This conviction of the Holy Ghost is not in general only, that all men are sinners, but particular and strong. ‘Thou art a sinner, and thou art in danger of damnation.’ And it is universal, taking in sins of nature, sins of life, sins of the understanding, will, and affections; and it is not of sin only, but of the misery by sin, of the danger, folly, and madness of sin, and of the aggravations that greaten sin, as of stifling so many good motions, withstanding so many means, abusing so many mercies. The Holy Ghost convinces us thoroughly, that we can have nothing to reply. Because I have spoken of this before, I am short. Beloved, unless the Holy Ghost ‘convince,’ there will be no convincing. Our deceitful hearts have so many windings and turnings; proud nature arms itself with defences, as a hedgehog winds himself round and defends himself by his pricks. So you have many clothe themselves with strong words, ill translations upon others, frivolous mitigations; the way of the multitude, as with a coat of mail to keep out this

conviction, that did not the Holy Ghost strike in hard with their consciences, 'Thou art the man,' this work would never be done.

Quest. But you will ask me this question, How shall we know common conviction of conscience from this of the Spirit? For carnal men that go to hell are 'convinced' by a common conviction. What is this saving conviction?

Ans. Difference 1. I answer, common conviction by the light of nature is a weak conviction. A little spark will show a little light, but it will not enlighten a room. It must be the work of some greater light, as the sun. The Spirit is a strong light, stronger than natural conscience. Natural conscience, and common light, is of some breaches of the second table. Natural conscience never 'convinceth' of corrupt nature, but the Spirit doth most of all, as you may see in David, Ps. li. 5, he resolves all into this, as if he should say, What should I tell you of my murder and adultery, 'in sin did my mother conceive me so a true Christian doth not look to the branches so much as to the root.

Difference 2. Then again, a natural conscience, when it convinceth a man, it is against his will. It makes him not the better man. He mends not upon it, but he is tortured and tormented. But a man that is 'convinced' by the Holy Ghost, he takes God's part against himself; he is willing to be laid open that he may find the greater mercy. So that there is a grand difference between common conviction of nature and the conviction of the Spirit. The conviction of the Spirit is the light of the Spirit, which is of a higher nature than that of natural conscience: 'I will send the Comforter,' when he comes he will greatly enlighten and overpower the soul.

Difference 3. Again, the conviction of the Spirit sticks by a man, it never leaves the soul. But that of an ordinary conscience it is but for a flash, and after they are worse than they were before.

I must cut off these things, because the time is always past upon these occasions before we begin.

Use 1. Come we therefore to make some use. The Spirit doth 'convince of sin.' But how? By the ministry ordinarily, though not alone by the ministry. Therefore we must labour willingly to submit to the ministry 'convincing of sin.' Conscience will convince first or last. Is it not better to have a saving conviction now to purpose, than to have a bare desperate conviction in hell? Oh, beloved, all the admonitions we hear, if we regard

them not now, we shall hereafter. Therefore labour to make good use of this 'sword of the Spirit' of God; and it is an argument of a good heart to wish, Oh that the ministry might meet with my corruption; that it may be discovered to me to the full. A true heart thinks sin the greatest enemy, and of all other miseries it desires to be freed from the thralldom thereof. For that defiles heaven and earth, and separates God from his creature. It is that that threw angels out of heaven, Adam out of paradise. What embitters blessings, and puts a sting into all afflictions but sin? If it were not for sin, we would take up any cross, and bear any affliction more quietly than we do.

Therefore as we desire to be saved, and to stand with comfort before God at the day of judgment, let us desire and endeavour to be thoroughly convinced of sin. Take heed of resisting the Spirit of God in the ministry. Why are many led captive of their lusts, but because they hate the ministry of the word? They look upon it as Ahab did upon Elias: 'Hast thou found me, O my enemy,' 1 Kings xxi. 20. They naturally are in love with their sins, and there is none so much hated as those that present themselves. A man, take him in his pure naturals, is a foolish creature; his heart rises against conviction. You see the Pharisees, wise men, learned men, being convinced, they hated Christ to the death. Why? Because he did entomb them and discover the dead men's bones within, Mat. xxiii. 27.

So many now-a-days, that are convinced, hate any. that by life or speech discover their sins unto them, if it were possible, and in their power, to the death. Thus the Holy Ghost convinces of sin. But before I leave this point, let me add this from the reason or ground of this conviction, 'Because they believe not in me.' That unbelief makes all other sins damnable. No sin is damnable if we could believe and repent. Therefore we are convinced of sin, because we do not believe; as we say of a man that is condemned, because he cannot read, therefore he is condemned. He should escape if he could read, being for no great fault. So it is here. It is not believing in Christ and repenting makes all other sins deadly.

The differing of one man from another is their faith and repentance. Some there be whose sins are greater than others, yet by the Spirit of God and faith, they work them out every day. It is faith in the 'brazen serpent' that takes away the sting of the fiery serpents, Num. xxi. 9.

I have done with the conviction of sin. Let us now come to speak of the conviction of righteousness.

And this righteousness here, is not our own inherent, but the righteousness of Christ a Mediator, God and man.

The Holy Ghost convinces of righteousness in this order of a fourfold gradation.

First, That there must be a righteousness, and a full righteousness.

The second is this, that there is no such righteousness in the creature.

Thirdly, That this is to be had in Christ the Mediator.

Fourthly, That this righteousness is our righteousness.

1. First, There must be a righteousness; for we have to deal with a God who is righteousness itself; and no unclean thing shall come into heaven, Rev. xxi. 7. Unless we have a righteousness, how shall we look God in the face, or how can we escape hell?

2. Now for the second, that it is not in any creature, men or angels. We have not a righteousness of our own; for there are divers things to be satisfied, God himself, and the law, and our own consciences, and the world. Perhaps we may have a righteousness to satisfy the world, because we live civilly. Oh but that will not satisfy conscience. And then there must be a satisfaction to the law, which is a large thing that condemns our thoughts, desires, but God is the most perfect of all. Put case we have a righteousness of a good carriage among men; this will not satisfy God and the law; it will not satisfy conscience. Men they are our fellow-prisoners. Conscience will not be contented but with that which will content God, when conscience sees there is such a righteousness found out by the wisdom of God, that contents him, else conscience will be always in doubts and fears.

3. Thirdly, This righteousness is to be had in Christ. What is the righteousness of Christ? The righteousness of Christ is that righteousness that is founded upon his obedience: active, fulfilling the law; and passive, discharging all our debts, satisfying God's justice. The meritoriousness of both of them is founded upon the purity of his nature. All his sufferings and doings had their excellency from the personal union of God and man; in reference to which union we may without blasphemy aver that God performed the law, God died for us.

4. Fourthly and lastly, This righteousness is our righteousness. The Spirit convinces that this belongs to all believers, for it is better than Adam had. His righteousness was the righteousness of a man, this righteousness is the righteousness of a mediator; and it is such a righteousness, that when we are clothed with it, we may go through the justice of God. We may have access with boldness to the throne of grace, and say, 'Lord, I come in the righteousness of Christ, that hath appeased thy wrath and satisfied thy justice. This the Holy Ghost convinces of.

Quest. But you will ask me, How doth the Holy Ghost 'convince' me of the righteousness of Christ?

Ans. I answer, first, the Holy Ghost presents to the soul the knowledge of this excellent righteousness, and then creates a hand of faith to embrace it, being proposed. You that are humble and broken-hearted sinners here is Christ for you. The Spirit of God doth not only reveal the excellency of Christ, but that this belongs to me, that Christ is given for me, and that 'revelation of the Spirit' doth sway the soul; when the Spirit doth not tell in general only that Christ is an excellent Saviour, but shall relate to a Christian soul, God gave Christ for thee. This sways the heart to rest upon Christ, whereupon the marriage is made up between the soul and Christ. The soul says, 'I am Christ's, and I give myself to Christ,' and to whatsoever accompanies Christ. And then as it is in marriage, the persons, by virtue of that relation, have interest into each other's substance and estate; so when this mystical marriage is made up between Christ and us, we have a right unto Christ by all rights, by titles of purchase and redemption. He hath purchased heaven for us, and us for heaven. All that Christ hath is ours; all his good is ours; our sins his, and his righteousness ours. So when the Holy Ghost convinces me of Christ's righteousness, and gives me faith to embrace it, then Christ is mine with all he hath. By this I have spoken, you may see how the Spirit convinces. Do but imagine what a blessed condition the soul is in when this match is made!

But you will ask me why is the sending of the Spirit necessary for the 'convincing of this righteousness'?

I answer, for divers reasons.

Reason 1. First, Because it is above the conceit of man that there should be such a righteousness of God-man. Therefore it is discovered by the Spirit; and when it is discovered, the Spirit must open the eyes of the soul to see,

else we shall have a natural knowledge of supernatural things; for a man, by a natural knowledge, may understand them, so as to be able to discourse of them; therefore, to change the soul, there must be a supernatural sight to see supernatural things. A devil incarnate may know all things, and yet want to see. Only the Holy Ghost gives inward sight, inward eyes, and works faith to see Christ as mine.

Reason 2. Again, the sending of the Holy Ghost is necessary for this conviction; because he alone must set down the soul and make the conscience quiet, who is greater than the conscience. Conscience will clamour, 'Thou art a sinner;' the Holy Ghost convinces, 'In Christ thou art righteous.' The Holy Ghost only knows what is in the heart of God the Father, and in the heart of every man. He only knows the intent of the Father to every Christian, and can answer all inward objections and cavils of flesh and blood raised up against the soul; therefore the convincing of the Holy Ghost is necessary. Howsoever Christ hath purchased our peace, yet the Holy Ghost must apply it; for the conscience is so full of clamours, that unless the Holy Ghost apply what Christ hath done, conscience will not be satisfied. God the Father hath appointed Christ, and Christ hath wrought it; but the third person must apply it to the soul, to assure us that this belongs to us. The application of all good things to the soul that Christ the Son hath wrought, is the proper office of the Third Person. In civil contracts here, there must not only be a purchase, but a seal. Though Christ hath wrought righteousness for us, the Spirit must seal it to every soul: 'This righteousness belongs to you;' 'Christ is yours, with all that is his.'

Reason 3. Again, it must needs be a work of the Spirit; because flesh and blood is full of pride, and would fain have some righteousness of their own. The Jews were of this temper; and it hath been the greatest question from the beginning of the world till this day, what is that righteousness whereby we must stand before God? But God's Spirit answers all objections. Beloved, the best of us, though in an estate of grace, if the Holy Ghost do not convince us, we shall be in darkness, and call all into question. Therefore we must not be convinced only at the first, but in a continued course of Christianity. Unless the Holy Ghost doth this, we shall fall into a dungeon of darkness; therefore the convincing of the Holy Ghost is necessary.

Beloved, this should make us take heed how we hear and how we read, even to beg this convincing of the Spirit in every ordinance: O Lord! vouchsafe 'the Spirit of revelation,' and take the scales off mine eyes, that as

these are truths of themselves, so they may be truths to me; sway my soul, that I may cast myself upon thy mercy in Christ, &c.

Obj. I must answer some cases that many a poor soul is troubled withal: Alas! I am not 'convinced by the Spirit that Christ is my righteousness,' therefore what case am I in?

Ans. I answer, some are more strongly convinced, and some less. Let a man be careless of holy duties, and he is less convinced; but let him be constant therein, and he shall find the Holy Ghost convincing him more strongly that the righteousness of Christ is his. There are many presumptuous persons that 'turn the grace of God into wantonness,' Jude 4; who because through the enthusiasm of Satan, they never question their estate, but conceit themselves to be good men and in the estate of grace, think this to be the convincing of the Holy Ghost; whereas this is a general rule, spiritual convincing is not total, but always leaves in the heart some drugs of doubting; as a ship that rides at anchor, though it may reel to and fro, yet is it safe for the main. So is it with the soul that is truly convinced. It is safe for the main, yet it is tumbled and tossed with many doubts and fears, but their anchor is in heaven.

Take this for a ground of comfort subscribed unto in the experience of all believers, that the Spirit of God so far convinces them of Christ's righteousness, as preserves in them such a power of grace as to cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ; and God will not quench that spark. Though there be little or no light, yet there will be heat. God will send his Spirit into the heart, so far as it shall not betray itself to despair, and let such a beam into the soul as all the power in hell shall not be able to keep out. But it is our own neglect that we are not more strongly convinced, so as to break through all. This is the privilege of a constant, careful Christian, to be strongly convinced of the righteousness of Christ.

Use. Thus we see how the Holy Ghost convinceth us of righteousness. Other things I must omit. If this be so, I beseech you, let us not lose our privileges and prerogatives. Doth God give grace, and give Christ with all his righteousness, and shall not we improve them? Let us use this righteousness in all temptations. Let us plead it to God himself, when he seems to be our enemy: Lord, thou hast ordained a righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, that hath given full satisfaction to thy justice, and he hath given me a title to heaven. Howsoever my soul be in darkness, yet, Lord, I come unto thee in the name of my Saviour, that thou wouldst persuade my soul of that

righteousness. I would glorify thy name. Wherein wilt thou be glorified? In mercy or justice? Oh, in mercy above all. I cannot glorify thee in thy mercy, unless thou persuade me 'of the righteousness of Christ.' Can I love thee except thou love me first? Canst thou have any free and voluntary obedience from me, unless I be convinced that Christ is mine? Now, Lord, I beseech thee, let me be such as thou mayest take delight in. Beloved, since we have means of such a gift, let us never rest till we have it. If Satan set upon us, hold this out. If he tell thee thou art a sinner, tell him I have a greater righteousness than my own, even the righteousness of God-man; I have a righteousness above all my unrighteousness. Satan saith God is displeased with me: ay, but he is more pleased with me in Christ, than displeased with me in myself. Satan saith I have sinned against God; ay, but not against the remedy. Send Satan to Christ. Oh, but thou hast a corrupt nature that makes thee run into this sin and that sin; but there is a spring of mercy in God, and an over-running fountain of righteousness in Christ, an overflowing sea of the blood of Christ. Therefore let us labour to improve this righteousness of Christ to God and Satan against all temptations, yea, against our own consciences. I am thus and thus, Yet God is thus and thus; all his attributes are conveyed to me in Christ. Let us exalt God and Christ, and set up Christ above our sins, above any thing in the world, as St Paul, who 'counted all things dung and dross for the excellent knowledge of Christ,' Philip, iii. 8.

Quest. You will ask me, How shall we know whether we be convinced of this righteousness or no?

Ans. I answer, We may know by the method Christ uses in convincing. First, he convinces of sin, and then of righteousness. For a man to catch at righteousness before he be convinced of sin, it is but an usurpation; for the Holy Ghost first convinces of sin.

Therefore you have many perish because they never were abased enough. Beloved, people are not lost enough and not miserable enough for Christ; and not broken enough for him; and therefore they go without him.

Quest. But how shall I know that the Holy Ghost hath convinced me enough of sin, so that I may without presumption apply the righteousness of Christ unto myself?

Ans. Only thus: if the Holy Ghost have discovered my sinful condition of nature and life, so as to work in me an hatred of sin, and to alter my bent

another way, and so make Christ sweet unto me, then I am sufficiently convinced of sin.

This in answer to that question by the way. To return; in the next place, I may know I am convinced thoroughly of the righteousness of Christ by the witness and work of the Spirit. The Spirit brings light and faith. The work of the Spirit hath a light of its own; as I know I believe, when I believe. But sometimes we have not the reflect act of faith whereby to evidence our own graces to ourselves; but ever he that is convinced of the Spirit of God, his heart will be wrought to bear marvellous love to God. Upon this apprehension that God is mine, and Christ is mine, the soul is constrained to love; whereupon ensues an enlargement of heart, and a prevalency of comfort above all discomfort, for love casteth out fear. This one comfort that our sins are forgiven, and that we have a right and title to heaven, when the soul is convinced of this it is in a blessed condition. Then what is poverty and what is imprisonment? Not worthy to be reckoned in respect of the glory that shall be revealed.

Again, where the Holy Ghost convinces enough, there is inward peace and great joy suitable to the righteousness. As the righteousness is an excellent righteousness of God-man, so, that peace and joy that comes from it is unspeakable peace and joy. So that then the heart sees itself instated in peace and joy, as you have it, Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace towards God not only inward peace and joy, but a peace that will show itself abroad; a glorious peace, a peace that will make us glory: ver. 3, 'We glory in tribulation.' A hard matter to glory in abasement. Not only so, but we glory in God. God is ours, and Christ's righteousness ours. When Christ hath satisfied God's wrath, then we may make our boast of God.

Again, where this conviction of righteousness is, it answers all objections. The doubting heart will object this and that, but the Spirit of God shows an all-sufficiency in Christ's obedience; and that sets the soul down quietly in all crosses, and calms it in all storms in some degree. Where the soul is convinced of the righteousness of Christ, there the conscience demands boldly: 'It is God that justifies, who shall condemn? It is Christ that is dead, and risen again, and sits at the right hand of God. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Rom. viii. 33. So that a convinced conscience dares all creatures in heaven and earth. It works strongly and boldly. I shall not need to enlarge this. You know whether you are convinced.

Use. To end the point, I beseech you, labour to live by this faith. Here is an evidence if we can live by it. How is that? Every day to make use of the 'righteousness of Christ,' as every day we run into sin. Be sure we have our consciences sprinkled with the blood of Christ; that as we increase new guilt, so we may have a new pardon. Therefore every day labour to see God as reconciled, and Christ as our advocate with the Father. Christ is now in heaven. If we sin, make use of him. This should be the life of a Christian, to make use of Christ's righteousness. When you find nature polluted, go to God, and say, Lord, my nature, though foul in itself, yet is holy and pure in Christ. He took the weakness of the human nature unto him, that he might communicate the worth and efficacy of his divine nature unto me. And for my actions, I am a sinner; but Christ hath fully discharged all my debts, and is now in heaven. He hath performed all righteousness for me. Look not upon me as in myself, but look upon me in Christ. He and I are one. This should be every day's exercise, to see ourselves in Christ, and so see him and ourselves one. I should enlarge the point further, but I will speak a word of the reason.

What is the reason why the Comforter may and shall convince of righteousness? 'Because I go to the Father.' What strength is there in that reason? Why this: Christ took upon him to be our surety; and he must acquit us of all our sins ere he can go to his Father. If one sin had been unsatisfied for, he could not have gone to his Father; but now he is gone to his Father, therefore all our sins are satisfied for. So that now the ascension of Christ is a sufficient pledge to me that my person is accepted, and my sins pardoned; because he is gone to his Father, to appear before the Father for us, which he could not have done had he not fulfilled all righteousness.

But wherefore did he go to the Father? Why, to make application of what he had wrought. If Christ should not have gone to the Father, he could not have sent the Holy Ghost to us. Therefore there is great use of this going to his Father. Satan pleads before God we are such and such. Ay, but saith Christ, I have shed my blood for them; and there he perfumes all our weak prayers. If we were not imperfect, what need we a Mediator in heaven? Therefore he is gone to heaven to disannul all Satan's accusations, and to provide a place for us. Die when we will, our place is ready.

Then again, he is gone to the Father to clothe us with a sweet relation, to make the Father our Father. For he saith, John xx. 17, 'I go to my Father and to your Father,' so that he is not ashamed to call us brethren. By virtue

of this, we may go to God and call him Father; and when we die, we may without presumption say, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' Luke xxiii. 46; for the Father loves us as he loved Christ, with one and the same love, though in a far different degree. What a comfort is this, that when we die, we go to our Father that is better than any earthly father. Therefore it should joy us when the time of our departure comes. We see old Jacob, when he saw the chariots come out of Egypt, how his heart leaped because he should go to see his son Joseph, Gen. xvi. 27, so when death is sent to transport us to Christ, to heaven, had we a strong faith we should be exceeding glad.

And let us learn here the art of faith from Christ. 'I go to the Father,' saith he. There was a great deal of time yet to pass, no less than forty days after his resurrection, before he went to the Father, yet he saith, 'I go to the Father,' to show that faith presents things future as present, faith sees heaven as present, and the day of judgment as present, and doth affect the soul as if they were now existent. If we had a spirit of faith, it would thus present things far off as nigh at hand. Therefore when we meet with anything that may make our way to heaven seem long or troublesome, exercise your faith, and make your term present to your spirits. Though remote from sense, say, I go to the Father. What, though I go through blood and a shameful death, yea, perhaps a tormentful death, yet I go to the Father! When a man is once persuaded that God is his Father in Christ, it will make him walk to heaven before his time.

Use. Let vs make use of this point of Christ's going to the Father. Beloved, there is not a point of religion but hath a wonderful spring of comfort; and it is want of faith that we do not draw more comfort from them. When, therefore, we part with our friends by death, think they are gone to their Father. If ye loved me, saith Christ, ye would rejoice because I said 'I go to the Father.' If we love our friends, we should rejoice when they die. Beloved, this should comfort us, Christ is gone to his Father! Oh, what welcome was there of Christ when he came into heaven. The same welcome will there be when we go to the Father. How joyful entertainment shall we have of the Father and the Son. Therefore death should not be troublesome to us; say, Christ's righteousness is mine; therefore I know I shall go to the Father. What care I, then, what kind of pains I go through. If a man be going to a desired place, howsoever the way be troublesome, the sweetness of the end will make him forget the discouragements of his passage. Perhaps we must wade to heaven through a sea of blood. It matters not. The end will

recompense all. Though we lose our limbs by the way, it is better to limp to heaven than dance to hell.

## The Witness of Salvation

*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—Rom. VIII. 15, 16.*

The apostle in this Epistle sets down a platform of Christian doctrine, whereupon all persons and Christian churches might safely build themselves; showing therein a sure way how those might come unto the Lord Jesus, who are to obtain salvation by him: which he delivereth in three heads.

1. First, Showing how God will convince the world of sin.

2. He discovereth unto them what that righteousness is, which without themselves is imputed unto them.

3. He setteth forth that righteousness inherent, created in us by sanctification of the Spirit, with the effects thereof and motions that help us thereunto.

Answering that threefold work of the Spirit, John xvi. 8, where Christ promiseth that when the Comforter cometh, he shall reprove the world, 1. Of sin; 2. Of righteousness; 3. Of judgment.

First, He shows the comforter shall work a conviction of sin, leaving a man as vile, empty, and naked as may be. Not a bare confession of sin only, which a man may have and yet go to hell; but such a conviction which stops a man's mouth that he hath not a word to speak, but sees a sink of sin and abomination in himself, such as the apostle had, Rom. vii. 18: 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,' &c. To attain unto this sight and measure of humiliation, there must be work of the Spirit.

Now, this being done, in the latter end of the third chapter he goes on and proceeds to that second work of the Comforter, to convince the world of righteousness. But upon what ground? 'Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more that is, he shall assure the conscience that there is now a righteousness of better things purchased for us; that Christ is wounded, condemned, and arraigned for us; that he was imprisoned, but now he is free,

who was our surety; yea, and that he is not freed as one escaped, who hath broken prison and run away, for then he could not have stayed in heaven, no more than Adam in paradise after his fall: but now that Christ remains in heaven perfectly and for ever co-enthronized with his Father, this is a sure ground to us that the debt is paid, and everlasting peace and righteousness is brought in for our salvation.

This the apostle enlargeth, and shows this to be that righteousness only which Adam had, and which all we must trust unto, unto the sixth chapter. Then the apostle goes on unto the third point, and comes unto the convincing the world of judgment and righteousness, in the eighth chapter, which are two words signifying one thing; but because he had named righteousness before, which was that righteousness without a man, in Christ Jesus, in justification, he calls the third judgment, which is that integrity inherent, bred, and created in us, as we may see in that place of Isaiah xiii. 3. It is said of Christ, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory.' He shows judgment there to be a beginning of righteousness in sanctification, even such a one as can never be extinguished. So Job xxvii. 2, the word is taken, where he expostulates the matter: 'As the Lord liveth, who hath taken away my judgment from me, all the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, I will not let it go.' Here you see by judgment is meant integrity and that righteousness which is created and inherent in us, so that the ground of that place of Isaiah is, that God will never give over to advance and make effectual that weak righteousness and sanctification begun in us, until it shall prevail against and master all our sins and corruptions, making it in some a victorious sanctification. And the ground thereof is, 'For the prince of this world is judged;' he is like one manacled, whose strength and power is limited, so that now though he be strong, yet he is cast out by a stronger than he, that he cannot nor shall ever rule, as in times past. This strain of doctrine, the apostle holds in this epistle, showing that, as that justification of righteousness by the blood of Christ is a thing without us, so sanctification is righteousness inherent and created in us, and is the ground of the witness of our spirit, as we shall hear in its own place. So that the blood of Christ doth two things unto us: 1. It covers our sins in justification; 2. And then in sanctification it heals our sins and sores; so that if there be any proud flesh, it eats it out and then heals the wound. 'Therefore, saith he, not under the law, but under grace.' He that sees the law

to be satisfied by another, and all to be under grace, he will not much stand on anything in himself for his justification, but fly unto grace, and be much in thankfulness; therefore we are commanded that sin have no dominion over us, 'for we are not under the law, but under grace.' Then he proceeds unto the particulars, and shows divers things, especially verse 12th of this eighth chapter, he drives unto the point of sanctification; as though he should say, You are freed from the law, as it is a judge of life and death, but yet the law must be your counsellor. You are debtors of thankfulness, seeing whence you are escaped, that ye may not live after the flesh. And then he proceeds to show them how they should walk; that seeing they have received the Spirit, they should walk after the Spirit. Now that they had received that which should subdue and mortify the flesh and the lusts thereof, they should be no more as dead men, but quick and lively in operation, to live after the Spirit; otherwise they could not be the sons of God. And then he comes unto the words which I have now read, verse 15th, 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'

'For the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God.'

Here the apostle shows the ground of our union and communion with Christ, because having his Spirit, we are of necessity his; as St John speaks, 1 John iii. 24, 'And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' What ties and makes one, things far asunder, but the same Spirit of life in both? So that Spirit which is in him, a full running-over fountain, dropping down and being also infused in us, unites us unto him; yea, that very Spirit communicated to me in some measure, which is in him in such fulness, that Spirit doth tie me as fast unto Christ as any joint ties member to member, and so makes Christ dwell in mine heart. As the apostle to this purpose speaks, Eph. ii. 21, 22, 'That thus by one Spirit we are built up and made the temple of God, and come to be the habitation of God by the Spirit.' So that now by this means we are inseparably knit and united unto him. For, I pray you, what is it that makes a member to be a member to another? Not the nearness of joining, or lying one to or upon another, but the same quickening spirit and life which is in both, and which causeth a like motion. For otherwise, if the same life were not in the member, it should be corrupt, dead, and of no use to the other; so that it is the same spirit and life which is in the things conjoined that unites. Yet to explain this more—as I have often in the like case spoken—imagine a man were as high as heaven,

the same life and spirit being in all parts, what is that now that can cause his toe to stir, there being such a huge distance betwixt the head and it? Even that self-same life which is in the head being in it; no sooner doth the head will the toe to stir but it moves. So is it with us; that very Spirit which is in him being in us, and he in us, thereby we are united to him, grow in him, and live in him, rejoice in him, and so are kept and preserved to be glorified with him. He is the 'second Adam,' from whom we received the influence of all good things, showering down and distilling the graces of his Spirit upon all his members, that look, as it was said of Aaron, who was a type of the second Adam, and of that holy oil representing the graces of the Spirit, 'Which did not only run down his head and beard, but the skirts of his garments, and all his rich attire about,' Ps. cxxxiii. 2; so when I see the oil of the Spirit of grace not only rest upon the head, but also descend to his heel and run upon the members, making me now as one of them, in some sort another thing than I was or my natural state made me, by the same Spirit I know I am conveyed into Christ and united unto him. To this purpose is that which Christ so stands upon, John vi. 63, unto the Jews, where, speaking of the eating of his flesh, and that bread of life which came down from heaven, lest they should mistake him, he adds, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' So that we see it is the Spirit that gives a being unto the thing; and therefore the apostle also proceeds to show, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 13, 14; that look, as Christ is the true natural Son of God, so we as truly, by the conveyance of the same Spirit unto us, are his, sons by adoption, and so heirs of God. This he begins to show, ver. 15, that now being in this excellent estate, they were not only servants or friends—a most high prerogative—but they were 'the sons of God,' having 'the Spirit of adoption,' whereby they might boldly call God Father. In which verse he opposeth 'the spirit of bondage,' which doth make a man fear again, 'unto the Spirit of adoption,' which frees a man from fears, so as boldly to call God Father.

Now two things may be observed hence: first, the order that the Spirit of God keeps. Ere it comforts, it shakes and makes us fear. This the apostle speaks of, Heb. ii. 14, where he shows the end of Christ's coming was, that 'Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part with them; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' The first work then of the Comforter is to put a man in fear. Further, hence is showed, that until

this Spirit doth work this fear, a man doth not fear. The heart holds out. The obstinacy is so great, that if hell gates were open, a man will not yield till then that the Spirit worketh it. So St John speaks of the Comforter, that 'when he comes, he will convince or reprove the world of sin,' John xvi. 8; that is, he will convince and show a man that he is but a bondman; and so he makes us to fear.

No man must think this strange, that God deals with men at first in this harsh manner, as it were to kill them, ere he make them alive; nor be discouraged, as if God had cast them off for ever as none of his; for this bondage and spirit of fear is a work of God's Spirit, and a preparative to the rest. But it is but a common work, and therefore, unless more follow it, it can afford us no comfort.

Obj. Why then doth God suffer his children to be terrified first with this fear?

Ans. I answer, that in two respects, this of all other is the best and wisest course to deal with us by the Holy Ghost, or else many would put it off, and never rightly come unto a sense of mercy. 1. In respect of God's glory; 2. In regard of our good.

1. But now, let us see why is such a course good in respect of God's glory. Because, as in the creation, so in the work of redemption, God will have the praise of all his attributes. In the former, there appeared his infinite wisdom, goodness, power, justice, mercy, and the like, so would he in the greater work of redemption have all these appear in strength and brightness; for in so doing, we honour him. It is honour to acknowledge all these things to be in him in high perfection, whereby the contrary, it is his dishonour when we acknowledge not the excellency of his infinite attributes. Yea, I may safely say, the work of redemption was the greater; for therein appeared all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in conveying it unto the church.

(1.) For his wisdom. There appeared infinite wisdom in so ordering the matter to find out such a means for the redemption of mankind, as no created understanding could possibly imagine or think of.

(2.) For his mercy. There could be no mercy comparable unto this, in not sparing his own Son, the Son of his love, to spare us, rather than we should perish, who had so grievously transgressed.

(3.) So there could not be so much justice seen in anything as in sparing us, not to spare his Son; in laying, as it were, his Son's head upon the block, and chopping it off, in renting and tearing that blessed body, even as the veil of the temple was rent—which was a type of him—so did he, as it were, tear him for us, and break him, when he 'made his soul an offering for sin.' This was the perfection of justice, and thus was he just, as the apostle speaks, 'that he might be a justifier of them who are of the faith of Jesus,' Rom. iii. 26. God would therefore in this great work have justice and mercy to meet and kiss each other. And that for two reasons: for the magnifying, 1. of his justice; 2. of his mercy.

1. Justice. For the former, the Spirit must first become a spirit of bondage and fear, for the magnifying of his justice, that God may have the glory thereof, as we see the prophet David, having sinned, was driven to this pinch: Ps. li. 4, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightst be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' Thus he, an holy man, was brought to confess, to give God the glory of his justice. And so to this end, that a man might pass by, or through, the gates of hell into heaven, the Lord will have his justice extended and spread abroad to the full view; and therefore, for the present sight of mercy, he turns the law loose to have its course; and thus, as in the work of redemption, he would have the height of justice to appear. So neither, in the application thereof, would God suffer justice to be swallowed up of mercy. But even as that woman, 2 Kings iv. 1, who had nothing to pay, was threatened by the creditors to take away her two sons and put them in prison, so the law is let loose upon us, though we have nothing to pay, yet to threaten imprisonment and damnation; to affright and terrify us, to magnify the justice of God. This is the first cause.

Further, God hath set forth many terrible threatenings against sin and sinners. Shall all this be to no purpose? The wicked are insensible of them; must they therefore be in vain? Some people there be on whom they must work. 'Shall the lion roar, and no man be afraid?' Amos iii. 8. Since, then, those who should will not, some there are who must tremble, and those even his own dear children. This the prophet excellently sets forth, Isaiah lxvi. 2, where the Lord showeth whom he will regard: 'But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembling at my words.' So that you see even some of his own must thus tremble and be humbled of necessity, and that it is not without just cause that God doth deal with his own children in this manner, though it be sharp in the experience. We must

fear, tremble, and be humbled, and then we shall receive a spirit not to fear again.

That vain courage which 'some have to brag of, 'I fear not death,' this is not that meant here; for, alas! such braggers, out of ignorance of the thing, and desire to be out of misery in this life, may embrace death willingly, hoping it may put an end to their miseries. But this spirit not to fear again, is such a spirit that assures me of the forgiveness of all my sins, showing me my freedom in Christ Jesus from hell and eternal condemnation, making me live an holy life, and from hence not to fear; and so seals us up unto the day of redemption, as we shall hear anon, when we come unto the witness of this Spirit. This is for the glory of his justice.

2. Mercy. Secondly, It is requisite that the Comforter should work a fear in men, for the glory of Jus mercy, which would never be so sweet, nor relish so well, nor be esteemed of us, if the awful terrors of justice had not formerly made us smart; as we may see in that parable, Mat. xviii. 23, whereunto our Saviour likens the kingdom of heaven, of that man who owed ten thousand talents unto the king his master. He shows he forgives him all. But what did he first? He requires the whole debt of him; and because he had nothing to pay, he commands him, his wife and children, and all that he had, to be sold, that payment might be made. First, he would have him pinch, thoroughly to know how much he was indebted; and in that case how high that favour was which he received in forgiving him all. Thus a king, for great faults, casts men into prison ere he pardon them, and then mercy is mercy indeed. So God deals with us. Many times he puts his children in fear, shows them how much they owe, how unable they are to pay, casts them into prison, and threatens condemnation in hell for ever. After which, when mercy comes to the soul, then it appears to be a wonderful mercy, yea, the acts of exceeding mercy. Why do so many find no savour in the gospel? Is it because there is no witness or matter of delight in it? No. It is because such have had no taste of the law and of the spirit of bondage; they have not smarted, nor found a sense of the bitterness of sins, nor of the just punishment due unto the same. Even as a king will suffer the law to pass on some grievous malefactor for high treason, and cause him to be brought to the place of execution, and lay his head on the block, ere he pardon, as we have had experience in this country. A man who otherwise would not cry, nor shed a tear for anything, despiseth death, and would not fear to meet an host of men, such a one now having at this instant a pardon brought from the king, it works wonderfully upon him, and will cause softness of heart and tears to come when nothing

else could; whilst the wonder of this mercy is admired; which now appeareth so sweet and seasonable, that he is struck, and knows not what to say. So therefore, for this cause, God shows us first a spirit of fear and bondage, and prepares us to relish mercy; and then the Spirit of adoption, not to fear again.

And thus, by this order, the one is magnified and highly esteemed by the foregoing sense of the other.

If, therefore, this terror and fear be hard and troublesome unto us, yet if it be for God's glory, let us endure it. If he will give me over to a wounded, terrified conscience, to fears, tremblings, astonishments, yea, or to draw me to the fire itself, or to any other punishment, since it is for his glory, I must be contented. But what do I say? God gets nothing by us. All that we do is for ourselves. Our acknowledgment of him makes him no wiser, stronger, juster, nor better than he is, Job xxxv. 6, 7; but, in glorifying him, we do glorify ourselves, and so pass from glory to glory, until we be fully transformed into his image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And herein consists our happiness in acknowledging of his wonderful attributes, that, by reflex of the knowledge of them, we may grow in them as much as may be for our good. He was as glorious, powerful, wise, just, happy, and good before the world was made as now. For if the case be put of glorifying him, the persons of the Trinity were only worthy of so great honour, not we, as we may read Prov. viii. 30. There Wisdom shows how it 'was with the Father before all time, and that they did mutually solace themselves in the contemplation of one another's glory.' Then, says Wisdom, 'was I by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;' and John xvii. 5, there we read the same in effect, where Christ prays, 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' So that the beholding, magnifying, and admiring his glory as much as may be, labouring to be like him, is our glory. Thus much of the glory of God in beginning of his work in us by fear.

This second was, that this course is for our good, and that two ways, 1. In justification. 2. In sanctification.

1. In justification. For the first, we are such strangers unto God, that we will never come to him till we see no other remedy, being at the pit's brink, ready to starve, hopeless of all other helps. We are such wretched creatures, so hard frozen in the dregs of sin, delighting in our own ways, as we see in the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv. 11, seq. He would never think of any return to his father till all other helps failed him, money, friends,

acquaintance, all sort of food; nay, if he might have fed on husks with the swine, he would not have thought of returning any more to his father. This being denied him, then the text saith, 'He came to himself,' showing us that whilst men run on in sinful courses they are madmen, out of themselves, even as we see those men in Bedlam.

They are beaten, and kept under; comforts denied them till they come to themselves. Then what says he? 'I will go to my father, and confess that I have sinned,' &c. So it is with us, until the Lord humbles and brings us low in our own eyes, and shows us our misery and sinful poverty, and that in us is no good thing; that we be stripped of all helps in and without ourselves, and must perish for ever without we beg his mercy. We will not come unto him, as we see it was with that woman whom Christ healed of her bloody issue, Luke viii. 43, how long it was ere she came to Christ. She had been sick twelve years; she had spent all her substance on physicians, and nobody could help her. This extremity brought her. So that this is a means to bring us to Christ, to drive us on our knees, helpless, as low as may be,—to show us where only help is to be found, and make us run into it.

Thus, therefore, when men have no mind to come unto Christ, he sends as it were fiery serpents to sting them, that they might look up unto the brazen serpent, or rather unto Christ Jesus, of whom it was a type, for help, Num. xxi. 8, John iii. 14. So unto others, being strangers unto him, he sends variety of great and strange afflictions, to make them come, that he may be acquainted with them. As Absalom set Joab's corn on fire because he would not come at him, being twice sent for, 2 Sam. xvi.

30, so God dealeth with us before our conversion many times; and with an iron whip he lasheth us home, turning loose the avenger of blood after us, and then we run and make haste unto this city of refuge for our life. Thus, I say, God doth shoot off his great ordnance against us, to make us run unto him. So John the Baptist in this manner came preaching of repentance, in attire, speech, diet, all strange; clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins, his meat locusts and wild honey; the place, in a wilderness; the speech, harsh and uncomfortable, thundering in voice, calling them generation of vipers, and telling them that now was the axe also laid to the root of the tree or under the wood, that every tree that brought not forth good fruit was hewn down and cast into the fire, Mark i. 6, seq.

As also we know in this manner, the Lord came unto Elias, 1 Kings xix. 11, seq. First, a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces

the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after them went an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. These were as a peal of great ordnance, shot off to prepare the way for him, to show the King his coming. And after the fire a still small voice, and there the Lord was. So the Lord rends, tears, and shakes our consciences oftentimes to prepare the way for him, and then he comes unto us in that still and soft voice of consolation.

2. For our sanctification. It is good for us that the Comforter's first work is to work fear in us; for we are naturally so frozen in our dregs, that no fire in a manner will warm and thaw us. We wallow in our blood; we stick fast in the mire of sin up to the chin, that we cannot stir. So that this fear is sent unto us to put us from our corruptions, and to make us more holy. As we see a man having a gangrene beginning on his hand or foot, which may spread further and be his death, he is easily persuaded to cut off that, that it go no further. So doth God deal with us in this fear of bondage, that we may be clothed anew with his image, in holiness and righteousness.

Now, to effect this, the sharpest things are best. Such as are the law and threatenings of condemnation, the opening of hell, the racking of the conscience, and a sense of wrath present and to come. So hard-hearted we are by nature, being as children of the bond-woman, unto whom violence must do the work. Even as we see a man riding a wild and young horse to tame him, he will run him against a wall that this may make him afraid, ride him into deep and tough lands, or taking him up unto the top of some high rock, from whence bringing him to the bank thereof, he threatens to throw him down, and so makes him shake and quake for fear, whereby at last he is tamed. So deals the Lord by us. He gives us a sight of sin, and the punishment due thereunto, a sense of wrath; sets the conscience on fire; fills the heart with fears, horrors, and disquietness; opens hell thus unto the soul; brings one as it were unto the gates thereof, and threatens to throw him in; and all this to make us more lowly, or the more to hate sin. So that by this we see there must be strange mortifying and subduing of us by strong hand, to bring us unto Christ, for our sanctification.

Obj. Ere I proceed, give me leave to answer one objection of a troubled soul, which may arise from hence: Oh, may one say, 'what comfort, then, may I have of the first work of the Spirit in me, for as yet I have found none of these things? I have not been thus humbled, nor terrified, nor had such experience, as you speak of, in that state under the spirit of bondage.'

Ans. I answer, This, though it be the work of the Spirit, yet it is not the principal, sanctifying, and saving work of the Spirit. Yea, a child of the devil may come to have a greater measure of this than God's own dear children, whom for the most part he will not affright, torture, nor afflict in that terrible manner as he doth some of them; but the consequent of this is more to be accounted of than the measure, to see whither that measure I have, whatsoever it be, leads me. For if the measure were so absolutely necessary to salvation, then all God's children should have enough of it; for I make a difference still betwixt humiliation and humility, which is a grace of itself, and leads me along with comfort and life. Thus, therefore, I think of humiliation. If I have so much of it as may bring me to see my danger, and run unto the medicine and city of refuge for help, to hate sin for the time to come, and set myself constantly in the way and practice of holiness, it is sufficient. And so, I say, in the case of repentance. If a man could have a heart firmly set upon the sight of sin past, against all sin to come, the greater and firmer this were, the lesser measure of sorrow might suffice for sins past. As we see a wise father would never beat his child for faults past—he takes no delight in that but for prevention of what which is to come, for we see the child cries out in the time of correction, I will never do so more!—so God deals with us. Because our promises and resolutions are faint, and fail, and that without much mourning, humiliation, and stripes we attain not this hatred of sins past, and to have strength against them, therefore it is that the measure of our humiliation and sorrow must be proportionable to that work which is to be done, otherwise any measure of it were sufficient which fits us for the time to come.

I will add, there are indeed divers measures of it, according unto which the conscience is wounded. When there is a tough, melancholy humour, that the powers of the soul are distracted, good duties omitted, and the heart so much the more hardened; when upon this the Lord lets loose the bond of the conscience, oppressing the same with exceeding terrors and fears, this the Lord useth as a wedge to drive out a hard piece of wood to be cut. God then doth show us, because we would not plough ourselves, we shall be ploughed: 'If ye would judge yourselves,' saith the apostle, 'you should not be judged,' 1 Cor. xi. 31. And therefore the church confesseth and complains, Ps. cxxix. 2, that 'the ploughers ploughed upon her back, and made deep furrows.' Why, how came this? 'She did not plough up her own fallow ground.' Wherefore the Lord sent her other ploughers, that ploughed her soundly indeed. Wherefore doth God thus deal? Because he is the great and most wise husbandman, who will not sow amongst thorns. Therefore when he is about

to sow the seed of eternal life in the soul, which must take deep root and grow for ever, he will have that ground thoroughly ploughed.

The way, then, to avoid these things, so harsh and displeasing to flesh and blood, is to take the rod betimes and beat ourselves. When we are slow, secure, and omit it, God doth the work; yet he makes a difference of good education in those who have kept themselves from the common pollutions and gross sins of the time. It pleaseth God that faith comes upon them, they know not how for the time. Grace drops in by little and little, now a little and then a little by degrees. Sin is more and more hated, and the heart inflamed with a desire of good things in a conscionable life. But in a measure, I say, such must have had, or have, or shall have, fears or terrors, so much as may keep them from sin, to go on constantly in the ways of holiness; or when they fly out of the way, they shall smart for it, and be whipped home again. Yet for the main they find themselves as it were in heaven, they know not how. But if a man have stuck deep and long in sin, he must look for a greater measure and more certain time of his effectual calling. There must be haling and pulling of such a man out of the fire with violence. That man must not look for peace and comfort with ease. God will thunder and lighten in this man's conscience in mount Sinai ere he speak peace unto him in mount Sion.

A second time also there is of a great measure of humiliation, which is, though a man be free of worldly pollutions and gross sins, when the Lord intends to show the sense of feeling of his mercy to any in an extraordinary measure, or to fit them for some high service, then they shall be much humbled before, as we see Paul was, Acts ix. 8. God did thunder upon him, and beat him down in the highway, being stricken with blindness three days after.

And thus much shall suffice to have spoken of the 15th verse, touching 'the spirit of bondage' and the 'Spirit of adoption.' The apostle tells them, they may thank God the spirit of fear thus came, that hereafter they might partake of the Spirit of adoption to fear no more. He stirs them up, as it were, to be thankful, because now they had obtained a better state. Why, what estate? A very high one: ver. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witnesseth with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' The thing is then to know ourselves to be the children of God. There must be sound evidences. Here then are two set down, whose testimony cannot fail. I will touch them, by your patience, as briefly as I can, and so make an end.

1. The witness of our spirit. 2. The witness of God's Spirit with our spirit.

These be two evidences, not singly but conjoined, wherein you see there must be some work of our own spirit.

Obj. Our spirit is deceitful; how can our spirit we then in this manner to testify this?

Ans. I answer in this place, Our spirit is taken as an evidence of God from heaven; as it were a love-token given, and assuring me from good grounds that I have not misapplied the promises; that though God do write bitter things against me, yet I love him still, and cleave unto him; that for all this, I know that I hunger and thirst after righteousness; that I will not be beaten off, nor receive an ill report of my Lord and Saviour; that I rest, wait, serve, and trust in him still. In a word, the witness of our spirit I take to be a sanctified resolution upon deep sorrow and mature judgment both of God's mercies bestowed, and my obedience to the will of God; whence the soul gathers strength to wait and depend upon God, and serve him in all holiness, though for the present he hide his face and seem an enemy. When thus our valour and faith is tried, then comes the same Spirit, and seals with our spirit, that we are the children of God. When our seal is first put, then God seals with our spirit the same thing by his Spirit. To this effect, 1 John v. 8, we read of three witnesses there set down, 1. The Spirit; 2, the water; 3, the blood.

'And these three agree in one.' These three witness that we have everlasting life, and that our names are written in heaven. How do these three agree with these two witnesses? Very well, Saint John ranks them according to the order of their clearest evidence.

1. The Spirit; 2, then the water; 3, then the blood.

The apostle here ranks them according to their natural being: first, our spirit in justification; and sanctification is put next, and then God's Spirit. For the Spirit, of all other things, is the clearest evidence; and when this is bright and manifest, there needs no more. The thing is sealed. So the testimony of water is a clear evidence whereby is meant sanctification. This is put next unto the Spirit; for when the Spirit is silent, yet this may speak. For though I have many wants and imperfections in me, yet if my spirit can testify unto me that I have a desire to please God in all things, that I have resolved to set

up his service as the pitch of all my utmost endeavours; that I with allowance will cherish no corruption, but have set myself against all: this water will thus comfort. It holds up a man from sinking, as we see in all the sore troubles of Job, chap. xxvii. 2-5, he still stood upon the integrity of his own spirit, and would not let that go though he were sore beaten of the Almighty, and slandered of his friends for a wicked person. But the water may be muddy, and the struggling of the flesh and spirit so strong, that we cannot well judge which is master. What then? In this case faith lays hold of the blood of justification, which though it be the darkest testimony, yet is it as sure as any of the other. Now in comparing these witnesses together in Saint John and in my text, 1. I rank the water and the blood with the testimony of our spirit. And, 2. The Spirit mentioned in St John and in my text to be all one.

Not as though we wrought them, but that we do believe them to be so. If a man ask, how I know that I am sanctified? the answer must be, I believe, I know it to be so. The work of working these things in me comes of God; but the work of discerning them is certain, how our affection stands in this case—comes of us. But yet to come nearer to the matter.

‘The testimony of our spirit.’

I conceive to be, when a man hath taken a survey of those excellent things, belonging unto justification and sanctification; when according to the substantial truths which I know in the word belonging thereunto, I observe and follow as fast as I may what is there commanded; when I take the candle of the word, and with that bright burning lamp search what is to be done, and therewith lance my corruptions, and so bring it home, then is it mine. This is the ground-work of the witness of our spirit. As in the blood, with my spirit I must see what is needful to be done to be justified; what free promises of invitation belong thereunto. I must see how God justifies the sinner, what conditions on our part are required in justification, and my interest therein. I must see what footings and grounds of life give way, and hope for a graceless man to be saved, yea, even unto the worst person that may be. In this case a man must not look for anything in himself as a cause. Christ must not be had by exchange, but received as a free gift, which the apostle shows, Rom. iv. 16, ‘Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed,’ &c. I must therefore bring out the receiving of Christ a bare hand; first, it must be of grace. God for this cause will make us let fall everything before we shall take hold of him. Though qualified with humiliation, I must let all fall; not trusting unto it,

as to make me the worthier to receive Christ, as some think. When thus at first for my justification I receive Christ, I must let anything I have fall, to lay hold on him, that then he may find us thus in our shirts, as it were—in our blood—and in this sort God will take us, that all may be of mere grace.

Another thing is required, that the promise may be sure. If anything in us must be as a cause or help to our justification, a man should never be sure; therefore it is all of grace, that the promise may be sure. As though God should say, I care for nothing else, thou canst bring me in this case. Bring me my Son, and show me him, and then all is well. And in this you see he doth not name hope or love, or any other grace, but faith. For the nature of faith is to let fall all things in laying hold of Christ. In justification faith is a sufferer only. But in sanctification it works and purgeth the whole man, and so witnesseth the certainty and truth of our justification, and so the assurance of salvation.

Hence, from the nature thereof in this work, 2 Pet. i. 1, the apostle writes unto them who had received the like precious faith. In this case, it was alike to all in virtue in this work, whatsoever the measure be. And I may liken it thus: Paul, we know, says, ‘with these hands I got my living,’ 1 Cor. iv. 12. Now, though strong hands may work more than weak, and so earn a great deal, yet a beggar who holds out his hands may receive more than some other can earn; so faith doth justify us by receiving, not working, as you may see, John i. 12, ‘But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.’ What then should we do to be saved? Why, receive him: that is, believe in him now. Come and take sure hold, as in the Revelation, ‘and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely,’ Rev. xxii. 17.

1. Open house. Now when I see that God keeps open house, come who will, without denying entertainment unto any, and when God’s Spirit hath wrought the will in me, and I come and take God at his word, and believe in Christ, laying hold by degrees on the other promises of life, winding and wrapping myself in them as I am able, this is faith; but that persuasion, that I have, that I shall go to heaven, which many think to be faith, is not so, but rather a consequent thereof. The promise is made unto those who believe in Christ; for in him, saith the apostle, ‘all the promises are yea and amen,’ 2 Cor. i. 20. If a man weep much, and beg hard for the forgiveness of sins, he may weep and be without comfort unto the end of the world, unless he have

received Christ, and applied his virtue home unto the trembling soul. A man must first receive Christ, and then he hath a warrant to interest himself in all the promises. So that now this being done, if such a man were asked, Hast thou a warrant to receive Christ? He will answer, Yes, I have a warrant. He keeps open house unto all who come, welcoming all, and I have a will to come. This is a good and sufficient warrant; if I have a will in me wrought for to come, and do come. And this is the first thing to be observed in the witness of our spirit.

2. Invitation. Now if a man do stagger, for all that the King keeps open house, so as he will not or doth not come, then in the second place comes invitation. Because we are slow to believe, therefore God invites us: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Many object, Oh, I am not worthy to come! But you see here is invitation to encourage me; yea, the sorer and heavier my load is, I should come so much the rather. So that if in this case the question should be asked of such a one, Friend, how came you hither?

What warrant had you to be so bold? Then he shows his ticket, as if he should say, Lord, thou gavest me a word of comfort, 'a warrant to come.' My load and burden indeed was very heavy, and my unworthiness great; but at thy invitation, in obedience to thy word, and faith in thy promise, I came hither. Now this invitation is directed to them who have no goodness yet wrought in them. When, then, my spirit warrants thus much unto me, that upon this word of promise and invitation, I have come in for relief and ease of my miseries unto Christ Jesus, the great physician, relying on him for cure, and lying, as it were, at his foot for mercy, this is the testimony of my spirit, that I do believe, and a ground for me to rest on, that now I am in the way of life, and justified by his grace.

3. Entreaty. Thirdly, Sometimes Christ meets with a slow and dull heart, lazy and careless, in a manner, what become of it; not knowing or weighing the dangerous estate it is in; making excuses. There Christ might justly leave us; for is it not too much that the King should invite us for our good, as he did those in the gospel, who, for refusing to come to his supper, were excluded from ever tasting thereof, and strangers were fetched in in their places? God might so deal with us; but you see, 2 Cor. v. 20, 'God sends an embassage to entreat us;' erects a new office, as it were, for our sakes. Says he, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.' This may

seem to be needless; we being weaker than he; ambassadors are sent to the stronger. The apostle reasons the matter: 'Are we stronger than he? Do we provoke the Lord to anger?' But here we see and may admire his infinite rich goodness, that he doth come to sue to us to be reconciled with him. We know it might be counted a kind of indignity for the king of Spain, so great a monarch, to sue unto the Hollanders for peace, who are so far inferior unto him. This dishonour God puts up at our hands, and says unto us first, when rather it becomes us on our knees to beg for it. The effect of the embassy is, that we would be friends with him, and receive that which is so highly for our advancement. When, therefore, I see this quickness in my heart, so that, as St James speaks of the engrafted word to save our souls, I can bring it home, having some sweet relish and high estimation of it in my heart, that it begins to be the square and rule of my life, then I am safe. If this or any of these fasten upon the soul, and thereupon I yield and come in, it is enough to show that I am a justified person, and from hence our spirit may witness, and that truly. This is a third thing in the witness of our spirit.

4. Command. Fourthly, If none of all this will do, then comes a further degree, a command from the Highest, You shall do it, as 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.' In the parliament of grace there is a law of faith, which binds one as strictly to believe as to keep any of the commandments. Saith the apostle, Rom. iii. 27, 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.' So that if I will not believe on the Lord Jesus, who easeth me from the rigour of the law, and so is my righteousness, I shall perish for ever. What, may one object, must I needs believe? Yes, thou art as strictly bound to believe, as not to murder, not to be an idolater, not to steal. Nay, I will add more, that thy infidelity and contempt of that gracious offer, thy disobedience to the law of faith, is greater than thy disobedience to the law of works; when thou dost fling God's grace in his face again, and, as it were, trample under foot the blood of the covenant. See for this John xvi. 9. What is that great sin which Christ came to reprove? Even this infidelity, says he, 'because they believe not in me;' which in two respects is a great sin. First, because it sins against God's mercy; secondly, because it is a chain which links and binds all other sins together. Thus faith is sure, when it lies on the word, otherwise all other thoughts are but presumption, and will fail a man in the time of need. For what is faith, I pray you, but my assent to believe every word of God. He hath commanded me to believe, and to endeavour the practice.

5. Threatenings. Fifthly, If all this will not do, then comes threatenings. Then God swears, that such as refuse shall never enter into his rest. If the prince should sue unto a beggar's daughter for marriage, and she should refuse and contemn his offer, do you think he would be well pleased? So it is with us when the King of heaven's Son sends to us, will you be married to me? If we refuse, the Son doth take on wonderfully; and therefore, Ps. ii. 12, he says, 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those that put their trust in him.' So Hebrews iii. 18: God swore because of infidelity those unbelieving Jews should never enter into his rest. All the rest of the threatenings in the law were not with an oath. There was some secret reservation of mercy upon the satisfaction of divine justice; but here there is no reservation. God hath sworn such shall never come to heaven. Look not for a third thing in God, as a mitigation of his oath. It cannot be. He hath sworn no unbeliever shall ever enter into his rest.

These five things are the grounds of faith even to the worst and unworthiest persons that may be, which, once wrought in the heart and the spirit, and the Spirit of God renewing our spirits, discerneth the same spirit. These are the witness of our spirit.

Now, our spirit having viewed all these things and the promises upon which they are grounded, thus it witnesses, as if one should demand of one, Are all these things presented to thy view true? Yes, will he say, true as the gospel. Then the next thing is, Are they good and profitable? Oh yes, saith he, all are very good and desirable. Then the upshot is, Are all good to thee? If then thou accept of this and warp and fold thyself in the promises, thou canst not wind thyself out of comfort and assurance to be in Christ Jesus; for, I pray you, what makes up a match but the consent of two agreeing. So the consent of two parties upon this embassy makes up the match between us and Christ, and unites and knits us unto him.

There are also, being now incorporate, other means to make us grow up in him, by which time discovers what manner of engrafting we have had in him. As we see four or five shoots may be engrafted in a stock and yet some of them not take root, but wither, so, many are by the word and sacraments admitted as retainers and believers of the promises who shrink and hold not out, because they never took root, but it only swam in the brain. Yet, howsoever, all that come to life must pass this way, if they look for sound comfort. Thus much shall suffice for the witness of our spirit in justification;

but our spirit's testimony goes further, wherein I might show you how in sanctification our spirit says, 'Lord, prove me, try me if there be evil in me, and lead me in the way for ever,' Ps. cxxxix.

23. He loves the brethren, desires to fear God, as Nehemiah pleads, Neh. i. 11, 'Be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name,' &c. This is the warrant that I am partaker of that inward true washing, and not of that outward only of the hog, which being kept clean, and in clean company, will be clean till there be occasion of returning to wallow in the mire again. But when I find, though there were neither heaven to reward me nor hell to punish me, if opportunity were, yet my heart riseth against the sin because of him who hath forbidden it, this is a sure evidence, and testifies that I am the child of God. Thus much is for the first thing in bringing a man in to survey the promises concerning justification and sanctification, whereupon our spirit doth truly witness the assurance of our salvation.

Secondly, When I find Christ drawing and changing my nature, that upon the former reasonings and view, and laying hold of Christ, making me now have supernatural thoughts and delights,—for this a man may have,—then, certainly, my spirit may conclude that I am blessed; for, saith the Scripture, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to come unto thee,' Ps. lxxv. 4.

But some like drones do dream of this, I know not on what grounds; these men can have no comfort. But do I this waking with my whole soul? Doth my spirit testify it upon good grounds? Then I may rest upon it; it is as sure as may be. This is the testimony of our spirit. Yet, ere I come to the witness of God's Spirit with our spirit: there may be often an interposing trial betwixt; God may write bitter things against me, seem to cast me off, wound me for all this as with the wound of an enemy, and remove the sense of the light of his countenance from me. What then is to be done? What doth the witness of our spirit now? Why then I will trust in him, though he kill me, Job xiii. 15. Sure I am I have loved and esteemed the words of his mouth, more than mine appointed food, Job xxiii. 12; as Job speaks, 'I have laid hold of them to show their power and believe them, I have desired to fear him and yield obedience to all his commandments.' If I must die, I will yet wait on him and die at his feet. Look here is the strength of faith. Christ had faith without feeling when he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' When sense is marvellous low, then faith is at the strongest.

We must walk here by faith; we shall have sense and sight enough in another world. The apostle saith, 'We walk by faith, and not by sight, and by faith we stand;' as we may see a pattern in that woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22, seq. She was repulsed as a stranger, yet she went on; then she was called a dog. She might have been dashed and given over her suit; but see, this is the nature of faith, to pick comforts out of discomforts; to see out of a very small hole those things which raise and bring matter of consolation. She catcheth at that quickly, Am I a dog, Lord? Why yet it is well, 'The dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Thus faith was strong in her; and when this trial was past, then Christ says unto her, 'Woman, great is thy faith, have what thou wilt.'

I have done with the testimony of our spirit. And then from our believing God in generals and valorous resting upon him, taking him at his word, comes 'the testimony of God's Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'

I say, this being done, and God letting us have trial what his strength is in us, he will not let us stand long in this uncomfortable state, but will come again and speak peace unto us; after two days gather us up, and the third day revive us, that we may live in his sight. As if he should say, What! hast thou believed me on my bare word? Hast thou honoured me so as to lay the blame and fault of all my trials on thyself for thy sins, and clear my justice in all things? Hast thou honoured me so as to magnify my mercy, to wait and hope in it for all this? Hast thou trusted me so as to remain faithful in all thy miseries? Then the Lord puts to the seal of his Spirit. As we may read Eph. i. 13, saith the apostle, 'In whom also ye trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance,' &c.

Here is the difference betwixt faith and sense. Faith doth take hold of general promises, applies them, makes them her own, and lives and walks by them; and so squares his life by those rules in all things, as without sense she leads us on to heaven; but sense is another thing, when as Ps. xxxv. 3, there is a full report made unto the soul of its assured happiness. As in that place, 'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.' When a man hath thus been gathered home by glorifying him and believing his truth, then comes a special evidence unto the soul and says, 'I am thy salvation,' which, in effect, is that which Christ in another place speaks, 'He that loveth me shall be beloved of my

Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him,' John xvi. 21. And as it is Cant. i. 2, 'He will kiss us with the kisses of his mouth,' so as we shall be able to say, 'My well-beloved is mine, and I am his.' When God hath heard us cry a while until we be thoroughly humbled, then he takes us up in his arms and dandles us, making his Spirit after a sensible manner seal unto us the assurance of our salvation. So that a meditation of the word being past, a man having viewed his charter and his evidences, surveying heaven and the promises and privileges, with the glory to come, then the Spirit comes in and makes up a third guest; then comes joy unspeakable and glorious, and in such a measure that the soul is wonderfully pleased. It shall not continue always so, but at some times we shall have it; yet it endures so as that it shall never be taken quite away, as our Saviour's promise is, John xvi. 22:

'And you now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.' This is the root of all consolation, that God will not forsake us for ever, but he will come at last and have compassion of us, according unto the multitude of his mercies.

Obj. Here some may object, What! doth the Spirit never seal but upon some such hard trials after the witness of our spirit?

Ans. I answer, The sealing of God's Spirit with our spirit is not always tied to sore, hard, and such foregoing trials immediately; for a man may be surveying heaven, or the glory to come, or praying earnestly in much humility, with a tender melting heart, applying the promises and wrestling with God; then at these or some such times God's seal many times may be, and is put to our seal: 'For as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and no man discerneth the coming thereof,' John iii. 8, so may the Spirit of God seal at divers times and upon divers occasions; yea, and why may it not seal in the time of some great suffering for the truth, as we read of the apostles, Acts v. 41, who went away from the council 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer any shame for his name'?

Lastly, for trial; we must now see how to distinguish this testimony of the true Spirit from the counterfeit illumination of the Anabaptists and some friars, who will now and then have some strange sudden joys, the devil, no question, transforming himself into an angel of light to deceive them. This trial is made, 1. By three things going before; 2. By three things following after.

First, See that the ground-work be sure. If a man be in the faith, and do believe the word; if, upon believing, meditation, opening unto the knock of Christ at first, not delaying him off, like the lazy spouse in the Canticles, if in this case the Spirit come and fill the heart with joy, then all is sure and well. It comes with promise, because then he hath promised to enter. If a man have a dull, dead, delaying ear to open unto Christ, or apply him upon good grounds, and therewith great fantastic joys, he may assure himself they are but idle speculations, not wrought in him by the right sanctification of the Spirit; but if this joy come upon the surveying of charters, evidences, &c., it is sure, we may build upon it.

Secondly, A man must consider, if he hath as yet overcome strong passions and temptations, and passed through much hazard and peril, having been buffeted with divers temptations, over which he hath obtained mastery. For this seal of God's Spirit with our spirit comes as a reward of service done; as we may see Rev. iii. 17, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it;' whereby he means, in such a case he will give a secret love-token unto the soul, whereby it may rest assured of the unspeakable love of God and freedom from condemnation.

The Athenians had a custom, when malefactors were accused and arraigned, to have black and white stones by them, and so according to the sentence given, those acquitted had a white, those condemned had a black stone given them. Unto this the Holy Ghost here alludes, that this seal shall assure them of an absolute acquittance from condemnation, and so free them from the cause of fear. Again, he shows Christ will give a man a new name, that is, his absolution written in fair letters upon the white stone with a clear evidence; as if he should say, 'When Christ hath seen a man overcoming, and how he hath buckled with temptations, and yet holds out, pressing on for his crown unto the end of the race, he will come in then, and stroke him on the head, ease all his pains, fears, and sorrows with such a sweet refreshing as is unspeakable. When a man hath won it in sum, he shows he shall wear it.

Thirdly, If the Spirit seal after meditation in the word, it is right. The apostle saith, 'In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,' Eph. i. 13. Examine the root of your joys. The Spirit gives no comfort but by the word. If a man do meditate on the promises, and thereupon have a flame kindled, when he knows his interest in them, this is

sure. A man may say, the word did stir it up. If it be God's comfort, assure thyself God would have his word to make way unto it. Those who find no sweetness in the word, what is the cause thereof? Because they chew not the cud to imprint it in their memories and hearts. If comfort comes whilst a man is meditating on the promises, and wedging them home upon the heart, it is of God, otherwise it is but counterfeit and false. These and divers others may be the forerunners to this seal. Now three things follow after, which the Spirit leaves behind it.

1. First, Humility; as in his knowledge, so in his sense, it makes a man more humble. There is naturally in all a certain pride which must be overcome; yea, of all sorts, spiritual pride is the most dangerous. Wherefore know the holiest are ever the humblest people. The apostle saith, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why boastest thou?' &c., 1 Cor. iv. 7. By the contrary, the more near a man comes unto the glory of God, the more he sees him, and is truly acquainted with him, so much the more rottenness he finds in his bones; as we see in Job, what he says of himself in this case: Job xiii. 5, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee.' His inference is—'wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' And the prophet Isaiah, he cries out, Isa. vi. 5, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that is of unclean lips.' But wherefore is all this? saith he. 'For mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts.' It is a certain thing, an humble soul is a sure and certain habitation for the Spirit of God. 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is the Lord of Hosts: I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble,' &c., Isa. lvii. 15. A proud spirit, therefore, but in vain brags of this seal of God's Spirit, which leaves a man humble, and the vilest of all others in his own sight; for then the brightest and best light hath showed him more than ever his manifold and darkest corruptions, which abase him in his own eyes, seeing how far short he comes of what he should and ought to be.

2. A second thing which the Spirit leaves behind it, if it seal rightly, is, a prevention of security to come. In this case we must look for a new encounter. A false persuasion makes a man to fall into security; because Satan is then most malicious and busy, a man must stand faster than ever. The devil, he hates those most which are most endowed with God's image, whom, because he cannot reach, he persecutes his members. And therefore in this case, it must be with us as it was with Elias in his feast, 1 Kings xix. 8.

After such an enlightening, a man must now think that he hath a great journey to go, and so walk on in the strength of that, long time. The devil, you see, watcheth a man at the best, then to overcome him, as we see in Adam and Eve. No sooner were they placed in that estate of innocency but he buckled with them. How much more a man having a sweeter taste of the Spirit and less strength now, may he look to be set upon? And therefore in these feasting days had need to be more in his watch and pray more; for we have more given unto us than Adam had. We have a new name give us, a secret love-token. Further, we see Christ saith, Rev. iii. 20, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' Now, in such a case, if we be such parties who let our hearts fly open to let him in, we are safe; as if he should say, if you would be sure of reconciliation to be at peace with me, sup with me, and I will sup with you. For we know, if men formerly enemies be brought to keep company and eat together, we use to say, all is done and lapped up in the napkin; old reckonings are forgotten and taken away. Now they are certainly friends. But if, like the spouse in the Canticles, we let him stand knocking, and will not let him in, we may have great, many, and sound knocks ere we find him again, as we know it befell the church then, when she had lost her communion with him. Our Saviour, you see, knowing the devil's violence and subtilty in taking us unprovided, how often doth he command us to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. 'That I say unto you I say unto all men, Watch,' Mark xiii. 37. If we would therefore retain our comfort after such a sweet taste, or having lost it, recover the same, let us watch chiefly at that time, and prepare for a new assault. Then again, in a loss, let us mark the knocks of the Spirit, when, as it is Isa. xxx. 21, 'A voice behind us says, Walk this way, and that way,' &c., and grieve him not by withstanding holy motions, and then we shall find him sealing our salvation, and witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. Men, you see, wait for the wind, and not the wind for them, else they may be long enough ere they reach home. So must we watch the knocks of Christ to let him in, that so his Spirit may seal us up to the day of redemption. Oh, how happy were it for us if thus we could do, and still watch and be ready for a new encounter! For let no man think to have more freedom from temptations than our blessed Saviour had, of whom it is written, Luke iv. 13, 'That when the devil had ended all his temptations against him, he departed from him for a season.'

The third thing the true Spirit leaves behind it is love. It makes a man the more enkindled with love to God. If a man do not love God more after

such an enlightening, it is false and counterfeit. Saith the prophet David, 'I will love thee dearly, my Lord, my God, because thou hast heard my voice.' And the apostle saith, 2 Cor. v. 14, 'For the love of God constraineth us,' &c. And therefore, if we be obedient sons, we must show it in loving and honouring our Father more and more; as Mai. i. 6, 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I then be a father, where is mine honour?' Yea, then, this love will break forth unto others like fire, to warm and comfort them. 'Come unto me, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul,' &c., saith the prophet, Ps. lxvi. 16; so a holy soul in this case finds a fire like that of Elihu. It is like new wine in bottles that cannot hold. There is an holy rejoicing, an holy praising; holy flames sent towards others. Much love increased to them; admiration of such excellent surpassing things as remain in the life to come, if a taste be so much here.

I cannot go on further now. These, in brief, may serve us for a trial of the truth of God's Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God, which now let us pray for, 'O Lord our God,' &c.

## Saint Paul's Challenge

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?—Rom. VIII. 31.*

The words are a glorious conclusion and triumph of faith: the conclusion upon all the former particulars in the chapter, and the foundation of all the comforts that follow after, to the end of the chapter. They are as the centre of the chapter. All the beams of heavenly comfort in this divine chapter, they meet, as it were in one, in this short clause, 'What shall we say then to these things?' &c.

In the words, briefly, there is first a question, 'What shall we say to these things?'

And then a triumph, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' It is a question answered with another question, 'What shall we say to these things?' He answers it with another question, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?'

'What shall we say to these things?'

To these things before mentioned. If we be in Christ, there is no condemnation to us; if we be led by the Spirit, if we be heirs of heaven and fellow-heirs with Christ, if we suffer with him, if we have the spirit of prayer to help our infirmities in the worst conditions, if all creatures groan with us, and if all work for our good, if God from all eternity hath written our names in heaven by election, and separated us from the rest of the world in vocation, and hath sanctified and justified us, and will after glorify us, 'what shall we say to these things?'

The heart of man is full of doubtings and misgiving, full of thoughts:

'According to the multitude of my thoughts, thy comforts refreshed my soul,' Ps. xciv. 19. A multitude of thoughts and a multitude of comforts. There is comfort after comfort, because there are thoughts after thoughts, and surmises after surmises. There is no waste comfort set down in this chapter; and when he hath set down all, he comes and concludes in a triumphant manner, 'What shall we say to these things?' He propounds the

query to himself, he catechiseth his own heart and others. If these things be so, what can be said against them? Surely the unbelieving, doubting, dark, rebellious heart of man hath many things to say against divine truths; for though divine truths be lighter than the sun, and there is no greater evidence of anything in the world, yet they find no place in the unbelieving heart. Let God say what he will, the doubting heart is ready to gainsay it. But these truths are so pregnant and clear, that it is a wonder that anything should be said against them: 'What shall we say to these things?'

Again he means, what comfort can you have more? What can you desire more? What can be said more? What use will you make of all that hath been said? What will you suck out of it? If all this be true that hath been spoken before, that a Christian is so elevated above the common condition; if God love him from everlasting in election, and to everlasting in glorification; if in the middle time all shall work for the best, what comfort can the heart of man desire more? and what use can you make of this for courage and for comfort for the time to come? These things are implied in this question, 'what shall we say to these things?'

Use. It is good often to propound queries and demands to our own hearts, when we read or hear divine truths; to ask our own hearts, You have heard these things, what say you to them? For whatsoever God saith in his word will do us no good till we speak to our own hearts, and be convinced of it, and say it is so. Therefore we should say to ourselves, Here are many comforts and duties pressed, but what sayest thou to it, my heart? Dost thou not stand out against comforts and advice? It is no matter what God saith, unless he overpower the unbelieving heart to say, 'What shall I say to these things?' Shall I not agree with God and his Spirit, and his comforts? Shall they be best in regard of an unbelieving heart? Oh no! Therefore let our care be to store them in the treasury of our memory, which should be like the pot of manna, to contain heavenly comforts. Let us treasure up all the truths we can, all will be little enough when we shall need comfort. But when we have them in our memory, let us ask ourselves, Are these things so or no? If they be so, believe them; if they be not so, then let us give liberty to ourselves, and away with hearing and reading, &c. If they be so, for shame let me yield to them.

Let us ask these questions with some fruit; let us deal thus with our own hearts, often call them to account whether we believe or no; for we have such a faculty and power, we can reflect upon ourselves. And we ought to

desire of the Spirit of God to teach our hearts to reflect upon themselves, to examine whether we know, and if we know, whether we believe, and what use we make of these things, and why we should live thus? Doth this life and course of mine agree with these principles? The best of us all are tardy this way. Therefore let not that part without making some use of it. But I proceed to that I will more dwell on, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

Here is first a ground laid, and then a comfort built upon it. The ground that is laid is, 'If God be with us.' When he saith, 'If God be with us,' he doth not put the case, but lays it as a ground. 'If God be with us,' as indeed he is with all his in electing them, in calling them, in working all for their good, in glorifying them after, &c., 'If God be with us,' as he is, then this comfort is built upon this ground, 'who shall or can be against us?'

For the first, the ground that is laid is, that God is with his children.

Indeed, he is with the whole world. He is everywhere; but he is with his church and children in a more peculiar manner. The soul is spread in the whole body, but it is in the brain after another manner, as it understands and reasons. God is everywhere; but he is not everywhere comforting, and directing, and sanctifying, nor everywhere giving a sweet and blessed issue. So, besides the general respect, that I will not now stand on, God is 'with us' that are his in a more peculiar manner in all his sweet attributes: in his wisdom to direct us, with his power to assist and strengthen us, by his grace and love to comfort us; and he is with us in all our perplexities, to stay our souls. He is with us by his sweet and gracious mercy, to feed us with hidden manna, with secret comforts in the midst of discomforts. When there is no comfort else with us, then God is with us; and then he is with us in the issue of all that a godly man takes in hand in his name. He is with him in all crosses, to direct and turn them to his best good; 'All things work for the best to them that love God,' Rom. vi. 23. He is with them in all his sweet relations as a gracious Father in covenant, as a husband. He is with them in those sweet comparisons: as a hen, Mat. xxiii. 37; as an eagle, to carry them on his wings above all dangers, as he carried the Israelites in the wilderness, Deut. xxxii. 11. He is with them in all comfortable relations.

Therefore God, in the Scriptures, borrows names from everything that is comfortable. He is with them as a rock, to build on; as a shield, to defend them; in the time of heat and persecution, he is a shadow, to keep them from the heat; he is with them as a light. Christ is our life in death, our light in darkness, our righteousness in sinfulness and guilt, our holiness in impurity,

our redemption in all our miseries. There is somewhat of God in every creature; therefore God takes names from his own creatures, because there is some strength or comfort in them. God gives himself variety of names, as there are variety of our distresses. Are we in misery? God is a rock, a shield, a tower of defence, a buckler; he is all that can be said for comfort. He is with us in his attributes and sweet relations, and all sweet terms that may support our faith, that whatsoever we see comfortable in the creature, we may rise more comfortably to God, and say, God is my rock and shield, and my light and defence.

And then God is with us in every condition and in every place whatsoever. He is not only a God of the mountains and not of the valleys, or a God of the valleys and not of the mountains, as those foolish people thought, 1 Kings xx. 28, but he is in all places, and at all times with his. If they be in prison, he goes with them: Acts xvi. 22, seq., he made the prison a kind of paradise, a heaven. If they be banished into other countries, he goes with them; 'I will go with thee, O Jacob, into Egypt, and bring thee back again,' Gen. xlviii. 21. If they be in death, he is with us to death and in death: 'In the valley of the shadow of death, thou art with me,' Ps. xxiii. 4. At all times whatsoever, and in all conditions, God is with us.

In all our affairs whatsoever God is with us. 'Fear not,' Joshua; 'fear not,' Moses. What was the ground of their comfort? 'I will be with thee.' He was with St Paul in all conditions, therefore he bids him 'fear not,' Acts xxvii. 24. So our blessed Saviour, the head of all, in Acts x. 38, in the speech of Peter to Cornelius, he did all things well, 'for God was with him.' You see how God is with his children.

What is the ground that the great, and holy, and pure God, blessed for ever, should be with such sinful and wretched creatures as we are? that he should not only be with us, and about us, and compass us as a shield, but be in us?

The ground of all is his free love in Christ. Christ was God with us first. God, that he might be with us, ordained that Christ should be God with us; 'Emmanuel,' that he should take our nature into unity of person with himself. Christ being God with us, that he might satisfy the just wrath of God for our sins, and so reconcile God and us together, he hath made God and us friends. So that this, that God is with us, it is grounded upon an excellent and sound bottom; upon the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, that for this very end, that God might be with us, was God with us; that is,

he was God and man, to bring God and man together; he was God and man in one, to bring God and man, that were at contrary terms, to terms of reconciliation; to recollect and bring us back again to God, from whence we fell. So the reason why God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are with us, it is because Christ, the second person, God and man, is with us, or else there could be no such sweet terms as these are. You see how it is founded. Christ took our nature, and advanced and enriched it. Now he having taken our nature and our persons to be one with him, how near are Christ and we together! There is one common Spirit in him and us, one common Father, 'I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,' John xx. 17. There is one common kingdom and inheritance. We are fellow-heirs with him. Oh, how near is Christ to us! Our souls are not so near our bodies as Christ is to us, and God in Christ. So you see this, that God is with us. It is founded upon an excellent, wonderful, comfortable mystery. This I suppose is clear; therefore I come to that I intend further to enlarge; that is, the comfort built upon this ground, 'If God be with us, who shall be against us?'

One would think this a strange question; for a Christian no sooner comes to be one with Christ, and so to be reconciled to God, but he hath against him all the powers of hell; and then he hath the whole world against him presently, Satan's kingdom; and then he hath an enemy that is worst of all, that stirs up strife and rebellion and contention even in his own heart, his own flesh. So that we may say, who is not against a Christian? If God be with us, all else but God will side against us. There are two grand sides in the world, to which all belong. There is God's side, and those that are his; and there is another side, that is, Satan's, and those that are his; two kingdoms, two seeds, two contrary dispositions, that pursue one another, till all the one be in hell, Satan and all his seed together, the devil and all that fight under his banner, that are led with his malignant, poisonous spirit. Though it may be they cannot do more hurt, or do not out of politic respects, though they have poisonous hearts, yet these never leave contending till they be in hell; and the other never leave till they be in heaven together. Christ makes it his prayer, 'My will is, that where I am, they may be also,' John xvii. 21, and his will must be performed; so that he need not ask the question, 'If God be with us, who shall be against us?' There will be enough against us.

It is true. But in what sense are they against us, and how far are they against us?

They are thus far against us in their wit, in their plots and policies; in their wills they would devour all if they could. They are against us in their endeavours. They do what they can against the church and people of God. They are against us in their prevailing likewise. Their endeavours are not idle, but prevail very far over God's people, even to insolency:

'Where is now their God?' Ps. xiii. 10, as it is oft in the Psalms, and to the dejection of God's people; 'The Lord hath forsaken me; the Lord hath forgotten me.' Ps. xxxi. 12. God's people are brought very low, to the pit's brink; the pit almost shuts her mouth upon them. So you see they are against them many ways. God gives a great length to their tether.

And many reasons God hath to let them prevail, both to draw out their malice the more, and then to show his people their corruptions the more, and then to exercise their graces in waiting, and for the just confusion of their enemies at the latter end, and for the sweet comfort of his children at the end—when God sees the fittest time to meet with the enemies—that they might have sweet experience of God's seasonable care, however God put off a long time for some respects. So you see they may prevail a long time. Yet who can be against us in this sense, that is, to prevail altogether? Who shall be against us, so far as to have their will in the issue? They prevail a great way. What do they intend? Not to prevail over the person of God's church and people, but the cause, which, in spite of Satan and his instruments, and all, must stand invincible to the end of the world. They intend likewise to prevail over the courage of God's people. That they cannot neither; for Saint Paul saith after, in this chapter, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors,' Rom. viii. 37; that is, abundant conquerors, a strange high term. But in some sense we are more than conquerors; for if we consider what weak persons God's children are, what strong enemies they have, and what weak means they prevail with in the sight of the world, to flesh and blood, that such persons should prevail over such enemies, by such weak means as they do, in this respect, they are more than conquerors. So he may say, 'Who can be against us?' that is, to have their wills, to overthrow the cause of Christ, and the courage of God's children; they may prevail in this or that particular, but at the last all their plots and counsels shall prove abortive, and bring forth a he. All is but to magnify God's power the more in letting them go so far, and then to dash all their moulds and plots. God's children, they have the devil and all his company, the world and the flesh against them. But there is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for them,

the blessed Trinity, that are able to blow away the other three, and all the strength and support they have whatsoever.

‘Who shall be against us?’

It is not a question of doubting, or inquisition to learn anything, but it is a question of triumph. He doth, as it were, cast a bank, and bid defiance to all enemies whatsoever. ‘Who shall be against us?’ Let them stand out, Satan and the world, and all Satan’s supports; let them do their worst. There is a strange confidence which is seated in the hearts of God’s children, that they dare thus dare hell and earth, and all infernal powers; they set God so high in their hearts, that they dare say with a spirit of confidence, ‘Who shall be against us?’ The meaning is not, who shall be against us, to take away our lives or liberties, &c. As the speech is, they may kill us, but they cannot hurt us. The worst they can do is to send us to heaven, and make us partakers of that we desire most. First, we desire that God will be with us here; and, secondly, that we may be with God in heaven. They make God’s children partakers of their desires by killing of them. Let tyrants and all persons that have a malignant disposition to the church of God, and armed with power, let them do their worst, the cause must stand impregnable. Christ will have a church and kingdom in the world, and their spirits will be impregnable against them. They may kill them, but they cannot hurt them; they may kill them, but they cannot kill their courage. As we see in the martyrs, there was the Spirit of God in them above all the dealings of the persecutors; there was a fire of God’s Spirit in them above all outward fire whatsoever. You see it must be taken for granted, that the church of God and every particular Christian hath many enemies against them, as it is Ps. cxxix. 1, ‘From my youth up,’ saith the church, ‘they have fought against me, but they have not prevailed.’ From my youth up; from Abel to the last saint that shall be in the world, there will be alway some against God’s people, yet their comfort is that none shall be against them to prevail, either over the Spirit of God in them, or over the cause that they manage.

Use. First of all you see then, that the state of a Christian in this world is an impregnable state, and a glorious condition. Here is glory upon glory, from this clause to the end of the chapter: ‘If God be with us, who shall be against us? If God gave his Son for us, shall he not with him give us all things else?’ There is another glorious speech, ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s people?’ Another glorious triumphant speech, another glorious speech, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of God founded in Christ?’ He

loves Christ first, and us in Christ as members; and as he loves them eternally, so he loves us eternally too. Therefore you see every way the state of a Christian is a glorious condition.

‘Who can be against us?’ You see the state of God’s people. It is an impregnable and glorious condition. Then by this means those that are strange paradoxes to flesh and blood, yet they agree in a Christian. He is never alone. When he is alone, God is with him; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are with him, angels are with him. God is not only with him, but his guard is with him; and God’s Spirit is with him, and in him victoriously both in grace and comfort. Christ saith to his disciples, when they thought to leave him alone; saith he, you cannot leave me alone, ‘my Father is with me,’ John viii. 16; and St Paul towards his latter end, that had deserved so well of the Christian world: ‘All forsook me,’ saith he, ‘but the Lord forsook me not, but delivered me out of the mouth of the lion,’ 2 Tim. iv. 17. So a Christian is not alone; he is not left to the mercy of his enemies, but God is with him, and who shall be against him to prevail over him?

Again, though a Christian be a worm, a person trampled upon, for so the church is the most afflicted part of mankind, yet ‘fear not thou, worm Jacob,’ Isa. xii. 14. The world accounts them as worms, and they account themselves so. They are trodden on as worms. They are worms upon earth, yet they have a glorious head in heaven, and a glorious guard about them. Strange things agree in a Christian. Therefore let us not stumble, though we see not these things presently. The life of a Christian is a mystery.

Again, hence we see that a Christian profession, to be a sound Christian, to have true faith in Christ, to be one with Christ, and to be taken out of the state of nature, this condition and the happiness of it, it hath the strongest foundation of any life in the world. Christianity is founded upon the strongest and the greatest reasons that can be. Faith stands with the greatest reason that a thing can do. Why? The comfort of a Christian is that he hath no enemy that shall prevail over him, and what is the ground of that? God is with him; God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Faith is that that lays hold upon that presence, and promise, and covenant of God. And is not faith well bottomed? A Christian that carries himself valiantly and courageously, is not his course grounded on sound reason? Is not God with him? God the Father is his Father, God the Son is his Redeemer, God the Holy Ghost is his Comforter. There is no other men that have strong reason for their course, for that choice that they make of their religion and of their ways. They prove

but fools in the conclusion. Only the sound Christian that by the Spirit of God hath his eyes opened to see the cursed estate he is in by nature, and what it is to be in Christ, and by a Spirit of faith is made one with Christ, he is the truly wise man in his faith and affiance, that the world mocks at, that he hath no common supports in the world, which he cares not for if God be on his side. He cares not what man can do against him, as it is Ps. cxviii. 6. You see on what ground it is founded. God is with him, and none can be against him.

Let us labour to lay up these principles. We work according as our principles are. Principles are the foundation of all conclusions that arise from them. As our grounds are, so are we in our faith, and working, and grace, and comfort every way. If we have rotten principles, if the grounds of our comfort be rotten, our course will be rotten and uncomfortable in the conclusion. Let us build upon the rock, to be well bottomed and founded, that our principles and grounds be strong, and that they be so to us; for what if God be with his, if he be not so to us? Let us labour to lay up sound grounds. Grounds have influence into the whole course of our lives. This one text hath influence into all the parts of our lives, in doing, in suffering, in all conditions. I know not a more pregnant, fruitful principle in the Scripture than this, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' It is like a pearl, little in quantity, few in words, but strong in sense, large in the fruit that issues from it. Therefore as we may carry pearls or precious things wheresoever we go, because there is a great deal of worth in them, and they be small in quantity, so we may carry this principle with us, let us be sure to lay it up and make use of it. There be these two, that there is a God, and that God is with his children, and so with his children that he will subvert and overthrow all their enemies, and all their plots and endeavours, a principle of wonderful comfort.

If this principle be well laid, it is a ground of a Christian's courage in all conditions whatsoever. It is no matter how many enemies he hath; for as Cyprian saith, the world cannot hurt him that in the world hath God for his protector. For the devil, he is crushed already. Though he keep ado, and stir up storms, he perisheth in the waves, as he saith. He hurts himself more than anybody else; he increaseth his own torment, and so do all his children. The flesh likewise it bustles against the Spirit, but it loseth; and the Spirit gains upon every foil. Why? Here is the principle, 'God is with us.' There is no power can resist God, for then God should withstand himself. The power that the creature hath, it is but a borrowed power; and if by a borrowed

power it should withstand God's purpose, God must be against himself, his kingdom must be divided, which is a contradiction. Therefore this is the ground of the courage of a Christian in all conditions. What is the reason that the Scripture hath this phrase so often, 'Fear not, I am with thee,' as to Paul, and Joshua, and the rest? Because it is the ground of all courage. We see weaker creatures than man: a dog in the sight of his master, he will fight courageously, because he hath a superior nature by him, that he thinks will back him. And shall not a Christian, when he hath laid up this principle, that God is with him, God incarnate, God in his nature, when he is a member of God as it were, of that person that is God, shall he not be courageous when he hath him to look upon him, and to back him?

And if God be with us, he is not so with us as to neglect us. He is so with us as he hath interest in the cause we have, and in our persons. He is with us as one with us, nay, as in us by his Spirit, and whosoever toucheth us toucheth the apple of his eye: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Here is ground of courage in whatsoever may befall us, to stand it out in all conditions whatsoever. Nothing can sever Christ and a Christian; this body will never be beheaded; Christ will never be separated from his body; he will not lose the poorest member he hath. You see it is the duty of a Christian to be courageous and undaunted in the cause of God; and from this ground, because God is with him, and 'who can be against him?' Let all the world be against God, and against the cause that a Christian professeth, they do but kick against the pricks. They dash against a rock; as the waves that break themselves, they do not hurt the rock a whit. They do but cast stones upward, that fall upon their heads again. Therefore it is a desperate cause that malicious spirits manage, who have more parts than grace, and arm themselves and their wits to hurt the people and church of God, and slander his cause, and do all the hurt they can.

It is a ground likewise of encouragement in our callings. When God calls us to anything in our places that is good, he will be with us. Therefore in our places and standing, let us do that that belongs to us; let us not fear that we shall want that which is necessary, or miscarry any way. When Moses pretended he could not speak, 'Who gives a mouth?' saith God to him, Exod. iv. 11. Therefore let us take courage, not only in suffering and opposition, but in our places and standings. God will be with us; he gives his angels charge to keep us in our ways, Ps. xci. 11. We have a guard over us.

Here is a ground likewise of all contentment in any condition in the world. What can be sufficient to him that God cannot suffice? God, all-sufficient, is with thee; thou canst want nothing that is for thy good. Thou mayest want this and that, but it is for thy good that thou wantest it: 'Those that fear God shall want nothing that is good,' Ps. xxxvi. 11. It is a ground of all contentment, God is with them, to fill their souls to utmost. He is made for the soul, and the soul for him; for our end is to have communion with God in Jesus Christ here, and everlastingly in heaven. God is fitted for us, and we for him. Here is fresh comfort for the soul alway: he can fill up every corner of the soul, he is larger than our souls. Therefore let us be content; in what condition soever we are in, God is with us. Therefore 'let the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, guard our hearts,' Philip, iv. 7; even from this very ground and conclusion, 'God is with us, who can be against us?' Let Moses be cast into a basket of bulrushes, if God be with him, he shall not be drowned. Let Daniel be cast into the den, if God be with him, God will come between the lions' teeth and him. Let the three blessed men be cast into the fiery furnace, a fourth shall be with them, and keep them from the hurt of the flame. Let God be with Noah, he shall swim upon the waters; and the greater the waters, the more safe he, and the nearer to heaven. Let God be with us, and we may be content with any condition whatsoever.

Again, let us not be over-much discouraged with our infirmities and corruptions: 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' Our corruptions are against us, and they are worse to me than the devil and all enemies, saith a poor Christian. Indeed they are, for the devil hath no advantage against us but by our corruptions; but if thou account thy corruptions thine enemies, they are God's enemies and Christ's enemies as well as thine. He will be with thee, and thy corruptions shall more and more be wasted; for the flesh shall fall before the Spirit. This Dagon shall fall before this blessed ark, 1 Sam. v. 3. Stronger is he that is in us than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4. The Spirit of God is stronger in us than corruption in us, or the world without us; it ministers stronger grounds of comfort than all other can do of discomfort. If you be under the Spirit and under grace, 'sin shall not have dominion over you,' Rom. vi. 14. It may be in you, but it shall not have dominion, because ye are under the covenant of grace. Therefore though corruption be in us, for our exercise and humiliation, yet it shall not be against us, to abridge us of comfort. They serve to drive us nearer to God. Let none be discouraged, 'Christ came to destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8; therefore he came to destroy sin in us, which is the work of the devil. He came to take

away not only the guilt, but the very being of sin, as he will at last; for if God and Christ be with us, who shall be against us?

Obj. But it may be objected by some, But I find not God with me.

Ans. It is true, sometimes God hides himself: 'Thou art a God that hidest thyself,' Is. xvi. 15. He seems as a stranger in his own church; to be 'as a wayfaring man,' as the prophet saith, Jer. xvi. 8. He takes no notice of his church and their afflictions; he seems not to take them to heart, nor to pity his church. Oh, but this is but for a time, and for trial: 'Can a mother forget her child?' Isa. xlix. 15. Put case she should, yet will not I forget thee. God hides himself but a while, to try the graces of his children, and to give way to the enemies; to let his children to see their corruptions, and his wise dispensation. And these desertions we must be acquainted with. God seems to be away from his children, yet he is with them, and supports them with invisible strength. He seems to be with wicked men in prospering them in the world, that they have all at their will in outward things, yet he is far from them. He withdraws himself in spiritual things; they have no grace, no sound inward comfort. And he seems opposite to his children; he leaves them outwardly in regard of assistance and friends, but they have an invisible inward presence of the Spirit to support and strengthen them; therefore measure not desertions, God's being or not being with us, by outward respects; for so he is with the enemies of the church oftentimes, and not with his children. But he is with his in the sweetest manner, supporting of them when they are in darkness, and see no light of God's countenance; yet they have so much light, though they think they see it not, as makes them trust in God: 'Let him that is in darkness, and sees no light, trust in the name of God,' Isa. 1. 10. Therefore, as I said, it is a principle pregnant for comfort and use. If God be with us, he is with us in life and death; for whom he loves he loves everlastingly, from everlasting to everlasting.

Quest. If this be so, what shall we do to God again? What is the best evidence to know that God is with us?

Ans. There is a relation between God and his. He is so with them, as that they are with him likewise in all passages. Doth he choose them? They in time choose him: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire in comparison of thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 25. Doth he call them? they answer. Doth he justify and free them from their sins? they make that answer of faith that Peter speaks of, 'I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. They have faith to lay hold upon the forgiveness. And likewise,

if God be with them, they can delight in God's presence. Can God delight to be present with them that have not grace to delight in him? God's children maintain their communion with him in all the sanctified means they can; they are afraid to break with God. Therefore those that, to please and give content to others, and for base ends will displease their God, it is a heavy sign that God as yet hath not showed himself in his gracious mercy in Christ Jesus to them.

If God be with us, we will be of his side; and his enemies shall be our enemies, and his friends our friends. He that claims this, that God is with him, he will say, I will be with God and for God. God hath two things in the world that we must have a care of, his church and his cause. Take them out of the world, the world is but a hell upon earth; a company of miscreants, profane, godless, impudent, poisonous creatures. Take away the cause of God, religion, and the people that are begotten by religion, and what is the rest of mankind? The world would not stand, but be all upon heaps, for a company of sinful wretches that will have their wills; but it is for the church and people of God that the world stands. Now he that hath God with him, and he is in terms with God, that they are friends, as Abraham was the friend of God, he will side with God and religion. God's cause shall be his cause, and God's people his people. He will cleave to God's side as the safest. If he may have never so much preferment in the world, he will not join with antichrist. He will not betray the cause of religion if he might have a world for it. Why?

Because he knows if God be with him, who can be against him? God hath given us understanding and grace to maintain friendship with him, to have common friends and common enemies: therefore, if we stand not for God, let us never talk of God's presence with us. He will be present to confound us, to overthrow us, and pursue us to hell; but not graciously present without we labour to maintain the cause of religion as far as we may. 'God is with us, if we be with him,' 2 Chron. xv. 2. If we be with God to take his part, he will be with us to protect and defend us, to guide and comfort us, and to give issue to all our affairs. Not that our being with him is the prime cause of his being with us, but it is an evidence to know whether be be with us, as we make profession, when as far as our callings will suffer, we be with him and maintain his cause.

Again, If we would know whether we be with God, and he with us, ask conscience whether it be with thee; for conscience is God's vicar. Is

conscience with thee? Dost thou not sin against conscience? What conscience saith, God saith; and what it forbids, God forbids, especially when it is enlightened by the word. Doth conscience speak peace to thee from the word? Then thou art with God, and God is with thee. Especially in the great point of justification, doth conscience speak peace to thee in the blood of Christ? Is thy heart sprinkled with it, that it is not as the blood of Abel, that cries for vengeance? Hast thou a spirit of faith, to believe that Christ shed his blood for thee in particular? Then thou art with God, and he with thee, because God hath sprinkled the blood of Christ upon thy heart.

Quest. What course shall we take to keep God comfortably with us?

Ans. Look thou be in covenant with him, and, not only at large in covenant; but look that continually upon all occasions thou renew thy covenant. For sometimes God's children may be in covenant, they may be his children; yet because they renew not their covenant, especially after some breaches, God is not with them so comfortably as he would, to free them from their enemies, as we see in the case of the Benjamites, Judges xx. 35. God's people sometimes may have the worst, though they be in covenant, because they have committed some sin, and have not renewed their peace and covenant with God. Therefore, if we would make a comfortable use of this truth, that God is with us, and would find him so in our affairs and business, let us renew our covenant upon all occasions, and our purpose to please God.

And then look to the cause we take in hand, and to our carriage in that cause. If our persons be good, be in covenant, and the cause good, and our conscience good, and our carriage suitable, then God will be with us. Let us make use of these principles, that we may be in love with the comfortable secure condition of a Christian. There is no state so glorious, so comfortable, so secure, and free from danger. If we were in heaven, and should look down below upon all snares and dangers, what would we care for them? Now if he be with us, and we with him, 'God is our habitation,' 'we dwell in the secret of the Almighty, he is our high tower, the way of wisdom is on high, to escape the snares below,' Ps. xci. 9. Therefore let us raise our souls as high as heaven and God is; and set ourselves where our hopes are, where our God is, and we have set ourselves in our tower; that we have set God in our hearts, and set ourselves in him; then we may overlook the devil, and men, and death, and danger, and all. As a man that stands upon the top of a rock, that is higher than all the waves, he overlooks them, and sees them break

themselves upon the rock, so when we see God with us, and ourselves with him, by a Spirit of comfort we can overlook all with a holy defiance, as the apostle saith here, 'Who can be against us?' 'What can separate us?' Oh, the excellent state of a Christian when he is assured of his condition! Who would not labour for assurance that yields this abundant comfort in all conditions?

A word of the occasion for which I made choice of this portion of Scripture. Here is a double fitness to the occasion, both at home and abroad, 'If God be with us, who can be against us!'

God was at home in 1588 [the year of the Armada]. He was with us in the powder treason: he was with us in the great sickness to preserve us, and to give us our lives for a prey. He hath been with us; and we ought not to forget this, but upon occasion of this great deliverance, to call all former deliverances to mind, national and personal; to consider how often God hath given us our lives, and how oft he hath preserved us from death; and to take occasion to bless God for all at once, and so to make some special use of these meetings.

Then if we look abroad, God hath been with us in that he hath been his church, for they and we make but one body. That member that hath not a sympathy with the body, it is but a dead member. Therefore if we be not affected with the presence of God with the armies abroad, we are dead members. We may say, in regard of these outward deliverances, 'God hath been with us, and none hath been against us.' If God had not been with us in the powder-plot, where had we been? Our lives would have been made a prey. That that would have been done, would have been more than the blowing up of the parliament. They would have blown up the kingdom with the king, and religion with religious persons, and the state with statesmen. It would have brought a confusion of all, and would have moulded all after an idolatrous antichristian fashion. It would have overthrown the state, and persons, and all. The issues would have been worse than the present thing. And, therefore, if God had not been with us, as he was graciously with us, what would have become of us? as it is in Ps. cxxvi. 1. If God had not been with us, they had made us a prey, and overwhelmed and devoured us all; there had been no hope.

Have not we cause to bless God and be thankful? Therefore let us labour to do it for ourselves and our neighbours. How shall we show our thankfulness to God? Not in outward manifestations only, which is laudable, and a good demonstration of the affections of people. But alas! what is that?

We must show our thankfulness in loving that religion that God hath so witnessed for, and defended so miraculously. Labour to love the truth, to entertain it in the love of it, and to bring our hearts to a more perfect hatred of popery; for if we wax cold and indifferent, or oppose God's cause, and undermine it, do we think that God would suffer this long? Would he not spue us out of his mouth?—with reverence I speak it. Though he have defended us again and again, he will be gone with his truth and religion. It came not alone, nor it will not go alone. If religion go, our peace and prosperity, and the flourishing of our state, all will go. It is our ark. If that go away, our happiness goes away. Let us make much of religion. That is the way to be thankful.

Again, Let us show our thankfulness by giving and doing some good to the poor, by refreshing their bowels, that they may have occasion to bless God.

And for the time to come let us trust in God; that God will be with us if we be with him, and to stick to him. Who then shall be against us? Let the devil, and Rome, and hell, be all against us, if God be with us. Bellarmine goes about to prove Luther a false prophet. Luther, as he was a courageous man, and had a great and mighty spirit of faith and prayer, so his expressions were suitable to his spirit. What saith he? The cause that I defend is Christ's and God's cause, and all the world shall not stand against it. It shall prevail. If there be a counsel in earth, there is a counsel in heaven that will disappoint all. God laughs in heaven at his enemies, and shall we weep? And things are in a good way if we can go on and help the cause of God with our prayers and faith that God will go on; 'and with our cheerfulness and joy that God may delight to go on with his own cause. We may encourage ourselves, though perhaps we shall not see the issue of these things, yet posterity shall see it.

## The Dead Man

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.—*  
Eph. II. 1.

The matter of this excellent epistle is partly doctrinal and partly exhortatory, as it was St Paul's course in all his epistles to lay the foundation of practice in doctrine. The heart must be moved, but the brain must be instructed first. There is a sympathy between those two parts; as in nature, so in grace. The doctrinal part of the epistle sets out the riches of Christ—chiefly in the first chapter—in regard of the spring of them, God's eternal election. Then in this chapter, by way of comparison, by comparing the state of grace to the state of nature: 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.'

The dependence of this verse, I take it to be from the 19th verse of the first chapter. The apostle there prays that the Ephesians might have 'the eye of their understandings opened and enlightened,' that they might know, among other things, what the exceeding great power of God is towards us that believe: 'According to the working of his mighty power that he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,' that they might have experience of that mighty power that raised Christ from the dead. Now, here in this chapter he saith, 'They were raised together with Christ, and set together with him in heavenly places.' His reason is in this manner: those that are raised up and quickened with Christ to sit in heavenly places with him, have experience of a mighty power; but you are raised up and quickened with Christ to sit in heavenly places with him; therefore you have experience of a mighty power that raised Christ, for those that are raised and quickened with Christ have experience of that power that Christ had when he was raised up.

The second thing that he intends especially in this chapter is, to show that, being raised with Christ, they are brought nearer to God, both Jews and Gentiles, that of themselves were far off. Now, he shows that they 'were raised and quickened with Christ, and brought near to God in Christ,' that they might magnify the free grace of God in Christ—all is by grace—and thereupon to be stirred up to a suitable, comfortable, and gracious life. To come to the words, 'And you hath he quickened,' &c. They are an application of the former comfortable truths to them, 'you hath he quickened,' &c. These words, 'bath be quickened,' are not in the original in this place. They

are after in verse 5, ‘When we were dead in sins, he quickened us;’ but they are put in in the translation, because they must be understood to make the full sense.

In the words consider these things:

First of all, here the apostle puts them in mind of their former condition.

And then he sets down in particular what it was: ‘they were dead in trespasses and sins.’

Then he tells them wherein they were dead, what was the cause of their death, and the element wherein they were dead: ‘in trespasses and sins.’

Lastly, Not in one trespass and in one sin, but ‘in trespasses and sins.’

And then to speak a little of ‘quickening,’ to take it out of the 5th verse: ‘You hath he quickened.’ There is the benefit with the condition. That which I aim at is especially to show our estate by nature, and how we are raised out of that. I shall touch the points briefly as I have propounded them.

1. St Paul here first minds them of their former condition—‘You were dead in trespasses and sins,’—for contraries give lustre one to another; and it magnifies grace marvellously to consider the opposite condition! He that never knew the ‘height, and breadth, and depth’ of his natural corruption, will never be able to conceive ‘the height, and breadth, and depth’ of God’s infinite love in Jesus Christ. St Paul had deep thoughts of both as ever man had; therefore he could never enter into the argument of abasing man and extolling the love of God in Christ, that he could satisfy himself, but his spirit carries him from one thing to another, till he set it out to the full. And every one of us should be skilful in this double mystery, the mystery of the corruption of nature, that is unsearchable. There is corruption in the heart that none knows but God only; and we must plough with his heifer, that carries a light into the bidden parts of the soul, and discovers corruption. There is a mystery of that as well as of the gospel, of our deliverance out of that cursed estate from the guilt and thralldom of it. I do but touch it only, to show the scope of the apostle.

Now, besides the consideration of it for this end—to magnify the grace of God, and to understand what our former estate was the better—there are many other ends; as to stir up our thankfulness, when we consider from what

we are delivered, to glorify God the more. There is no soul so enlarged to glorify God as that soul that hath large thoughts of its estate by nature; and that estate by nature made worse by custom, our second ill nature and bondage voluntary. Considering God's mercy in delivering and freeing us from all sins and trespasses, this will make us thankful indeed. And it is a spring of love to God. When we consider what great sins we have forgiven us, it will make us humble all the days of our lives and pitiful to others. But this may be bandied fitter from another portion of Scripture. To come therefore to the words:

'Who were dead in trespasses and sins.'

Their condition is, 'they were dead.' The specification of their death, 'in sins and trespasses,' and not in one, but in 'sins and trespasses.' Here I might digress and tell you a discourse of life and death at large: every man knows by experience what they are. In a word, death is a privation of life. What is life? and whence ariseth it? Not to speak of the life of God,—God is life and Christ is life,—but of life in us, it ariseth from the soul. First there is a soul, and then a life from the union with that soul; and then there is a secret-kindled motion and operation outward wheresoever life is. Life in man, I say, springs from the soul. The soul hath a double life, a life in itself, and a life it communicates to the body. The life in itself it liveth when it is out of the body,—it hath an essential life of its own,—but the life of the body is derived from its union with the soul; and from that union comes lively motion and operation. The spiritual life of the soul is by the Spirit of Christ, when our soul hath union with the quickening Spirit of Christ, and by Christ's Spirit is joined to Christ, and by Christ to God, who is life itself, and the first fountain of all life: then we have a spiritual life. The Spirit is the soul of our souls; and this spiritual soul, this Spirit in us, is not idle. Wherever life is there is motion and operation inward and outward, suitable and proportionable to the fountain of life, the Spirit of God himself.

So on the contrary it is with death. What is death? Death is nothing else but a separation from the cause of life, from that from whence life springs. The body having a communicated life from the soul, when the soul is departed it must needs be dead. Now death, take it in a spiritual sense, it is either the death of law, our sentence,—as we say of a man when he is condemned, he is a dead man,—or death in regard of disposition; and then the execution of that death of sentence in bodily death and in eternal death afterward. Now naturally we are dead in all these senses.

1. First, By the sin of Adam, in whose loins we were, we were all damned. There was a sentence of death upon all Adam's rotten race; as we say, *damnati antequam nati*, we were damned before we were born, as soon as we had a being in our mother's womb, by reason of our communion with Adam in that first sin.

And then there is corruption of nature as a punishment of that first sin, that is a death, as we shall see afterward, a death of all the powers: we cannot act and move according to that life that we had at the first; we cannot think; we cannot will; we cannot affect; we cannot do anything that savours of spiritual life.

2. Hereupon comes a death of sentence upon us, being damned both in Adam's loins and in original sin, and likewise adding actual sins of our own. If we had no actual sin it were enough for the sentence of death to pass upon us, but this aggravates the sentence.

8. We are dead in law as well as in disposition. This death in law is called guilt, a binding over to eternal death. It breeds horror and terrors in the soul for the present, which are the flashes of hell-fire, and expectation of worse, even of the 'second death,' for the time to come, which is an eternal separation from God for ever—an eternal lying under the wrath and curse of God in body and soul, after they are united at the resurrection,—because we would sin eternally if we did live eternally here. And, no satisfaction being made for man after death, there must be an eternal sentence and punishment upon him. A terrible condition! If we were not afraid of the first death, we should be afraid of the second death that follows. 'We are all dead in trespasses and sins.'

Now what is the reason of it why we are dead?

First of all, The ground of it is: by sin we are separated from the fountain of life; therefore we are all dead.

Secondly, By sin we lost that first original righteousness which was co-produced with Adam's soul. When Adam's soul was infused, it was clothed with all graces, with original righteousness. The stamp of God was on his soul. It was co-natural to that estate and condition to have that excellent gracious disposition that he had. Now, because we all lost that primitive image and glory of our souls, we are dead.

We are dead likewise, not only in regard of the time past, but for the time to come. No man by nature hath fellowship with the second Adam till he be grafted into him by faith, which is a mere supernatural thing. In these regards every man naturally is dead.

Nay, sin itself, it is not only a cause of death,—of temporal death as it is a curse, and so of eternal death; of that bitter sentence and adjudging of us too, both that we feel in terrors of conscience and expect after,—but sin itself is an intrinsical death. Why? Because it is nothing but a separation of the soul from the chief good, which is God, and a cleaving to some creature; for there is no sin but it carries the soul to the changeable creature in delight and affection to its pride and vanity, one thing or other. Sin is a turning from God to the creature, and that very turning of the soul is death: every sinful soul is dead. In these and the like considerations you may conceive we are all dead.

‘And you hath he quickened who were dead,’ &c.

Let us consider a little what a condition this is, to be ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ Not to speak of the danger of the death of sentence, when a man by the state of nature lies under the wrath of God, that hangs over his head and is ready to crush him every moment, but to speak of that death that seizeth upon our dispositions, we are dead by nature. And what doth death work upon the body?

1. Inactiveness, stiffness; so when the Spirit of God is severed from the soul it is cold, and inactive, and stiff. Therefore those that find no life to that that is good, no, nor no power nor strength, it is a sign that they have not yet felt the power of the quickening Spirit; when they hear coldly and receive the sacrament coldly, as if it were a dead piece of work and business; when they do anything that is spiritually good coldly and forced, not from an inward principle of love to God, that might heat and warm their hearts, but they go about it as a thing that must be done, and think to satisfy God with an outward dead action.

- 2. Again, death makes the body unlovely. Abraham would buy a piece of ground that he might bury his dead out of his sight; he could not endure the sight of his own beloved wife when she was dead. Death takes away the beauty and the honour that God hath put upon the body, so that it is not honourable to those that behold it after death. The image of God stamped upon the soul of man by the Spirit, it is the glory of a man; after sin it is an

unlovely soul. 'We are all deprived of the glory of God,' as St Paul saith, Rom. iii. 23.

3. And not only so, but there is a loathsomeness contrary to that honour that was in it before. Though all art and skill be used that may be to set out a dead body,—with flowers, or whatsoever you will,—to please the fancy of the living; yet it is but a dead body, and the stench will be above all other sweet smells. So let any natural man be as witty, and as learned, and as great, and as rich as you will, or as he can be set out with all these ornaments and flowers, yet he is but a carrion, a loathsome creature to God, if his soul be separate from God and inwardly cleave to the creature. If he have not a new heart, he is abominable and loathsome to God, and to all that have the Spirit of God. A dead soul is abominable to all God's senses. The scripture thus familiarly condescends unto us; he will not behold him. 'He looks upon the proud afar off,' Isa. ii. 12. And he smells no savour from their performances, 'The very sacrifice of the wicked is abominable,' Isa. i. 13. He looks upon them as we do upon a dunghill, as a loathsome thing: 'The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to God,' Prov. xxviii. 9; he turns away his face from them, he cannot endure them. And for his ears, 'He will not hear the prayers of the wicked.' And for feeling, he is wearied with their sins, 'as a cart is with sheaves,' Amos ii. 13. Nay, he is wearied with their very good actions, as it is Isa. i. 8, seq. Whatsoever wicked men perform, it is abominable to God; he cannot behold them; he cannot endure them; he is burdened with their sins; and those also that have the Spirit of God in them, as far as they see the foulness of their sins, they loathe them.

But herein a wicked man agrees with a dead body: a dead body is not loathsome to itself. So take a carnal man, he pranks up himself, he thinks himself a jolly man; especially when he is set out in his flowers,—those things that he begs of the creatures,—he sees not his loathsomeness; he thinks himself a brave man in the world, in the place he lives in; and he hath base conceits of others, of God, and all things of God. Dead men are not loathsome to themselves, because they want senses. As in a prison, the noisome savour is not offensive to them, because they are all acquainted with it; it hath seized upon and possessed their senses. So wicked men they smell no ill savour and scent, one from another, because they are all dead persons. One dead man is not loathsome to another; as a company of prisoners they are not offended with the noisomeness of one another.

4. Again, we sever dead persons from the rest. So, indeed, a dead soul, as he is severed from God, so, de jure, he should be severed from the company of others. There should be a separation; and as soon as the life of grace is begun, there will be a separation between the living and the dead.

‘Let the dead follow the dead, and bury the dead,’ saith our Saviour in the gospel, Mat. viii. 22.

5. Where bodily death is it deprives of all senses. There is no use of any, either of the eye or tongue, &c. It makes them speechless. So he that is spiritually a dead man, he can speak nothing that is savoury and good of spiritual things. If he doth, he is out of his element. If he speak of good things, he speaks with the spirit of another man. If he speak of the writings of other men, it is with the spirit of the writer. He cannot speak to God in praise, or to others in experience of the work of grace, because he hath a dead soul. Put him to his own arguments, to talk of vanity, to swear, or to talk of the times, you shall have him in his theme; but to talk of God and divine things, unless it be to swear by them and to scorn good things, he cannot. He is speechless there; it is not his theme. And as he is speechless, so he hath no spiritual eyes to see God in his works. There is nothing that we see with our bodily eyes, but our souls should have an eye to see somewhat of God in it; his mercy and goodness and power, &c. And so he hath no relish to taste of God in his creatures and mercies. When a man tastes of the creatures, he should have a spiritual taste of God and of the mercy in him. Oh how sweet is God! A wicked man hath no taste of God. And he cannot hear what the Spirit saith in the word. He hears the voice of man, but not of the Spirit when the trumpet of the word sounds never so loud in his ears. These things ought not to be over much pressed. Much curiosity must not be used in them, but because the Holy Ghost raiseth the proportion from these things, something must be said of them.

6. As there is no sense nor moving to outward things, so no outward thing can move a dead body. Offer him colours to the eye, food to the taste, or anything to the feeling, nothing moves him. So a dead soul, as it cannot move to good, so it is moved with nothing. That that affects a child of God, and makes him tremble and quake, it affects not a carnal man at all.

7. And as in bodily death, the longer it is dead, the more noisome and offensive it is every day more than other, so sin it makes the soul more loathsome and noisome daily, till they have filled up the measure of their sins, till the earth can bear them no longer. We say of a dead body it is heavy;

so dead souls, I am sure, they are heavy, heavy to God, and to Christ that died for sin, and heavy in themselves. They sink to earthly things in their affections, and thereby they sink lower and lower to hell, and never leave sinking till they be there. As the life of grace is like the sun when it riseth, it grows still till it come to full perfection, till it come to the life of glory, so, on the contrary, this death is a death that is more and more increased in the loathsomeness and noisomeness of it every way; so that the longer a carnal man lives, the more guilt he contracts. 'A child of a hundred years old,' Isaiah lxx. 20, as the prophet saith, the longer he lives, the more vengeance is stored for him; 'he treasures vengeance up against the day of vengeance,' Rom. ii. 5, and it is a curse for a man in his natural estate to live long, for he grows more and more abominable every way. These things help to understand the Scripture, and therefore so far we may well think of them.

If this be so, I beseech you let us learn to know what we are by nature, not to make ourselves in our own conceits better than indeed we are. We judge of ourselves as we are to civil things. A man that hath natural parts, that can discourse and understand the mysteries of law and of the state, we value men by these. Alas! poor soul, thou mayest be dead for all this. What are all these abilities for? Are they not for the spiritual life? What is this to the life of grace? They only blow thee up with pride, and set thee further off, and make thee incapable of grace. If thou talk of learning, the devil is a better scholar than any man. He knows matters of state and other things better than thou dost, and yet he is a devil for all that. Therefore never stand upon these things. But there is a company that are more to blame than these. One would think that these have something to be proud of, that they might set themselves against God and goodness; but there is a generation that have little in them, that yet think themselves the only men in loose licentious life, despising all, caring for none, and think it the only life to live as they list, to go where they list, in what companies they list, to have bounds of their own. These think themselves the only men, when indeed they are nobody; they are dead, loathsome creatures. It is the mercy of God that the ground doth not sink under them; and yet they carry themselves as if they only were alive.

Again, if we be all dead by nature, and there ought to be a separation of the living from the dead, let tis take heed in our amity and society, that we converse not with natural men too much, that have not spiritual goodness in them.; that we converse not with them with delight and complacency. It is a tyrannical thing to knit dead and living bodies together, and he was accounted a tyrant that did so. Surely, in choosing our society, conjugal or

friendly, any intimate society, to join living and dead souls together, we are tyrants to our own souls. We wrong our souls to join with dead persons; who would converse with dead corpses? The very creatures startle at the sight of a dead body; nature startles at that that is dead. If we had the life of grace, further than the necessity of civil conversation, and the hope of bettering them forceth it upon us, we would have no society with those that we see are in the state of nature. What issues from them but stench? eyes full of adultery; nothing that is pleasing can come from them; nothing can come from all their senses but rottenness and stench. What comfort can a man that loves his own soul, and hath any desire to be saved, have by intimate converse with such persons? Let them have never so good parts, they hurt more one way than they do good another. You see we are all dead by nature, and what this death is.

Obj. But you will say there is a difference between natural death and spiritual death; for in natural bodily death there is no moving, but in this spiritual death of the soul men have senses and motion, &c.

Ans. It is true thus far they differ; though a man be spiritually dead, yet notwithstanding he hath feet to carry him to the house of God; he hath ears to hear the word of God; he hath abilities of nature upon which grace is founded. God works grace upon nature. Now a man living in the church of God, that is a grace when a man hath grace to live within the compass of the means. He can, by common grace, without any inward change of nature, come and hear the word of God; and when he is there, he may yield an ear to listen, and he hath common discourse and understanding to know what is said, and upon what ground. He can offer himself to the work of the Spirit; he can come to the pool, though he be not thrust in this day or that day, when God stirs the waters. This, by common grace, any man living in the church may do.

Therefore, though we be all dead, even the best of us, by nature, yet let us use the parts of nature that we have, that God hath given us, to offer ourselves to the gracious and blessed means wherein the Spirit of God may work. Let us come to hear the word of God: John v. 25, 'The time is come, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of God,' where the voice of God is in the ministry, 'and so they shall live.' As in the latter day the noise of the trumpet shall raise the dead bodies, so the trumpet of the word of God, sounding in the ears of men, together with the Spirit, shall raise the dead souls out of the grave of sin. Therefore I beseech you, as you would be raised

up out of this death, hear the noise of God's trumpet. Come within the compass of the means. As God is the God of life, and Christ calls himself the life, and the Spirit the Spirit of life, so the word 'is the word of life,' because, together with the word, God conveys spiritual life. The word of God in the ordinance is an operative, working word. As it was in the creation, God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' so in the ministry it exhorts and stirs up to duty; and there is a clothing of the ministerial word with an almighty power. It is a working word; as when Christ spake to Lazarus when he stank in his grave, he said, 'Lazarus, come forth,' it was an operative working word. There went an almighty power to raise Lazarus. Therefore, though we find ourselves dead, and have no work of grace, yet let us present ourselves more and more to the ordinance of God. God will be mighty in his own ordinance. The blessed time may come; let us wait when the waters are stirred, and take heed that we despise not the counsel of God, which is to bring man to spiritual life this way.

And object not, I am dead and rotten in sin many years; I am an old man.

You know many were raised in the Gospel; some that had been dead few days. Lazarus was rotten, and stank. It shows us that though a man be dead and rotten in sin, yet he may be raised first or last. The blessed time may come, therefore wait. Never pretend long custom and long living in sin. All things are in obedience to God. Though they have a resistance in themselves, yet God can take away that resistance, and bring all to obey him. All things in the world, though they be never so opposite to God's grace, they are in obedience to his command. Therefore though there be nothing but actual present resistance in the soul to that that is good, and a slavery to the bondage of sin, yet attend meekly upon the ordinance. God can make of lions lambs; he can take away that actual resistance. As Christ, when he was raised, the stone that lay upon the grave was removed, so when God will quicken a man, he will remove the stone of long custom that is upon him. Though he have been dead so many years, yet God can roll away the stone, and bid him rise up. Therefore let none despair. God is more merciful to save those that belong to him, than Satan can be malicious to hinder any way.

The best of us all, though we be not wholly dead, yet there are some relics of spiritual death hanging upon us, there be corruptions which in themselves are noisome. Therefore let all attend upon the means, that the Spirit of God by little and little may work out the remainders of death, the

remainders of death in our understandings, and of rebellion in our wills and affections. For there be usually three degrees of persons in the church of God. Some open rotten persons, that are as graves, open sepulchres, that their stink comes forth, and they are profane ones. There are some that have a form of godliness that are merely ghosts; that act things outwardly, but they have not a spirit of their own. They have an evil spirit and yet do good works. They walk up and down, and do things with no spirit of their own. The second are more tolerable than the first in human society; because the other stink and smell to common society: common swearers and profane persons, that stink to any except it be to themselves. But the godly have this death in part. The life of sentence is perfect, the life of justification; but spiritual life in us is by little and little wrought in the means. The Spirit of life joins with the word of life, and quickens us daily more and more. A word of these words, 'And you hath he quickened.'

Suitable to the occasion. This being our estate, let us know how much we are beholding to God 'who hath quickened us.' God quickens us with Christ and in Christ. It is a comfortable consideration, in that God hath quickened Christ and raised him from the grave, it shows that his Father's wrath is pacified, or else he would not have quickened him. He gave him to death, and quickened him again; therefore we may know that he hath paid the price for us. And he quickens us with Christ and in Christ. Whatsoever we have that is good, it is in Christ first: 'That Christ in all things might have the pre-eminence,' Col. i. 18. Christ first rose and ascended and sits in heaven, and then we rise, and ascend, 'and sit in heavenly places with Christ.' Therefore, as St Peter saith well in 1 Peter i. 20, 'God hath raised Christ, that our faith might be in God.' If Christ had not been raised up, our faith and hope could not have been in God that he would raise us up. We are quickened and raised in Christ. All is in Christ first, and then in us. The ground of this is, that Christ was a public person in all that he did in his death; therefore we are crucified and buried with him; in his resurrection and ascension, therefore, we are quickened with him, 'and sit in heavenly places with him.' He is the 'second Adam.' And if the first Adam could convey death to so many thousands so many thousand years after, and if the world should continue millions of years he would convey death to all, shall not Christ, the second Adam, convey life to all that are in him? So think of all things, both comfortable and uncomfortable, in Christ first. When we think of sin, think of it in him our surety; and when we think of freedom from death and damnation, think of his death. When we think of our resurrection, think of his when he rose again. In his resurrection, the acquittance from our

sins was sealed. Thereby we know that the debt is paid, because he rose again. Let us see an acquittance of all in the resurrection. And if we think of the glory that God hath reserved for us, think of it in Christ. See Christ glorious first, and we in him. See Christ at the right hand of God, and we in him. Carry Christ along with us in our contemplations. We are quickened with Christ. Christ takes away all the deaths I spake of before. Christ by his resurrection took away the death of sentence. He rose again for our justification, 'so that now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1. So again in regard of that deadly disposition that is in us, Christ quickens us in regard of that, by infusing grace by his Spirit, for Christ is an universal principle of all life. Now Christ, by his death pacifying his Father, obtained the Spirit, and by that Spirit, which he infuseth as a principle of life, he more and more quickens our nature, and makes it better and better, till it be perfect in heaven. As Adam was a principle of death, and the more we live in the state of nature, the worse we are, till we come to hell, so when we are in Christ, the Spirit sanctifies us more and more, till he have brought us to perfection. And as we are quickened from the death of sentence and of disposition, so we are quickened in regard of that hope of glory that we have. For now in Christ we are in heaven already; and though there come bodily death between, yet notwithstanding, that is but a fitting us for glory. The body is but fitted and moulded in the grave for glory. This very consideration will quicken a man in death: my head is in heaven above water, therefore the body shall not be long under water. And faith makes that that is to come present, and affects the soul comfortably. Christ is in heaven already, and I am there in Christ; and I shall be there as verily as he is there. I am there de jure, and de facto I shall be there. In these considerations, Christ quickens us. Therefore, saith St Peter, 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again through the resurrection of Christ from the dead to a lively hope of an inheritance immortal,' &c. We are begotten again to this inheritance by the resurrection of Christ, who is risen again to quicken himself and all his. The consideration of this should affect us as it did St Peter, 'to bless God.'

Now all this quickening power ariseth from our union with Christ. We must have a being in Christ before we can have comfort by death with him or by rising with him. Our union with Christ springs from faith. Faith is cherished by the sacrament. The word and sacrament beget faith. Faith unites us to Christ. Union with Christ makes us partake of his death and the benefits of it, and of his resurrection and ascension to glory. Therefore the more we attend upon this ordinance of the word,, and the seal of the word,

the sacrament, the more our faith is increased; for God invites us to communion and fellowship with Christ, and all his benefits and favours; and the more we find faith assured of Christ, the more union and fellowship we have with Christ; and the more we feel that, the more Christ is a quickening Spirit, quickening us with the life of grace here, and the hope of glory afterward. Therefore let us comfortably attend upon the ordinance of God sanctified for this purpose, to strengthen this our union with Christ.

## The Danger of Backsliding

*For Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced this present world.*— 2 Tim. IV. 10

Blessed St Paul, being now an old man, and ready to sacrifice his dearest blood for the sealing of that truth which he had carefully taught, sets down in this chapter what diverse entertainment he found both from God and man in the preaching of the gospel. As for men, he found they dealt most unfaithfully with him, when he stood most in need of comfort from them. Demas, a man of great note, in the end forsook him. Alexander the coppersmith,—thus it pleaseth God to try his dearest ones with base oppositions of worthless persons,—did him most mischief. Weaker Christians forsook him, &c. But mark the wisdom of God's spirit in the blessed apostle in regard of his different carriage towards these persons. Demas, because his fault was greater, by reason of the eminency of his profession, him he brands to all posterity, for looking back to Sodom and to the world, after he had put his hand to the plough. Alexander's opposing, because it sprung from extremity of malice towards the profession of godliness, him he curseth: 'The Lord reward him according to his works.' Weaker Christians who failed him from want of some measure of spirit and courage, retaining still a hidden love to the cause of Christ, their names he conceals, with prayer that God would not lay their sin to their charge. But whilst Paul lived in this cold comfort on earth, see what large encouragement had he from heaven! Though all forsook me, yet, says he, 'God did not forsake me, but stood by me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion,' ver. 17.

Obs. In the words we have, 1. This remarkable observation, that it is the lot of God's dearest children to be oftentimes forsaken of those that have been most near unto them. Thus it was with Christ himself. His disciples fled and left him, Mat. xxvi. 56. David complaineth that his friends forsook him, Ps. cxix. 87, and xxvii. 10. And Elias mourneth because he was 'left alone, and they sought his life also,' 1 Kings xix. 10.

Reason 1. And God suffers his dearest children to be thus forsaken, that they may be made conformable to their head Christ Jesus, who was left alone of his beloved disciples, and had none to comfort him.

Reason 2. Again, God suffers this to draw them to the fountain, that they might fly to Christ, in whom all true comfort lies, and see whether he is not better than ten sons, as Eli spake to Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 8. The Lord oft embitters other comforts to men that Christ may be sweet to them. Our hearts naturally hang loose from God, and are soon ready to join with the creature. Therefore we should soar much aloft in our meditations, and see the excellencies of Christ, and adhere to him. This will soon take off the soul from resting upon other props. When David began to say, 'My hill is strong,' then presently 'his soul was troubled,' Ps. xxx. 6, seq. Out of God there is nothing fit for the soul to stay itself upon; for all outward things are beneath the worth of the soul, and draw it lower than itself. Earthly things, such as are riches, honours, friends, &c., are not given us for stays to rest upon, but for comforts in our way to heaven. Whatever comfort is in the creature the soul will spend quickly, and look still for more; whereas the comfort that we have in God, 'is undefiled, and fadeth not away,' 1 Peter i. 4.

God hath therefore planted the grace of faith in us, that our souls thereby might be carried to himself, and not rely upon vain things, which only are so far good as we do not trust in them. Who would trust to that for comfort, which by very trusting proves uncomfortable to him? If we trust in friends, or estate, more than God, we make them idols.

There is still left in man's nature a desire of pleasure, profit, and whatever the creature presents as good; but the desire of gracious comforts, and heavenly delights is altogether lost, the soul being wholly infected with a contrary taste. Man hath a nature capable of excellency, and desirous of it, and the Spirit of God in and by the word discovers where true excellency is to be had; but corrupt nature leaving God, seeketh it elsewhere in carnal friendship and the like, and so crosseth its own desires, till the Spirit of God discovers where these things are to be had, and so nature is brought to its right frame again, by turning the stream into its right current. Grace and sinful nature have the same general object of comfort, only sinful nature seeks it in broken cisterns, and grace in the fountain. The beginning of our true happiness is from the discovery of true and false objects; so as the soul may clearly see what is best and safest, and then stedfastly rely upon it. For the soul is as that which it relies upon; if on vanity, itself becomes vain; if upon God and Christ, it becomes a spiritual and heavenly soul. It is no small privilege then which the Lord vouchsafeth some, by knocking off their fingers, and crossing their greedy appetites after earthly comforts, that he may refresh them with pleasures of a higher nature. Alas! what is the delight

that we have in friends, or children, and the like, to the joy of God's presence, and the pleasures at his right hand for evermore?

Obs. But to bring the text a little closer to ourselves, the thing that I would have you chiefly to observe is this, that those that have gone far in religion may yet notwithstanding fall away, and become apostates.

Reason 1. The reason is, 1. Because they rest on their own strength, and there is no support in man to uphold himself. Without Christ we can do nothing. We see how weak the apostles themselves were, till they were endued with strength from above. Peter was blasted with the speech of a damsel. Therefore in all our encounters and fear of falling, we should lift up our hearts to Christ, who hath Spirit enough for us all, and say with good Jehoshaphat, 'Lord, we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee,' 2 Chron. xx. 12. The battle we fight is thine, and the strength whereby we fight must be thine. If thou goest not out with us, we are sure to be foiled. Satan knows that nothing can prevail against Christ, or those that rely upon his power; therefore his study is, how to keep us in ourselves and in the creature; but we must carry this always in our minds, that that which is begun in self-confidence will end in shame.

Reason 2. Because Satan, that grand apostate, is fallen from the truth himself, and he labours to draw others to fall back with him; for being a cursed spirit, cast and tumbled down himself from heaven, where he is never to come again, he is full of malice, and labours all that he can to ruin and destroy others, that they may be in the same cursed condition with himself. By his envy and subtlety we were driven out of paradise at the first, and ever since he envies us the paradise of a good conscience. He cannot endure that a creature of meaner rank than himself should enjoy such happiness.

Use. I beseech you, therefore, let us learn that exhortation of the apostle, 'Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall,' A watchful Christian stands, when careless spirits have many a fall. It is no easy matter to keep our ground. We see tall cedars oftentimes to shake and fall. How many are like buds in a frosty morning, nipped suddenly. We have no more truth of grace than we hold out to the end.

Quest. But how shall we persevere in goodness?

Ans. 1. Labour for true grace. What is sincere, is constant. That is true grace which the Spirit of God doth work in us, and is not built on false grounds, as to have respect to this or that man, or by-ends of our own.

Now, that we may have true grace, let us labour to be thoroughly convinced of sin, after which conviction of our evil ways, grace will follow. To which end we should pray earnestly for the Spirit, which will 'convince us of all sin,' John xvi. 9, and work this grace of constancy, and all other graces in us. For where the Spirit is, there is a savour and relish in all the ways of God. How sweet is the goodness of God in our redemption, justification, and preservation, to a spiritual heart! If there be a relish in the meat, and not in the man, all is nothing.

Ans. 2. Again, if we would hold out, get a strong resolution against all oppositions, for, know this, scandals will come, difficulties will arise, but firm resolution will carry us through all. Those that go forth to walk for pleasure, if a storm comes, they return in again presently; whereas he that is to go a journey, though he meets with never so many storms and tempests, yet he will go through all, because he hath so resolved beforehand. Things are either good or evil, as a man willeth them. The bent of the soul to God makes a man good.

Ans. 8. That thou mayest persevere to the end, labour, as for the obedience of faith, to believe the truth, so for the obedience of practice. Labour to know the truth, and to practise what thou knowest, that so thou mayest be built on the rock Christ Jesus. If thou fall, it is thy own fault for building on the sand. Therefore, often put this question to thy soul, Is this truth that I hold? would I die for it? If so, then hold it fast, otherwise suspect there is unsoundness.

Ans. 4. Above all things, get the love of God in thy heart. This will constrain us to obedience. If we look altogether upon our discouragements, alas! we shall soon flag and fall away. But if we eye our encouragements, it is impossible we should desert Christ, or his truth. Who would not hold out, having such a captain, and such a cause as we fight for. Where the truth is received in the love of it, there is constancy.

Ans. 5. Strive to grow daily in a denied of thyself. None can come to heaven, but he must first strip himself of himself. He must not own his own wit, will, or affections; he must be emptied of himself wholly. He must deny himself in all his aims after the world, in the pleasure, profit, or preferment

of it. He must not respect anything if he will follow Christ. A respective religion is never a sound religion. A true Christian hath a single eye; he serves God for himself. A man that hath worldly aims hath a double eye as well as a double heart; such a one cannot but waver. Bring therefore single eyes, hearts, and aims to receive the word. It is the great fault of many; they bring false hearts with them to the ordinances of God. It is said of Israel that he brought Egypt into the wilderness, Num. xi. 18. So it is with most men, they think to have religion and their lusts together; but whatsoever doth begin in hypocrisy will end in apostasy. And know this, that he that hath religion needs not go out for aims or good company. He hath acquaintance with God and Christ, and he hath an eternal inheritance to aim at. There be encouragements enough in religion itself. We need not go out and look abroad for more. I speak this the rather, because false aims and ends is the ready means to undo men, when we have respect to such a man or such a thing in our practice of holiness. Joash was a good king all the while Jehoiada lived. This respect kept him in awe. The eye of a great person keeps some men in, and causeth them oft to blaze forth in a greater show, than many others less outwardly apparent, but more inwardly sincere.

Ans. 6. Labour, therefore, to have divine truths engrafted in thee; not to have them loose, for then they will never grow, but get them engrafted in thy heart, that so they may spring forth in thy life, as that which is set in a stock turns the stock into the same nature with it. We should embrace truths inwardly. And indeed God's children will have truths as belonging to themselves. As a wife receiving a letter from her husband, saith, This is sent to me, it belongs to me, so we should say in every truth, this was penned for me, and directed to my soul in particular.

Ans. 7. Lastly, That thou mayest grow deeper in religion, grow deeper and deeper in humiliation. Then a man is humble when he accounteth sin his greatest evil and grace his chiefest good. Such a one will hold out in time of trial; and if temptations come on the right hand, of profit or preferment, Oh, saith he, Christ is better to me! And if sin comes on the left hand, to draw him aside, Oh, saith he, this is the vilest thing in the world; it is the worst of all evils, I may not yield to it.

Obs. But to go on, from Demas his forsaking of Paul, and embracing of the present world, we learn, that the love of Christ and, the world cannot lodge together in one heart.

Reason 1. The reason is, 1, They are two masters, ruling by contrary laws. Christ was resolved to suffer, but the world saith, 'Spare thyself,' Mat. xvi. 22. How can these agree? I deny not but a man may be truly religious, and abound with all outward blessings; but the love of the world, and love of religion, cannot harbour in one breast. When the love of the world entered into Judas, it is said the devil entered into him, John xiii. 2. Now, Christ and Satan are contrary one to the other. Where religion is, it carries the soul upwards to heaven and heavenly things; but where the love of the world is, it brings the soul downward to the earth and things below.

Use. This discovereth the gross hypocrisy of such men as labour to bring God and the world together, which cannot be. Where the world hath got possession in the heart, it makes us false to God and false to man. It makes us unfaithful in our callings, and false to religion itself. Labour therefore to have the world in its own place, under thy feet; for if we love the world, we shall break with religion, with our friend, with the church, and with God himself. We see how it hindered the man in the Gospel from blessedness. When once Christ told him he must 'sell all that he had, and give to the poor,' he went away sorrowful, 'for he had great possessions,' Mat. xix. 22. Oh how do these things steal the good word out of our hearts, as the birds did the seed that was on the 'highway side,' Mat. xiii. 4. It even chokes the word, as the tares did the corn when it was sprung up, Mat. xiii. 26. Where this worldly love is, there can be no true profession of Christ, let men delude themselves never so much.

Quest. But how shall I know I love the world?

Ans. That will be seen by observing the bent of our heart, how it is swayed towards God and his service, and how towards things below. When two masters are parted, their servants will be known whom they serve, by following, their own master. Blessed be God, in these times we enjoy both religion and the world together; but if times of suffering should approach, then it would be known whose servants we are. Consider therefore beforehand what thou wouldst do. If trouble and persecution should arise, wouldst thou stand up for Christ, and set light by liberty, riches, credit, all in comparison of him?

Yet we must know it is not the world simply that draws our heart from God and goodness, but the love of the world. Worldly things are good in themselves, and given to sweeten our passage to heaven. They sweeten the profession of religion, therefore bring not a false report upon the world. It is

thy falseness that makes it hurtful, in loving it so much. Use it as a servant all thy days, and not as a master, and thou mayest have comfort therein. It is not the world properly that hurts us, but our setting our hearts upon it; whereas God should be in our thoughts, our spirits are even drunk with the cares below. Thorns will not prick of themselves, but when they are grasped in a man's hand they prick deep. So this world and the things thereof are all good, and were all made of God for the benefit of his creature, did not our immoderate affection make them hurtful, which indeed embitters every sweet unto us. This is the root of all evil. When once a man's heart is set upon the world, how doth he set light by God, and the peace of his conscience, to attain his ends! How doth he break with God, his truth, religion, and all, to satisfy a lust! And indeed as we fasten our love, so we are either good or bad. We are not as we know, but as we love. If we set our love on earthly things, we ourselves become base and earthly; but if we love heavenly things, our conversations will be spiritual and divine. Our affections are those things which declare what we are. If we do not love religion, it is no matter what we know or talk of it.

He that loves the world, brings it into the church with him. It is chief in his thoughts, and therefore he carries it about with him in his heart wherever he goes. As it is said of Israel, they carried Egypt into the wilderness, so these bring the world to the ordinances of God, they come to the hearing of the word like drones, leaving their stings behind them.

Paul saith not here 'Demas did forsake him' for fear of persecution, but 'for the love of the world.' Faults are in their aggravation as they are in deliberation. Peter denied his Master, but it was not with deliberation, whereas Demas did it in his cold blood. He loved the world, he set up the creature in his heart higher than the Creator.

Use. Labour therefore to know the world, that thou mayest detest it.

In religion, the more we know the more we will love; but all the worldly things, the more we know the less we will affect them; as a picture afar off, it will show well, but come near it and it is not so. Let us see, then, what the world is. Alas! it is but the 'present world,' which will vanish away suddenly. Poor Demas thought a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush, and therefore he would brave in out a while; but, alas! what is become of him now? A worldling oftentimes, in seeking these things, loseth himself and the world too; but a Christian never loseth that which he seeks after, God and Christ, and the things of a better life. The more we know the vanities of the

world and the excellencies of grace, the more we will love the one and hate the other.

Labour, then, for faith, that you may overcome the world. It was an excellent speech of Christ when he sent forth his disciples, 'Did you lack anything?' and they said, 'Nothing at all,' Luke xxii. 35. Labour therefore for faith to rely on the promise; for provision, protection, and all things needful. If God be our shepherd, we are sure to lack nothing.

And cherish a waking heart; lay hold of eternal life. The way to get this is not to be drunk of the world, but to be wise, redeeming your time; and balance these earthly things with heavenly. See what these fading comforts are to eternity. All the things we see here are temporal, but the things which are not seen, they are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Therefore we should let our affections run the right way, and have Abraham's eyes to see afar off, and feed our meditations with the things which we shall have hereafter, as Moses did.

I beseech you, let us prize the favour of God above all that the earth affords. What though we endure hardness here! Did Christ leave heaven to suffer for us, and shall not we suffer some straits for him? Faith can see a greater good in Christ than in the creature. This is that that will set out the vanity of the world and the excellency of heaven, the certainty of the one and the perishing condition of the other. It will make things to come as present with us, and find out a sufficiency in the worst estate.

## Faith Triumphant

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.*—Heb. XI. 13.

This chapter is a little book of martyrs. It discovers the life and death of the holy patriarchs, and by what means God's children are brought into possession of that that they have an interest and right unto upon earth. It is by faith. By faith we do and suffer all that we do and suffer, all that God hath ordained us to go through, till he have brought us and invested us to heaven, which is prepared for us.

In the former part of the chapter there is an induction, the instances of particular blessed patriarchs; and after he had named diverse particulars, he sums them up in this general, 'All these died in faith.'

In this verse there is, First, The general set down, 'All these died in faith.'

And then the particular unfolding of this. 'They received not the promises, having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.' He sets down their faith particularly, hereby setting down what might hinder it and yet did not hinder it, 'the not receiving of the promises.'

'They received not the promises, and yet they believed the promises;' that is, the things promised. They were afar off, and yet they saw them.

'They saw them.' That is the first degree.

'They were persuaded of them.' That is the second.

'They embraced them.' That is the third.

'They confessed they were pilgrims and strangers.' That is the fourth.

'All these died in faith.' There is one faith from the beginning of the world. As there is one Christ, one salvation, so there is one uniform faith for

the saving of our souls, We hope to be saved by Jesus Christ as they were. I do but touch that.

Then again, here is implied a continuance and perseverance in faith. ‘All these died in faith;’ that is, they lived in faith and by faith till they died, and then they died in faith. Faith first makes a Christian, and then after, he lives by faith. It quickens the life of grace, and then he leads his life by that faith. He continues in it till he come to death, which is the period of all, and then he dies by that faith. But of perseverance to the end and the helps to it, I spake at large upon another occasion, therefore I omit it. ‘All these died in faith.’ Faith carried them along all their lifetime till death itself. Now that faith that helped them through all the difficulties of this life, that faith by which they lived, in that faith they died.

‘They died in faith.’

In the faith of the Messiah, in faith of Canaan, in faith of heaven. For the patriarchs, they had not Canaan till many hundred years after. It was a type of heaven. They had not Christ till some thousands of years after. So they died in faith of Christ, of Canaan, and of heaven. The benefits by Christ is the upshot of all this. ‘They died in faith.’ He doth not say how otherwise they died, because it is not material whether they died rich or poor, great or mean. God takes no great notice of that, nor a Christian takes no great notice of it. ‘They died in faith.’ Whether they died a violent or a peaceable death it is no matter; they died blessed, in that they died in faith. ‘They died in faith,’ which in other phrase is, ‘to die in the Lord,’ ‘to sleep in the Lord;’ because whosoever dies in faith, dies in Christ. Faith lifts them up to Christ, and they sleep in Christ. It is a happy thing to die in Christ. Now those that die in faith, they die in Christ. ‘Blessed are those that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours,’ saith the apostle, Rev. xiv. 13.

‘All these died in faith.’

They continued in faith to death, and then they ended their days in faith. When death closed up the eyes of their bodies, then with the eye of faith they looked upon Christ, upon God in Christ reconciled to them. The point is clear, that Doct. The grace of faith, it is such a grace that it carries a Christian through all the passages of this life.

It enableth him to hold out to the end, to suffer those things that he is to suffer, and in the end by it he dies. And when all things else leave him in

death, when riches leave him, when friends leave him, when honour and great places leave him, when his life and senses leave him, when all leave him, yet faith will never leave him till it have put him in full possession of heaven, and then it ceaseth when it hath done the work it hath to do, which is to bring us to heaven. Then it is swallowed up in vision and sight, and hope into fruition, and enjoying of the thing” hoped for. It is a blessed grace, that stands by us, and goes along with us, and comforts us in all the passages of this life, and even in death itself, in those dark passages. It never forsakes us till it have put us in possession of heaven.

‘All these died in faith.’

Quest. What is it to die in faith?

Ans. To die in faith, as I said, is to die in the Lord by faith; and it looks to the time past, present, to come.

1. To the time past. To die in faith is to die in assurance of the forgiveness of sins, when by faith and repentance we have pulled out the sting of sins past. For faith looks upon Christ, and Christ hath taken the sting of death in his own, and death ever since hath been stingless and harmless to his members. He hath disarmed it. Death had nothing to do to kill Christ. Now seizing upon him, who should not have died, who was our surety, death hath lost his sting. So that to die in faith is to die in assurance of forgiveness of sins past by Christ.

2. For the present. In the present instant of death, to die in faith is to see God reconciled to us in Christ, and with the eye of Stephen, to see Christ ready to receive our souls, Acts vii. 59, to see Christ sitting at the right hand of God, to break through all that is between, to see ourselves sitting ‘at the right hand of God, in heavenly places with Jesus Christ,’ Eph. i. 20. This is to die in faith; to see ourselves there with our head, where we shall be ere long. Faith makes things to come present. To die in faith is to die in assurance of that blessed salvation presently, even at that instant of time, at the parting of soul and body, that Christ will receive our souls, that are redeemed with his precious blood, that cost him so dear. He will not suffer the price of his blood to miscarry. Faith apprehends that Christ will go down with us to the grave. As God said to Jacob, ‘Fear not to go down into Egypt; I will go with thee,’ Gen. xlv. 3, so God would not have us fear to go down into the grave, those dark cells and dungeons; God will go down with us. ‘Our flesh shall rest in hope,’ Ps. xvi. 9, because Christ, our surety, was raised out of the

grave, and sits in heaven in glory and majesty. Therefore 'our flesh rests in hope,' as it is, Ps. xvi. 10, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' Therefore our flesh rests in hope till the resurrection; because God did not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. This is to die in faith.

3. And for the time to come. To die in faith is by faith to overcome all the horror of death. Death is a terrible thing; and of all the passages wherein we have occasion to use faith, it is most exercised in death. It requires more to die in faith than to live in faith; for then the soul it looks to the horror of the grave, it sees nothing there but dust and rottenness. It looks to the pangs of death, sense and nature doth. And likewise the soul, so far as it hath nothing but nature in it, it looks to the dissolution of two friends, the body and the soul, who have been long coupled together, and their parting is bitter. And then it looks to the parting with friends here, with whom they have lived lovingly and sweetly. In death, nature sees an end of all employment in this world, of all the comforts of this life, &c., and therefore it is a terrible thing. Now to die in faith is to die in conquering all these, with a spirit above all these. What doth faith in the hour of death? It overcomes all these, and all such like.

For when the soul by faith considers the horror of the grave as the chambers of death, faith considers they be but resting places for the body, that it sleeps there awhile till the day of the resurrection, and then they meet again. And it considers that the flesh rests there in hope of a glorious resurrection; and faith sees a time of restoring, as St Peter saith, 'There shall be a day of restoring of all things,' Acts iii. 21. There is a day of refreshing and restoring to come, when those eyes wherewith we now look up to heaven, and those feet that carry us about our callings, and about the exercises of religion, and those hands that have been lift up to God, that body that hath been the vessel of the soul, shall be restored, though it be turned to dust and rottenness. Faith seeth the faithfulness of God, that God in Christ hath taken these bodies of ours in trust. 'I know whom I have believed, and he is able to keep that I have committed to him,' 2 Tim. i. 12. I have committed to him my soul, my body, my whole salvation. I know he is able to keep that I have committed to him. 'And I know that my Redeemer liveth,' saith Job. It was his comfort in all extremity, that he should see him with his very same eyes.

And then for the pangs of death, which nature trembles and quakes at, faith considers of them as the pangs of child-birth. Every birth is with pangs.

Now, what is death but the birth to immortality, the birth of glory? We die to be born to glory and happiness. All our lifetime we are in the womb of the church, and here we are bringing forth glory. Now death, I say, it is the birthday of glory, and a birth is with pain. Faith sees it is a birth-day. It sees that presently upon it there shall be joy. As with a woman after she hath brought 'a man-child into the world,' John xvi. 21, so it comforts itself against the pangs of death. Again, faith sees them short, and sees the glory after to be eternal. It is a little dark passage to an eternal glorious light.

Then for the dissolution and parting of two friends, soul and body, faith sees that it is but for a while, and then that that parting is a bringing in a better joining; for it brings the soul immediately to her beloved, our Saviour Christ Jesus; and faith sees that it is not long till body and soul shall be reunited again for ever, 'and they shall be for ever with the Lord.'

And then for friends. Faith sees, indeed, that we shall part with many sweet friends; but faith saith we shall have better friends. We go to God, we go to the souls of perfect men, we go to an innumerable company of angels, Heb. xii. 22, we go to better company a great deal. And for all the employments we have here, that we have below, faith sees that there will be exercise in heaven. We shall praise God with angels and all the blessed and glorious company of heaven. So consider what you will that is bitter and terrible in death, faith conquers it. It sees an end of it, and opposeth to it better things; because, notwithstanding death cuts off many comforts, yet it brings better. It is a blessed change; it is a change for the better every way. Faith sees that there is a better place, better company, better employment, better liberty,—all better. And, which is more, to die in faith is to die in assurance that all is ours, as the apostle saith, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Even death is ours. Paul is yours, Christ is yours, death is yours. This is our comfort when our days shall be closed up with death. Faith believes that death is ours, that is, it is for our good; for, as I said, it brings us to our wished haven; it brings an end to all misery, an end to our sins, an end to our pain, an end to our vexations, an end to our discomforts, and to all scandals here below; an end to all the temptations of Satan. 'The Lord will wipe all tears from our eyes then,' Rev. vii. 17. And it is the beginning of happiness that shall never end. So, indeed, faith sees that the day of death is better than the day of birth. When we come into misery, it is not so good as when we go out of misery, and enter into happiness. This is to die in faith. For the time past to see the forgiveness of all our sins, to see the sting pulled out; and for the present to look to Christ, ready to receive our souls, and to see him present with us to

comfort us, to strengthen us against the pangs of death; and for the time to come, by faith to overlook the grave, to overlook death and all, and to see all conquered in Christ to see ourselves in heaven already with Christ. And thus a Christian being upheld with this grace, he ends his days in faith.

It is not any faith that we can die by. It must be a faith that we have exercised and tried before. It is a tried, a proved faith, that we must end our days by. For, alas! when death comes, if we have not learned to live by faith before, how can we end our days in faith? He that, while he lives, will not trust God with his children, that will not trust God with his soul; he that will not trust God with his estate, but will use ill means, and put his hand to ill courses to gain by; he that will not trust God for his inheritance, that will not 'cast his bread upon the waters,' Eccles. xi. 1, and trust God to see it again; he that will not do this while he lives, how shall he trust God for body and soul and all, in death? He cannot do it. It must be a faith that is daily exercised and tried, whereby we must commit our souls to God when we die, that we may die in that faith; that we may be able to say, All the days of my life I had experience of God's goodness; I depended upon him, and I have found him true in all his promises. I committed myself and my ways to him, and I found him good and gracious in blessing me. I found him giving me a good issue; and now I am strengthened thereby to trust God, that hath been so true to me all my lifetime. I will trust him now with my soul that he will never fail me.

Let us all labour for this faith; for though it cannot be said of us that we die rich, or that we die great in the world, perhaps we may die a violent death, as there be divers diseases that lead the body into distempers. It is no matter how we die distempered, and in any estate, so it may be said of us we die in a blessed faith.

Obj. But it may be objected that all God's children die not in faith, because some die raging and distempered, and in such fits.

Ans. But we must know that they die in faith notwithstanding all that, for then they are not themselves. The covenant between God and them was made before: they have given up themselves to God, and committed their souls to God before; for a Christian gives up himself every day. He commits himself, soul and body, continually to God, as a blessed sacrifice of a free-will offering; so he learns to die daily, daily labours to live in the estate he would die in. He ought to do thus; and many Christians do thus. Therefore, notwithstanding these distempers, the covenant between God and the soul

remains still, and he dies in faith. It is said here, they 'all died in faith.' He saith not they all died in feeling. A man may die in faith, and yet not die in feeling; and sometimes the strongest faith is with the least feeling of God's love. Feeling may be reserved sometimes for heaven. Yet notwithstanding, we must not take it so as if there were no feeling where there is faith; for there was never faith yet but upon the touch of faith, the soul drew some strength and some inward feeling. Though it be not discerned of the soul in regard of the immoderate desire of the soul to have more, yet there is always so much feeling, and strength, and comfort, that supports the soul from despair, take the child of God at the worst. Therefore when I speak of feeling, I speak of a glorious demonstration that God sometimes takes away from his children. They died in faith, though not always in feeling of it; they died in faith, though not always by a fair death or in a comely manner outwardly, to the applause of the world. It is no matter for that; they all died in faith, and that is sufficient.

It is the desire of God's children that they may die in faith and die in Christ, as they have lived in faith and lived in Christ. Faith is a blessed grace. By it we live, by it we stand, by it we conquer and resist, by it we endure, by it we die, by it we do all those worthy matters we do, in spite of the devil and his kingdom. This is that excellent grace of faith by which we live and by which we die.

'These all died in faith.'

For they lived as they died, and died as they lived. It is a usual general rule, as men live, so they die. He that lives by faith, dies by faith. He that lives profanely, dies profanely. If we suffer the devil to lead us and abuse us all the time of our life, we must think God in just judgment will give us up, that he shall delude us and abuse us at the hour of death. Carnal confidence disposeth men to think they shall step out of their filthy blasphemous course of life, out of their sinful cursed condition, to leap to heaven presently. It is no such matter. Alas! heaven it must be entered into on earth. There must be a fitting and preparing time on earth for heaven. We must look to die as we live. There is but one example of a man that died by faith that did not live by faith; that is, the good thief; and yet that little time of life we see how fruitful it was. But the rule is, all that will die in faith must live in faith; and usually men are affected and disposed, and their speeches and carriage are on their death-bed as they were when they lived, God in just judgment giving them up to that course.

Many wish that they may live in popery, and enjoy the liberty of that carnal religion, but they would not die by that religion. They live by that religion, and die by ours. When they have had the sweetness and liberty that is given them there to sin, and then open all in confession and be clean, and then sin again; and such easy courses they have that betrays thousands of souls to damnation. Now this is their course: when conscience is awakened, they fly to salvation by Christ, if they understand any thing at all, or else they die desperate, if they look to be saved by that religion as they live by it. If we look to die by faith, we must live by it...

‘These all died in faith, not having received the promises.’

For God promised them Canaan, and they died many hundred years before. Their posterity came into Canaan. He promised them Christ, and they died long before Christ came. He promised them heaven, and they entered not into heaven till death. SO they received not the promises, that is, they received not the things promised; for else they received the promise, but not that that was promised. They received not the type, Canaan, nor the things typified,—Christ and heaven. This is added as a commendation of their faith, that though they received not the things that they looked for, yet notwithstanding they had such a strong faith, that they continued to live by faith and died in faith. The promises here are taken for the blessed things promised.

This should teach us this lesson, that God’s promises are not empty shells; they are real things. And then, whatsoever God promiseth it is not barely propounded to the soul, but in a promise. It is wrapped up in a promise. He gives us not empty promises nor naked things; but he gives us promises of things which we must exercise our faith in, in depending upon him for the performance of them till we be put in possession. For here all the blessings they looked for is wrapped up in the name promises. ‘They received not the promises.’ The meaning is, they received not Canaan; they received not Christ in the flesh, nor life everlasting. Now the believing soul, it looks upon all the good things that it looks for from God, not nakedly, but as they are involved and wrapped and lapped up in promises. It must have a word for it; it looks to God’s word. For the soul looks not now immediately, as it shall do in heaven. It looks not to God and to Christ directly; but it looks to Christ, and heaven, and happiness, as it is in a promise. It dares not expect any thing of God but by a promise. Alas! the guilty soul, how dares it look God in the face but by a promise, except he have engaged himself by

promise? And he hath engaged himself by promise that he will do it. He hath pawned his faithfulness that he will do it. And then the soul looks to the promise; and in that it looks to Christ and grace, and heaven and happiness, and all good things.

A presumptuous idle person, that knows not what God is, that he is a 'consuming fire,' he rusheth into God's presence. Faith dares not go to God, but first it pleads his word to him; it pleads his promise to him; it looks on God by a promise. The very phrase enforceth this upon us that we should make great account of the promises, because we have all good wrapped in them. The promises are the swaddling clouts. Christ and heaven is wrapped in them. And when we have a promise, let us think we are rich indeed; for God will perform his promise. From the promise then the soul goes to the nature of God. Then he thinks of his justice: his justice ties him to perform it. It thinks of his mercy and truth, 'faithful is he that hath promised,' Heb. x. 28. Then it thinks of that great name Jehovah, that gives being to the world, gives being to all things, nay, and that will turn all things that are now to nothing; as when they were nothing he gave them being at the first. That Jehovah hath made these promises of life everlasting, of necessary grace to bring us thither. He hath made a promise of perseverance and of comfort under the cross and affliction; a promise of provision and the like. That great God Jehovah, that gave being to all, is faithful: he hath bound himself; he hath laid his faithfulness to pawn, that he will make all good that is here promised. The soul, after it sees the promise, it riseth up and looks to God. 'They received not the promises,' that is, the things promised. So much I desire to observe from the phrase.

"They received not the promises."

He speaks in the plural number, though he mean but one main promise, that is, the Messiah, for all other were types of him. Believers are called 'children of the promise,' Gal. iv. 28. Here they are called promises, for the repeating of them. The promise of the same thing it was made oft: there was no new promise. The promise of the same thing it was seven times repeated and renewed to Abraham presently one after another. So they are called promises, to show that the promise can never be too much thought on, though it be the same promise of life everlasting; the same promise of grace and of comfort; the same promise of the resurrection, &c. All the promises of good things to come we cannot think of too oft, nor receive the sacrament, the seal of the promise, too oft. God knows what we are. He will

have us oft receive the sacrament, and oft hear the same things. We see the prophet Isaiah and the rest, how oft they inculcate the same promises of comfort to the people in captivity, concerning their deliverance out of it. They repeat it again and again. The same reason should enforce the soul to have recourse to the promises again and again; when there is any doubt or darkness ariseth, to comfort the soul with the promise again and again. Satan puts clouds and darkness before the soul every day. There is a repeating of sin, of infirmities and darkness every day. We should every day repeat the promises still, though it be the same promise, and the seal of them. This I observe from the number.

“They received not the promises.”

There is a distinction of the words Evangelion and Epangelia in the Greek, They have a different signification. Epangelia is of the time of the promises that were before Christ, and they were all in expectation of the promise, of the promised Messiah. The time of that dispensation was Epangelia; Evangelion, that was the time of the gospel, when the promise was brought into performance, when our salvation was wrought by Christ in his first coming. So they lived under the promise, but they lived not under the things promised. They had Epangelia, the promise made to them; but they had not Evangelion, that is, the dispensation of time wherein Christ lived; which were indeed glorious times, when Christ came in the flesh. They received not those, yet notwithstanding they died in faith, to shame us, that have so many means and helps, and yet notwithstanding are so earthly-minded, and so stagger and doubt in matters of salvation, and have our faith to seek; when all these blessed worthies, the patriarchs, died in the faith that they lived in, and yet ‘they received not the promises,’ no, not the type of the promises. They received not Canaan, which was an earthly type of heavenly Canaan, which was promised them. They came not to reap that till long after, when they came out of Egypt; as for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they lived in the land of promise as strangers.

‘They received not the promises.’ They were comforted notwithstanding, that their posterity should receive them. Canaan was a type of Christ and of heaven. I observe this by the way that, Obs. God doth not reveal all things at all times.

God doth leave diverse things to be revealed in diverse ages of the church. God doth not reveal everything in every time, to comfort all ages of the church. We see not everything in our times; we must be content.

There is to come the conversion of the Jews. Many good souls desire that. There is to come the confusion of antichrist,, and many good things that God will bring to pass in another age. Our posterity they shall see it. Let it comfort us. By faith we see the promises. Though we do not receive the things promised, we have the promise in the Scriptures.

Let us comfort ourselves in that, that the benefit is reserved to our posterity. Every age hath several privileges: that that one age hath not, another hath. These grand patriarchs saw not what their posterity saw. Their posterity saw not what those that lived in the time of Christ saw. Those in Christ's time saw not the discovery of antichrist which we see. Our posterity shall see the confusion of antichrist, which, it may be, we shall not see.

Again, this should help us against the common infirmity that Christians are subject unto. We should be thankful for some things, though we have not all that we would have. These 'received not the promises.' They had the promise, they had the word, though they had not the things promised; and that comforted them. Though they had not the thing, no, not so much as the type of the thing, not Canaan,—these blessed patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—yet they were thankful and cheerful, and died in faith.

It is a common infirmity which our nature is too prone to. If the church be not in all things as we would, we will not hear, we care for nothing. Like curst children, if they have not all they would have, they care for nothing. These all, they had the promises, they had not the things promised; but did they take pet upon this? Oh no! 'they embraced the promises,' and looked for the things promised in due time, though they had them not themselves. So it is with particular Christians. Other Christians they see go comfortably in their Christian course, and they have nothing,—no grace, no faith, no love, no goodness. Because they have not all they would have, therefore they have nothing. What an ill affection is this! We should be thankful for that we have, that we can deny ourselves; and we should be content to wait for that we have not. This is the disposition of a Christian that is in a right temper; and that is it which holds many from comforts, that they do not thankfully acknowledge that they have. Our covetousness and greediness of that that we have not, and yet would have it, makes us that we do not see that we have already. We all look forward, we would have more and more, and are not thankful for the present grace. The patriarchs were not so. They wanted many things that they desired heartily to have, and yet they comforted themselves, and died in faith. Though 'they did not receive the promises,'

‘They saw them afar off.’

‘They saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them,’ &c. This is the order of God’s Spirit; first to open the eye to see, and by sight to persuade, and upon persuasion to stir up the heart and affections to embrace; for good things are brought into the soul through the understanding, by the spiritual sight of the understanding, and from that into the will and affections by embracing the things we know. This is God’s course daily. Therefore he saith they first saw them, and then were persuaded of them, and then embraced them.

‘They see them afar off.’

Indeed, they saw them afar off. They were not fulfilled till many years and generations after, yet they see them.

By what eye?

By the eye of faith. Faith makes things present, though in themselves they be far off. It is the nature of faith to make things that are absent to be present to the believing soul; and it affects the soul somewhat as if it were present. We know things work not upon the soul but as present; a danger that is many years to come, it affects not the soul unless it be apprehended as present; nothing affects the soul but as present. Now there are two ways of things being present. One is, when the things themselves be present; that is, when we shall be in heaven and enjoy Christ and all the joys of heaven, then the things are present themselves. And then there is a presence of faith. When faith apprehends the things promised to us as present, faith makes the things present in some sort, not in all respects, for then faith were all one with vision and possession, but in regard of certainty they are present, and in regard of sound comfort. Therefore God gives other graces, between faith and possession, to strengthen and enable faith that it do not sink in the work. Between faith and the full possession of the good things we believe, we have patience and hope, and many other sweet graces; but all dispose the soul comfortably to wait for the accomplishment of the things believed. Now, though the presence of faith affect not so much as the presence of sight, yet it doth affect. What is the reason that a holy man is so much affected with heavenly things? He feels no more joy many times than a wicked man. It is the nature of faith that so represents them to him, and sets before his eyes the excellency of the things that he sees them as present.

Faith hath her eye, faith hath her senses, faith hath feet of her own, whereby she goes to Christ; faith hath arms of her own to grasp and to clasp Christ. Faith hath ears of her own to hear the word of God and believe it. Faith hath eyes of her own; and what kind of eyes? To see things afar off; to see things invisible; to see things within the veil; to see things that are upward, things that sense and reason can never reach unto. Reason sees more than sense; but faith sees more than reason. Faith sees the resurrection of the body; faith sees the glory in heaven, that all the eyes in the world cannot see. Faith correcteth the error of reason; reason corrects the error of sense. They saw him afar off; with the blessed eye of faith. Faith hath an eye that sees afar off; it sees things remote both in time and place.

1. It sees things far off in place. Faith sees things in heaven; it sees Christ there; it sees our place provided for us there; it sees God reconciled there; by it we see ourselves there, because we shall be there ere long. Faith sees all this; it breaks through and looks through all; it hath most piercing beams, the eye of faith. And it works in an instant; it goes to heaven in a moment and sees Christ.

And for distance of time, the eye of faith it sees things past and things to come. It sees things past, it sees the creation of the world; it sees the redemption of us by Jesus Christ; it sees our sins there punished in Christ our surety; it sees us crucified with Christ Jesus; it sees all discharged by him. Faith sees this in the sacrament: when we take the bread, faith hath recourse presently to the breaking of the body of Christ and the shedding of the blood of Christ. Then Christ is crucified to us and dies to us. When we believe Christ was crucified for us and died for us, faith makes it present.

And so for the time to come, faith hath an eye that looks afar off. It sees the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Faith sees the general judgment. It sees eternal happiness in heaven; it sees things afar off. It is the evidence of things not seen.

What is the reason of it?

It makes things not otherwise seen be seen, and presently seen; it gives a being to things. It is a strange power that faith hath. Faith is the eye of the sanctified soul; it is the light of the soul. In the dark, though things have a colour and a lustre in them, yet till light come to make them clear, they are all as if they were not, they are not seen; but when the light discovers them, then those things that were impossible to be seen and had in them colour and

lustre, they come to be actually seen. So it is with faith; there is the happiness of a Christian; there is glory and grace. Reason, it seeth not this. Here is a night of all these things, if there be not light in the eye of faith. Now, when there comes the promise of God as a light discovering them, and the eye of faith to see all this, then here is an evidence of the things, a clear sight of them, which without faith are as excellent things in the night, that no eye can see. Faith is a further light, a light beyond all, a supernatural heavenly light and sight. It sees beyond all other eyes, beyond the eye of the body, or beyond the other eye of the soul, which is reason.

Now this work of faith is called sight; among other respects for this, that sight is the most capacious and comprehending sense. It apprehends its object quickly; and sight it works upon the affections. So faith hath a quick eye-sight; it pierceth through the dark things of the world; it pierceth through contraries. God's children, though they see their estate oftentimes contrary to the promise, as if God -did not regard them, yet they break through that. You know God's manner of working is in contrary estates. When we die, faith sees life; when we most apprehend our sins, faith sees the forgiveness of sins; when we are in the greatest mystery, faith hath so quick a sight that it sees happiness and glory through all. It sees afar off, notwithstanding the interposing of anything contrary by flesh and blood.

Faith is sometimes called taste, and by the name of other senses; but especially by the name of sight. As in sight there is both the light outward and a light in the eye, and the application of the light in the eye to the object, so in faith there is a light in the things revealed, a promise and discovery of it by the light of the gospel, and an inward light in the soul answerable to the inward light in the eye. For a dead eye sees nothing, and a quick living eye sees nothing without the light of the air. So there is a double revelation, by the word and by the Spirit. The Spirit works an eye of faith in the soul, and then it discovers to it the things of God.

God created a new eye in the soul, a new sight which they had not by nature; for even as the natural eye cannot see things that are invisible, so the natural man cannot see the things of God, which are seen not by a natural, but by a supernatural eye. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for his children,' 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. The eye therefore that must see things afar off, it must be a supernatural eye; and the light that must discover them must be the light of

God's truth. For reason cannot see the resurrection of the body, and the life to come, and such glorious things as the word of God reveals to us.

Quest. If you ask why this sight of faith is so necessary, this supernatural sight;—

Ans. I answer, nothing can be done in religion without the supernatural eye of the soul, nothing at all; for a man may see heavenly things with a natural eye and be never a whit the better. A man may see the joys of heaven; he may hear much of heaven and happiness and forgiveness, and think, Oh, these are good things; but yet notwithstanding he doth not see these things with a supernatural eye; he doth not see these things to be holy and gracious, and to be fit for him; he wisheth them with conditions, but not with the altering of his disposition. As a man may see an earthly thing with a heavenly eye, because he sees God in it, and there is somewhat of God in it to lead him to see him, so a man may see heavenly things with a carnal eye, as Balaam wished 'to die the death of the righteous,' Num. xxiii. 10. A carnal man may be ravished with heavenly things; but he must look upon them as things suitable, or else all is to no purpose.

Quest. How doth faith see this? How comes faith to have this strength?

Ans. Because faith sees things in the power of God. It sees things in the truth of God. He is Jehovah; he gives being to things. Therefore, as God Almighty gives being to things in their time, when they are not, so faith in his promises sees that these things will be. It sees things in the truth of God, in the promise of God. There it hath these eyes to see afar off. Itself is wrought by the mighty power of God in the soul, for it is a mighty power for the soul to neglect the things it sees, to neglect riches, and honours, and pleasures, and to stand admiring of things that it sees not. For a man to rule his course of life upon reasons which the world sees not, because there is a happiness to come and a God that he believes in, &c., it is a mighty power that plants such a grace in the heart. Faith is wrought by the mighty power of God. As itself is wrought by the power of God, so it lays hold upon the power of God, that the promises shall be performed. In all the promises it sees and lays hold on the mighty power and truth of God, and therefore it hath such an eye.

Use. Our duty then is to labour to have our faith clear, to have this eye of faith, to have a strong faith, a strong sight.

Quest. When is the sight of faith strong?

Ans. When it is as the faith of these patriarchs was.

There are three things that makes a strong sight, that makes us conceive that the sight of faith is a strong sight.

1. When the things are far off that we see, then if the eye see them, it is a strong sight. A weak eye cannot see afar off.

2. Secondly, When there are clouds between, though the things be near. Yet when there are clouds between, to break and pierce through them, there must be a strong sight.

3. Then, thirdly, when there is but a little light. When there are many obstacles in the midst, and to break through all by a little light to see things remote, here is a strong eye; and this was the sight of these blessed men. They had a strong eye.

1. For the things they looked on were remote, afar off. Divers thousands of years, they saw Christ by faith. The soul mounted up on the wing of faith. It flew over many thousands of years in a moment, and saw Christ the Messiah, and saw heaven itself typified in Canaan. So swift is the eye of faith, it mounts over all in a moment. As the eye of the body in a moment can look to the visible heavens, so a strong faith it sees Christ in heaven.

2. And then between them and that they looked to what difficulties were there! Blessed Abraham, who was a type of Christ, how many difficulties had he, besides other of the patriarchs! We see God commanded him to slay his son, a command one would think against reason, against affection, against hope. It was faith against faith, as it were. It was against reason in the eye of flesh. Now in this case to strive against all these difficulties, what a-many clouds must Abraham break through here, against sense and against affection. He must hope against hope; he must have faith against faith, he must deny affection, he must go and take his only begotten son Isaac, and he must be the executioner and butcher himself, and slay him for a sacrifice. Here must be a strong faith in the power of God, that must see God raising Isaac from the dead, as he did after a sort; for when he was bound for a sacrifice ready to be slain, he caused a ram to be taken in the thicket, and to be offered, and Isaac escaped. It was a strong faith to break through all these. Indeed, blessed Abraham saw more excellency and power in the work of God than in his beloved Isaac. So faith that is strong, it sees more comfort, and joy, and matter of benefit and blessing to the soul in the promises and in

the word of God than in Isaac; that is, than in the dearest thing in our own account that we have, that the faithful soul had rather part with all than with God. It will not part with his promises for all that is in the earth, not for the dearest thing in this world; Isaac shall go rather.

3. Then for their light to go by, it was but little. What a little light had they! Promises., They saw things in types and glasses, a few promises. And what was that they sought? A heritage far off. We, on the contrary, have all set nearer hand that may help us; but we have a weaker faith. One would think it should greatly help us to lead our lives till we come to heaven; for that that we believe is nearer, heaven is nearer. How little a time is between us and the day of judgment! How little a time between us and the glory that is to be revealed! For the clouds that we have between they are none in comparing our light with theirs. How many promises have we discovered beforehand! We have Christ come in the flesh and risen again; we have the Gentiles called, and all these things. We have light upon light. We have larger promises, and a larger unfolding of divine truths. The canon is enlarged, the Bible is enlarged more than it was then. There are many books added, and the New Testament. Now how doth it come to pass that we see not so well as they, nor so strongly as they? I answer, the reason is this,—their light was less, but their sight was stronger. We have more light and less sight. We have things nearer, but our sight is weaker; the more shame for. us. A strong eye may see afar off by a little light, when a weak eye cannot see so far by a greater light. The eye of their soul, the eye of faith was stronger and more lightsome. The Spirit of God was stronger in Abraham, but his light of revelation was lesser, he had fewer promises; for he desired to see Christ's day, and saw it not.

So it is with Christians sometimes; when there is a great strength of faith, yet it may be there is not so much light. A weak Christian may have more light, but he hath a weaker eye, and he in that respect sees better than a stronger. To a stronger, God doth not discover to him so much outwardly sometimes, suitable to his inward. God's dispensations are diverse in this kind.

Now to help our sight to heaven, this sight of faith, that we may every day ascend with the eye of our souls with this blessed sight.

1. Let us take heed of the god of this world, Satan, that he do not with the dust of the world dim our sight. What is the reason that many cannot see the glorious things of God? 'The god of this world,' saith the apostle, 'hath

blinded their eyes.’ He casts dust in their eyes. They are covetous, they are blind in their affections, they have dark souls. The soul when it is led by affections and lusts, when the affections will not suffer it to see, it covers the eyes of it. And then the outward things of the world, they are cast into the eyes. We must take heed of these inward and outward lets; take heed of Satan, that he do not with outward objects bewitch us. For as it is in prospective glasses, you know such glasses, some are of that nature they represent to a man things that are afar off as if they were near; so faith it is a kind of prospective glass, it presents to the soul by reason of this supernatural light, things that are far off as if they were near. Now, as God hath his prospective glasses to see afar off, so the devil hath prospective glasses that when things are near he makes them seem afar off,—as such glasses there are too. When death, and danger, and damnation are near; when a man carries the sentence of damnation in his bosom, when he carries a stained, defiled conscience, the devil with his prospective glass makes him see death and destruction as afar off. I may live so many years and enjoy my pleasure and my will. Now this is but a false glass, the devil abuseth them; for your life is but a death, and when we begin to live we begin to die. Why should we account therefore of the time to come? Death and life go in equal pace one with another. Every day we live, so much is taken from our life, and then the cutting off of all is uncertain. Let us take heed that Satan blind us not.

2. And withal desire God to open our eyes every day, to take the scales from the eye of our souls, that we may see the promises, that we may see Christ, that we may see God shining on us in Christ; that he would take away the veil from the things by exposition, that he would open the truth to us by his ministers, and that he would take away the veil from our hearts, that our hearts may join with the things; that when by ministerial means the things are clear, that there may not be a veil of infidelity on our hearts, but that our hearts may sweetly join with them. Let us beg daily that God would take away the things that hinder, inward and outward, that we may see the things afar off; that we may not be, as Peter saith, mop-eyed, that we cannot see afar off; but that we may set heaven before our eyes, and the judgment and the happiness to come, that we may see, and view, and eye those things by faith, and that we may square our lives answerable.

3. Then, again, to help our sight of Christ and happiness, let us get a fresh sight of our corruption and sin every day; let us every day look on that terrifying object of our corruption of nature, hang it in the eye of our souls as

an odious object, to humble us. Let us see every day what a corrupt heart we carry about us; see how odious these things are to God, how it offends him; see how it exposes us to the wrath of God, if he should take us in the midst of our sins and corruptions. Let us have these things fresh in our eyes every day, and that will clear our sight. Men are loath to look in the book of their consciences, because they are loath to be disturbed from their pleasures.

Let us see what need we stand in of Christ. The view of our corruptions will make us glad to see a better object. It will make us turn our eyes to Christ, to the promises, and all things that we have by Christ, we shall be glad to look to him. What is the reason we have no more delight to see the glorious things afar off? We see not the dimensions of our corruptions, for then we would be glad to see all the dimensions of God's love in Christ; the height, and breadth, and depth and all. So much for that.

'They saw them afar off.'

'They were persuaded of them.'

It was such a sight of the things as was with convincing, with persuasion. And indeed this follows well upon sight, for sight of all other senses persuades best. Hearing is not so persuasive as sight. Supernatural sight brings forth supernatural persuasion. Sight is a convincing sense, even outward sight. So inward sight it is a convincing thing; it persuades and sets down the soul that a thing is so, when a man sees it. All the men in the world cannot persuade the weakest man in the world when it is day or night, when the sun shines or it is dark, that it is not so. When he sees it, he will believe his own eyes more than all the world besides. And as it is in sensible things we believe our own eyes, so much more in spiritual things we believe our eyes. When there is a spiritual light of revelation in the word discovering such things, and also to spiritual light a spiritual eye, when the Spirit puts an eye into the soul to see supernatural things that reason cannot attain to, then there is persuasion. Though all the world should persuade the soul that such a thing were not so, it would say it is so, it will believe its own eyes. If all the world should persuade a Christian that there is no such excellency in religion, that his ways are not good, that he is but foolish, &c., he knows the contrary, and will not be scorned out of his religion, and driven out of it by any contrary persuasion of men whom he pities—though perhaps they are otherwise beyond him—in the state of nature, for sight it is a convincing thing.

Especially when there is some taste with sight, for taste together with sight convinceth of the goodness of things; as we see in those that lead their life by tasting and feeling. The creatures maintain their life by tasting some proportionable food fit for them; so a Christian, when once he hath tasted of spiritual things, the proper food of his soul, when he hath seen and tasted of them, he will never be driven out of his religion and his course by any means; when he hath seen and tasted, he is thoroughly persuaded. A man must not dispute against taste. When he hath tasted a thing to be so, talk to him otherwise, he saith, I have tasted, and feel, and see it to be so; and therefore we see that after sight comes persuasion.

Now, this persuasion is a supernatural persuasion, and it is general and particular.

A general persuasion of the things, of the general truths, and a particular personal persuasion of our interest in them. When we are persuaded that the truths are so, generally, that are revealed in the word of God, and when we are persuaded, by the help of the Spirit, that we have a particular interest in them, a portion in them; and both are here meant. 'They saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them;' they were convinced both of the truth and goodness of them, and of the truth and goodness to them in particular.

Now, persuasion is a settled kind of knowledge. Persuasion comes divers ways. There be divers degrees tending to persuasion.

1. First, The poorest degree of the apprehension of things is conjecture, a guessing that such a thing may be so or otherwise, but I guess it rather to be so.

2. Beyond conjecture there is opinion, when a man thinks it is so, upon more reasons swaying him one way; and yet in opinion there is fear on the contrary, that it may be otherwise.

3. And the third degree beyond opinion is certain knowledge; when a man is not only conceited that the thing is so, his opinion is so upon some reasons inducing him, but he knows it by arguments and reasons. That is science and knowledge when the mind is persuaded by arguments. But that is not so much here meant, the persuasion by argument.

4. There is another degree then of knowledge, which is by the authority of the speaker, a persuasion from thence. When I know not the thing by the

light of the thing so much, because I see the reason of the thing, but because I know such a one saith it, that is the persuasion of faith; when one is persuaded of a thing not so much out of his own knowledge, out of the principles of the thing, setting out the causes of the thing, as out of the credit of the person that speaks. Now, this persuasion riseth out of faith in the authority of the person. When I believe a thing for the authority of the speaker, it ariseth from the knowledge of him that speaks, that he is able, and that he is true, and that he is honest, and good; that he will not deceive because he is good, and he will not be deceived because he is wise. We conceive that he is wise, and holy, and able withal; one that we trust. If together with this knowledge and persuasion from the authority, and truth, and goodness, and wisdom of the speaker, there be joined sense and experience, we see it proved; and when there is experience, there is reason why we should believe that he saith, because we have found the thing to be so. So when there is both the authority of the speaker and some inward sense—some sight, and taste, and feeling, and experience of the thing spoken—here comes that settled persuasion, for he is undoubtedly true that hath spoken it, and I have found in some degree the thing true that he hath spoken. Now, both are here meant in some degrees, ‘they saw the things afar off,’ both by the authority of the promise, as likewise by their own sight, and some taste they had.

For God reserves not all for heaven. God gives his children some taste and feeling, some little joy and comfort, the ‘first-fruits of the Spirit’ here, Rom. viii. 23. So they were persuaded from the authority of the speaker, and some sense and feeling of the thing in some measure.

Now, this persuasion hath its degrees.

There is a full persuasion.

And there is a persuasion that is not so full, that is growing to further persuasion still.

And this persuasion hath degrees, both in the general persuasion of the truths themselves, and in their particular interest; for all Christians are not alike persuaded of divine truths themselves, nor all Christians are not alike persuaded of their particular interest in those truths. There be degrees in both respects.

1. For the things themselves, we may grow stronger and stronger persuaded; even as the light and our eye grows clearer the stronger is our sight, so our persuasion while we are here may grow stronger and stronger. It was strong in Abraham; yet not so- uniformly strong, but that it was weaker some times than others, as we see in the story.

2. And so for particular persuasion. The Spirit of God may give assurance that may be shaken; ay, but he recovers himself presently. The tenor of a Christian's life is usually a state of sight and persuasion, when he is himself and when he remembers his own principles.

To come particularly, you see here that Spiritual persuasion is necessary.

Both of the things in general, and of our interest in them.

Quest. It may be asked, whether there may be a persuasion of the truth in general, without a persuasion of our own particular interest in them?

Ans. I answer, No; not a sound, undoubted, spiritual persuasion. There is a double conviction, a conviction when a man cannot tell what to say against it; but spiritual conviction is when a man is convinced of the truth and goodness of the thing, and this always draws the other with it, first or last. A man may be convinced that he cannot tell what to say against the truth, but that is not properly persuasion. A man is persuaded by divine truth that all the promises are true in the gospel, and it draws with it a particular light; he sees, and is persuaded, of his own interest in it, first or last. For a strong persuasion of divine truth, of God's word, when I know it is God's word, it works in my flesh, it changeth me, it lifts me up, it casts me down, &c. So that a Christian knows that the word of God is the word of God by a spiritual persuasion, wrought by the efficacy of the word, from an intrinsical principle in the word itself.

But sometimes it falls out that a Christian may be convinced of the truth of the word in general that it is God's word, and that the promises of salvation are true, and yet notwithstanding he may not feel the particular persuasion of the forgiveness of his sins, and of his acceptance to life everlasting, and his interest in Christ. These two are sometimes separable in regard of feeling. A Christian hath alway a persuasion of the truth of God, of the things, but he hath not alway a like persuasion of his own interest in them.

Quest. How do you prove that these are severed sometimes?

Ans. Thus: there is the birth and infancy of a Christian. When a Christian is in his birth, he is not persuaded of his own good estate, as he is after when he is grown. Then he knows his estate. A soul that is in the state of grace, that hungers and thirsts after good things, at that time it may be it is not acquainted that it shall be satisfied; it is not acquainted of its own interest, but stretcheth itself forward for entire satisfaction, and it shall be satisfied; that is, the soul that hungers and thirsts after the persuasion of God's love in Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, there is never soul that thus hungers and thirsts, but God satisfies it at length; for the most part in this world, or else certainly in the world to come for ever. But alway where there is this persuasion supernatural, that the word of God is true indeed, that there is salvation to all true believers, when it is wrought by the Spirit, there is either a persuasion of our interest, or somewhat tending to persuasion, some hungering and thirsting, some desire that God accepts for the deed, to show that such a man is in the state of grace.

I speak this the rather, because some are deceived in their own estates. They do not conceive aright of themselves. They think they are not in the state of grace, when they find not that particular, strong, assured persuasion.

I answer, they may be in the state of grace notwithstanding. A Christian knows not his own estate alway, at all times. It is one grace to be in a good estate, and another to have the knowledge of it. They be different gifts of God, and God suspends the knowledge of a man's being in a good estate for several ends.

1. Sometimes, among the rest for this one, to humble us, to keep us from security, to make us careful and diligent; to make us know that he hath the keeping of our feeling and persuasion in his own hands. As he hath the keeping of all our grace, so he hath the keeping of the knowledge that we have grace, and of our comfortable walking, that we may know we have everything from him, both grace and the feeling of grace; and if we take liberty to ourselves, he will take liberty to keep our feeling at that time, to make us humble, and to make us seek reconciliation again. It is one part of God's dispensation with his children to hinder their persuasion of their particular interest sometimes.

Sometimes the children of God may be in such a condition, as that they may think for a time in their judgment, that they be in a contrary estate; they

are mispersuaded of themselves not to be God's children, as it were. God may suffer this, that they shall not only have a weak, staggering persuasion, but a persuasion to the contrary, though it be a false persuasion.

Quest. But how shall they know that they are God's children at that time? They say they are so shaken, and at a stand, they are so conceited that they are none of God's; that God hath left them, and forsaken them.

Ans. You may know it by this, that at the same time they are conscionable of all heavenly duties, at the same they neglect no means of salvation; at the same time they complain against their own corrupt course of life that hath given God occasion to leave them thus to themselves; at the same time they strive against this, and labour to be persuaded of God's truths in general. And though the devil sometimes shake that persuasion, that God's truth is not God's truth, and make them question whether it be the word of God or no, and whether there be such a thing as life everlasting,—the devil shakes us in principles sometimes,—but yet a Christian in such temptations, though he be shaken in his principles by the force of wickedness, yet he attends upon the means, and goes on more conscionably, he doth not give back, but labours for satisfaction and further settling still, and is ashamed of himself that he should have such beastly thoughts, as the psalmist saith, 'so foolish was I and ignorant, and as a beast before thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 22, when he began to stagger in the principle of the providence of God. So sometimes a Christian is brought to stagger in principles, in the main general persuasion of the word of God; but he likes not himself, he accounts himself as a beast, and labours for satisfaction still in sanctified means, and never gives over, though he have not particular persuasion, he gives not over holy duties, but goes on in spiritual duties; he labours to obey God in all things; he is conscionable to God in fear and trembling, in the least thing. A man may say to such a soul, it shall find peace at the length; for God's ways are unsearchable. God hath cause and reason why he keeps such a soul under for a time, and withholds some sense and persuasion; but usually God's comforts come more abundantly to such a soul, he reserves it for the time of affliction or the hour of death.

The truth is, it is a constant rule, that though it may be thus with some in some cases, yet ordinarily God's children may be persuaded of their particular condition; yea, and they ought to labour after this persuasion and assurance, that their souls may be filled with marrow and fatness, and that they may joy in God, and have boldness to come before God in prayer, that

they may be fruitful in all holy duties; that they may be strong to suffer afflictions, and to resist temptations. Therefore though God sometimes, in his wise dispensation, suffer them to be hindered, yet notwithstanding, this is a thing that is both attainable, and that they ought to labour for, and never give their hearts rest till they attain to it.

I say we ought to labour for it; for the soul is never in such a frame as it ought to be but when it hath gotten some assurance of God's love. But I must add this, we must labour that this persuasion be supernatural, by the Spirit of God, both of the truths in general, of the promises in general, and of our interest in particular in them. We must labour that it be by the Spirit to our spirits; that the Spirit may seal them to our spirits. For it is not sufficient to know the word of God to be the word of God, and the promises to be the promises, because we have been brought up in them, and can say them by heart, and it were a shame for us to conceive the contrary. That is not sufficient, for that will deceive us. We must labour (as I said of knowledge,, that we may be supernaturally convinced, so also that is from that knowledge), that it may be spiritual, or else it will deceive us.

Quest. How do we prove that?

Ans. To make it a little clearer, because it is a point of some consequence, even as I showed of what consequence the sight of faith is, so I may say of this persuasion. We must labour therefore to know how we come by this persuasion, and whether it be such as we can hold out in; whether it be such by which we can stand out in the time of temptation. If there be nothing but that argument of breeding, and of general light, of discourse, that we see one thing how it follows from another, I say it will deceive us, because constant obedience will never follow upon such a persuasion; nor constant holding out to death, nor constancy in death, if the conscience be once awakened; neither will we be fruitful in our lives and conversations. To make this clear.

1. If the soul be not persuaded by the Spirit of God, together with the Spirit of the Scripture; for the same Spirit that is in the Scripture must be in our spirit, working our natures suitable to the Scriptures to be holy; if we do not, by that Spirit by which the Scripture was indited, know those truths, we shall never be obedient to them, not constantly. For what is the reason that men when they are told, God doth forbid you to take his name in vain; God forbids you to seek after earthly things; God forbids you by the Scriptures to defile your vessels; he forbids you to seek these things below; he forbids you

these courses? Now a man that hath knowledge that is not supernatural, that hath it not by the Spirit, he hears these things with a kind of scorn, and despiseth them as niceties; he never makes scruple of these things, because he knows they are forbidden or commanded of God, because he hears so. But he hath not known by the Spirit of God that penned the Scriptures, that these indeed are God's divine truths. The Spirit hath not sealed these truths to his soul, this is God's word. He hath not felt it in converting his soul, in mortifying his corruptions, in raising him being cast down, in working wonders in his conscience, in bringing all into a spiritual subjection. When he hath not felt the word work thus, for all his general knowledge by education, and breeding, and reading, he may be a disobedient wretch, and live and die a rebel, and bitter opposite against the power of grace, because he hath not knowledge of the word of God, and of particular truths by the Spirit of God, it is no persuasion of the Spirit.

And this is that that men wonder at, that know not the mystery of these things, to see great scholars, men of great knowledge, perhaps divines, that are preachers to others, to see such an one vicious, to see him carnally disposed as others. When a man seeth this he thinks, What, do you talk of the word of God? If there were such a thing, men that know these things must needs lead their lives after the rule. It is no wonder. The devil hath knowledge enough, but he is no divine at all, because he hath it from his nature, being a spirit. So a man may be a devil incarnate, he may have knowledge of these things, and yet no true divine. But he that is taught by the Spirit of God the things in the word of God, the Spirit works a taste in them. Historical truths are known by their own light. There is no such need of the Spirit to discover them; but the promises, and threatenings, and such things are known by the Spirit. A man feels the power of the word of God. Then a man is convinced. Otherwise if the Spirit do not reveal these things, a man will never obey, but be rebellious.

2. And as there will be no obedience, so there will be no holding out in time of peril mid temptation. The persuasion that a carnal man hath, that is not a sanctified persuasion, it will not hold out in the hour of death, in the time of temptation, in strong temptation, either on the right hand by preferments and favours, or on the left hand by threatenings and persecutions. It is but a seeming persuasion. When anything comes that is stronger than it, it will not hold. When there is afflictions and persecutions in the church, we see many excellent learned men hold not out in their profession. Why? They were drawn to the profession of religion by

dependence on such kind of men, or they only followed religion as they saw reason for it, or they have been so bred in it, &c. Now reason may be brought against reason. When men have no other motives than these; when persecution comes that they must lose their preferments or their friends, or their life, they fall away altogether, because that persuasion that they seemed to have before, it was no spiritual persuasion wrought from intrinsical grounds of divine truth, that hath a majesty and a spiritualness in itself, but it was merely wrought out of foreign grounds. Now we see a meaner man that hath his knowledge wrought by the Spirit of God, the same Spirit it seals that knowledge to him with the word of God that indited the Scripture, and acted the holy men of God that wrote the Scriptures. As his portion is incomparably great, so he is persuaded of his interest in those good things. The same Spirit that convinceth him of the truth, and of the certainty of the things, it convinceth him likewise of his part in them, and this supernatural persuasion, together with his interest in those good things persuaded of, sets down the soul so as it will not move. He holds out in persecution, because he hath felt the work of divine truth in his soul. He hath found the Spirit of God casting him down, and raising him up to comfort, therefore he holds out in his persuasion in all trials, and never apostatiseth from that estate and condition.

3. And so for unfruitfulness in conversation. Notwithstanding all those motives we have in the word of God, a man that is not convinced spiritually of those excellent things, he goes on deadly, as if there were no motives, because the Spirit of God hath not sealed them to his spirit. He hath not given him an apprehension of the divine encouragements wrapped up in the promises in the Scripture; and when death and danger come, for the most part such men are desperate, notwithstanding all their learning and knowledge literal that they have; for it will not hold water. All knowledge that is not wrought by the Spirit of God sealing divine truth to the soul, with some evidence of the power of it, it will not hold out in the trial.

Especially when Satan with his fiery darts comes with strong temptations, for the soul never felt the working power of the word. It feels then the temptation, it apprehends the poisonous fiery temptation, but it hath not so inwardly digested the truths of the Spirit, and therefore is surprised with horror and despair. There is not wrought in the heart an experimental feeling of knowledge, and therefore the heart cannot beat back the temptation.

When the devil shall come and tell men, You have been thus and thus, and they have not felt the truth of that they seemed to believe, conscience tells them, It is true I have heard and read such and such things; I never believed them; they never sunk deeply into my heart. When temptation shall be nearer the soul than the truth shall be, when temptation presseth sore, they are swallowed up of despair. Therefore let us labour that our general knowledge from the word, and our particular knowledge and persuasion, that it may be spiritual.

Quest. Now how doth the Spirit work this particular persuasion?

Ans. I answer, the Spirit of God works it in the soul together with the word: the Spirit and the word go together. All the men in the world cannot persuade the soul without the Spirit of God join. Paul preached, but God opened Lydia's heart, Acts xvi. 40, seq. We have it not of ourselves. It must come from without, from God's Spirit opening our eyes, and persuading and convincing our hearts: 'God persuades Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem,' Gen. ix. 27. No creature can do it. It is passive. It is said here 'they were persuaded.' That persuasion that is sound, that carries a man to heaven, by which he dies in faith, it must be from the Spirit of God. All the words of the ministry, and all reasons, nothing will do it but God. God must persuade the soul.

Quest. Now what doth the Spirit here?

Ans. The Spirit enlightens the understanding, which I spake of before. It opens the understanding in persuasion. It doth propound arguments and motives from the excellency of the things promised, and the privileges of religion, and the good things we have by Christ, &c.; and, together with propounding these excellent encouragements and motives, the Spirit strongly works upon the disposition, upon the will, and affections. It works upon the soul, and so doth persuade and convince.

And thereupon comes embracing, which I shall have occasion to speak of afterward. The soul being persuaded, embraceth.

Now this persuasion is not only by propounding of arguments by the word and Spirit, but likewise a working upon the will; from whence there follows an inclination of the will, and an embracing of the things we are persuaded of.

For let all the arguments in the world be brought to a man to persuade him that God will be merciful to him in Christ, tell him of the free offer, 'Whosoever will, let him come in,' Rev. xxii. 17; all that will: a large offer; let him join to that offer of mercy the inviting, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' Mat. xi. 28, and I will ease you; a sweet inviting; join with the invitation a command, 'It is his command that we should believe in his Son Jesus,' Acts xvii. 30; let him strengthen that command with the threatening, 'He that believes not is damned already,' John iii. 18; let a man remove all objections that the soul can make of its unworthiness, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you,' though you groan under the burden of your sin; let a man object again, I have nothing worthy in myself; why, come and buy, though you have no money; let him strengthen all these-proposals with examples of the mercy of God to Manasseh, to Peter, to Paul, a persecutor, to Mary Magdalene, and the like; let all these arguments be wondrous effectually propounded, the soul will not yield, unless God's Spirit join with these arguments, and all in that kind, and convince the soul of our particular interest in these things, and persuade the will to embrace these things offered.

That, God hath reserved in his own power to bring our hearts and the promises together, to bring our hearts and divine truths together. Let there be never so much set before us in the ministry, he hath reserved this prerogative and authority, that our hearts and the truth should close together to embrace them in hearing. All things depend upon the Spirit; when we do not regard the Spirit in hearing and reading, &c., let all the things the Scripture hath be propounded, and set on with all the excellency and eloquence that may be, God hath reserved it to himself, by his Spirit, to give faith to persuade our souls that these belong to us, and to incline and draw the will.

I have showed you, then, the kinds of persuasion, general and particular, and how it is wrought by the Spirit; that unless this persuasion be wrought by the Spirit, we shall never hold out in it. Though we have all the arguments in the world, we shall be disobedient. Disobedience comes when things are not discovered by the Spirit, and apostasy when the persuasion is not wrought by the Spirit, and desperation when the knowledge is not spiritual.

Now the manner is by removing contraries, and moving the heart, and drawing it. With the word of man, God enters into the very will and affections; for, as he made the soul, and framed it, so he knows how to work

upon it, and to draw it sweetly by reasons, but yet strongly, that it may be carried to the things revealed. God at the same time works strongly by carrying the soul, and sweetly with reasons. For God first comes into the soul by divine light, by reasons, and then he sinks into the soul by his Spirit, to draw the soul to these reasons. Without this, we never yield to those reasons, but stand out in rebellion.

1. God persuades the soul sweetly of the truth, by showing a man the goodness of it, and the suitableness to our condition, and the reasons of it, how they agree to our nature. He doth not force the soul, but doth it with reasons and arguments sweetly.

2. And he doth it strongly, that the soul, when it is persuaded, would not for all the world be of another mind. It is so strong, that the persuasion and the promises are stronger than the temptations of Satan and the corruptions of the flesh, or than the scandals of the world; that nothing can separate us from Christ, nothing can drive us from our faith and hope. The persuasion is set so strongly upon the soul,, because it is a divine persuasion.

It is a strong work to persuade the soul.

For the Spirit of God, when it brings a light into the soul, it brings a great many graces with it. When it shines upon the soul, and discovers better things, it brings other graces to persuade, and to embrace the things it discovers.

As it is an infinite mercy and goodness of God to discover to our souls such excellent things as we may be persuaded of, as of our estate to be such as indeed it is above our comprehension, in this, world—4 Neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him,' Isaiah lxiv. 4,—so likewise it is God's infinite work of power to frame the soul to be persuaded of this. It is as much power to work the soul to this persuasion, as it is mercy to discover them in a manner. There is such inward rebellion and distrust in the soul calling these truths into question, as if these things were too good to be true. Considering our own unworthiness and vileness, and the excellency of these things, laying these together, the unbelieving heart of man is prone to unbelief above all other sins. He can hardly conceive that there are such things for God's children, except the heart be mightily wrought on; unless, together with persuasion, there be some work in the soul whence it may gather by the work of the Spirit that they are those to whom such good

things belong, because the Spirit of God hath singled them out, and set his seal and stamp on them, above other men, by some evidences of grace.

It is another manner of work than the world takes it to be; for, as I said before, together with the Scripture, there must a Spirit of persuasion go. There is a secret messenger goes with the outward speech both of the preacher and of the Scripture, or else all the arguments will not be to purpose; they will be of no efficacy.

As the Israelites they had arguments and motives enough to persuade them of God's love and care to them, yet notwithstanding God gave them not a heart, Deut. xxix. 4. In Christ's time what miracles did they see! Yet their hearts were hardened, because God, together with his shining in the outward means, did not subdue the rebellion of their wills and affections; and therefore the more they saw, the more they were hardened, the Scribes and Pharisees, and some of their desperate followers.

Use. Well, then, considering that the Spirit doth this great work, let us labour that our knowledge may be spiritual; that our persuasion of divine truth in general, and our part and portion in divine truth, that it may be spiritual. For, as St Paul divinely and excellently sets it down, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, that 'as no man knows the things that are in man, but the spirit that is in man: so no man knows the things of God's word,' divine truths, nor his part and portion and interest in them, but by the Spirit of God. If we bring the engine of our own wit and parts to God's truth, to sermons and books, we may never be the better, if we come not with a spiritual intention, with reverent and humble hearts, and implore the teaching of the Spirit, that together with the revelation of the word there may be a removing of the veil by the Spirit; that with the outward teaching there may be the inward teaching of the Spirit; that with the sound opening the ear there may be the opening of the heart; that he that hath the key of David may open, and incline, and persuade the heart; that he may 'persuade Japhet,' as the Scripture phrase is.

It is sacrilegious presumption to come to holy places, and to set upon holy duties, to hear or read the word of God, without lifting up our hearts to God for his Holy Spirit. We cannot plough without his heifer. Can we know the mind of God without the Spirit of God? What arrogancy is this to think I shall be saved; and the Spirit never tells us with the word so: but it is only a presumptuous conceit. This is a sacrilegious usurpation upon God's glory.

The Spirit of God knows what things are in God towards us, and reveals to our spirits God's inward love to us.

And, above all things, to make it the pitch of our desires, as it is Luke xi. 13, to pray for the Spirit, 'he will give his Holy Spirit to them that beg it.' It is the best and the chief gift of all; for this makes our knowledge heavenly, our persuasion heavenly, and sound and constant in life and death. And this Spirit carries the whole soul with it: this Spirit makes us like the word of God. Because it is spiritual, it makes us so; and we love it in our inward man, and consent to it, and joy in it. Whereas naturally there is inward rebellion in the greatest scholar in the world against the word of God. The heart riseth against divine truths. They are as opposite as fire and water, as heaven and hell. The proud heart of man slights the promises of mercy, as nothing to petty things of the world. It slights the comforts of the word to carnal comforts, and the commandments of God in respect of the commandments of men. The proud man looks scornfully upon the things of conscience and of the Spirit; only the Spirit of God brings the proud heart of man to be subject to the word of God. Nothing that is not spiritual will hold out. Whatsoever is not spiritual, Christ will not own at the day of judgment. If the Spirit seal us and set a stamp upon us, Christ will look on his own stamp of the Spirit; where the first fruits are not, the harvest will not follow. The Spirit is an 'earnest.' Where the 'earnest' is not, the bargain will not follow. I beseech you, let us labour for the Spirit in the use of all means: let us attend upon the word, 'which is the ministry of the Spirit,' and we shall find that the Spirit will alter and change us, and show us our interest in the promises, and the goodness of them. The more we attend upon the means, the more we shall see it; and the more we pray, the more we shall have the Spirit; and the more we obey God, the more we shall have the Spirit of God. God gives his Spirit to 'them that obey him.'

Use. And this should teach us when we come to hear or to read the word of God, Lord, open mine eyes!, Lord, persuade my soul! Lord, bow the neck of my soul! of my inward man, that iron sinew. Lord, take away my hard heart, and give me a heart of flesh, teach my heart. Thou must persuade and incline me; incline my heart, Lord!

We want religious carriage in this. We come presumptuously upon confidence of our wit, to hear sermons, and to read the word; and so we come away worse than we went. Why? We do not pray to God to persuade us.

‘They were persuaded of them.’

Mark here, first, he opens the eyes, and so he persuades. God persuades the inward man with enlightening. He shows a reason. The devil, and antichrist his vicar, they persuade by darkness, by maintaining a kingdom of darkness. The devil allures: he shows no reason; he keeps the soul in darkness and blindness. Antichrist persuades men to their religion. How? By fleshly allurements; not instructing them and opening their eyes, enlightening their understandings; but God opens their eyes to see, and then teaches and persuades. The devil’s instruments they persuade, and so they teach and draw away. They persuade with carnal objects and the like, to draw and bewitch the affections, and so the judgment is dark still; but where there is true dealing there is no fear of the light.

Therefore, those that are enemies to the means of salvation, that fear God’s people should know too much, they take a course contrary to God. For God enlightens, and then persuades; and knowledge enlighteneth: so that knowledge is necessary. All divine persuasion of faith hath the name of knowledge. They were persuaded by the Spirit of God of the truth of God, having their eyes opened.

It is an evidence we are not persuaded. We come to church, and attend upon the means. We go on in a course of sin: we are not divinely persuaded. God hath not persuaded our hearts. He hath not enlightened us; for if the covetous man were persuaded, ‘that neither covetous, nor extortioners, should enter into the kingdom of heaven,’ 1 Cor. vi. 10, would he not leave that course? Light and persuasion always rule the action: for we work as we see and are persuaded in every thing.

The very beasts do as they see, and as sense leads them. An ass bears burdens. You know nature hath framed and made him for it; but can you drive the silly creature into the fire? He knows that will consume him. So that men they are brutish: they will not be persuaded by the Spirit of God. They run into courses that, if they had light in their souls, and if they were persuaded whither it tends, they would never run into hell fire. If there were a pit open before a man’s eyes, would he plunge himself into that pit that were before his eyes? A man that lives in sins against conscience, he runs into a pit. There are no manner of liars, of whoremongers, of covetous persons, of such wretches as take the name of God in vain, that shall escape unpunished. Men lead a life in a course wherein they see a pit before them,

and yet they run on. Are they persuaded? No, no! Certainly they are not persuaded.

And so for the means of salvation. Men that care not for hearing the word, are they persuaded it is the word of God to salvation? They are not persuaded. We may know the truth of our persuasion by the power it hath to rule our lives and conversations. What is the reason that a simple man, a weak man, he lives Christianly, and dies in the faith he lived by, whereas a great man, in conceit in knowledge, he lives wickedly, and dies worse? Because the one hath not this knowledge of the Spirit. The Spirit of God never opened his eyes: the Spirit of God never persuaded him. He hath it in books, and by education and the like. There are none that ever hold out but those that have the Spirit of God to be their teacher and persuader. We must see things in their own proper light. The Spirit of God hath to deal with the heart. God hath only power of that. He must deal with the heart. We must not trust therefore to education, or to outward things. If a man should ask the reason of men, Why do you leave these courses? why do you do this good? A Christian doth not say, I was brought up to this, or I cannot do otherwise; but I do it from a principle of the 'new creature.' Let us desire God, that we may do things from reasons of Scripture, from reasons of pleasing God; that we may do them from a holy sanctified affection; that we may be persuaded by the Spirit, and then it will hold out. 'They were persuaded of them, 'And embraced them.'

They embraced the promises, the good things promised: Christ's coming in the flesh, and Canaan, the type of heaven, and heaven itself. Though they had not these things, yet they embraced what they had, they embraced the promises. That is the nature of faith. If it have not that it looks for, as it hath not till it come to heaven, yet it makes much of that it hath; it embraceth the promises, and in the promises the thing itself promised.

Now these things follow one another in a most natural order; for sight brings persuasion, sight and conviction brings strong persuasion, and persuasion breeds embracing. For we embrace that in our affections that we are persuaded of to be good. According to the strength of conviction and persuasion is the strength of the affections. Those things that we have a weak persuasion of we have a weak affection to. Those things that we are fully persuaded of, and are great withal, the affections cannot but stretch forth themselves to embrace them. When the understanding was enlightened to see the truth, and to be persuaded of the truth of the promises, then the will and

affections, they join and embrace those things. The will makes choice of them, and cleaves to them, the affection of desire extends itself to them, the affection of love embraceth them, the affection of joy delights in them. Spiritual conviction always draws affection. For God hath framed the soul so, that upon discovery of a good out of itself, it doth stretch out itself to embrace that object, the good thing presented. It cannot be otherwise.

We see the eye, it cannot but delight in beautiful objects, so the understanding of itself, it delights in true things, and the will in things that are good, that are delightfully good, or spiritually and conveniently good to the person. It cannot but be so.

The author of nature, God, doth not overthrow nature, but preserves it in its own work. Therefore where he gives a light to discover and persuade, both of the truth in general and of our particular interest in those things, he gives grace likewise to the will and affections, to that part of the soul that is carried to good things to embrace them. And upon discovery of evil, in that part of the soul that is affected to evil, there is an aversion and loathing of things that are inconvenient and hurtful. It must needs be so in the light of reason.

We may know whether the Spirit of God have wrought anything in us by our embracing of good things; for, as I said, God hath made our souls thus, when the soul is convinced of the truth and goodness of a thing, and is persuaded, the affections will always follow that that is showed to be the best. Now when the Spirit of God discovers to the soul the excellencies of religion to be above all other excellencies whatsoever, 'that the favour of God is better than life itself,' Ps. lxxiii. 3, and discovers to the soul the vanity of all other things, then comes the soul to embrace them. For the soul cannot but embrace that which the understanding being convinced designs to be best, and best for me; in comparison of all other things, this is now at this time, all things considered, best for me to do. Hereupon comes embracing always. The affections follow spiritual persuasion.

There be two main branches of faith: one is spiritual conviction and persuasion that things are so good, and that they belong to us; another branch of faith is to go out, and close, and meet with the things. Upon discovery of the excellency of the things, the heart opens itself to let in those things.

It is in grace as it is in nature: the heart is open upwards, and pointed downward. So the heart and soul of a man opens to heavenward. When those things are discovered by the soul to be best, the Spirit opens and closeth with those things.

A man may know what he is in religion by his affections, by his affection of love; for the affection of love will open to the things that are discovered to be best, whereof he is persuaded. And his affection of joy; he will delight in those things. And his affection of grief; his heart will be shut to things that are contrary; and his affection of zeal in the pursuit of the means, and in opposing that that is an enemy to that good. It is always so. The heart embraceth what we are persuaded of.

God hath made the affections of the soul for supernatural things, he hath made our understanding to conceive of the heavenly light, and those prerogatives and privileges, and he hath made our affections to embrace those heavenly things. And then a man is in his right subordination, in his right state under God; he is framed as he should be. He is in a right frame of soul, when his soul is convinced of the excellency of the best things, and when his affections of joy and love and delight, of zeal and trust, and all are set on those things. For then a man is raised above the condition of an ordinary man. Such a man is come to his perfection. He is come out of that cursed estate that naturally all are in. For now the soul is set upon things that make it better than itself. For the soul is as the things are it is carried to. When the soul is persuaded of heavenly things and of its interest in them, and is carried to them by the sway and weight of the affections of love, and joy, and delight,—which is called here embracing,— then the things embraced transform the soul to be like them, as they be heavenly, and glorious, and excellent. There is nothing in the world to be named with them. All else is dung and dross. Then a man comes to be holy, and heavenly, and spiritual. He is raised in a condition far above others, above all other men, though he be never so mean in the world. When his soul is enlightened, and answerable to the light, there is heat; when there is light in the understanding, and heat in the affections accordingly to embrace, then the soul is in a right temper, a man is a holy and happy man. Therefore no wonder if upon persuasion and sight they embraced those things.

Let us try the truth of our estate by our affections, by our embracing of good things, by opening our hearts to the best things, by our joy and delight in them. Is there a holy wonderment at them? ‘Oh how I love thy law!’ Ps.

cxix. 97; and 'one day in thy courts is better than ten thousand elsewhere,' Ps. lxxxvi. 10; and 'Oh the depth of his mercies!' Rom. xi. 83; and 'one thing have I desired of the Lord; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,' Ps. xxvii. 4. When the soul stands in admiration of God and good things, when it is ready to welcome Christ and heavenly things and the state of religion: now away all former vanities! away all lusts of youth! away all confidence in beauty, and strength, and riches! All these are but dung to the soul. The soul hath seen better things. There is a discovery of better things; and now the respect of all other things falls down in the soul when there is a discovery of better things.

The soul cannot do otherwise when it is convinced supernaturally. The same Spirit that discovers better things opens the soul to follow them. It is so with every soul that hath the true work and stamp of the Spirit in it. It is set upon heavenly things. It saith with St Paul, 'I account all dung and dross in comparison of the excellent knowledge of Christ,' Philip, iii. 8. There is an attractive, a drawing, magnetical power in heavenly things when they are propounded to the soul by the Spirit, to draw the affections, and to make us spiritual like themselves.

Let us therefore labour more and more to have our affections wrought upon. As we are in our affections, we are in religion. It is impossible that a Christian should be spiritually convinced that there are such excellent things belong to religion, and that he hath his part and portion in them, and not be transformed to a spiritual state and frame of soul, to love and delight in holy things, and to despise that which is contrary.

And when he is in such a state, what is all the world to him? What cares he for riches, or pleasures, or honours, when the soul sees incomparable better things? 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and what do I desire on earth in comparison of thee?' saith David, Ps. lxxiii. 25, when he had a little meditated of the vanity of earthly things, and saw the goodness of God to his children. 'It is good for me to draw near unto God,' Ps. lxxiii. 28. It is a speech of conviction. The soul is convinced that it is good and best to draw near to God in holy means, and in holy duties to keep close to him, and then it cries out, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?'

Therefore let us never rest in such a knowledge of holy things as doth not convince us of the goodness of them, and of our interest in them, so far as may draw and work upon our affections to embrace those things.

When we find our hearts and affections wrought on, that holy things, as they are excellent in themselves, so they have an answerable place in our hearts, that as they are holy, and high, and best, so they have a high place in our hearts, then a man is in the estate of a Christian, or else a man may very well doubt of his estate, when he can hear of heaven, and happiness, and of the excellency of the children of God, that they are heirs of heaven, &c., and his heart be not affected with these things. He may well question himself, Do I believe those things? Here are rich and precious promises, but where is my precious faith to close with and to embrace these things? Do I believe them? If I do, how is it that I am no more affected with them? And so let us stand in the meditation of the excellencies of religion so long till our hearts be affected and warmed with them. This will follow affections, a desire to think oft of them; as David joins both together: 'Oh, how do I love thy law! it is my meditation continually.' That that a man loves he oft thinks of. That stirs up love, and love makes him oft consider of it; and when it is thus with a man, he is in such a condition as these holy patriarchs, fit to live and die by his faith. 'They saw them, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.'

Therefore, I say, we may know whether we have this spiritual light, whether we have true faith or no, if we have these embracing. If we be so persuaded of them that we embrace them with delight, and desire, and love, and joy; if we make choice of them, and esteem them highly, and cleave constantly to that which is revealed to us: then it is a divine light and persuasion, because we embrace them.

Certainly there is nothing in religion divine, unless the affections be carried with it. True faith carries the whole soul, to whole Christ, out of a man's whole self. It carries the understanding to see, and the will to choose and to cleave; it carries the affections to joy and delight and love; it carries all. Therefore, those that when holy things are discovered they have not a high esteem of them; that they prize them not above earthly things; that they cleave not to them with a disesteem of other things; that they joy not in them as their best portion; that they do not embrace them: there is no true faith at all, for where there is true faith there is this embracing.

God hath made the soul, as I said, for these heavenly things; and when the soul and they close together, there is a sweet embracing. Then the soul is raised above itself; the soul is quieted, and stilled, and satisfied. There is nothing in the world else will better the soul but the embracing of these things; nothing else will beautify and adorn the soul in God's sight. Our souls

are made for them, our desires are made to embrace them, our love and our joy to delight in them, our wills to cleave to them and make choice of them above other things.

We abuse our souls. They are not made to close and grasp with the world; they are not made for those things that are baser than ourselves. We abase our souls. A covetous man makes himself worse than he is; therefore he is called the world, because he hath nothing in him better than the world. If we embrace Christ and the promises of salvation, the things of another life, the embracing of these raiseth the soul to be excellent like the things, and it doth quiet and rest the soul. For nothing will rest but in its own element. As the heavy bodies rest not but in the centre, in the middle point of the earth, and light bodies rest coming to their place above, so the soul it rests in God and in Christ. Faith resting in the power of God quiets the soul, carrying it to the thing it is made for. As these holy men, in all the turmoils and troubles of the world, in all confusions, the souls of these blessed men rested in Christ.

We may say of all earthly things, as Micah hath this sentence of them, Micah ii. 10, 'Go ye hence, here is not your rest.' So we may say to the soul concerning riches, and honours, and friends, 'Here is not your rest.' You were not made to embrace and to cleave to these things. Our rest is in Christ and in the good things we have by him. These good men embraced him with their whole soul.

This shows that many men have not faith; they know not what it means. Where there is true faith, there is alway love, and joy, and delight in the things believed. It carries the soul with it. In what measure we apprehend the goodness of a thing, in that measure our love is to it. In what measure we apprehend the greatness and fitness of a thing, in that measure our affections are carried to it. The understanding reports it to the affections of love and liking, and they are naturally carried to that which the soul makes report of to be useful. The understanding makes them follow it. Therefore it is a sign our understandings are not persuaded, our eyes are not opened, when we love not good persons and good things, when we cleave not to them above all things. Those that do not embrace and cleave in their will and affections to good things, let them say what they will, they do not believe. If there were but a light conjecture in men, if there were but a guessing that there were such a happiness and that there were such horrible torments for sinners that live in sin, they would live otherwise than they do. Therefore deadness in the

affections discovers atheism in the judgment and heart; it shows there is unbelief. For how is it possible that a man should not be carried in his affections to a good that he is persuaded of. And how is it possible he should not loathe ill and destructive things? If he were persuaded that hell were such as it is, and that these courses lead to hell and destruction, and estrange him from the favour of God, 'whose loving-kindness is better than life itself,' Ps. lxxiii., 3, if men were persuaded of these things in any strength, their souls would not be affected as they are.

Therefore if we would know whether nature be corrupted or no, we may do it by this. You have some men that are conceited, especially when they are in their ruff and have all things plenty. Divines talk much of the corruption of nature and such things. They think all is well. Oh, but do but lay these things together, the excellency of the things promised and the terror of the things threatened, and our indisposition to these things in regard of persuasion, that we live as if we did not think these things to be true. What a disposition of soul is that that calls divine truths into question! To believe the lies of our own hearts and the temptations of the devil, and the world that lies in mischief, before the resolved truth of God itself, that is sealed with the oath of God. And yet the heart of man is naturally carried to believe these things more than God himself. Witness the lives of men who have dead, carnal, base affections in regard of heavenly things, they show that they are not persuaded of them, notwithstanding all the sweet arguments and persuasions that the Scripture hath. They do not profess that they call them in question, yet they live as if they made no doubt that they are all false. It is a folly not to believe those things that are sealed by so many evidences as divine things are; but it is more desperate folly to live as if we did not believe them at all.

If these things were digested, they would make us out of love with our own natural estate, and to labour for a spirit of faith to persuade our souls, both that those things are so indeed that God hath revealed, and to get assured persuasion of our part and interest in them. Indeed, a dead faith is no faith at all. It is the effect of the whole Epistle of St James, that it is no faith that is dead; it doth not work upon the heart and affections, nor the life and conversation. A dead faith is no faith at all.

Let us shame ourselves therefore: Lord, do I profess I see things above nature? that I see Christ in heaven and see myself there? and do I profess that I am persuaded that the word of God is true, and am I no more

affected? Where is my love? Where is my joy? Where is my comfort? Doth my heart run after other things, that profess myself to be persuaded of better things? Let us never rest, but be angry and wroth with our hearts and affections, for they are made for these promises. Our precious faith is made to embrace precious promises, and to carry the whole soul to them.

And let us help this with complaining of ourselves and with prayer. Lord, thou hast discovered excellent things in thy word, and hast persuaded me. Lord, open my heart; the heart is thy throne; the heart, and will, and affections thou dealest with especially. Lord, incline my heart, enlarge my heart. The Lord hath promised in the new covenant to teach our bowels to love; Lord, teach my heart to love thee. Thou hast opened my understanding to conceive holy things, or else I had never been able to understand thee and thy truth. Teach my bowels also to love; teach them to cleave to the things; take off my love, my joy, and delight from earthly things, and plant them where they should be; enlarge them the right way; fill my heart with thyself, as thou hast made it for thyself. This should be our desire.

Quest. What be the affections whereby the soul embraceth these good things it is persuaded of?

Ans. The soul embraceth these things in the affections of faith and hope in the first place; for faith is an empty grace in itself; it is carried to somewhat out of itself that it embraceth and layeth hold on; and hope is with faith alway. Together with the work of faith and hope there is a sanctified affection of the embracing soul; there is a love of the things promised, which is embracing, and a love of the means, and likewise joy and delight in them expressed by thankfulness. As you see the patriarchs in the story of Genesis, when God discovered holy things to them afresh, that he would give them the land of Canaan and the Messiah to come, and all that happiness, there was thankfulness, presently they built altars to God; and which alway accompanies thankfulness, humility. As Abraham, Gen. xvii. 3, down he falls when God made him such a large promise; he falls down on his face, as if he were unworthy of such a thing. So this disposition alway accompanies a soul that embraceth. Together with faith and hope, that leads the affections after them, there is love, expressed in a constant obedience and care of duty to God many ways, as it is an affection that will not be concealed. And joy and delight, with thankfulness and humility, considering the excellency of the things and our unworthiness; that we cannot but have this disposition alway, thankfulness and humility. And likewise contentment to end our days, a

disposition that follows embracing in faith; for, where embracing of faith and love is in an imperfect estate, there will be joy when that comes that makes way to full embracing; that is, in heaven itself, as Simeon rejoiced when he embraced Christ in his arms. What did the old man, think we, when he came to heaven, when Christ and he met there? And Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day with the eye of faith; and likewise embraced it with faith, and that wrought joy. What did Abraham then when he came to heaven, when he saw all ended there? I say, death, that makes way to full enjoining and embracing, in this very respect it is not only patiently entertained of God's children, but comfortably, as letting them in to the good things that they esteem above all the world besides; to the possession of Christ; to heaven and happiness. Let us consider of these things.

To come to direct us a little about this embracing in faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and the whole soul, when the soul as it were goes out to the things we are persuaded of.

Quest. How shall this be wrought upon the soul?

Ans. This embracing we see it follows upon persuasion, and persuasion follows seeing: 'They saw them far off, and were persuaded of them, and thereupon they embraced them.'

1. Therefore let us labour for a clear understanding of divine things. That which the eye sees, the heart grieves for in ill, and that that the eye sees the heart embraceth in good. And in what measure our eyesight of heavenly things is clearer, and our persuasion stronger, in that measure our embracing is lovely and full of joy and delight. Therefore let us labour to grow in knowledge, in supernatural spiritual knowledge, and that our persuasion may be stronger every day more and more; for answerable to that our affections will grow, and will be carried to the things discovered.

And there is nothing more effectual to commend knowledge to us than this, that it is a means to work a holy and heavenly disposition and temper in us, especially if it be spiritual. And let us meditate upon what we seem to know and are persuaded of; let us dwell upon things still, to work them upon the will and affections; let us dwell upon them till our hearts be warmed well with the things known, and that we profess ourselves to be persuaded of.

And join with it an inquiry upon the soul, Are these things so? Do I know these things? and am I persuaded of these things that they are so? How

is my disposition answerable then? am I so affected as I should be? Is my love so hot, and my joy so working, and spiritually, and quick as it should, or no? And hereupon take occasion to stir up ourselves, and to check our own souls: Alas! that I should have such things discovered, and that I should see such things, in such a strong persuasion in the book of God, and profess myself to be persuaded of these things, and yet be so dead at all times.

And if we find our affections anything working, that we are disposed to embrace these things, then we cannot but be in an excellent temper, and bless God that vouchsafed, together with the excellency of the things themselves, to show us our portion by his Holy Spirit, to enlighten our understandings, and to persuade us. Let us bless God for this, for it is a work above nature.

And withal, because the soul cannot close with and embrace these things but it must let loose other things (for, you know, in embracing there must be a letting go of those things that were formerly within the grip), if we would grip these things in our affection and will, we must have them only; we must not think to grasp the world and them together, the things here below and them together; as we shall see after in that point, 'they accounted themselves strangers' to earthly things. Therefore this is one way to come to this embracing, to come to the sight of the vanity and insufficiency of all things in comparison of Christ, and the happiness we have by Christ. To see in matter of judgment the insufficiency of works and merit, and such like, in the matter of justification, the insufficiency of all such trash as the popish religion abuseth the world withal. And so in matter of conversation, to see the insufficiency, and emptiness, and vanity, yea, the vexation of all things besides these good things here offered. The good things that God's Spirit offers to the eye of our souls, that he offers to our wills and affections, what are all to these? And effectually think so, think what should draw a man's affections after it. Beauty or strength! Consider what will become of these ere long.

And then withal consider the excellency of the estate of the body and soul in heaven, if we carry ourselves as we should do, and preserve ourselves in our spiritual condition. Let us lay these things together, and then we shall see how infinitely the one is beyond the other. If it be for honour and favour of the world, consider the vanity of them and how short a time we may enjoy them, and the things themselves are subject to alteration. And withal consider the constant excellency of the favour of God in Christ Jesus, which

will comfort us in life, in death, and for ever. And so for riches and possessions in this world, consider how soon all here must be left, and how the soul is larger than all these things, if we had a thousand times more abundance than we have; and that our souls that are more large and more excellent, they are not made for these things, but for better; and what use we shall have of better things when these fail, the soul being immortal and eternal. This will make us let go earthly things in our affections, and hold them in their place, in a secondary place, as things serviceable in the way to heaven, and not to grasp them in our affections, for then they pierce the soul to death and damnation.

And if we would be affected as we should be to good things, let us keep our affections tender, and keep them clear from the guilt of any sin that may work fears and doubts, for together with sin goes fears and doubts. They are bred in sin naturally; therefore if we would maintain this embracing, oh let us keep our souls! As we keep our understandings clear, so keep our affections tender by all means, and keep our consciences unspotted, that so our affections of joy, and delight, and love, may be ready pressed to good things, even to the best things.

Another way is in particular to meditate of the love of Christ, the love of God in Christ, and of his embracing of us; for we must know that our embracing is upon persuasion of God's embracing of us. We embrace not the promises of Christ as a man embraceth a dead post, that cannot return embraces to him again. This embracing of Christ and heaven, it is a mutual embracing; and it is a second, reflexive embracing. We embrace God and Christ, because we find God in Christ embracing our souls first in the arms of his love; therefore we embrace him again in the arms of our affections, because we find Christ embracing us in the arms of his affections.

Therefore let us attend upon the means, upon private reading of the word and upon the ministry; for what are the ministers but to contract Christ and the soul together? They are 'friends of the Bridegroom,' to discover, Christ's love to us, and his loveliness,—his loveliness in himself, his riches in himself, and his love to us, to allure us again to Christ. The ministry is for this end especially, to draw Christ and the soul together. And what is the Scripture in the intent and scope of it, but to discover to us the excellency of Christ, and the good things we have by him, his love and good intention to our souls? Now, hearing these things in the ministry, they are effectual, together with the Spirit, to draw our affections back again to him; and,

naturally, we cannot but love those that love us. Now, when we are persuaded of God's love to us in Christ, and Christ's love to us (God having made our souls for love to himself, and friendship with himself, and the nearest and sweetest conjugal friendship, now therefore) the more his love is discovered to us, the more we shall love him.

Therefore let us be constant in attending upon good means. We shall always hear something that will either strengthen our faith in the promises of God, or show us our duty to God again. We shall have something discovered whereby the Spirit will be effectual to help this embracing. Let us go to reading and hearing with this scope and intention. Now, I come to hear, I come to have my soul wrought on, I come to hear some message from heaven, to hear some good thing to draw my mind from the world and worldly things; and upon hearing our duty to God, to walk lowly in thankfulness for those good things that we have, and that we hope for in another world. It is no wonder that men lose their affections that are careless in the use of means; and if they lose them, will they not lose all? The best man living, if he be careless in using the means of salvation, and give himself to the world altogether or to his calling,—things not in themselves unlawful,—his affections will be dead, he shall lose them; for God hath ordained that our affections should be quickened by heavenly means, and God knoweth better than we ourselves, that hath sanctified these means to this purpose. In attending upon the means, we shall hear a discovery of good things, and hear comforts, and have our light strengthened by new discovery of new Scripture, or by old Scriptures lively applied; something to increase the life of our persuasion, at every sermon and reading good books, and by every good company. And that which increaseth knowledge and persuasion, makes our affection and embracing stronger.

I beseech you, let us take these courses, or else all is to no purpose. The main thing in religion is the will and affections, and when the will and affections are wrought on, the work is done in the matter of grace. And there is no other way to know whether the former work of the understanding and persuasion be effectual and to purpose or no, but this; to know whether the will choose and cleave to good things, and whether our affections joy and delight in them. There is the trial of the main work. The work indeed is especially in the judgment, when it hears soundly and supernaturally of the ills that are to be avoided, and of the good things that are to be embraced, but where is the trial of the judgment, but when it carries the whole soul with it, when it carries the stern of the soul with it? Now that which is immediate

to our souls is our affection of joy and delight, and the like. Therefore let us take to heart these things, and never think we are anything in religion till our hearts and affections be wrought upon; till our knowledge be such as may sway that whole inward man.

Again, consider the excellency of those good things that we have discovered to us in the gospel, that are the object of our embracing, together with the necessity of them, that without them we are wretched creatures, there is no hope for us. Let us every day consider what ground of hope we have, though the things be not yet possessed, whether the things be true that we hope for, whether they be confirmed to be true or no, and how we rest on them. For let things be never so excellent and necessary, unless the soul conceive of them as things attainable, as things belonging to us, all is to no purpose, this effect of embracing will not be wrought in the soul. Therefore consider more and more the hopefulness of them. That may help this embracing.

A Christian, when he believes and hopes for that happiness that shall be revealed to him, the things promised, what a world of grounds of hope hath he for it? He hath the word of God for an 'inheritance immortal and undefiled,' 1 Peter i. 4; he hath the will of Christ: 'Father, I will that where I am, they may be,' John xvii. 24. His prayer to his Father is his will, and his will must be performed; for he lives for ever to make good his own legacy to his church. And he is now in heaven, preparing that happiness for us that we so embrace with faith. And he hath left us here his Spirit to be a pledge that he will come again. He hath left his Spirit, and hath taken our flesh to heaven, to strengthen our hope, that this shall follow. Our flesh is in heaven in him already, and his Spirit is in earth in us; as a mutual depositum in trust between him and us; and all to strengthen the hope of that happiness that is reserved.

Besides the seal of the sacrament, the end of which is to cherish hopefulness of Christ, and of all the good we have by him, his oath is added to his promise, that all things might be immutable and unchangeable of the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, &c. Now especially when we find our hearts to sink downward, and not to have that life as they should have, by meditating on these things, of their excellency and necessity, and to conceive in Scripture the grounds of hope of them, it will quicken us.

Add likewise, for our own interest, what work of the Spirit we have, and then what singular promises we have, that where God hath begun he will

make an end. For why is the work of the Spirit called an earnest, but that God will make good the bargain? Consider what work of the Spirit we have; for whatsoever is spiritual is eternal in a man. What joy is spiritual, what love is spiritual, what knowledge is spiritual, it shall be made up in perfection, it shall never be taken away.

See then how the Spirit seals us by the work of it, and what earnest we have, in peace of conscience and the work of it. This will cherish hope; for that is part of this embracing, to embrace them with faith and hope.

And this should be a daily course, to work upon the affections, to estrange them from all things, and from the meditation of all things, else. And as I said before, to consider the love of God to us, and to love him again. And consider likewise the hopefulness of good things, that nothing in the world is so made good to us as the things of a better life; the things of grace and glory. And God hath borrowed from all assurance amongst men, terms to show the assurance of the good things we have in hope and faith. The pledge of the Spirit, the earnest of the Spirit, the seal of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit. What terms are there used among men that may confirm anything, that you have not used to strengthen this supernatural assurance of these supernatural good things? God herein succours our weakness, knowing how prone we are to call these things into question. And consider especially our own unworthiness, our vileness and baseness, that we deserve none of this. When conscience is once awaked to know aright our own unworthiness, then we shall find it a difficult thing to believe these things. Therefore it is a work worthy of our daily endeavour, to search the Scriptures, which applies itself to our capacity, and confers all the help in the world to increase our grounds of hope of the best things, and then our disposition is as it should be.

And let us deeply consider of the necessity of heavenly things, and the foulness of sin, and the danger of our natural condition, and this will make us embrace better things. He that sees himself in danger of drowning will embrace that that may stay him. He that sees himself in danger to be pulled away from that that upholds him from sinking, he will clasp about it fast. Let us consider what a-many things we have in this world to pull us away from God and good things, and to loose our grip, that we may not lay such hold of them. The devil envies our embracing of these things, and there are many things to loose our affections from them. Consider the danger, and withal the necessity of these good things, that if they be lost, we do not only lose them,

but we lose them with the loss of our souls, with eternal damnation in the world to come. We do not simply lose them, but we plunge ourselves into the contrary. Let us consider of this, and it will make us clasp fast, and keep our hold by all means possible. In that measure that we apprehend the danger, in that measure we shall embrace these excellent things.

Case. Now to answer a doubt and a case or two by the way. How happens it, then, that God's children sometime, when their judgment is convinced, yet their affections are not so quick, they are something flat in their affections? As God's people complain sometimes, Alas! that I should believe such a happiness as heaven is, and such glory, and yet find my affections no more stirred! Is it possible that I should be the child of God, and believe these things, and find myself no more affected?

Sol. Indeed,, this troubles the peace of God's children sometimes; and good reason: for we see here, after sight comes persuasion, then embracing. The will and affections cannot but entertain that good they are persuaded of, and so there is great ground for the objection.

But there may be some mistake in this; for sometimes the judgment may be convinced, and yet the affections not be so quick, because there may be a diversion at the same time. There may perhaps be some present cross that may befall thee, or some present thing lawfully loved, that takes up the affections at that time. As, for example, the presence of father, mother, wife, or children, or of other friends, may take up the affections for the time. Now the affections running that way at that time, perhaps not sinfully neither, they are not so enlarged to heavenly things. God knows our capacity, and what our affections can do.

Then again, there may be some present grief upon them, that God, to humble a man, may take up his affections, so that at that time he shall not be so affected with good things, though ordinarily he comfort himself with the best things; and so he doth afterward, when he hath given his grief and his present affections some liberty. There is a love of intension and of valuing: a man may be deceived that way. A man values his child more than a stranger that he entertains, yet for the present he may give a stranger better looks and better entertainment. Though he set more value on his child, or his dear friend that he hath secured himself of, yet he will not show such countenance to them as to a stranger on the sudden.

So it is here. God's children their constant joy is in the best things, and they are judiciously carried to the best things; but on the sudden there may be an entertaining of some other thing, and perhaps not unlawful neither. Perhaps it may be sinful, to humble God's children; but that is but on the sudden. His course is to carry his affections above all earthly things.

Again, in another case, God's children are deceived this way sometimes; for they think they have no affections when they have affections. How is that seen? In case of opposition. Let God, and Christ, and heavenly things be opposed, and you shall see then that they have affections. Those that, for want of stirring up the grace of God in them, or for want of good means, or by indisposition of body, seemed to be dull in their affections, let religion be disgraced or opposed any way, and you shall find then their affections deep in their hearts to heavenly things; but they appeared not before, because there was no opposition. These, and such like thoughts, we may have to content the soul that is disquieted this way. But the rule is certain, that a man's affections are as his persuasion is, and his persuasion as his light is. As he hath a heavenly light, discovering heavenly things, so is his persuasion of a better estate than the world can yield; and, answerable to his persuasion, his soul is raised up to delight in the best things. This is his course. If it fall out to be otherwise, there be reasons for it, which we must discreetly judge of, and not trouble the peace of a good conscience. To go on.

'They confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.'

These words contain what they were in regard of earthly things; their disposition and carriage to all things besides the promises, to the things below. They were strangers and pilgrims in regard of their condition below. It sets down how they apprehended themselves to be, and how they discovered themselves to the world to be.

They were in regard of heaven indeed, heirs of happiness, heirs of a kingdom; in regard of the world and earthly things they were 'strangers and pilgrims.' And as they were, so they made themselves to be no better than they were. They confessed it. They were not ashamed of it. They apprehended themselves to be as they were, and they carried themselves answerable. Their life and course spake as much as their tongues. They confessed both in word and in deed that they were 'strangers and pilgrims.' Now in the words I say you have their disposition and their profession, their condition and their confession; their disposition and carriage, and state and condition; 'they were strangers and pilgrims.'

The discovery of it, 'they confessed' they were so. And this confession is double.

Their confession was either verbal, as Jacob confessed when he came before Pharaoh: 'Few and evil have the days of the life of my pilgrimage been,' saith old Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 9.

Or it was a real confession, discovered by their carriage that they were strangers: their course spake louder than their words,.

Those that in the whole course of their life show a weaned affection to earthly things, though they talk not gloriously, as some idle persons do in a bravery, 'we are but strangers here, and we must be gone,' &c. Though, I say, they do not speak thus, as some do that never think so, yet, notwithstanding, their carriage betrays it; their course, and company, and conversation shows that indeed they 'confess themselves pilgrims and strangers.'

Now the order of the words is this, 'strangers and pilgrims.' There is little difference between these two. 'Strangers' shows our absence from home, that we are abroad in another country, that we are in another place.

And 'pilgrims' shows our carriage to our country, our going home: a pilgrim or traveller is he that is going homeward. They confessed themselves that they were not at home, but they were going toward that that was their home, toward heaven, to that city 'whose builder and maker was God himself,' Heb. xi. 10. We are 'strangers,' to show what we are here on earth. In regard of heaven we are strangers on earth, and not mere strangers that rest, and do nothing, but such strangers as are passing home toward their country; 'we are strangers and pilgrims' on earth. The one implies our absence, the other implies our moving to the place of our abode.

The points considerable are, first, this, that God's children upon earth here are strangers and pilgrims; They are not at home, but are travelling toward their country.

The second is this, that They profess themselves to be so. They know they are so, and they confess that they are so. They are not ashamed of it.

For the first, Doct. It is the disposition of him that hath truly interest in better things (though but in faith and hope) to be a stranger and a pilgrim in regard of all things here below.

And this follows the other; for where the eyes of the understanding are opened, and a man is persuaded, there is an embracing of better things as our proper good things; there is a considering of all other things as things that do not belong to us; in a manner we are strangers. When faith apprehends Christ and heaven and happiness to be our own, and our country to be above, faith apprehending and grasping these things, and embracing them, at the same time it is to be supposed, and necessarily follows, that we are strangers.

It follows out of the necessity of the thing itself; for, upon the very consideration that a man is an heir of heaven, that he hath another country and condition, out of the necessity of the thing itself, though there were no other reason for it, the affections of the soul will be closed up, as it were, to other things, and he will consider of other things in an inferior condition as they are.

For the things, though they be good in their kind and order, both the things above and the things below, yet there being such a difference in these good things and the things here below, the contentments here on earth being so meanly good, and so short in continuance, and so weak in their satisfaction of the soul, that they cannot be possessed, together with the blessed assurance of better things, but with the affections of strangers and pilgrims, this follows, I say, from the nature of the thing, that in whose eyes heavenly things are great, in his eyes earthly things are mean. They are accounted as they are, secondary, mean things of the way, to help him forward home.

If a man were on the top of a great mountain, he would see the things below to be very little, and the things above would appear greater to him; so when the soul is raised up to see great things, though they be afar off, as these did with the eye of faith, at the same time, his soul looking to things below must needs apprehend them to be little in quantity, as indeed they are.

If a man were in body lift up to heaven, and should look upon the earth, what were the earth but a poor silly point, the whole earth itself, much more a man's own possession; so when the soul is lifted up to heaven by faith,—which sets a man in heaven before his time,—when it looks from thence to the earth and earthly things, it must of necessity consider them, as they are, to be poor mean things. Therefore this follows, that being persuaded of the promises, that is, of the good things promised in religion in the word of God, to earthly things they were 'strangers and pilgrims.'

He that is from home, and hath another home which he is not at, he is a stranger; but Christians have another home.

1. For, first, they are bred from heaven, they are born from heaven, they are born in Jerusalem that is from above; they are born in the church by the seed of the word and Spirit. Now as they are from heaven, so their bent is to heaven again; for everything naturally riseth as high as it springeth. As we say of water, it mounts as high as the head of it is, so our affections mount as high as the spring of them is. Now a Christian being born from heaven, he tends to that in his affections, that is his country. It is his country, because his Father is there in his glory, and his Saviour is there, and a great part of his kindred are there; the souls of perfect men, and the glorious angels in a most glorious manner,—though they be in their attendance upon the earth,—there is his country, his city, his house, there is his happiness, his home. I shall not need, therefore, to prove that the godly are strangers. If heaven be his country, earth must needs be the place of his pilgrimage; there is no question but that follows.

It is said here ‘they were pilgrims and strangers upon earth.’ ‘Upon earth,’ because, wherever a Christian is, if it be upon any place upon earth, he is a stranger and a pilgrim. If he be in his own house, he is upon earth, and therefore he is a stranger in his own house; if he be in his own possession, he is upon earth, and therefore he is a stranger in his own possession. As David confessed, though he were a king, ‘I am a stranger and a pilgrim here, as all my fathers were,’ 1 Chron. xxix. 15. A king in his kingdom is upon God’s earth, and therefore he is a stranger in his own kingdom here. As Austin saith very well, ‘*Quisque domus sua,*’ &c., every man is a stranger in his own house. We are strangers here on earth, therefore. It is not any condition on earth that exempts a child of God from being a stranger, when the greatest kings in the world have confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims; so that all Christians, of what condition soever they are, from the highest to the meanest, they are all strangers upon earth. It is a clear point.

And it must needs be so, for the head of Christians was a stranger. His love made him a stranger; for he left his Father’s bosom. His love drew him from heaven to earth, and here he conversed as a stranger. He dwelt in his body here as a tabernacle, which he laid aside for a while, to work the work of our redemption, and then after to dwell in it for ever. He was the prime stranger of all strangers. He that makes us all strangers here, and citizens of heaven, he was a stranger on earth. He was not indeed a stranger, for he was

Lord of heaven and earth, yet in regard of his state of exaltation that was to come after, in regard of dispensation, he was here as a servant: he lived here as a stranger. And indeed he was as strangely used; 'for he came among his own, and his own knew him not,' as it is in John i. 10. He was not known among his own countrymen the Jews; 'he was a stranger on earth.'

He conversed with us here, and was among us as a stranger. You see how his speech and carriage and conversation on earth it was as a stranger's. He was talking alway of his Father's house and of the kingdom of heaven. When he speaks of the estate of the church, which is the only company of people here in whom God rules by his Spirit, yet because they are ordained for the kingdom of heaven, he calls them strangers here, and terms them by that that they are ordained to. All his mind was of the kingdom of heaven. We see after he was risen, the matter of his discourse, as the gospel tells, it was of the kingdom of heaven. He talked of things that belonged to the kingdom of God; all his speeches were that way, and his comparisons were fetched that way. 'The kingdom of heaven is like' to such a thing and such a thing. And all his work was to draw men from the earth. As it was his grand work to redeem men from the earth, that is, from hell, and from their cursed condition, so the matter of his teaching was answerable to his work, to draw men to heaven. All the pains that he took before and after his death, till he was taken into heaven, it tended that way.

He came from heaven to earth to woo us to be a spouse to himself. He came from heaven into a strange country, to take us for his spouse, to take our nature, and in our nature to win us, to die for us. He carried himself as a stranger every way; he regarded not earthly things. Now answerable to our head Christ, must all Christians be in their affections and dispositions. We must be conformable to him; we must be strangers as he was.

All that look to die in the faith of Christ, and to be happy for ever, they must witness their believing and loving of better things by an answerable carriage to all things here below; they must have the affection of strangers and travellers. Faith doth enforce this. It is the nature of the soul, from a principle and ground of nature, that when the soul is carried up one way, it is shut another; when it cleaves unto, and embraceth better things, when it is open to heaven, the point of the soul is shut to the earth; and we look upon these things as strangers and pilgrims, only for necessary use.

These holy men the patriarchs were strangers.

1. Strangers in their own esteem. As Abraham and Jacob, they confess they were sojourners; and David, though he were a king, yet he saith 'he was a stranger, as all his fathers were.' So all the patriarchs they professed themselves to be strangers and sojourners; and they did it not in word only, but in deed. They showed it by dwelling in tabernacles and tents; poor things, fit for strangers. Heaven was their house. Tabernacles are moveable, weak things, that have no foundation; so they knew their life was like a tabernacle here. And their manner of life showed what they looked for; they carried themselves as those that hoped and looked for better things. They were strangers in their dispositions; they affected things above, and cared no more for these things than for necessary use, to help them to serve God in their places; and those that are strangers in their dispositions, they desire to be at home.

2. Again, they were strangers in God's esteem.. God termed them so; and so it is with all that believe in Christ. When we once believe, and are new creatures, new born to a better inheritance, presently at the same time we are strangers here.

3. Strangers likewise in the esteem of the world. The world used them as strangers, strangely. When a man leaveth the world and cleaveth to God, presently the world setteth on him by reproaches, and all they can. Because they think he will disgrace them by his change, therefore they labour to make him as black as they may that way: they use all strangely that break from them. God will have it so. Because he will have his children not to love the world, therefore he will have the world hate them. So they are strangers in that respect: they think it strange that they do not as they did formerly; that they do not as they do. Wicked men think it strange that they 'run not with them into the same excess of riot,' 1 Pet. iv. 4: so they are strangers in the esteem of wicked men.

4. So they are strangers in regard of their place. Heaven is their hope. They are 'begotten to an inheritance immortal, undefiled,' &c., 1 Pet. i. 4; they live in a place where they are strangers; they are every way strangers.

Obj. But you will say, Wicked men are strangers, and pilgrims too? Ans. I answer, They are indeed so, for in regard of the shortness of their lives, and the uncertainty of the things they enjoy,—for they outlive all their happiness here,—they are snatched hence before they be aware, therefore they are but travellers here; but they go from ill to worse. Yet in regard of their affections they are no strangers, but account themselves at home from a spirit of

infidelity, and pride, and earthliness. Therefore they are called men of the earth, and those that 'dwell on the earth,' in the Revelation, Rev. iii. 10, because they look no further than the earth; and here they root and fix their affections upon this earth. They do not fix their hearts and affections upon the things above; they look not after them; they care not for them; they value them not, nor esteem them. Therefore, answerable to their thoughts, and bent of their soul and mind, is their discourse, their speech and carriage; and thereupon they are called 'men of the earth,' and called 'the world,' because they love nothing but the world; they are as it were changed into the things they love; they are earth, as the prophet saith, 'O earth, earth,' &c., Jer. xxii. 29; and they are the world, because their affection of love joins them to these earthly things. The church in the Revelation is called heaven; but the beast is said 'to rise out of the earth,' Rev. xiii. 11; for that which bred the carnal religion of popery, it was nothing but earth and earthly respects. Therefore, however they are strangers here, that they cannot be here long, and they have souls that are of an everlasting continuance; yet because their affections and the bent of their souls are all here, they account themselves at home here, and here they plant themselves and their posterity; therefore, though in some sense they be strangers, yet not in that sense that the children of God are.

Every Christian is born from above, and born to things above, and he is a stranger here. All his course, from his new birth till he come to the possession of his inheritance in heaven, it is nothing but a travelling. He never sits down, but is always in his motion and passage. Every good work is a step of his way: he is in motion still; he takes degrees from better to better, from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, till he come to his home.

Let us make a trial of ourselves, how our affections stand to these things, whether our hearts be weaned from earthly things. Undoubtedly, if we have embraced Christ, we shall use the world as though we used it not. We shall be transformed into the image of Christ; and he used the things of this world as a stranger, only to comfort him in the way. We shall have the same mind that he had. We shall carry ourselves as strangers, as those that hope for a country in heaven. Therefore I will name some particulars, to show the condition and carriage of a stranger.

1. First of all, a stranger is travelling to another country—to join both in one; for the one follows the other. He that is a stranger, that apprehends what he is, and apprehends that he hath a country to go to, he travels toward it.

2. A stranger that is travelling homeward, he is content with his present condition, for he knows he shall have better at home. In Jer. xvi. 4, God, by Jeremiah, speaks to Baruch, a good man: 'I will destroy all these things; and dost thou seek great things for thyself?' If a Christian did consider, I am going to heaven, to God, what do I seeking great things here, which God will destroy? What will become of heaven and earth, and all things here ere long? And if the time be long ere heaven and earth be destroyed, yet what will become of me ere long? I shall be turned to earth, and shall I seek great things here upon earth? Shall I not be content with my portion? Certainly a stranger is content with his present portion. He that is a traveller, when he comes to his inn, if perhaps things be not so clean, if his usage be not so good, he thinks it is but a night and away: it is no great matter. This is not the main. He will not be over much discontent, and quarrel at any unkind usage in the way, for he knows he shall have better usage when he comes home. Therefore, as he will be content with little, be it what it will be, he knows it is not the main.

3. So he will be patient if he meet with unkind usage: he will not stand quarrelling by the way, and so hinder himself in his journey; he will be patient in the injuries and wrongs in this life. If a prince be misused in another country, he is contented, and thinks with himself, I have a country where I shall be more respected; and therefore he bears it the more willingly. So a Christian is a king, he is an heir; and being a stranger, he shall meet with dogs in this world; as, who do dogs bark at, but at strangers? Now being strangers we must look for dogged usage. It is no wonder that dogs bark at strangers; it is their kind. They consider it is the disposition of wicked men to do so; they do but their kind. Would a man have dogs not to bark? And would we have wicked men that have evil tongues not to scorn that they know not? To do otherwise is to forget their kind. A Christian knows they do but their kind. He pities them; and he doth not stop his journey and his course for it. He will not be scorned out of his religion by a company of profane spirits; he will not be laughed out of his course; he knows what he doth better than they. They are mad and fools; he knows it, and they shall know it themselves ere long. He knows that he is in a serious judicious course that he can approve, and they cannot theirs; therefore he will not be scorned out of his course.

Thus faith in Christ makes him that is a stranger here, content and patient. He whose soul hath embraced Christ is contented with anything; anything is sufficient to his soul that is filled with better things. Nothing will

content a covetous earthly man, a man of earth. Such men think themselves at home; they make a league with hell and death. The men of the world they think they shall live here alway; but a Christian that embraceth a better life with Christ in happiness to come, he knows he shall not be here long. He is here but as a stranger, and shall shortly be at home; and therefore he is contented with anything.

4. Likewise the knowledge of this that we are strangers and pilgrims, it will make a man not only content and patient, but thankful, for any kindness he finds in this world; that God sweetens his absence from heaven and his pilgrimage on earth somewhat; that God should love me so, not only to give me heaven, but to give me contentments on the earth to sweeten my way to heaven: what a mercy is this! He is thankful for any contentment; he is thankful to the world, to those that do anything for him, that afford him any courtesy here that may help him in his pilgrimage, and make it less troublesome and cumbersome to him.

All the saints in former time were wondrous thankful for that they had; for what can a traveller look for but discourtesies and hard usage? And if he find anything better he will be thankful: certainly it is more than I looked for, saith he. When a man is bent toward heaven, he cannot but look for hard usage from the world. We see when Christ did but look toward Jerusalem, the Samaritans had enough; they began to malign him. Why? 'His face was toward Jerusalem,' Luke ix. 53. So when base worldlings see that a man will to heaven, and leave their company and courses, they cannot digest this. A man with an ill conscience, when he sees another oppose that course that he resolved to stick to, he sees he confutes his course, he sees his face is toward heaven, and therefore labours to disgrace him. As the wench said to Peter, 'Thou speakest as one of Galilee; thy speech betrays thee,' Mat. xxvi. 73; so when a man is going toward heaven, every base person, the veriest rascal of all, hath pride enough to scorn religion. So we see they make not much of the world, nor the world of them; therefore they are contented and thankful if they find better; for what can a stranger look for but strange usage in a strange place?

And therefore we see in Scripture how thankful they were, even for refreshings, for meat and drink. Our Saviour Christ was known by 'breaking of bread.' He used to be thankful. 'In all things give thanks,' Eph. v. 20. They saw the favour and love of God in a crumb of bread, and in a drop of refreshing in any kind. Oh, here is a blessed God, that hath given us these

comforts in the way. The saints of God are wondrous thankful for the comforts of their pilgrimage, the comforts of this life.

And this should make us more thankful, because all men's pilgrimages are not alike; for do we not see the life of some more cumbersome? Some live in a great deal of want; some live in a great deal of opposition more than others do; others go in a smoother way to heaven. God sees his children's weakness; he sees they have not strength; and if in pity he keeps them that they shall not encounter with opposition, but lead them a better way than others, it is special matter of thankfulness to God and men too.

5. He that is a stranger, he is glad of any good company Oh, if he meet with a man of his own country, he is a man alone for him; so it is with a Christian that walks in the way to heaven with him, he is comforted much in it.

6. A stranger, he hath his prime intention home to his country, and what he doth in the way, it is in virtue of his prime intention, though he doth not, in every particular action that he doth, think of it. A traveller when he rides on the way he doth not think of home in every step. Ay, but he doth that that he doth in virtue of his prime intention when he first set out, and calls to remembrance oftentimes as he goes home; he thinks of his journeys. And by the way, I observe this note of some weak Christians that think they are not heavenly-minded, except they do nothing but think of heaven and heavenly things. That is but a weak and silly conceit. It should be our thought in the morning. Our thoughts should open with that. It should be the key to open the morning, the thought of this course what will become of us ere long in heaven. But then all that we do should be in virtue and strength of that prime intention to please God, and to go to heaven. Though we think not alway of the present business, yet it is good as much as may be to quicken our endeavour.

7. And hence it is that there is another property of a stranger that is going to a place, perhaps he may step out of the way, yet notwithstanding, by virtue of his first intention, he gathers himself homeward again. If he take other matters in hand, he gathers home still, though he go out of his way, in he comes; he considers, this is not my way. So a child of God, sometimes he diverts and turns aside, yet notwithstanding he considers, doth this way lead to Godward, to heavenward? Be these actions Christian actions? Are they the way to heaven? If he see they be not, though he have stepped awry, he comes in again, and is gathering homeward. Though he may perhaps forget himself

a little—a traveller—yet his bent is homewards. So a Christian man, though perhaps in some particular he may forget himself, yet he is always gathering home; his bent is home, and his course is godly. Take a Christian, perhaps he may step awry, but his course is godly, and he labours to recover himself; and if a traveller stay at any time by the way, he makes amends afterwards by making more haste. So doth a Christian, if we consider him with his affections loose to good things; yet he recovers himself again, and sets upon religious actions and courses with more violence of spirit, and recovers his former loss again.

8. A traveller and stranger he provides beforehand for all encumbrances. He knows though he meet not with troubles, yet he may, therefore he will be sure to go with weapons, and he will go with that that may sustain him by the way. Religion teacheth a man to gather out of the word of God comforts beforehand, and munition beforehand, to carry with him. Put the case he never use them; he may have cause to use them, and then if he have them not, what will become of him? He lies open to adversaries by the way. Therefore there is a spirit in a Christian, an instinct that stirs him up; he will be reading the word of God, and good books, and hearing the word. This I may have use of at such a time; this I will lay up for such an occasion. Put the case that such an occasion come not, he loseth nothing. He seasoneth his soul in the mean time, and prepares it for worse things if worse come.

Woe to those that have not laid up strength and comfort against evil times beforehand. If a man go to sea, and be not provided beforehand; if he take a journey, and be not provided beforehand, then when a storm comes, what a case is he in! It please-the God to teach us by these resemblances heavenly things. Therefore because they are fit means to convey holier things unto us, it is good to take this help that God affords us, considering that he shows us by these shadows better things. When we travel, and are going on in our journey towards heaven, it is good to consider higher things, it is a good meditation. Therefore to go on a little further.

9. A traveller and stranger is inquisitive of the way, whether he be in the way or out of the way. He asks not at random. That doth not content him, whether he go west, or north, or south, or east; it doth not content him to ask where lies my country, eastward? &c. No; but he will ask the particular towns, and particular turnings and windings, how he may avoid going out of his way, and which is the right way, and he will ask upon every occasion, because he knows if he go but a little out of his way it will be a long time ere

he shall recover it, and he will be ashamed to come back again; and the more he goes out of the way, the more trouble it is to come back again. So it is with a Christian, he doth not only desire to know in general, but he desires to have daily direction, what shall I do in such a case of conscience, and in such a case? How shall I overcome such a temptation if I meet with it? And so he is willing to have daily direction how to walk with God day by day, that he go not out of his way in anything.

For even as every step that a man takes is a part of his journey, so every action of a man's life it is a part of his journey to heaven, and therefore he is willing to have direction for every step, that he may walk step upon step upon good ground. Therefore he goes upon good grounds of a good conscience, in the duties of Christianity. He will have sound conviction what is good, and what is true in religion; what religion is true that he may venture his soul upon, and what use he may make of his particular calling; what he may do with a safe conscience, and what not; and what he may not do that he will not meddle with, and what is clear to his conscience that he will do. So every step he takes, though it be in his particular calling, it helps him forward. As St Paul saith, in the Epistle to the Colossians, of servants, that they serve God in serving their master, so a poor servant in his drudgery may serve God. So in our ordinary professions we are in the way to heaven, if they be sanctified by prayer beforehand, and do it in conscience and obedience to God, that hath set us in this way.

There are two callings, our general and particular calling, and we show religion, that is our general calling, in our particular calling, as we are placed in this or that calling; and what we do in either of these callings is the way to heaven. Now the care of a Christian is, that he be well advised what to do, and on what ground.

10. And even as a traveller considers of things by the way as they make to his end, to further his journey or hinder his journey, he looks to heaven as his country that he hopes for, and therefore he doth not tangle himself with any more than may help him home. If they hinder him once, away they go; if they may help him, he takes them. A Christian in his travel in the way to heaven considers of things that may fall out by the way, as they may help and further him to heaven. If I find that things, though they be indifferent in themselves, if they trouble me in my way to heaven (it may be they are not so to another, but they are to me), though another can do it, yet I must consider whether I can do it, and find myself enlarged to heaven as at other times. If

not, away with it. It is not indifferent to me, because it hinders my journey to heaven. A wise traveller will venture upon things and courses as they serve or hinder the main, though they be things perhaps that he cannot over-well spare, yet if they trouble him in his journey, off they go, that he may be more expedite and right in his way.

I wonder at the boldness of many that profess themselves religious, and yet dare venture upon anything. Undoubtedly, if they did search their own hearts, they could not but say that such courses do dead and dull them, and make them forget religion; that such company is not safe to keep. I find myself the worse by it, why should I venture upon anything that may stop and hinder, or cool and dead me in my way to heaven?

If a man be wise, he will consider of things as they help or hinder him to that.

As for sins whereof we are convicted, it is the apostle's counsel, Heb. xii. 1—he puts it out of all question—'We must cast off all that burden, that presseth down,' &c. A traveller will not have a burden upon him. The sin that hangs so fast on we must labour to mortify, to kill our lusts and corruptions more and more, and never leave till we have cast them off. These things are undeniable. I spake before of things in themselves indifferent, and to other men indifferent, if they have a larger measure of wisdom; but for corruptions and sins, they fight against the soul, they fasten us to the world, therefore above all things we must cast off them; as St Peter saith excellently, in 1 Peter ii. 11, 'I beseech you, brethren, as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which fight against your souls insinuating that pilgrims and strangers should altogether abstain from lusts, from the cherishing of carnal lusts, for these fight against the soul, they fight against the comforts of the soul, against the graces of the soul, and against the eternal well-being of the soul. The more a man cherisheth base lusts, the more it damps his comfort and grace, and weakens his assurance of life everlasting. They fight against all good in the soul; therefore let us abstain 'from fleshly lusts, that fight against the soul.' That is clear; all confess that. But the other that I spake of before, carefulness of things indifferent, if we find them not so to us, till we get more mastery of ourselves, we must even be careful of our liberties, and not give ourselves those liberties that others do, if we find they hinder us in particular. Yet with a secret concealing of it, not to entangle the consciences of other men, who perhaps may use those things with less hindrance than we do: a wise Christian will be wary in that kind. If he find the things of the

world to hinder him, he will not have his heart eaten up with the world, nor eaten out with lawful things. Being therefore to prepare for a better life, and to do God's business, he will only take the things of this life as they may make for a better life, and be a furtherance of him to his home. He winds home by all means, he useth all advantages to come nearer to God, and whatsoever hinders him he labours to avoid.

11. Again, he that accounts himself a stranger here, he doth not value himself by outward things. Faith teacheth a man, when he is an heir of heaven, not to value himself by earthly things. He thinks himself a stranger in his own house, as David did, though he were a king, as I said. Every Christian is a stranger at home. He values not himself by his honours, nor dignity, nor by the things that he hath here; nor he doth not disvalue himself by poverty or disgrace. He knows he is a stranger; he is going home; therefore he values himself by that he hath at home. Christians are kings and heirs; they esteem not or disesteem of themselves by what they have here below; they account them as things in the way, that God gives them, if they be good, to sweeten their pilgrimage; if they be ill, to sharpen their journey. It is necessary that God should give them these things, good things to sweeten their journey; and if they loiter in their way to heaven, then that they should have crosses to drive them homeward.

In all confusions in the world, faith teacheth a man to stand as a man upon a rock immoveable, because he is a stranger. If anything fall out in the city or place where a stranger is, he carries his own jewels and things about him, and so goes away, his goods are not of that place; so in all confusions of the world, a Christian hath good things of another world. The good things he carries with him are not subject to losses or crosses, they are not subject to the misusing of the world. When all things shall be on fire, a Christian hath his treasure laid up in heaven, in a place where no earthly creature hath power of it. It is not subject to any ill, and that makes him in all estates contented and patient. Let heaven and earth go together. A Christian when he hath embraced better things, a Christian thinks himself a stranger that is going home; therefore in all his life he carries himself as a stranger. To go on a little further.

12. A traveller in his way must of necessity have refreshings by the way, or else he will fail; therefore sometimes he sings, and sometimes useth other refreshings. Now, what saith David? 'Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage,' Ps. cxix. 54; that is, when I want other comforts,

they are my song, my joy, and delight. A traveller must needs have comforts that may revive him in his fainting; he must have some pleasant walks for meditation. Let us therefore, when we grow weary, refresh ourselves in walking, in holy meditation. Take a turn there, to think of the vanity of all earthly things, and how soon they come to an end; and of the excellency and eternity of our glorious condition and estate when we come home, and then think of the helps and comforts by the way, and such like. The art of divine meditation is an art for this end, that since we are all travellers, that we are from home, and that we are going home, we may walk in wisdom. Let us learn that art, to feed and strengthen our souls with such meditations as may clear them by the way, to set some time apart when we grow dull and indisposed in religion. Then let us think how to cherish and refresh our souls with those excellencies, that are indeed above our comprehension; our hearts cannot conceive of it. It is set out in the word of God to our conceit, but as it is we cannot conceive here what is reserved for us when we shall come home. Therefore let us do as travellers, often think of home, and what is at home for us; and that will make us when we are in the way, and any comfort would draw us out of our way, to think, Oh, these are good comforts, but this is not my home. I have better at home than this, and this will stay me from home. Therefore the cross is necessary for travellers, that they may know they are not at home, that they may embitter his comforts. This consideration, that he is not at home, and that this is not his country, as it will keep a Christian from temptations, so it will draw him on to constancy in his love and in going on; for a traveller sits not down to stay there. He thinks, Here I am, and home I must go, and I shall not come home by sitting here.

So the oft thinking of home, it will both sweeten our troubles, and likewise the comforts that we meet with in this world. It will make us that we shall not be ensnared with them; because, though they be comfortable things, yet, alas! what are these? These indeed are fit to make a man forget home, to forget heaven, as a man that sees goodly things, goodly houses. These things, saith he, are they that make a man unwilling to go out of the world. But he that is assured of a country, and knows that he hath a better home than all these earthly things, that are shadows and vanity, he thinks these are very goodly things; but what are these to that that is reserved? And if I sit down by these, if a traveller sit down by delights, and gaze upon things by the way, when shall he come home? Let us think oft of home; there be many uses to think and meditate of that blessed day; this among the rest, that it draws us on forward and forward still, that we shall not sit quiet, but go on still, and not rest till we come home.

And the nearer we are home, the more busy and the more cheerful we should be; as a traveller, when he comes near home he is more cheerful, when he hath home in his eye; when he sees the smoke of his country, he rejoiceth. As these patriarchs, they saw the promises afar off. As men when they see the tops of steeples and houses, they think. Now we have them continually in our eye, we see something of home; and the nearer they come the more they see, and the nearer they come still the more they see. So the longer a Christian lives, the nearer and nearer he comes home. If he understand himself, and have any assurance in any degree, it makes him more joyful towards his end.

Thus it was with God's people. When they were nearer their end, then they sung sweetly the swan's song, and then they were enlarged in their spirits; as Jacob, when he was dying we see what a will he made, what legacies to his children. And Joseph, when he was dying, and Moses the man of God; the song of Moses, and David, the 'sweet singer of Israel.' The last words of David, what sweet words they were! And St Paul, when he was to go out of the world, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,' &c., 2 Tim. iv. 7. And our blessed Saviour, toward his end, we see how heavenly he was in his prayer. And good Simeon, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace,' &c., Luke ii. 29. When he had grasped Christ once, he was loath to live any longer. So it should be with Christians as it is with travellers: the nearer they are home, the more and more comfortable they should be still.

It is a shame for old men to fear when they come near their end, when they are near the haven, then to fear. It is as if a man in a storm should fear the haven; or a man that travels and sees a city, to be afraid of his own house; whereas he should rejoice and think he is nearer his happiness than other men, as Saint Paul tells the Romans, 'Your salvation is nearer now than when you first believed,' xiii. 11. So we should think our salvation and happiness in heaven is nearer now than when we first believed; and therefore the less time we have to travel here with encumbrances in the way to heaven, the more joyful we should be. The nearer we are to death, the nearer to our preferment, the nearer to our country and our home. These are the advised thoughts of a Christian; and when other thoughts come into a man, when he is stricken in years, surely they are not in him as a Christian, but as he is weak and wants faith and assurance of salvation. Oh let us therefore labour to get assurance of another, a better country; for what made these holy men confess themselves strangers and pilgrims here? 'They saw the promises afar off, and

were persuaded of them and embraced them;’ and in that measure they were assured of a better condition, ‘they carried themselves as strangers and pilgrims here.’

To wind up all in a word, you see here their disposition. I beseech you, make this text your pattern to be moulded into. You see how these blessed men long ago lived in faith when their light was less than ours is; and they died in faith, and will welcome us when we shall come to heaven. We shall go to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs and holy men. It will be a blessed time when all the blessed men that have gone before shall welcome us to heaven. If we look to be happy as they are, we must live as they did, and die as they did. Though we cannot so strongly as they did see that with the eye of faith that no eye else can see, yet let us desire God to persuade us of these truths more strongly than the devil of our own lusts shall persuade us to the contrary; let us desire God to set on his truths so strongly that all other things may not hinder us, that we may embrace them with our best affections of love, of desire, of contentment; that we may witness all this by our demeanor to earthly things; by our base esteem of them, and carry ourselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth. If we do thus live in faith and die in faith, we shall live with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven eternally.

## The Ruin of Mystical Jericho

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days.*—Heb. XI. 30.

This verse suits somewhat to the occasion: therefore I have made choice of it at this time. This chapter contains the triumph of faith in the hearts and souls of those in whom this blessed grace is planted; so that the excellency and office of all graces are attributed to it. There is a stirring up of all other graces whatsoever in faith. All the worthies that are spoken of before, they did that they did, and ‘obtained a good report by faith.’ The Spirit of God goes on here, and shows a glorious effect of this blessed grace, in the falling down of the walls of Jericho. This short verse is taken out of the story of the conquest of Jericho, mentioned in Josh, vi., in the latter end of the chapter, where you have the whole story set down at large. I need not rehearse it; and withal you have there a curse set down, that whosoever should go about again to build the walls of Jericho, he should lay the foundation in his first-born, and in his youngest son he should set up the gates. He that would raise up such a cursed building again, he should do it with the overthrow of his own building, of his own family; as the Scripture calls a man’s house a building. He should lay the foundation in his eldest son, and build the gates at the death of his youngest son.

And a little to acquaint you with the fulness of the word, before I come to the story, you have an audacious cursed attempt to build the walls of Jericho again, in 1 Kings xvi. toward the latter end, ver. 34, in a wicked king’s time, in Ahab’s time. There was one so adventurous, one Hiel, that he would build Jericho. He laid the foundation in Abram, his first-born, and set up the gates in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua the son of Nun. You see whence this story is fetched. ‘By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days.’ They were compassed about seven days, and the ark in the midst; and the seventh day they went seven times about, and then the walls fell down, as you have it in the story. But to come to the words; and to hasten to that I specially mean to touch at this time.

First of all, observe here, that Jericho had mighty walls, as you see in the story. It had walls, and trusted in these walls; or else they would have come out and have made conditions of peace with Israel. But as they had walls, so

they were confident in them; as you see the spies, in Num. xiii. 28, they tell what walled cities they had, and that terrified them.

And next you see here, that God overthrows their walls; and by what means? By poor and base means, by trumpets of rams' horns. They had silver trumpets, but they used not them, but meaner instruments, rams' horns. Those were the means; and the time that they used them, seven days together; and then that by faith, using these means, they overthrew the walls of Jericho, they fell down. From hence, by analogy and proportion, we may see, First of all, that carnal men they build up walls, and put their trust in them.

The second is, that God confounds these courses.

The third is, that God doth it by weak and silly means, believed by faith.

The last point is, that faith in the use of these means overcomes all.

'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days.' And then we shall come to other things that concern us, and apply it to the time.

Doct. 1. Natural men, since the fall, they must have somewhat to trust to.

Since man lost his first prop and confidence, and communion with God, he turns to the creature. There is always some confidence in some creature; and men leave God in what measure they trust that. When Cain was banished his father's house, then he falls to building of cities; he must have some contentment. And those that were escaped the flood, within a hundred years after the flood, they must build a tower of Babel, that should reach to heaven, to get themselves a name, wanting better courses. Every one will have some castle and wall of Jericho to trust to. Riches are the rich man's stronghold, as Solomon saith, Prov. xi. 16. Ahithophel trusted to a shrewd head and policy, that proved his ruin afterwards. The Jews had outward sanctity to trust to, opposing it to the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness of faith, Rom. x. 6. They would set a-foot a dead righteousness that could not stand; and therefore they were shut from the righteousness of God in Christ. Man will have a holiness, a wisdom, a strength, and power of himself, in the things below here, as I might show at large, both in examples and otherwise. Naturally we find it in ourselves. If we be sick, we trust to the

physician and other means. If we be in danger, we flee to the arm of flesh, to some mighty man; we trust in some great friend, if we have any. If we be in danger of invasion, or such like, we trust our walls and defences; and till strong temptations come, we trust in our own strength, till Satan pick so many holes in it, that we cannot stay there, and that conscience upbraids us. Always a man hath somewhat to trust to, till he be brought to desperate conditions; and rather than he will have nothing to trust to, he will trust to the broken reed of Egypt; he will trust to that that will deceive him and hurt him, as the reed of Egypt did the Jews; rather than they would trust God, and the word brought by the prophets, they would trust Asshur, and Egypt, 2 Kings xviii. 21.

Now the Spirit of God in the Scriptures takes notice of this proneness to false confidence. 'Trust not in uncertain riches. If riches increase, set not your hearts on them,' 1 Timothy vi. 17. And man, when he sets his heart upon false confidence, the issues are more dangerous; he will come against God; he doth not only set up these holds that he hath in rebellion against God, but he proclaims, as it were, defiance to God, and his word, and his ordinances, till afterwards God destroy all his false confidence, and bring him to shame.

In 2 Cor. x. 4 there is a notable place to show what holds there are in the heart of man, that oppose against God and his truth in his word; holds that Satan keeps in man, and man, joining with Satan the enemy, holds against God and his truth: 'The weapons of our warfare,' saith he, 'are not carnal, but mighty through God to cast down strongholds.' The holds are within us, and we are so far from preparing ourselves to grace, and to entertain grace when it is offered, that naturally we set up holds against God and grace. There must be strong power to overturn all, to lead them into captivity to the obedience of Christ: 'To cast down the imaginations, and every high thing, every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring in captivity every thought,' 2 Cor. x. 5. So there are three mighty things in every natural man.

(1.) This false reasoning and sophistry. There is no man will go to hell without reason. Take the debauchedest wretch that lives, he is mad with some reason, and he will be damned with some reason. 'God is merciful,' 'Christ is come,' and 'others are as bad as I,' and 'I hope in time to repent;' this vile reasoning must be turned out of a man before he can be saved.

(2.) Then there are -proud thoughts. What, shall I yield to such a one as he? I am better than he; I understand these things as well as he. As that proud cardinal in Germany said, 'I confess these things that Luther finds fault with are naught; but shall I yield to a base monk?' So men think, shall I yield to a minister? The proud rebellious heart of man is lift up in proud thoughts against God.

(8.) And then there be forecasts. If I do thus, this danger will come of it; I shall provoke such an enemy; I shall lose such a friend; I shall endanger myself. Now, when the truth of God comes, down goes all these sophistries and high thoughts, and all these forecasts; they all he flat when the Spirit of God comes in the power of the word. But naturally every man hath these; he builds up some castle against God; he builds up the walls of Jericho, and trusts in them too. 'Thy wisdom hath caused thee to rebel,' saith God to the king of Babylon, Isa. xlvii. 10. 'Let not the wise man trust in his wisdom,' Jer. ix. 28, insinuating that wise men are subject to trust in their wisdom, and the rich man in his riches, and the strong man in his strength; therefore God commands that they should not do so. 'Thy wisdom hath made thee to rebel.'

Use. Let us take notice of this, and make this use of trial of it, that if, by the power of God's Spirit, we can use all outward means and not trust in them; that we can trust in God, and not to our strength, then we have somewhat in us above nature; for naturally every man, before he be in communion and covenant with God, he hath some earthly false support or other to trust on; either within him, some policy and wisdom, or without him, some friends or riches, some bulwark or other; and this sets him against God and against the means of salvation, till God come in effectual calling and overturn all. But this doth but make way to other things, therefore I only touch it.

The second thing is this, that, Obs. 2. God first or last overturns all vain confidence in the creature.

The walls of Jericho, down they must; and whatsoever exalts itself against God, either it shall end in conversion or confusion, because the time must come that God must have all the glory. 'Was there ever any man fierce against God, and prospered?' Job ix. 4. 'The rage of man turns to the glory of God,' saith the psalmist, Ps. lxxvi. 10. 'There is neither wisdom nor policy, counsel nor strength, or any earthly thing against the Lord,' as the wise man saith, Prov. xxi. 30. 'God will confound all; he scattered the proud in the

imagination of their own hearts,' as the blessed virgin saith, Luke i. 51. And when they had built Babel, to get them a name, they found confusion. There is a notable place in Isa. 1. 11: 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk,' saith God, 'in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This ye shall have at my hand; ye shall be brought down in sorrow.' Men that will walk in the light of their own fire, that will have a wisdom of their own, distinct, nay, contrary oftentimes to God's;— Well! go on, walk in the light of your own fire that ye have kindled; but take this withal with you, 'You shall have this at my hands,' saith God, 'ye shall be brought down in sorrow.' What became of Haman's plots? What became of Ahithophel's policy? They all turned upon their own heads. Although men build up castles to secure themselves in their earthly defences and munition, yet God overturns all.

Use. Therefore let us make that use that Jeremiah doth, Jer. ix. 23:

'Therefore let not the wise man trust in his wisdom, or the strong man in his strength, or the rich man in his riches.' Let a man joy in none of these; but if he will joy, let him joy in this, that he knows the Lord, that he is in covenant with God. That for the second, briefly.

The third is this, that, Obs. 3. God doth this by base and weak means.

He confounds great and mighty enterprises and mighty persons, and useth but base and despised means; as here, the walls of Jericho fell down with the noise of rams' horns. This I might carry along through all the stories in the Scripture, from the creation to this present time, to show how God doth great things by despised means; sometimes by no means at all, sometimes clean contrary to all means. When our Saviour Christ gave sight to the blind, he put clay upon his eyes, that, one would think, were fitter to put them out. We see in the story of the Israelites what an ox-goad did, and what Samson did with the jaw-bone of an ass. We see by what a trick the Midianites were put to flight by Gideon. In all the stories we see, when God would do great matters, he doth it by base means. When he would confound the pride of Pharaoh, he will do it by frogs and lice, and such base creatures, that were fittest in God's wisdom to overthrow the pride of that wretched king. God, as he overturns the pride of men, so for the most part he doth it by weak and despised means.

Reason. And the reason is clear, that he may have all the glory. Sometimes the means he useth have no influence at all to effect the thing,

but are only joined with the thing; as here, what influence could poor trumpets of rams' horns have to cast down walls? They could have none; but only it was a thing joined before the walls fell down; they were things that must be used to try their obedience; and that they might know that it was not by chance that they fell down, but by God's power; and for other reasons. But if there be any influence from the cause to the effect, it is supposed it cannot produce the effect of itself, therefore, I say, God doth this that he may have all the glory; for that is his end, and it ought to be our end. We see here, though they had silver trumpets, yet they must by God's appointment use these base means, trumpets of rams' horns.

Now, they were to use them seven days together, and therefore on a Sabbath day; but it was no breach of the day, because God can dispense with his own law. In case of charity, good works may be done on the Sabbath, and in case of duty likewise, as the priests kill the sacrifice on the Sabbath. So here was sufficient warrant for them; God gave them a command; God, that made the law, can dispense with his own law in things that touch not upon his nature, as his truth and purity, &c., doth. In things that touch his nature, he should deny himself if he should dispense. God cannot he, because truth is natural to him. God cannot do anything that is unfit for his nature; but for things that are out of him, he is Lord of days; he is Lord of goods and life; he hath a right to dispense here, as we see in the taking away the Egyptian's jewels and the like; they were outward things. But for those things that are intrinsical in God, he cannot command that which is contrary to his truth and nature. Other things belong to his sovereignty. But that by the way.

They were to compass the walls seven days. If they had made an end before the seventh day, the walls had never fallen down. Howsoever, there was no power in their going about to effect that, yet God would not work the effect till he was waited on in all the seven days; the means appointed by God must be used, and so long as God will have them used, there must be a depending and waiting upon God all the time.

Quest. To give a little further light to that I touched before, you will ask why God useth means and doth not work immediately? why he did not cast down these walls by his own will and pleasure?

Ans. Besides that I said before, God useth second causes, not for defect of power, but for demonstration of his goodness; and for the trial of our obedience, and the like. Therefore, being Lord of hosts, he hath multiplicity of ranks of creatures which he useth to effect those things that he could do

himself if it pleased him. Therefore let such questions cease; it pleased God so to do.

The last point is this—

Obs. 4. It was by faith in the use of means that the walls of Jericho fell down.

If they had not depended upon God in their going about seven days, the walls had stood still. It was by faith they did it; and it was a great faith that, using such a ridiculous stratagem as this, to go about the walls with rams' horns, they should think the walls would fall. It might shake their faith, and likewise expose them to the scorn of those of Jericho within, therefore it was a great faith in them. Not that all had faith, for certainly divers of them were unbelieving persons; but Joshua their captain, and some others of them, had faith, and all of them had hope of the best. It was faith that believed this in this unlikelihood of second causes, for there is the strength of faith; when second causes are weak, then faith is strong.

Abraham's faith was the stronger by reason there was more indisposition in the second causes, in Sarah's womb to conceive a child; for her womb was dead; in the course of nature she could not conceive. Therefore it is said by Saint Paul, Rom. iv. 20, 'He being strong in faith, gave glory to God;' strong faith gives glory to God. So here was a strong faith, because the means were weak, or none at all; for these means had nothing in themselves to work such a glorious effect as this, that the falling of the walls should follow. It was but a means adjoined. That it should be done by such a poor thing as this, it was the strength of faith. But was it the strength of faith in itself? Could faith do this?

Oh no; but that which that faith lays hold on doth, that faith is said to do. God honours the grace of faith by terming that to be done by it that he doth himself; for it was the power of God, the goodness of God to them, and the justice of God against the sins of these people, that overturned the walls of Jericho. Faith, it was but an empty hand to lay hold upon this power. It was the grace, whereby they went out of themselves, and denied themselves, and gave glory to God, in accomplishing the truth of his word, and his wisdom, and power, and justice. So God did it. But it is said to be done by faith, because, as I said, God honours faith thus much. What strength God and Christ hath, when faith lays hold on them, faith hath that strength, because it builds upon them. Faith sets a man upon God and

Christ, and upon the truth of God. Hereupon it comes to be so victorious and conquering a grace as it is, because it carries us to that that doth all. By faith they did this.

But here were other graces likewise that sprang from faith, that helped them also. There was a great deal of patience to go about after that silly fashion with rams' horns seven days together. Here was patience, and perseverance, and hope. But, as I said before, because faith doth enliven all other graces, it gives life to all, and stirs up all, therefore that is named. In the whole chapter the exercise of other graces is attributed to faith, because they draw strength from that to quicken them all, and to stir them all to their several offices. Strengthen faith, and strengthen all other graces whatsoever. Thus you see we have briefly gone over these four main things.

Now, let us by way of proportion raise them higher, and make use of them to other things. To give a little touch. The walls of Jericho represent to us many things.

1. The kingdom of Satan in general, the power of the devil in himself and in his instruments, who hinders what he can, our coming out of Egypt to Canaan. He labours to come between us and heaven; to hinder us all he can by all means. He hath walls of many kinds; the strength of tyrants, the subtilty of heretics. What a world of ado was there to bring Israel out of Egypt! God was put to it, as it were, to work so many miracles to bring that poor despised people out of Egypt, to bring them through the Red Sea. When they were in the wilderness, what ado was there to bring them thence! what opposition! And then when they came to Jordan, what miracles were wrought! The division of the waters by the ark coming through; and then the first, the frontier town, that was, as it were, the key to let in all and to stop all, Jericho, the first town for the entrance into Canaan. There was opposition made when they would have entered into Canaan. It is no easy thing to come out of Egypt and to enter into Canaan. It is a mighty work to bring a poor Christian out of the kingdom of Satan, to bring him out of spiritual Egypt through the wilderness of this life; to bring him through Jordan, those waves of death; to put him into heaven, to bring him at length to his own country, to Canaan; because there is spiritual wickedness stands in the way, both in regard of Satan himself, and in regard of the instruments he useth.

But Christ came 'to destroy the works of the devil,' as it is said 1 John iii. 8; and he himself overcame Satan and triumphed over him, as it is Col. ii. 15. He led him in triumph. He triumphed over Satan himself, and he will

triumph over Satan in all his members. As he overcame Satan in himself, so he will overcome in us all: 'For stronger is he that is in us than he that is in the world,' 1 John iv. 4. The Spirit of God, as he is in us, is stronger than Satan. Not only Christ our glorious captain overcame him and is now in heaven, but the Spirit of God in us weak creatures, with faith laying hold upon the word of God, is stronger than he that is in the world; he is stronger than the devil and all that are against us.

2. But besides Satan, there is in us much opposition that must be subdued before we come to Canaan. As we saw before in 2 Cor. x. 5, those reasonings and sophistries, proud high thoughts, all must be brought down, because Satan doth join with these; and if it were not for enemies within us, Satan could not prevail over us. As it was Delilah that betrayed Samson, or else the Philistines could not have hurt him, so it is with our own corruptions. There be these walls within us. These betray us to Satan. He could not hurt us but that we betray ourselves.

Now, by little and little all these walls shall fall; not all at once, as the walls of Jericho did, but they shall moulder in pieces by little and little. God by degrees will perfect the work of mortification and sanctification till he make us like his Son Christ, like our husband and head, that we may be fit for so glorious a head.

3. But to come to the particular occasion. Besides other enemies that are between us and heaven, Satan is powerful, and effectual, and strong in the kingdom, of antichrist. And by all means, that church which is opposite to Christ hath studied to build up walls, to build up Jericho, and to stop the church of Christ, to hinder it what they could. Now, what walls have they built up? As Pharaoh said, 'Let us deal wisely,' Exod. i. 10. How wittily have they gone to work to overthrow the church of God in all times, and to set up themselves and their own kingdom. It were a large discourse; it would take up the whole time to show their policy and the plots they have had. To give an instance in a few.

How strongly have they built up walls in their own conceit when they had got the whole world almost into subjection to them! Before Luther's time, all the world followed them. They had used the matter so, that kings themselves had betrayed their very crowns to them, they had betrayed their kingdoms, they were rather vassals to them than kings. They had gotten the temporal sword into their hands as well as the spiritual. And they had raised up to themselves a bloody inquisition to suppress all light of truth as soon as

ever it sparkled out. All beams of truth were stopped with their bloody inquisition. They thought they had fenced themselves safe enough. Then again, they had disabled all the kings and princes of Christendom. And then because the pope would engage princes to him to strengthen the walls higher, and to make them stronger, the young sons of princes, he would make them cardinals. And then he would arrogate to himself a power absolute to dispense in case of marriage, and oaths, and such like. And besides, what plots have they had for the counterfeiting of authors, for falsifying of authors, purging out true authors, that they might have none give witness against them! What tricks have they to keep people in ignorance, because it is a kingdom of darkness! The Bible they must have, God hath preserved that; but they would have it in an unknown tongue. And what other devices to abuse the people withal. How have they fenced themselves, by applying themselves to humour all sorts of people! For even as the devil enlargeth his kingdom by applying himself to the cursed sinful disposition of men, so doth the pope here upon earth apply himself to the sinful disposition of all sorts of men. There are no kind of men but they have a bait in popery. For loose libertines, there are stews. For others that are of a more reserved and severe disposition, there are monasteries. For superstitious persons, there they have a world of ridiculous ceremonies, devised to themselves of their own brain, and never used in the primitive church. For those that are covetous, they have the riches of the world in their own hands, they have had at least before more than they now have. For proud, ambitious persons, they have honours of all sorts. For the people, they have many carnal liberties for them. And for all the senses of the body, they have something to delight them, to draw people from the power of religion to carnal outward worship. So they have studied and whetted their wits all the ways that might be, to apply themselves to the dispositions of all sorts of men whatsoever, that so they might strengthen the walls of Jericho. I might be large; I give you but a taste.

Well, but what hath God done? God hath infatuate and overthrown their walls, and by weak means. Luther, a poor monk, with a trumpet of rams' horns, with his preaching and with his writing, you see how he shook the walls of Rome, how much they have lost within the last hundred years. The last age, the last century of years, they have lost a great part of this western part of the world, that they had in slavery before; and how? By weak means, as you heard, by the preaching of the gospel, by learning, and knowledge. It is no wonder that the devil hates knowledge and learning. As Luther saith well, 'He hates the quills of geese, because they are instruments to write against them'. He hath a kingdom of darkness, and hell, and the

pope is a king of darkness. Now when the light of knowledge, the light of the word of God, the ordinance of God, when preaching came, these poor trumpets did shake the Church of Rome. As we see in England, the walls of Jericho fell down. By what means? By a child, in a manner, King Edward the Sixth, and after by a woman; and if the word of God had gone on in like proportion in other places, popery had been lower than it is.

So we see then, that as high as they built, and as much as they fortified, though they be not wholly cast down, yet they are shaken, and that by weak means. Now the way to effect this, that these walls may fall down more and more, it must be by the spiritual means that God win use. We must use the means that God hath appointed us, poor contemptible means, trumpets of rams' horns, the preaching of the word, the discovery of the truth; and by this means we shall more and more gain upon them. And undoubtedly, let them but give free liberty to the preaching of the word in other countries, and we shall see them shortly as heretical, as they term it, even as London and England is. Such a power there is in God's ordinance, the Spirit of God accompanying it, that it carries all before it, it lays all flat, it beats all strongholds down before it.

What shall we do then?

By faith use the means that God hath appointed. The weapons appointed and sanctified by God, they are strong through God to beat down all strongholds. And take heed especially that we do not build up the walls of Jericho again, nor suffer them to build them. You know Joshua pronounceth a curse upon all that should build the walls of Jericho. He should lay the first stone in the death of his eldest son, and the last at the death of his younger; and so, as we have it in the story of Hiel, it was made good. I beseech you, therefore, let every one of us in our place labour to ruin these walls of Jericho, and take heed how we build them again, or suffer any to build them again.

Quest. What way have we to prevent their building, that the walls of Jericho be not built again? They go about it what they can. We see what course they take. They have all the art of hell to help them, lies and equivocations. How many kings and great ones have they at this day to support and help them, to keep them from falling! They do all that they can to keep life now. How shall we prevent this, that they build not up the walls of this spiritual Jericho again?

Ans. 1. First of all, every one labour to do what they can in their callings. Magistrates to execute the laws of the kingdom, which, as those say that are well acquainted with them, are very beneficial to the church of God. Therefore the magistrates in their place should do what appertains to them.

2. And so for ministers. The spiritual means whereby such heresies must be confounded, it is by the breath of the mouth of Christ; as it is 2 Thes. ii. 8, 'He shall consume him with the breath of his mouth.' For things are dissolved contrary to that way that they were raised at the first, and contrary to that way they were maintained. Popery, as it was raised, so it is maintained, by darkness, and blindness, and ignorance of the word of God and of divine truth. The way to hinder it, therefore, from being built again, is to lay open divine truths, and to plant the ministry. Every one must labour for this, to be faithful in their place and standing. St Paul saith, 2 Tim. iii. 9, 'They shall prevail no longer, because their madness shall be manifest.' How doth that follow? The very manifestation of error hinders the prevailing of it. That is the way to hinder popery from prevailing, to manifest it by preaching, and writing, and such good means. For the demonstration of errors to be so is a refuting of them; for who would willingly be deceived? Therefore the laying open of the madness of popery, and the folly of their devices, it hinders their prevailing. No man willingly would have his soul led into error. Therefore let us lay their errors open in the ministry, and the grounds of them; the danger of popery, how pernicious it is. When this is discovered in the ministry, men, as they love their own souls, will take heed. That is the way therefore to keep the walls of Jericho from being built, to set an able ministry everywhere, and to countenance them, and those that are God's captains to fight his battles against them.

It is a world of hurt that comes to the church by impropriations, especially in the north parts, as we hear too much by reports. In great and mighty parishes to set up poor and weak men, and others wholly to receive the revenues; and that is the reason of the swarm of dangerous papists in those parts. Oh, that these things had been looked to in time! The walls of Jericho had not been built again in those parts so much as they are. This is one main way, the planting of an able ministry; for this painted harlot, she cannot endure the breath of the ministry. It discovers all her painting; it lays her naked and open; she knows it well enough.

3. Then again, take heed of the spreading of infections. Men should be careful this way. They build up their religion thus, that else would fall down

more and more. We are so confident in our cause, that we suffer men to read any popish treatises. They on the other side watch all things, so that there cannot a spark of our light break into them, what by their Inquisition, and other courses that they take. Confidence in our cause hath made us careless and secure in this kind. Therefore care this way is one means to help it.

4. And then encouragement of good learning. Popery fell with the beginning of good learning. Religion and good learning came in together. If I were in some place I should speak more of this; for, as I said before, it is a dark religion, not only in regard of the religion itself, but it grows and thrives with ignorance and barbarism, and not understanding of arts and tongues. They have helped very much towards the overthrow of these walls of Jericho. 'Every one should contend for the faith once given, as St Jude admonisheth, ver. 3. Every one, the poorest man, may contend with his prayers. He that saith, 'Thy kingdom come,' what doth he pray for? If he pray in faith, he desires that God would pull down all opposite kingdoms to the kingdom of his Son Christ; that the kingdom of Christ may come, more and more in the hearts of his people; that he may reign everywhere more freely and largely than he doth. Every one may help forward the kingdom of Christ; he may help forward Jerusalem, and pull down Jericho; every one that hath a fervent devotion of prayer.

5. And by a holy life; for when men are vicious and carnal, they occasion God,—for not loving and embracing the truth,—to give them up to popish errors and such like. Many ways there be to stop the building up of Jericho.

6. But this is one especial, which this day occasions; that is, thankfulness to God, a thankful remembrance, how God hath fought for us; how God hath by little and little ruined the walls of this Jericho, and hath helped us to build the walls of our Jerusalem. A thankful remembrance is a notable means to hinder the growth of popery; for when we remember their attempts, how God hath cursed and crossed them, it will make us love our religion that God hath witnessed to by so many deliverances, and it will make us hate theirs the more. Therefore it was a worthy work of that reverend bishop, that set out in a treatise all the deliverances that have been from popish conspiracies, from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's time to this present. It was a worthy work, beseeeming that grave and reverend person. Prayer gets blessings, but thankfulness keeps them. So thankfulness to God for that which is past, for so many deliverances, is a means to preserve God's

love and care of us still; that he will be our buckler, and castle, and hold, and all defence; thankfulness will do this.

We are over-prone to look upon civil grievances,—which are to be regarded and helped in season,—but naturally our nature is subject to complain more than to be thankful. We are so sensible of ill as to pray for remedy; but then let us always be thankful to God for the good we have had these years together, and the good that still, blessed be God, we enjoy. What cause have we to be thankful, that we are as the ‘three young men’ in the furnace! All Europe hath been in combustion, and we have been untouched and safe in the midst of the furnace under a quiet government.

What cause have we to bless God, for continuing the liberties of the gospel, whereby the soul is built up in saving knowledge, and ignorance banished! It was a fault in Rehoboam’s time, in the beginning of his reign, it was a fault in these men, they could complain of the government of Solomon; and certainly there were many grievances in Solomon’s: he was a great builder, and it was not without some cause they complained. Yet notwithstanding Solomon’s time was a blessed time, and they had great cause to bless God for the government of Solomon. Now it is very likely in the story that they forgot it, and only lighted upon some grievance. I beseech you, let us in these times stir up our hearts to be thankful; as upon other occasions, so upon occasion of this day we are to bless God for this glorious deliverance, which we have spoken of so oft, again and again; and therefore we need not be much in the particular setting out the facinorous and prodigious fact, that gives the day occasion to be remembered, as it hath oft done before. Let that remembrance, I say, Stir us up to thankfulness, to show our thankfulness, and love to that truth that God hath defended. ‘Hath God been a wilderness to us?’ Jer. ii. 31, as the prophet complains. Hath religion done us any harm? Why should we grow cold and lukewarm? Why should we decay in our first-love? Why should we be so unfruitful, when God hath given us so many encouragements to be thankful and fruitful, as he hath done? I beseech you, let us consider with ourselves, if we be not more thankful upon these occasions for these deliverances, and work our hearts to love religion, and to hate popery more, it will be just with God that they shall be thorns in our sides more than they have been, and pricks in our eyes; that we shall see what a dangerous faction they are, and what case we are in. For those that are drunk with the cup of this harlot, it takes away their wits from them. Those that worship images and stocks, they are stocks themselves. Though the danger be great to themselves, yet they labour to make others

worse than themselves. There is no trusting to them. We should more fear them than foreign enemies. Both reasons of state, and reasons of religion, and reasons of our own safety, all should be forcible to have a special regard to prevent the growth of popery.

For ourselves, that hear of the destruction of this Jericho, we have heard what Jericho was before it was destroyed. For aught we know, God may destroy Jerusalem, as well as Jericho, and by a worse people than themselves, as the prophet saith, Ezek. xvii. 14, by 'a base people.' It is no matter, though others be worse than ourselves. God, when he plagues his people, will do it by worse than themselves, and cast the rod into the fire when he hath done; 'Asshur, the rod of my wrath,' Isa. x. 5. Therefore let us look to ourselves, that we be thankful to God. It will be no plea that we have been safe thus long, thus many years; for these people of Jericho, God let them alone four hundred years, as it is in Gen. xv. 16, They were threatened, but 'the sins of the Amorites were not yet full.' Jericho was a part of that country; but when their sins were full, then they were destroyed. God had patience four hundred years to the sins of the Amorites, to this people; and at last judgment came upon them fearfully. So howsoever God hath been forbearing and long-suffering towards us, yet let us look about us; oh, destruction may be near. It is not sufficient to think that God will destroy antichrist, that the walls of Jericho shall down. He may do that, and yet he may destroy us. There may be danger towards us too; and it is no comfort to them neither that God will punish us; for that easeth not their overthrow neither, 'for if he do so to the green tree, what will he do to the dry?' Luke xxiii. 31. If his children be whipped with scorpions, what will he do to rebels? 'If the children of God scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. iv. 18. If the children taste of the wrath of God, then the enemies shall taste of the dregs of his wrath. It is no comfort for them, for their doom is set down, 'Babylon is fallen,' Rev. xvi. 8. It will not be so much comfort to us that God will destroy them, as it will be to look to ourselves in time before a peremptory decree come forth, to make our peace with God. The king of Sodom and others were delivered by Abraham, but afterwards we see how fearfully they perished. Pharaoh was let alone for a time, yet after he was destroyed in the sea. Jerusalem had warning after warning, yet afterwards it was destroyed. So, though we have had deliverance upon deliverance, yet if we make not more of religion, and grow more in detestation of that religion, that God would have us set ourselves against, it will be just with God to punish us, and to lay us open to them that we have sinfully favoured. ,,

Use. We see what great matters faith will do in the use of means, though they be poor, weak, base means. Therefore let us set upon popish religion, in our places and callings, in a spirit of faith, in the use of means; and let us never think we are too weak; and now they are mighty and strong. It was said to Luther, when he began to write against the pope, Oh, poor monk, get thee into thy cell, and say, Lord have mercy upon thee! dost thou think to overcome the whole world with thy writing?. So the walls of Jericho may seem so mighty, the opposite power that we are to set against, as if we should lose our labour to set against it; but whatsoever is opposite to Christ, we have a promise it shall be overthrown. Let us in a spirit of faith set upon them in the use of means, and God will make it good, as in former times.

And for all other things that stand between us and heaven, all the walls of Jericho, all opposition, let us set upon them with a spirit of faith in the use of means; for he that hath overcome us, as I said, will by little and little overcome in us. These corruptions of ours shall fall before the Spirit of God by little and little. And as Haman's wife could tell him, 'If thou begin to fall before that people, thou shalt certainly fall,' Esther vi. 13; so if the work of grace be begun in us, that corruptions begin to fall, undoubtedly and certainly they shall fall. They cannot stand before the Spirit; for grace is in growing, and corruption is in decaying, continually in a Christian.

Quest. Why doth not God all at once subdue these walls of Jericho in us, but by little and little?

Ans. 1. God will exercise our faith and patience. We are warriors here in this world. Our life is a warfare, and he will exercise grace in us; he will have us combat with enemies; these inward enemies among the rest.

2. Again, He will let us see what he hath done for us. If we were not exercised with enemies, we should not be thankful sufficient for victory over the devil. When we have been vexed with the devil's temptations, then blessed be God and Christ, that at last these troubles are ceased. How much are we beholden to Christ, that hath freed us from the danger of these! We are only annoyed with the trouble. This will make us thankful when we have smarted...

3. This keeps us likewise from soul-devouring sins. Less infirmities in us keep us from pride and security. God hath many ends; but to cut off other things, because the point is large, I only give a taste.

Let this comfort us, that the walls of Jericho, that is to say, whatsoever opposeth us in our coming out of the state of nature, and our entrance into the state of heaven, whatsoever opposition is between, shall fall. Therefore let us strengthen our faith in the use of means.

Quest. How shall we strengthen our faith this way?

Ans. Faith is strengthened by the knowledge of the attributes of him, whom we lay hold upon, whose power doth all. The more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Let us labour to know God in covenant to be our Father, and to know Christ as he is, in his nature and offices, what he is to us: to know his wisdom, and power, and truth, that there may be a bottom for faith to build on. The more we grow in spiritual knowledge the more we shall grow in faith; and the more we grow in faith, the more we shall grow in other graces, whereby we overcome all our enemies that set against us.

Again, Let us make use of all former experience to strengthen faith. Hath God begun the work? Do the walls of Jericho begin to fall? 'He that hath begun a good work will finish it to the day of the Lord,' Philip, i. 6. Let us take in trust the time to come, by experience of God's truth for the time past; for the work of the Spirit is a continued work. The Spirit of God, in subduing our corruptions, he would not have begun if he had meant to have left off and interrupted the work. The Spirit suffers us to fall sometimes, but it is to teach us to stand better afterward. He turns our very falls and slips to our good. Let us strengthen faith, therefore, from former experience, as David did. We have overcome the bear and the lion; therefore let us set on the Philistine, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. And as Joshua set his foot on the necks of the ten kings, and said, 'Thus shall the Lord thy God destroy all thine enemies,' Joshua x. 24, seq., so hath the Spirit of God set his foot as it were upon some corruptions. Thus shall God deal with all corruptions and temptations at length, and never leave the blessed government of us till he have subdued all. Let us rise from one experiment to another, to strengthen faith. God is alike in all truths. You know in Judges v. 31, saith the holy woman Deborah, 'So let all thine enemies perish.' The heart of that blessed woman was, as it were, enlarged prophetically. When one falls, they shall all fall, there is like reason. See how gloriously Hannah in her song enlargeth her faith, by God's power and goodness, because she had experience in herself. So experience in ourselves or others will enlarge our faith to look for greater matters still from our gracious, powerful God. Thus we ought to labour to strengthen our faith.

And the third thing to help faith in all spiritual oppositions that we meet with, is daily exercise in using it, to make it brighter continually every day, by working with it upon our enemies. And in the estate of grace to live by it, both for this present life, to depend upon God for all things, and likewise for necessary grace; as the disciples when they were enjoined a hard duty, 'Lord, increase our faith,' say they, Luke xvii. 5, they go to exercise their faith upon it. If that be increased, all is increased. And so in our callings, exercise it by depending upon God for strength and success. Saith Peter to Christ, 'Lord, at thy word I will cast out the net,' Luke v. 5, though it were very unlikely it should do any good. They had fished all day, and caught nothing, but yet he would wait, and go on still: And learn this, to wait in the exercise of our faith; as they that went about the walls of Jericho, they did it seven days. Put case they had done it six, and no more, the walls had stood still. He that hath ten miles to go, and goes but nine, he shall never come to his journey's end. When God hath set down such a time, so long thou shalt wait, and use the means, and depend upon me by faith, in the use of the means; if we be short-spirited, and lengthen and strengthen not our faith in the use of the means, we shall never attain our desire, therefore let us labour to wait. Here is the difference between Christians and others. There is no man but he would be happy if so be it were not for this waiting. If a wicked man should see hell open, would he commit sin if he should see it present? If he should see heaven open, and Christ coming with his reward with him, he would be godly. There is not the vilest wretch in the world but he would be so if these things were present. But because it is only discovered in the word of God, and faith must believe, and wait for the reward, and faith must wait all the time of our life, here is the trial. So that a Christian differs nothing from a worldly man, but in a spirit of faith and waiting, and continuance of that faith in the mean time before a man come to enjoy and receive what he looks for. Faith gives God the glory of all his attributes. The glory of his truth; he hath spoken, and therefore he will make it good. The glory of his wisdom; that he hath found out such a course for us to walk in. The glory of his mercy; that he hath made such promises to such wretches. So all other attributes faith gives glory to. Therefore God glorifies faith, and the special act of faith is waiting: 'If I tarry long, wait thou,' Hab. ii. 3. And we have need of patience. Faith stirs up patience to help and assist it, as we see here, these waited seven days. Remember therefore to exercise faith in continual dependence upon God. Take heed of being short-spirited. Though God defer the rewarding of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked, yet hold out still. He that hath promised will come in time, and make good that that he hath said in due time. Give God the glory of appointing the fittest time. He is the best

discerner of opportunities: 'Our times are in his hand,' Ps. xxxi. 15, all kind of times; therefore let us depend upon him for that; only labour to have a strong spirit of faith, that we may wait his good leisure.

And to help us, do but consider what if we wait a few years, what is that to eternity? I might enlarge the point.

What great matters faith will do both in heaven and earth every way. We see here faith shakes the very earth. God he is the Lord of heaven and earth. The earth is the Lord's. Because these walls were built upon God's earth, we see here one puff of God blows them all down; and faith laying hold upon this casts them down. Though faith doth it not immediately, yet God doth it, because he is laid hold on by faith.

Let us labour therefore to have faith above all other graces. It is the mother grace. It is the grace that is the spring of all graces. If we would have patience, and hope, and love, and perseverance, and constancy together, let us labour to have faith strengthened; and to feed our faith the more, let us look to the word of God, make it familiar to us. The Spirit goes together with the word to strengthen and increase our faith, and that being strengthened, all is strengthened whatsoever.

Now the way to try whether we have this faith or no, not to speak largely of the point, but as the text leads me, is, if we humbly attend upon the means that God hath appointed, though they seem base to carnal reason. As how do we know that these Israelites had faith when they went about the walls of Jericho? Because they have humbled themselves to use the base means that God had appointed, though they were very unlikely. Naaman, out of the pride of his heart, saith he, what are the waters of Jordan? Have not we waters that can do as much? But if the servants had not been wiser than the master, he had gone home a leper as he came, 2 Kings v. 11, seq. So when men hear the word preached, they think, Cannot we read good books at home? And for the sacrament, it is a poor ordinance. What is there but wine and bread, and such like? Take heed of a proud heart. God will have weaker means to try us whether we will humble ourselves to his wisdom or no. Where there is true faith it will be careful to use all good means, or else it is a tempting of God, and not a trusting of him, when we do not use the means that he hath sanctified.

And where there is faith, as there will be a careful use of all means, so there will be a care in the use of means, not to depend upon the means, but

to trust in God. There will be a joining of both together. Faith doth not take away the use of means, nay, he that is most certain of the end should strive to be most careful of all means used to that end. There ought no man to be more diligent in using the means, than he that is most certain of the end; because he is encouraged to use the means, knowing that he shall not beat the air, that he shall not lose his labour; so if we by faith lay hold upon God for the destruction of antichrist, and that God would subdue our corruptions, and that they shall fall before the Spirit by little and little; if by faith we lay hold upon this, that God will perfect the good work he hath begun in the use of good means: this will stir us up to use all means with cheerfulness and constancy. There are none that are more careful of the means than those that are most sure of the issue. Those that are careless of the means, let them pretend what they will, they are presumptuous persons, they have no faith; for that will stir us up to use the means, and in the use of means to depend upon God. So careful is faith to use the means, as if without them God would do nothing, and yet in the means it is so careful to depend upon God, as if the means could not do anything without God. Thus faith walks between the means and the great God.

Let us go on constantly in living the life of faith, and using all the blessed means that God hath sanctified. God hath sanctified the preaching of the word to beat down all these spiritual walls. Let us go on all our lifetime; and at length the last trump shall sound, another trumpet shall sound, and then not only the walls of Jericho, but the walls of heaven and earth shall fall down, and then we shall enter into that heavenly Canaan, both body and soul. In the mean time, let us exercise faith, and to quicken our faith the more, let us have those blessed times in the eye of our soul, let us see them as present. It is the nature of faith to apprehend things to come as present. Let us see heaven and earth on fire, see Christ coming to judgment. Let us see all the walls down, the graves open, whatsoever opposeth and stands between us and glory, see all gone. Let us see ourselves at the right hand of Christ, and triumphing in heaven. For the Scripture speaks of that that is to come, as if it were past. 'We sit in heavenly places with Christ,' Eph. ii. 6, and we are saved by faith, and we are glorified. Thus the spirit of faith speaks of the glorious times to come, when all enemies shall be trodden under foot. Satan and all enemies whatsoever shall go to their place. The opposite church shall be no longer. When the last trump shall blow we shall all stand together at the right, hand of Christ, and be for ever glorious with him.

## The Demand of a Good Conscience

*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.—1 Pet. III. 21.*

The dependence of these words upon the former is this. The blessed apostle had spoken before of those that were before the flood, and of Noah's saving in the ark, whereupon he mentions baptism: 'The like figure whereunto is baptism, which also saveth us.' 'Christ was yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8. He was the same unto them before his incarnation, and the same unto them that lived in his time, and to us that shall be for ever. All were saved by Christ, and all had several sacrifices that were types of Christ. As there were two cities of the world from the beginning of the world figured out in Cain and Abel, the beginners of both, so God hath carried himself differently to the citizens of both. He always had a care to save his Noahs in the midst of destruction; he had an ark alway for his Noahs. 'God knoweth how to deliver his,' saith the apostle Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 9. It is a work that he hath practised a long time, since the beginning of the world; and for the other that are not his, that are of Cain's posterity, God carries himself in a contrary way to them; he destroys them. But to come to the words, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us,' &c. The saving of Noah in the ark was a correspondent answerable type to baptism; for as baptism figures Christ, so did the saving of Noah in the ark. They are correspondent in many things. "1. As all that were without the ark perished, so all that are without Christ, that are not engrafted into Christ by faith, whereof baptism was a seal, they perish.

2. And as the same water in the flood preserved Noah in the ark, and destroyed all the old world, so the same blood and death of Christ, and his sufferings, it kills all our spiritual enemies. They are all drowned in the Red Sea of Christ's blood, but it preserves his children. There were three main waters and deluges, which did all typify out Christ: the flood, that drowned the old world; the passing through the Red Sea; and the waters of Jordan. In all these God's people were saved, and the enemies of God's church destroyed, whereunto Micah the prophet alludes when he saith, 'He shall drown our sins in the bottom of the sea,' chap. vii. 19. He alludes to Pharaoh and his host drowned in the bottom of the sea. They sunk as lead; so all our sins, which are our enemies, if we be in Christ, they sink as lead.

3. As Noah, when he went to make the ark and to get into it, was mocked of the wretched world, so all that labour to get into Christ and to be saved, they are derided.

Yet notwithstanding, Noah was thought a wise man when the flood came; so when destruction comes, then they are wise that get into the ark, that get into Christ before. Many such resemblances there be. I name but a few, because I go on.

‘The like figure whereunto baptism also saveth us,’ &c.

Here, first of all, in a word, is a description of the means of salvation, how we are saved: ‘baptism saveth us.’

Then there is a prevention of an objection, ‘not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,’ the outward part of baptism.

Then he sets down how baptism saves us, but ‘the answer of a good conscience.’

And then the ground of it, ‘by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’

The former I pass over, that I may come to that which I specially intend. I come, therefore, to the prevention of the objection, which I will not speak much of, but somewhat, because it is a useful point. When he said that baptism saves us, he saith, not that baptism which is a putting away ‘the filth of the flesh;’ insinuating this, that baptism hath two parts. There is a double baptism: the outward, which is the washing of the body; the inward, which is the washing of the soul; the outward doth not save without the inward. Therefore he prevents them, lest they should think that all are saved by Christ that are baptized, that have their bodies washed outwardly with water. The apostle knew this, that people are naturally prone to give too much to outward things. The devil in people is in extremes; he labours to bring people to extremes, to make the sacraments idols or idle, to make the outward sacrament a mere idol, to give all to that, or to make them idle signs. The devil hath what he would in both. The apostle knew the disease of the times, especially in his time, they attributed too much to outward things. St Paul, writing to the Galatians, he is fain twice to repeat it, ‘Neither circumcision availeth anything, or uncircumcision, but a new creature,’ Gal. v. 6. You stand too much on outward things. That that God requires especially is the ‘new creature.’

So in the Old Testament, when God prescribed both outward and inward worship, they attributed too much to the outward, and let the inward alone. As in Ps. 1. 16, God complains how they served him; therefore, saith he, 'What hast thou to do to take my covenant into thy mouth, and hatest to be reformed?' And so in Isa. i. 13, and Isa. lxvi. 3, we see God's peremptory dealing with them: 'I will none of your new moons, I abhor your offerings.' And in Isa. lxvi. 3, 'It was as the cutting off of a dog's neck, the offering of sacrifice;' and yet they were sacrifices appointed by God himself. What was the reason of this? They played the hypocrites with God, and gave him only the shell; they brought him outward performances, they attributed too much to that, and left the spiritual part that God most esteems. So our Saviour Christ to the Pharisees, we see how he takes them up: 'Say not with yourselves, We have Abraham to our father,' Mat. iii. 9. They boasted too much of their outward privileges. You see through the current of the Scriptures, those especially that belong not to God, they are apt to attribute too much to outward things. It were well if they would join the inward too, which they neglect. There are two parts of God's service, outward and inward, that is harsh to flesh and blood. As in baptism there are two parts, outward and inward washing; and in hearing the word, is the outward man and inward soul, when it bows to hear what God saith; so in the Lord's Supper, there is outward receiving of bread and wine, and inward making of a covenant with God. Now people give too much to the outward, and think that God is beholding to them for it; but now for the inward, because they are conscious of their lust, they care not for that.

But more particularly, the reason is in corrupt nature.

First, Because the outward part is easy and glorious to the eye of the world. Every one can see the sacrament administered, every one can see when one comes and attends, and hears the word of God. They are easy and glorious in the eye of the world.

Second, And then again, people rest in them, because somewhat is done by it to daub conscience, that would clamour if they should do nothing, if they were direct atheists. Therefore, say they, we will hear the word, and perform outward things, and being loath to search into the bottom of their conscience, rest in outward things, and satisfy conscience by it. These and the like reasons there are.

Use. Let us take notice of it, and take heed of the corruption of nature in it; let us know that God regards not the outward without the inward, nay, he

abhors it. He abhors his own worship that he hath appointed himself, if the inward be not there, much more devices and ceremonies of men's own devising. Popery is but an outside of religion. They labour to put off God with the work done. They have an opinion fit to corrupt nature; that is, that the sacrament administered confers grace, without any disposing of the party. One of the chief of them, a great scholar, he will have the water itself to be elevated above its own nature to confer grace, as if grace had any communion with a dead element. And thus they speak, to make people doat too much upon outward things. I will not stand to confute this opinion. This very text showeth that the outward part of baptism, without the inward, is nothing; not the washing of the body, but 'the answer of a good conscience,' saith St Peter.

Let us labour, therefore, in all our services of God, to bring especially the spiritual part. The prophet Hosea finds fault with Ephraim: 'They loved to tread out the corn, but not to wear the yoke,' Hosea x. 11. Now the ox that wears no yoke, it is no trouble to tread out the corn; they fed upon the corn as they trod it. 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,' Deut. xxv. 4. So Christians are like Ephraim. They are content to take the easy part of religion, but to take the yoke, that which is hard, that they love not. Now we must labour to bear the yoke of religion. What the heart doth is done in religion; what the heart doth not, is not done; and there is a kind of divinity, a divine power in all the parts of God's worship that is requisite besides the bringing of the outward man. As in hearing there is required a divine power to make a man hear as he ought to do, to bow the neck of the inward man of the soul. And so to receive the sacrament, more is required than the outward man. There is a form and power in all the parts of religion. Let us not rest in the form, but labour for the power. There is a power in hearing of the word to transform us into the obedience of it, and a power in the sacrament to renew our covenants with God for a new life, and to cast ourselves altogether upon God's mercy in Jesus Christ—besides the outward elements—to have further communion with Christ.

We see what kind of persons those were in 2 Tim. iii. 5, that practised 'a form of religion, without the power.' He names a catalogue of sins there: 'they were lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.' Yet these people will have a form of religion notwithstanding, but they deny the power of it. But I hasten to that that I will more dwell on.

Use 2. The ministers likewise are to leant their duty hence, to observe the dispositions of -people, and what bars they lay to their own salvation. If we see them superstitious, that they swell in outward performances, and so are deluded by Satan in an ill state, and feed themselves with husks, then we are to take away such objections as much as we can, as St Peter here, when he had said that baptism answers to the flood. Both show the deliverance of God's people by the blood of Christ. Ay, saith he, not the outward baptism, the washing of the body, but 'the answer of a good conscience.'

So Christ takes away a secret objection. Say not with yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father,' Mat. iii. 9. And to feed people in their ill humours, this is not the way, but to labour to make them spiritual, for God is a Spirit, and he loves that part of his worship that is spiritual and inward. We shall have no man damned in the church if there were not an inward spiritual part of God's worship, for the worst men of all will be busiest in outward performances, and glory most in it of any other. It is a delusion that brings thousands to hell; and that made me a little dwell upon it. But I go on. 'Not the washing away the filth of the body,'

'But the answer of a good conscience.'

Upon the preventing of an objection and removing their false confidence, he positively sets down what that is that doth save in baptism. Saith he, it is 'the answer of a good conscience.' The scope of the words should have moved the holy apostle to have said thus, 'not the putting off the filth of the body, but the putting off the filth of the soul.' But instead of that he sets down the act of the soul, which is an 'answer of a good conscience to God,' by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Where, first of all, you must know this for a ground. Indeed, it is a hard place of Scripture. I will only take that that I think fittest, and raise what observations I think fit for you, that out of that you must know for a ground that—

There is a covenant of grace.

Since God and man brake in the creation, there is a covenant which we call a 'covenant of grace.' God hath stooped so low, he hath condescended to enter into terms of covenant with us. Now, the foundation of this covenant is, that God will be our God, and give us grace and glory, and all good in Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, Christ is the foundation of

the covenant, the mediator of the covenant, a friend to both: to God as God, to man as man, God and man in himself and by office; such is his office, as to procure love and agreement between God and man. He being the foundation of the covenant, there must be agreement in him. Now Christ is the foundation of the covenant, by satisfying God's justice, else God and we could never have come to good terms, nor conscience could ever have been satisfied; for God must be satisfied before conscience be satisfied. Conscience else would think God is angry, and he hath not received full satisfaction; and conscience will never be satisfied but with that that God is satisfied with. God is satisfied with the death of the mediator; so conscience being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, applying the death of Christ, conscience is satisfied too. Now, what doth show that the death of the Mediator is a sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction? The resurrection of Christ; for Christ our surety should have lain in the grave to this day, if our sins had not been fully satisfied for.

Christ is the foundation of the covenant of grace, by his humiliation and by his exaltation, whereof the resurrection was the first degree. Now, in this as in other covenants, there is the party promising, making the covenant, and the parties that answer in the covenant. God promises life everlasting, forgiveness of sins, through the death of Christ, the mediator. We answer by faith, that we rely upon God's mercy in Christ; this is the answer of conscience. Now, this sound answer of conscience, it doth save us, because it doth lay hold on Christ that doth save us. Christ properly saveth us, by his death and passion. An argument of the sufficiency of his salvation was his resurrection. He is now in heaven triumphing; but because there is somewhat in us that must lay hold of this salvation, it is attributed to that that is the instrument of salvation, that is, to the answer of a good conscience. Now, this answer of a good conscience doth afford us this observation, that,

There must be something in us before we can make use of what good is in God or Christ.

In a covenant, both parties must agree. There must be somewhat wrought in us that must answer, or else we cannot claim any good by the promises in Christ, or by any good that Christ hath wrought: that is the answer of a good conscience. Or else Christ should save all, if there were not the answer of a good conscience required, that only God's elect children have. But to show the reasons of this, that there must on our part be this answer.

Reason 1. The reason is partly from the nature of the covenant. There must be consent on both sides, or else the covenant cannot hold; there are indentures drawn up between God and us. God promiseth all good, if we believe and rest on Christ; we again rest upon Christ, and so have interest in all that is good. There is a mutual engagement then in the covenant. God engageth himself to us, and we engage ourselves to God in Christ; and where this mutual engagement is, there the covenant is perfect; as here, there is 'the answer of a good conscience.' That is the first reason, then, from the nature of the covenant, there must be this answer.

Reason 2. The second reason, that there must be somewhat in us, is because when two agree, there must be a like disposition. Now, there must be a sanctifying of our nature, from whence this blessed answer comes, before that God and we can agree. There must be a correspondency of disposition. Of necessity this must be, for we enter into terms of friendship with God in the covenant of grace. Now, friends must have the same mind; there must be an answering. Now, this answer is especially faith, when we believe, and from faith, sanctified obedience. That is called the restipulation or engagement of a good conscience to God.

When the promise is made, we engage ourselves to believe, and to live as Christians.

Use. Now from this, that there must be an answer in us, an engagement on our part, I beseech you, let us in general therefore know that we must search our own hearts for the evidence of our good estate in religion. Let us not so much search what Christ hath done, but search our own hearts how we have engaged ourselves to God in Christ, that we believe and witness our believing, that we lead a life answerable to our faith, renounce all but Christ. This mutual engagement is in the form in baptism, that was used by the apostles and by the ancient church; for we know that in the ancient church that they that were baptized, they were questioned, Do you believe? I do believe. Do you renounce the flesh, and the world, and devil? I do renounce them. These two questions were made. Now, when they answered this question from a good conscience, truly, faithfully, and sincerely, then they had right in all the good things by Christ. Something always therefore in the church was required on our part. Not that we answer by our own strength, for it is the covenant of grace. Why is it a covenant of grace? Not only because the things promised are promised of grace, but because our part is of grace likewise. We believe of grace, and live holily of grace; every good

thought is from grace; it is by grace that we are that we are. All is of grace in the new covenant, merely of grace. God requires not any answering by our strength, for then he should require light of darkness and life of death. There is nothing good in us. He requires obedience, that he may work it when he requires it. For his commands in the covenant of grace, they are operative and working. When he commands us to believe and obey, he gives us grace to believe and obey. It is ourselves that answer, but not from ourselves, but from grace. Yet notwithstanding let us make this use of it, let us search ourselves, though it be not from ourselves, that we answer God's promise by faith and his command by obedience; yet we must have this obedience, though from him, before we can challenge anything at God's hands. It is arrogant presumption to hope for heaven and salvation before we have grace to answer all God's promises and commands, by a good conscience.

To come more particularly to the words, some will have it, 'the questioning,' 'the demand' of a good conscience, but that follows the other; for when we answer truly the interrogatories in baptism, when we believe and renounce, then we may from a good conscience demand of God all the good in Christ. We may call upon him, and pray unto him, Hath not Christ died, and made peace between thee and us? And may we not triumph against all enemies when there is the answer of good conscience? If Satan lay anything to our charge, Christ died, and rose, and sits at the right hand of God: 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's people?' Rom. viii. 33. We may, with a heart sprinkled with the blood of Christ now ascended into heaven, answer all objections, and triumph against all enemies. We may go boldly to God, and demand the performance of his promises.

Hence comes all the spirit of boldness in prayer from the answer of a good conscience, for that draws all other after it. Now, to come more particularly to the words, 'the answer of a good conscience.' It would take up all the time to speak of conscience in general, and it were not to much purpose. I will take it as it serves my purpose at this time. A good conscience, in this place, is a conscience peaceable and gracious.

Peace and purity make up a good conscience. To make this clearer, there be three degrees of a good conscience, though the last be here meant especially. There is, first, a good conscience that is troubled, a troubled good conscience; and then a pacified good conscience, and then a gracious good conscience.

1. A troubled good conscience is when the Spirit by conviction opens to us what we are in ourselves. He opens our sins, and the danger and foulness of our sins, whereupon our conscience is terrified and affrighted. Therefore this good conscience, whereby we are convinced of our estate by nature, in itself it is a good conscience, and tends to good; for it tends to drive us to Christ. There is a good conscience therefore that hath terror with it.

2. The second degree of a good conscience is that that comes from the other; when we are convinced of sin, and of the misery that comes by sin, then that good conscience speaks peace to us. When God shines upon the conscience by his Spirit, from whence there is peace, that is a peaceable good conscience, for God takes this course. After he hath terrified conscience by his Spirit and word, then he offers in the gospel; and not only offers, but commands, us to believe. He offers all good in Christ, and commands us; and not only so, but invites us: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary,' &c., Mat. xi. 28. Nay, he beseecheth us: 'We beseech you to be reconciled,' 2 Cor. v. 20. He takes all courses. Now, his Spirit going with these entreaties, he persuades the soul that he is our gracious Father in Christ Jesus. Christ hath suffered such great things; and he is God and man, he is willing and able to save us. Considering he is anointed of God for this purpose, hereupon conscience is satisfied, and doth willingly yield to these gracious promises. It yields to this command of believing, to these sweet invitings. This is a peaceable good conscience.

3. Hereupon comes, in the third place, a gracious good conscience, which is a conscience, after we have believed, that resolves to please God in all things; as the apostle saith, Heb. xiii. 18, 'We have a good conscience, studying to please God in all things.' We have a good conscience toward God and toward men. When the conscience is appeased and quieted, then it is fit to serve God, as an instrument that is in tune. An instrument out of tune yields nothing but harsh music; so when the soul and conscience is distempered, and not set at peace, it is not gracious. So now you see the order: there is a troubled good conscience, and a peaceable good conscience, and then a gracious heart; for while conscience is not at peace by the blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by considering him, and by application of him, there is no grace nor service of God with that heart; but the heart shuns God, it hates God, and murmurs against God. Men think, why should they do good deeds when they believe not? When they cast not themselves upon Christ, and when conscience is not sprinkled with the blood of Christ, they are able to do nothing out of the love of God; and 'whatsoever is not of faith

and love, it is sin,' Rom. xvi. 23. The heart cannot but be afraid of God, and wish there were no God, and murmur and repine till it be pacified. That is the reason why the apostles, in the latter part of their epistles, they press conscience of good duties when they had taught Christians before and stablished them in Christ, because all duties issue from faith; if they come not thence, they are nothing. If there be first faith in Christ, then there will be a good conscience in our lives and conversations.

And from the gracious conscience comes the increase of a peaceable conscience. There must be peace before we can graciously renew our covenants to please God; but when we have both these, faith in Christ and a resolution to please God in all things, there comes an increase of peace; for then there is an argument to satisfy conscience, when first of all conscience goes to Christ, to the foundation. I have answered God's command; I have believed, and cast myself upon Christ; I have answered God's promise. He hath promised, if I do so, he will give me Christ with all his benefits; I have yielded the obedience of faith. Hereupon comes some comforts; here is the foundation of this obedience. But then when conscience likewise from this resolves to please God in all things, in the duties to God and man, hereupon comes another increase of peace, when I look to the life of grace in my own heart. For a working, careful Christian hath a double ground of comfort: one, in the command to believe, and in the promise, whether he hath evidences of grace or no; but when he hath power by the Spirit to lead a godly life, and to keep a good conscience in all things, then he hath comfort from the evidence of grace in his own heart, from whence an increase of peace comes. You see what a good conscience is here in this place: 'the answer of a good conscience.' I will not speak largely of it. To come a little further to the point.

Quest. How know we that a man hath a good conscience, a peaceable good conscience, when it is troubled? For here is the difficulty, a conscience is never so peaceable and gracious but there is a principle of rebellion in us, the flesh, that casts in doubtings, and stirs up objections, as indeed our flesh is full of objections against God's divine truth. There be seeds of infidelity to every promise, and of rebellion to every command in the word. How shall a man know that he hath a peaceable good conscience in the midst of this rebellion?

Ans. 1. Let him look if the conscience answer God in the midst of opposition and rebellion. My flesh and blood saith thus, My sins are great, and Satan lays it hard to my charge; yet notwithstanding, because God hath

promised and commanded, I cast myself upon God. Let us ask our own hearts and consciences what they say to God, what is the answer to God. We see what Job saith: 'Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him,' Job xiii. 15; flesh and blood would have showed its part in Job, as if God had neither respected nor loved him; yet when Job recovered himself, 'Though he kill me, I will trust in him.' So a man may know, though conscience be somewhat troubled; yet it is a gracious peaceable conscience if peace get the upper hand, and grace subdue corruption, when the conscience, so far as it is enlarged by God's Spirit, can check itself. 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul?' Ps. xiii. 5. Why art thou troubled? Trust in God. Trust in God reconciled now in Christ. When conscience can lay a charge upon itself, and check itself thus, it is a sign that conscience hath made this gracious answer.

2. Again, one may know, though conscience be troubled somewhat, yet it is a gracious peaceable conscience when it always allows of the truth of God in the inward man. Whatsoever the flesh say, the word is good, the commandment is good, the promise is good; as St Paul saith, 'I allow the law of God in my inward man,' Rom. vii. 22. By this a man may know, though his peace be somewhat troubled, that yet, notwithstanding, there is the answer of a good conscience.

3. Again, when a man can break out of trouble, and such an estate as the devil weakens our faith by; for he useth the troubles of the church, and our own troubles, to shake our faith, as if God did not regard us: now when conscience can rise out of this, as in Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Yet God is good to Israel; yet, my soul, keep silence to the Lord.' Though things seem to go contrary to a man, as if God were not reconciled, as if he had not part in Christ, 'yet, my soul, keep silence, and God is good to Israel.' This conflict shows that there is a gracious part in the soul, and that conscience is a gracious conscience. It is said here, it is 'the answer of a good conscience towards God.'

For conscience, indeed, hath reference to God, and that will answer another question; for conscience, as it performs holy duties, as it is a gracious conscience, it looks to God.

Quest. Whether may a man know, or how shall he know, that he doth things of conscience? whether he be in the state of grace, and doth things graciously?

Ans. He may; for why is conscience set in man but to tell him what he doth, with what mind he doth it, in what state he is? This is a power of the

soul which conscience shows. A man may know what estate he is in, and whether he perform things graciously or no.

Quest. Now how shall a man know whether he doth things of conscience or no?

(1.) First, Whatsoever the answer of conscience is, it is towards God. If a man do things from reasons of religion, if a man be charitable to his neighbour, if he be just and good, if it be from reasons of religion, because God commands him, this is a good conscience. A good conscience respects God and his command. What we do for company or for custom is not from a good conscience. A good conscience doth things from God, with reasons from God, because he commands it. It is God's deputy in our hearts.

(2.) Again, what we do from a good conscience we do from the inward man, from an inward principle, from the inward judgment, because we think it is so, and from an inward affection. When we have not a right judgment of what we do, and do it not out of love, and from the inward man, we do it not out of a good conscience. What is done out of conscience is done from the inner man. Therefore in all our performances let us examine ourselves, not what we do, but upon what ground we do it, in conscience to God, to obey him in all things. I cannot dwell upon these things.

The answer of a good conscience, that saves us, together with baptism; when there is the answer of a good conscience, then baptism seals salvation. To come more near to the answer of a good conscience in baptism.

Obj. You will object, If the answer of a good conscience in baptism do all, and not the outward washing of the body, why are children baptized then; they cannot make the answer of a good conscience?

Ans. I answer, The place must be understood of those of years of discretion. For infants that die in their infancy we have a double ground of comfort concerning them. First, they are within the covenant. Have they not received the seal of the covenant, which is baptism? And however they actually answer not the covenant of grace by actual believing, yet they have the seed of believing, the Spirit of God in them, and God doth comprehend them by his mercy, being not able to comprehend him. Nay, we that are at years of discretion are saved by God's comprehending and embracing us. We are comprehended of him, as the child is of the nurse or of the mother. The child holds the nurse, and the nurse the child. The child is more safe from

falling by the nurse and the mother's holding of it, than by its holding of them. Those that are at years must clasp and grasp about Christ, but Christ holds and comprehends them; much more doth God comprehend those that are children, that are not able to comprehend him. For those that live to years of discretion, their baptism is an engagement and obligation to them to believe, because they have undertaken, by those that answered for them, to believe when they come to years; and if, when they come to years, they answer not the covenant of grace and the answer of a good conscience, if they do not believe, and renounce Satan, all is frustrate. Their baptism doth them no good, if they make not good their covenant by believing and renouncing. It is spoken, therefore, of those that are of years of discretion. We leave infants to the mercy of God. Those, therefore, that are at years of discretion must have grace to answer the covenant of grace by believing and renouncing. To come, therefore, to ourselves.

We that will answer to the covenant made in baptism must perform it, especially that that we then covenanted. What was that? We answered that we would believe. Dost thou believe? I believe every article of the faith. And do you renounce the devil and all his works? I do. Therefore, unless now we believe in Christ, and renounce the devil, we renounce our baptism. It doth us no good. There are divers kinds of people that overthrow their own baptism.

Those that live in sins against conscience, they do renounce their baptism in some sort, those that feed their corruptions; for in baptism we are consecrated in soul and body to God, we are given up to him, 'we are not our own,' 1 Cor. vi. 20; his name is called on us; we are called Christians. Therefore our eyes are not our own, our hands are not our own, our thoughts and affections are not our own. There must be a renouncing and a denial of all sin, as far as it is contrary to Christ's spirit. Those, therefore, that labour to feed their corruptions, what do they else so far but renounce their baptism, and under the livery of Christ serve the enemy of Christ, the devil, that they should renounce? Those that feed their eyes with seeing of vanity, and their ears with filthy discourse; those that suffer their feet to carry them to places where they infect their souls; those that, instead of renouncing their corruptions, feed them, and their hearts tell them they cherish those corruptions they should renounce by baptism: what shall we think of these? And yet they think to be saved by Christ; 'God is merciful,' and 'Christ died,' when they live in a continual renouncing of baptism.

For a use therefore of exhortation, if so be that this be the effectual baptism, the chief thing that we ought to stand on, this answer of a good conscience, then I beseech you let us all labour for this echo, for this answer: when God saith, 'Seek ye my face,' to answer, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8; when he saith, 'I will be your God,' to answer, 'We will be thy people.' When he saith in the ministry, 'Believe,' to answer, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. Let us labour to echo: this holy echo is the answer in the covenant of grace.

This answer of our faith is set down in Scripture alway when it speaks of the estate of those that are in the covenant of grace. It is mentioned on our part that we take God for our God, and Christ for our Christ:

'My beloved is mine, and I am my beloved's,' Cant. ii. 16, and vi. 3. There is a mutual owning of both sides. Therefore, if we would answer the covenant of grace, let us work our hearts to answer. When we hear in the ministry, and in the covenant of grace, answer, Lord, I desire to believe this; and when there is anything commanded, let our hearts answer, and desire God to bow our inward man to obedience, that we may be pliable. Let us labour to have that free spirit that holy David prays for, Ps. ii. 12. That was stopped by reason of his sin; for when we renew sins against conscience, we stop the mouth of our prayers, that we cannot go to God; we stop the mouth of conscience, that we cannot go boldly to God; therefore he had then lost that freedom of spirit. Let us labour to be pliable to the Spirit, ready to answer God in all that we are exhorted to, and to yield the obedience of faith to all the promises. That is the state of those that are in the covenant of grace; there is the answer of a good conscience. Therefore let us resolve to take this course, if we would attain the answer of a good conscience.

First of all, labour that our consciences way be convinced of the ill that is in vs, that we may have a good troubled conscience: first, that we may know thoroughly what our estate by nature is; and then labour, in the second place, to have peace, and then raise and renew our purpose to serve God in all things; and to try the truth of this, let us put interrogatories to ourselves; let us ask ourselves, Do I believe? do I not daub with my heart? do I obey? do I willingly cast myself into the mould of God's word, and willingly obey all that I hear? do I not deceive myself? Let us propound these interrogatories: 'God is greater than our conscience,' 1 John iii. 20. If we answer God with reservations, I will answer God in this, and not in this,—I will yield to religion as far as it may stand with my own lusts and advantage;

—this is not the answer of a good conscience. What is done to God must be done all; what is done zealously and religiously, hath respect to all God's commandments and promises, to one thing as well as another. If our hearts tell us there are reservations from false grounds, here is not 'the answer of a good conscience.' Therefore let us search ourselves, and propound questions to ourselves, whether we believe and obey or no, and from what ground we do it.

And let us make use of our baptism upon all occasions, as thus, 1. Satan hath two ways of tempting. One is, he tempts to sin, and then he tempts for sin, to accuse our consciences to make a breach between God and us, that we dare not look upon God. When he tempts us, or our corruptions move us, or the world by allurements would draw us to any sin, let us think of our baptism, and the answer we have made there, and make use of it. Is this agreeable to the promise I made? Surely I have renounced this. Shall I overthrow my own promise? I make conscience to make good my promise to men, and shall I break with God? I have promised to God to renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil; to renounce all these corruptions. Let us have these thoughts when we are solicited to sin, when proud nature would have us set up the banner of pride. I have renounced these proud affections; I shall overthrow my baptism if I yield. And so for the enlarging of our estates, or for getting up to honour to please men's humours, to break the peace of my conscience. These things we have renounced, the world and the vanities of it in our baptism.

The life of many is nothing but a breach of their vow and covenant in baptism. How will they look at the hour of death, and the day of judgment, that God should keep his promise with them to give them life everlasting, when they never had grace to keep touch with him, notwithstanding their engagements in baptism and their so often repeating it at the communion, and their renewing of their vows when they have been sick? How can we look for performance on God's part, when we have not had grace to perform our part, but our whole life hath been a satisfying of our base lusts! Let us make that use in temptations to sin; let us fetch arguments against sin from our baptism, from the answer that we made then; for we must make good now that that was made then, or else it is in vain.

2. Again, when we are solicited by Satan to be discouraged, let us consider that we are baptized 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and consider that the promise is made whensoever we

repent, without any exception of time, nay, though we have broke with God, —for Satan will use that as a chief weapon, ‘Thou hast fallen, thou hast fallen,’—yet as it is Jeremiah iii. 1, seq. Though a man will not take his wife after a breach, yet God transcends us; he is God, and not man. Therefore, after breaches, if we yet answer his command and his promise,— for the command of believing is upon us while we live,—if we believe, and ‘confess our sins, we shall have mercy,’ if we come and cast ourselves upon Christ. Therefore, after relapses, let not Satan abuse them to make us despair. Baptism is a seal of our faith, and faith is enjoined us all the days of our life. All this time of life is a time of grace, and we are commanded to repent and believe. Let not Satan therefore discourage us after sin; let us go to our baptism. It is a seal to us of faith and repentance whensoever we believe and repent.

3. When we are solicited to distrust in God for the things of this life any “—ay, as if God cared not for us, let us consider that we have answered, that ‘we believe in God the Father Almighty therefore he is our Father, he knows what is good for us, and he loves us. He is an almighty God. It is an article of our faith that we have answered to: let us make it good upon all temptations in that kind. Doth not God care for us? He had an ark for Noah in the worst times, when the flood overwhelmed the whole world. So in there be the answer of a good conscience, he will have an ark for his Noahs, to save, and protect, and defend us; he is a Father Almighty. Let us know the grounds of our religion, the articles of our faith, the grounds and foundation of our faith. Let us consider the good things promised there, and consider withal that we have all engaged ourselves to believe those things, and to make use of our faith upon all occasions. Those that cannot read, if they have no other, let them look on these two books, the book of their baptism and the book of conscience. They would be sufficient to instruct them. Some people pretend ignorance. Consider what thou art baptized to: the grounds of religion; consider there what thou hast renounced; consider in particular whether this thing that thou art moved to be God’s or the devil’s command, and answer Satan and thy lusts by not answering of them; give them their answer, and tell them a good conscience must answer God’s command and promise. But they must have their answer by denial, by this answer of a good conscience. Those that cannot read, and are not learned, let them make use of the learning of their baptism. There is a world of instruction and comfort, a treasury of it in baptism. I dare be bold to say, if any Christian, when he is tempted to any sin, to despair or discouragement, if he consider what a solemn promise he hath made to God in baptism, it would be a means to strengthen his faith,

and to arm him against all temptations. There is no man sins, but there is a breach with God first in wronging the promise he hath engaged himself to in baptism. We all that are here have been baptized, let us learn to make more conscience of this blessed sacrament than we have done, and let us labour to have the answer of a good conscience at all times.

What a comfort is it when our hearts and consciences makes a gracious answer to God in believing and obeying, and in renouncing all God's and our enemies! What a comfort is such a conscience! It will uphold us in sickness, in death, and at the day of judgment, in all ill times in this life. A conscience that hath answered God by believing his promises, and hath renewed the covenant to obey God in all things, what a wondrous peace hath it! Let the devil object what he can; let our unbelieving hearts object what they can, yet notwithstanding, if it be a renewed sanctified conscience, it can out of the privacy of its own act say, I have believed; I have cast myself upon God's mercy in Christ; I have renounced these motions, and suggestions, and courses, and though I be overcome with temptations, yet I heartily hate them. What a comfort is this!

Conscience, it is either the greatest friend or the greatest enemy in the world. It is the chiefest friend when it is privy to itself of this resolute answer, that it hath obeyed God in all things. Then conscience is our friend, it speaks to God for us at all times. Then again at the hour of death, what a comfort it is that we have this answer of a good conscience, especially at the day of judgment, when we can look God in the face. A sincere heart, a conscience that hath laboured to obey the gospel, and to keep covenant with God, it can look God in the face. For what in the covenant of grace goes for perfect obedience, but sincerity and truth? God requires that. When the heart can say with Hezekiah, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked perfectly before thee,' Isa. xxxviii. 3; Lord, I have believed, and laboured to express it in my life and conversation, though with much weakness, yet in truth; this sincerity will make us look God in the face, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, and in all troubles in this life.

A Christian that hath the answer of a good conscience, he hath Christ to be his ark in all deluges. Christ saves us not only from hell and damnation, but in all the miseries of this life. If anything come upon us for the breach of God's covenant,—as God threateneth, Lev. xxvi. 21, seq.

'to send war and famine,' &c., for the breach of his covenant,—what a comfort is it then for such as have kept the covenant! For then God hath an

ark for such in ill times; for every deliverance in evil times, it comes from the same ground as the deliverance from hell doth. Why doth God deliver me from hell and damnation? Because he loves me in Christ, and that moves him to deliver me in evil times, if I keep a good conscience; and that love that gives me heaven, gives me the comforts of this life. If I labour to have this answer the apostle speaks of, what a comfort is this in the worst times?

Those that live in rebellion, and make no conscience of their vows and covenants to God, that they have made and repeated oftentimes, and renewed in taking of the Lord's supper, but go on still in their sins, alas! what comfort can such as these have! How can they look for an answer from God of any promise that he hath made, when their lives are rebellious. Their conscience tells them that their lives do not witness for God in keeping covenant with him, but they rebel against him. Their hearts tell them they cannot look to heaven for comfort. They carry a hell in their bosom, a guilty conscience; they do not labour to be purged by the blood of Christ, nor labour for the Spirit of God to sanctify them, in renewing them to holy obedience to God. Those that have their conscience thus stained, especially that purpose to live in sin, they can look for nothing but vengeance from God. It is not known now who are the wisest people. In the times of trouble, and at the hour of death, at such times it will be known that they are the wisest people that have made conscience of keeping their covenant with God, of renewing their covenant with God, first, in all things that would serve him better, and then when they have renewed their covenant with God, as we have cause now indeed, if ever, to renew them, when we are warned by public dangers; or when we have cause to take occasion to renew our covenants that we made with God in baptism, to bind our consciences to closer obedience; and those that have renewed their covenant, and have grace to keep it, those are wise people. We see in the current of Scripture, in dangerous times there was still renewing of their covenants with God. And those that God delights in, he puts his Spirit into them, that they shall be able, by the help of his Spirit, to keep their covenant in some comfortable measure; and those God will choose and mark out in the worst times.

## A Glimpse of Glory

*According to his divine power, who hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us unto glory and virtue.—2 Peter I. 3.*

You have often heard in these two verses, how the apostle lays down the groundwork of that his prayer which he had made in the second verse, wherein he wishes the multiplication of grace and peace unto them, ‘through the knowledge of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.’ And further, in these verses he makes manifest, that we have a grant and gift given us of all things pertaining to life and godliness, by that same way by which he had formerly wished unto them the multiplication of grace and peace, ‘through the knowledge of him who hath called us unto glory and virtue,’ which in the fourth verse he clears, and shows that by the virtue of God’s calling on his part, and our acknowledgment on our part, he hath given unto us those precious promises by which we may be, and are, made partakers of the divine nature, of which a sure sign and evidence is, that such ‘do fly the corruption which is in the world through lust.’

Something does yet remain of the third verse untouched, and then, God assisting us, we shall come unto the fourth. In the third verse, the sum whereof you have heard, we have considered,

1. A gift: ‘he hath given us.’
2. The fountain from whence: ‘his divine power.’
3. The kind of gift: ‘things pertaining to life and godliness.’
4. The extent thereof: ‘all things.’
5. The means of conveyance by which this great gift is made ours: ‘by the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue.’

Knowledge, then, is the means by which we make claim to, and make use of, this great charter, grant, and gift of God. Not by every divine knowledge of God, nor by a general knowledge of every branch of divinity, but by the knowledge of him only who ‘calleth us to glory and virtue.’ Then,

I say, the immediate or mediate calling of God and Christ is considerable, or both if you will. This is that we must take knowledge of, if we mean to make claim either to piety in this world, or life in that to come. If once we come to have, and be assured of this calling, then therewith all things also pertaining to life and godliness are given us. And the reasons thereof are, 1. Such is the efficacy of this calling; ‘not of men, but of God.’

2. Such is the fidelity of him who calleth us.

3. Such is the continual supply he will make of all things to us.

If he hath called us, he will supply us with all things, with piety here, and crown us hereafter in glory.

Thus far we went. Now let us go on. Something yet remains to be handled of the conveyance, where he saith, ‘He hath called us. This word us hath his proper weight, and must not slightly be passed over. For although we have already spoken of calling in general, and the necessity thereof, yet now it is also fit to consider thereof in particular for our proper interest therein; for, as it is not sufficient to have a general knowledge of God in his power, justice, mercy, goodness, or other his attributes, or of Christ in his person and function, but I must know how he is merciful and good unto me, how he justifies and conveys life to me,—for unless we know God in Christ in particular, the general will not serve,—to know only that there is a covenant, a gospel, and life therein, that there is a Mediator, thou mayest know all this and more, and yet it be unprofitable to thee; so it will not suffice us to know there is a calling to glory and virtue, but in particular we must know him calling us to glory and virtue; for if we cannot say, He hath called us, we have small reason to rejoice, or be content of our estate. I enlarged this the last day by the similitude of a rich inventory and a will; a man may have a rich inventory, and read of many brave things and moveables therein, and know them also, but unless from the gift of the testator he may make claim to somewhat given him by name in the will, he is a poor man, for all his rich inventory. So is it of calling; a man may have a general calling, but he must have it by name: ‘Who hath called us to glory and virtue.’

The point then is, Doct. 1. That whereby a Christian may have title, interest, and comfort, in life and glory. It is not a knowledge of calling in general, but of that particular calling of ourselves to glory and virtue. This doth interest us in the promises of God. See Acts ii. 39, where, after they had

been pricked with his sermon, he says, to comfort them, and invite all to hope and seek, 'For the promise is made to you and to your children;' and then he adds the condition, 'Even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.' No calling, no promise. Nay, further, without this there is no encouragement to holiness. 1 Tim. vi. 12, there Paul wills Timothy 'to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold upon eternal life;' but on what ground is this?

'Whereunto thou art also called.' This is the reason why he is encouraged to lay hold; God had sanctified, and made a change in him, therefore he had good reason to lay hold of eternal life. So I would have every one of you know, that it is a command of God that every man should make 'his calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10, as is showed in the tenth verse of this chapter, where my text is. And for this, that we may be stirred up unto it, see both reason and example.

The reason is, because by this knowledge of our calling we draw home to our election. See for this Rom. viii. 30: 'Whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them also he glorified,' and so elected and predestinated.

By our calling, therefore, which is by an eternal purpose and grace of God in time, changing and renewing us unto holiness of life, we come to know the eternal decree of God, which otherwise were presumption to search, and may not be looked unto. For, as a prince's secret mind is made known by edicts and proclamations, which before we durst not search into, neither could know, so when God's secret counsel to execution is manifested, by changing our hearts, by calling us from the world to an holy calling, in a sanctified life: this, then, is no presumption, but duty in us, by our calling, to judge of our election, and so of our calling to glory and virtue.

If you look for an example of this, see that of St Paul, Gal. ii. 20, where that Paul gives a proof of his hope of life and calling, says, 'Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' What doth Paul mean here? Doth he mean to engross unto him only, and make a monopoly of Christ? No; but he invests and puts himself into the common inheritance of the saints, because Christ loved him, and had given himself for him, because Christ dwelt in him, and that he had attained to lead a holy life. This was the ground of his assurance to eternal life, and of his calling to glory and virtue.

Obj. But some may object, and say, What speak you of St Paul? This was peculiar unto him, he was a chosen vessel, others cannot attain the like; chiefly the papists, they object most against this, who would have no assurance of calling but by special revelation. But the apostle, 1 John iv. 16, saith far otherwise. There he saith not, we hope, for he knew so weak a word could not express so great a matter and such assurance as he was about to declare unto them, but 'we have known and believe the love wherewith God hath loved us.' To know God's calling, and not our interest therein, it is a punishment, rather than any comfort unto us; as Christ speaketh of the Jews, Mat. viii. 11, 'For I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness.' It is a small comfort to the children of the kingdom to know much, and yet to be thrust into utter darkness; but we must labour to know and believe this love of God to us, as the apostle did. Not that I exclude hope from faith, for though there be a distinction between them, yet there can be no separation; faith hath ever hope with it: a strong faith, a strong hope; a weak faith, a weak hope; a staggering faith, a staggering hope; a pale faith, a pale hope; but this we must do, make it our own, know it, believe it, apprehend it for our own. Many may know Christ in a sort, but not apprehend him. What is my knowledge, but so much the more misery to me, if I apprehend not Christ? For this I must crave leave to tell you a tale which shall make this I say good. There was not long ago a revolting wretch, one Francis Spira, beyond seas, who in the midst of his torments and despair, being told of the mediation of Christ's justification, the virtue of his blood, and merits of the same, burst out in this strange unexpected speech, 'I know all this, and more than any of you, and yet I cannot lay hold thereof to me'.

Then further, let us by the way add one point more, which formerly in part I touched.

Doct. 2. That this knowledge of our particular calling is one of the strongest motives unto all goodness, against that opinion of the papists, that say this doctrine opens a door to all licentiousness. Nay, it is so far from opening a door to all licentiousness, that like that angel of paradise, which with a flaming sword was set to keep the tree of life, he shuts all such liberty and licentiousness out of doors. So we see the apostles in their opinions still urge holiness and sanctification from this ground of the assurance of calling and election. Gal. v. 13, the apostle wills them 'not to use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh;' but on what grounds presseth he this? 'Ye have been

called unto liberty.’ Eph. iv. 2, he desires them ‘to forbear one another in lowliness and meekness, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ But on what ground? ‘That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.’ Col. iii. 12, he exhorts them ‘to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing and forgiving one another.’ But on what ground? ‘As the elect of God, holy and beloved.’ I might mention many places to this purpose; take this one more: 1 Thes. v. 9, after he hath exhorted them unto ‘watchfulness and sobriety, to be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.’ What is his ground? ‘For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ He that hath no assurance of this calling can have little comfort in performing of holy duties. A fearful, doubting soul lives in much vexation. Now I come to the uses, which are three.

1, Confutation; 2, trial; 3, instruction.

Use 1. The first is against all such as oppugn this doctrine, chiefly the papists, who are for that, that a man should not inquire after the assurance of his salvation. Such kind of men, I pray you what do they but do as much as in them lieth to overthrow and pluck up the root of faith, and of all obedience unto God? Oh, what should water my heart, and make it melt in obedience unto my God, but the assurance and knowledge of the virtue of this most precious blood of my Redeemer, applied to my sick soul, in the full and free remission of all my sins, and appeasing the justice of God? What should bow and break my rebellious hard heart and soften it, but the apprehension of that dear love of my Saviour, who hath loved me before I loved him, and now hath blotted out that hand-writing that was against me? What should enable my weak knees, hold up my weary hands, strengthen my fainting and feeble spirit in constant obedience against so many crosses and afflictions, temptations and impediments, which would stop up my way, but the hope of this precious calling unto glory and virtue? Down, then, with this false opinion and perverse doctrine, which overthroweth all the comfort of godliness, faith, and obedience to God.

Use 2. The second is, that every man then must try his title, what calling he hath. The trumpet of God is come and sounded loud in our ears; I mean, as it is Titus ii. 11, ‘The grace of God, that bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,’ &c. Not that it bringeth salvation unto all men, but unto all nations, to some of

every sort. Now inquire whether this grace be come home unto thy heart, what power thou hast against thy corruptions, what sanctification and calling thou hast.

Exception. There is no man, I hope, that from hence needs to gather any matter of despair or discomfort, for that which hath not been it may be. God may have a time for thee; for who knows, but even whilst now that we are speaking of calling, the Lord may call thee, and touch thy heart with a sense of his love. I say to thee, be not discouraged, for there may be a time for thee. But I say unto such who think they are called, Art thou called? Hast thou had comfort of thy calling? Deceive not thyself; look from whence thou art called; if he have called thee, as it is 1 Peter ii. 9, out of darkness, he hath called thee to light, yea, out of darkness into his marvellous light. Hast thou seen a rare light in the gospel? Hast thou seen what palpable darkness thou hast been in? Hath he enlightened thee now from darkness into holiness, that now thou delightest thyself to do the works of God? If thus thou be called, then hath he called thee 'to a fellowship in his Son.' Show me what conformity hast thou with him? Believest thou in him? at least, dost thou receive him offered unto thee? If thou receive him offered to thee, then cheer up thy heart, thou art called; so saith John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,' &c. What apprehension and feeling of this there wants, if thou hast received Christ, yet power is given thee to be the son of God, thou mayest have it.

Further, I say unto such, what peace hast thou obtained through him? Having him, thou hast peace; 'he is our peace.' Look what thou once wast, look now, what remission of sins, what dominion thou hast over them, what peace of conscience thou hast obtained! His blood hath a purging and a cleansing virtue to wash us from all sin, in delight, love, and approbation, as Heb. ix. 13, the apostle showeth, 'that if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified them, as to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God!' Hast thou then peace, and a clean conscience with God and man? Hath he made it clean? Hast thou seen thy sin and thy impiety? and hath he cleansed thee from it by means of life? Hast thou in thy body been dead, and then art thou alive, and quickened from the dead? Hast thou found thyself to be alive? If thus thou be called, thou, art also certainly justified. There is a calling and an election begun, that shall lead

thee to life and glory. Be of good cheer then: thou mayest rejoice in peace; thou art certainly called to glory and virtue.

Yet to go on; he says, 'called us.' This was necessary to be stood upon in particular, that a man might not be deceived of his estate. For as there are some who presume on false and no titles, having no right, so there are some who have good title to glory, yet dare not make claim to the same, nor have any comfort thereof: as, on the contrary, we see some will boast of faith, and yet not know what it meaneth; but a liking of godliness in others, a seeming show of it in themselves, haunting of good company, for some respects, and the like, makes a show of faith; when those others who cannot see their calling and election, nor their title, are indeed more happy. For whence is their discomfort? Not because they want a title, but because they see it not, for either affliction and crosses hath so slurred and dimmed the print, that they cannot for the present read it; or by temptations, Satan hath cast a blot upon their evidence, that they know it not; or their eyes are so full of tears, and their mind carried, that they cannot duly consider thereof, though indeed their title be good still. Even as a print of a seal, though the print be dimmed, and not apparent, yet is a good sufficient evidence in law, though it be not so fairly stamped, and the seal so evident, as that of other seals: so I say unto thee, be not discouraged though thy seal be smooth, and little; yet look if any measure of faith be in thee in truth, or any light of God have shined in thine heart, though there remain faith and doubting still in thee. This dims the print, but mars not quite the evidence; as though the legs and knees be not so strong as others, yet thou wilt not deny, but having weak legs and knees, thou hast such members as well as others, and art able to go; thou hast them in truth, though not in such strength as well as they; so I say, thy weak and dim evidence may be true as the strongest. When we desire for more, wish for more, endeavour for more, and are not content of that we have, in this case, the evidence is but blotted, we want not the title.

Use 3. The third is for instruction. If this be so, let not then any man dare to confound the external calling of men with the internal calling of God. You shall at some times see some men at a word of God falling suddenly upon them, struck as with a clap of thunder, and go away bleeding, as one struck on a galled wound; this affects much for the present, but continueth not.

So again, the calling of God by the ministry, breeds in some a certain amazement, when the majesty and glory of the word, overcoming our senses,

doth for the present ravish us with a marvellous conceit of the excellency thereof; as those in the Gospel, who having heard of the excellency of the kingdom of God, do thereupon send out this confession, 'Blessed are they that eat bread in the kingdom of heaven,' and yet in neither of these a true calling. A man, if he have no more, may have small comfort in either, save by the one he may be convicted, and by the other condemned. The market, indeed, by the preaching of the gospel, is set open, the banquet is provided, and the guests invited to it, but where is thy warrant to come? where is thy invitation? where is thy wedding garment? what answer canst thou make unto the Lord of the feast? where are the fruits of thy faith? where is thy sanctity? where is the sense of thy poverty and wretched misery? where is thy hunger and thirst, and desire of Christ? Look to this well.

Again, we must not think that the particular calling of men, either to magistracy or ministry, is this calling to glory and virtue; the first whereof, is to 1. Execution; 2. Action.

For if an outward calling to the ministry be sufficient, then Judas, who had such a calling to assist Christ in his ministry, and had, with the other, power to cast out devils, had this calling, Luke ix. 1. But he was not thus called; he knew it not, for if he had known it, he had been saved and lived.

Further, how precious this calling should be unto us, we may see, Luke x. 20, whereupon the seventy disciples returned rejoicing, that the spirits were subject unto them. Christ reproves them, saying, 'Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.'

Here is only cause of true joy. We know this was a great and excellent work, to subdue spirits and devils, to relieve poor souls, and in this to show forth his exceeding power, who had sent them; and yet all is nothing to this calling. Christ he wills them to look to their election, and rejoice therein, as though all other joys were in vain, until a man might rejoice in this.

Let not, therefore, a man rejoice in any outward calling only; nay, not in this, that he is called to be a minister in the church of God, without this particular calling.

By this then be sure to take thy warrant of rejoicing, fetch it out of this calling, that God hath called thee to glory and virtue, which is the next thing

to consider of; our calling to glory and virtue; I mean, a consideration of these things whereunto we are called, glory and virtue.

1. Glory. Glory is the end of all. The glory of God is the furthest reach and end of all things, and virtue is the way leading unto glory. Glory, the extent of glory, is set before virtue, the means and way thereunto: why unto virtue, and not by virtue, I have showed already, I will not now insist. The liberty of the Scripture is manifold in the like. Glory; what is glory? Glory with men is nothing else but an estate in the world, that draws amazement and admiration after it; this it is, not that which we look after. Of such a kind of glory we read, Gen. xvi. 13, of Joseph, whereof he speaks to his brethren, 'And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt.' This was a glory, and a glory, I confess, not to be despised, when God gives it as a favour and pledge of future glory, as it was unto him.

Further, we read of another glory, which was put from Moses upon Joshua, Num. xxvii. 20, where God said to Moses, that he shall bring Joshua before the priest, and shall put some of his glory upon him, and his Spirit, that he might be honourable before the people: this was the glory of endowments, but it is not that glory we inquire after. We read of another glory, Prov. xxii. 4, the reward of humility, and the fear of the Lord, is riches, glory, and life; neither is this that glory we inquire for, ours is of a higher strain. This glory then we speak of, is the reward of goodness, and is ever attended with virtue. For as shame and sin still go together, so do glory and virtue, -even by the testimony of the consciences of all good and ill men. The glory then we speak of is an eternal glory.

'Called to glory and virtue.'

It is not meant, when he says 'called to glory,' that a Christian is only called unto that, and unto nothing else by the way, but by the way he is called unto virtue, and by occasion unto afflictions. When God will give physic, humble, purge, and fit us by the way, then accidentally come afflictions and crosses, that if there be anything in us which hinders and makes us unfit for glory, these afflictions and crosses scour us, and purge away.

But God's end of calling us is unto glory; as 1 Thes. ii. 12, there they are exhorted to 'walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.' Rom. ix. 23, the children of God are called the 'vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory.' This glory is only of his mercy, from whence glory floweth unto us; mercy is the ground thereof. What shall I say

of glory? See what is written, Rev. xix. 9, when a voice came to him and called, 'Write,' what doth he write? 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' There was a glorious feast, full of glory; and then it followeth, 'These are the true sayings of God,' for to comfort and assure the faithful, of the excellency and truth of this happiness, and to stir them up to a pursuit thereof. Why thus blessed? Because by this marriage supper is meant that great, general wedding feast in heaven after the resurrection, where the King of glory and the angels are, where the Lamb's wife, as it is in the former verse, and all shall meet, at which all the creatures in their greatest glory, heaven and earth and all, shall put on new habits; for as a vesture shall they all be changed, Heb. i. 12; 2 Peter iii. 7, they shall be renewed. Here shall be glory, and surpassing glory, as it is written, 1 Cor. i. 9, then to be 'called unto fellowship with Christ;' yet more, as Rom. viii. 17, to be heirs; nay, yet a step more, to be co-heirs with him together in glory. Men cannot reward their servants thus, but it is the only excellency of our great Master, that he can make all his servants heirs, and all his sons kings. Thus as it is upon this strong tower, whereupon now we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; as it is called the glory of God, so, 2 Thes. ii. 14, we are stirred up to thankfulness for the same, as being called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, 1 Peter v. 4, it is there called a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And, finally, what use and advantage the faithful make of this glory against all the crosses, afflictions, storms, and tempests of this life, the apostle showeth; 2 Cor. iv. 17, saith he, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory.' The more affliction, the more glory. Our thoughts cannot bear nor reach to that exceeding depth of the apostle's conceit of glory.

But perhaps like unto some great glory of a prince, it may continue but for a day, though but a day in this great glory were a wonderful thing, and passing all the glory of this world. No, saith the apostle, it shall be eternal. What more? It shall be a load, a weight, an exceeding weight, of glory. Oh how the apostle grows full, and lifts himself higher and higher, striving to express a thing inexpressible! Why doth he thus, but to move our hearts, and ravish us also in exceeding admiration of the greatness of this glory?

What can be said more? If yet you desire to hear more of glory, consider we, if you will, 1, The place, where; 2, the company, 'with whom; 3, the title, what; 4, the time, how long.

1. First, For the place. It is heaven, the proper seat and mansion of all glory, where Christ is. So Christ speaketh in that prayer of his: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' This needs not much proof. So also 1 Thes. iv. 17, 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' Oh if the outside, skirts, and suburbs of the palace (the stars and planets, chiefly those two great lights, the sun and moon) of this great King be so glorious, that with our eyes we cannot look upon the splendour of the same, what brightness of glory is in the chamber of presence, innermost court, and sanctum sanctorum itself! And if now, in the state of corruption, where sin hath abated such a deal of their glory, these creatures are yet so glorious, what shall they be when they shall be changed and renewed in that state of incorruption? And if they then be glorious, how much more shall the glory of the Creator! Yea, when all the creatures shall put on their new habits, gloriously arrayed for this marriage feast; when the general kinds of all creatures shall be changed, renewed, and delivered from the estate of corruption and vanity unto the glorious liberty of the sons of God; for that they shall be delivered it is clear, Rom. viii. 21. So the apostle Peter speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, 2 Peter iii. 13; not new in substance or quality, but renewed and purged. I say, when the glory of all these creatures shall meet, renewed in exceeding glory, what a deal of glory shall be there, both in heaven and earth! And if the servants at that day shall be glorious, judge you what shall be the glory of the bride and bridegroom.

2. The second thing is the company, with whom. No chaff shall be there mingled with the wheat, no darnel shall be amongst the corn, no unclean thing shall enter therein or be amongst them, Rev. xxi. 27, but there we shall be with innumerable millions of God's holy angels; and not so only, but with Jesus Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, and God the judge of all, &c.; as the apostle shows, Heb. xii. 22. To which he showeth we are now already come in this life, and entered with them; but then is the full time, that we shall find the full comfort and perfection thereof in that meeting.

And therefore the Queen of the South's spirit did fail her when she had seen all Solomon's magnificency, his wisdom, the glory of his house, his meat, table, the attendance of his ministers, their apparel, &c., pronouncing those men and servants to be happy which might stand continually before him to hear his wisdom, 2 Chron. ix. 7. Blessed Lord, how great shall our

felicity be to be continually with our God, who is the fountain of all wisdom, and to behold his face continually in so wonderful a light!

3. Thirdly, The title, what. Not of creatures, or of servants, not so only, but of sons and heirs, and co-heirs with Christ. This, one would think, were sufficient; and yet the Scripture gives us others to the like effect, as that we shall be kings and priests unto God. What can be more? But what shall be our condition then in this so excellent an estate? Oh, who can tell? Surely I cannot. But as those spies who went to view the land of Canaan, by some of the grapes and fruits which they brought, did judge of the fertility of the land, so, I say, if by the word of God those first-fruits of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, those beginnings of grace, the divers working and operation of the same Spirit, those feelings and joys of the faithful raised thereby, peace of conscience, and all that which shines in the glory of the gospel, we may think of the same. If by these grapes, these fruits of our celestial Canaan, we may judge of our condition then, I will speak my mind to you. This we know for certain, that the image of God shall then be perfectly renewed in us, so to know and feel no more labour, no more pensiveness of heart, no more sin, sorrow, nor temptations, which shall all then cease, and then again to be holy as God is holy, I mean not in that habit of holiness he is holy, but in that manner. And so here we shall have a happiness beyond that estate of Adam's innocency; for at the best all he received was but a possibility to stand if he would, but we shall receive an impossibility ever to fall again.

So again, for our bodies, they shall have no manner of disturbance or subjection to corruption; then they shall know nothing but glory, glory within and glory without, all glorious. So the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 42, sets down the same of the body in four heads:

(1.) Says he, the body is sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption. Then no more mortality, nor tribulation, nor any sense of sorrow. Some interpreters have thought good to express this by the word impassible, signifying an impossibility of feeling any more hunger, cold, thirst, sorrow, and the like; in brief, not capable of suffering any more; for at first, sin brought in corruption, but then all sin being abolished, corruption, and all things thereunto belonging, must needs cease.

(2.) He says it is sown in dishonour, and is raised in glory. Thus we see how loathsome a dead body is generally to all, yea, even that of our dearest friends; we cannot then endure to see it. Some may say this is but passion for

friends which causes this. I grant, but yet generally there is an hatred naturally in all to look upon a dead body. Ay, but then it shall be a glorious body, a bright, shining body, as Mat. xiii. 48, 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

We see here how things of great splendour do affect and move us, as the heat and light of the sun, and the glory of the heavens, the moon and stars, and the like. Consider, then, how glorious thou shalt be, to shine as the sun in the firmament, yea, as the sun when he riseth in his might.

(8.) So again, these bodies, though lame, dismembered, disfigured, abortive, or what you will of the like kind, shall rise again without all deformities, caused either through want and defect of nature, or time; and therefore the apostle, though he say, 'it is sown in weakness,' yet he adds, 'it is raised in power,' strong with the qualities and necessities thereunto.

(4.) So also, lastly, the apostle unto the power addeth agility, nimbleness, spiritualness. It is sown 'a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;' subtile as it were, like a spirit, not unable by lumpish heaviness to move upwards, but being incapable of anything pressing downwards; a glorious body, not clogged with mortality; and the soul, no more imprisoned, then is swift, nimble, and spiritual. Not that I say it shall not then keep the bodily dimensions, to be a body truly, for it shall do so still, but by reason of alteration of qualities, swiftness and agility, so it shall be a spiritual body. And if the glory of the body shall be such, what think you shall be that exceeding glory of the soul?

A taste hereof we have set forth, 1 John iii. 2: 'For we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' What can be more? And, Phil. iii. 20, the apostle says, 'But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.' May some say, This is soon said; how shall this be done? He answers, By that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. If he hath power over all things, then hath he power to bring to pass this also.

4. Now we want but the time, how long. What can be said of eternity? Think what we can, this is ever beyond the reach of all our thoughts, only I may say thereof as it is Ps. lxxxvi. 10. If the prophet David did make be great account of one day, in the sanctuary upon earth, 'that he had rather be one

day in God's court, as a door-keeper, than be a thousand elsewhere, or dwell in the tents of wickedness,' what shall it be to be not one day in the court of heaven; for even but one day were a great happiness to be there; but to be there for ever, out of all time! For then, the angel in the Revelation, 'Time shall cease, and be no more,' Rev. x. 6. What is time, but the measure of motion, which, once ceasing, time shall cease also, and we shall have eternal rest. As no minute of time shall ever be that shall give any release to the torments of the damned, so shall there never again be any time which shall give the least intermission to the joys of the elect. Oh, where are our hearts? How should they be lift up to hear of these things; what should we leave undone that may be done, once at last, to have life eternal? Now I come to The uses. 1. If this, then, as is proved, be the only calling that we are called unto, unto glory and virtue, let us labour to acknowledge the excellency of the calling of God, and set a due price upon the same. Why stagger we herein? We are full of false fears, and discouragements, because we hear that 'all that will live godly in this world shall suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12; therefore we give back, and are shamefully dismayed; and yet what lose we by this suffering? for, saith the apostle, 'If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him,' 2 Tim. ii. 12. Is not, then, the reigning beyond the suffering? Oh but if it were to suffer only, it were somewhat! But herein we must war and fight. Oh but it is for a kingdom; would we be crowned and not fight? and in fight would we have no enemies? Ay, but we may be overcome in the fight. No, but we are sure to overcome. Who would not then fight? God, when he calls us to conquer, then he conquers for us, and he conquers in us; and, as it is Rom. viii. 37, 'We are more than conquerors in him.'

No man, we know, how base soever, even the greatest coward that may be, but he would fight, if he were sure to overcome. What cowards then are we. Every one of us would be reputed stout and valiant; where, then, is our valour, whereas every barking of a dog, as I may so call them, or every touch of a fly, makes us deny our master? Oh, the shame of our profession; what is this temporizing but to draw to lukewarmness, and so to denial, that we are ashamed in this or that company for these and these causes of our profession! Well, remember, if we deny him, he will deny us; if we be ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of us, Mat. x. 33. In this case, what shall, what can we answer him at that great day?

But if nothing in the excellency of this great calling will encourage us to war thus, yet let glory do it. 'Called to glory,' as it is Heb. xii. 2. Set glory

before thy eyes, this or nothing will make thee go on. Look at Christ Jesus, 'who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.' This will encourage thee to go on; and if thou so run that thou mayest obtain, so shalt thou in time be.

This is that which formerly hath been taught us out of the former chapter, Heb. xi. 10. Of all those famous champions, what made them hold out so in all their troubles and crosses but this, that they look at 'a better city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?' Here, therefore, stir up your fainting spirits to despise these base things you so delight in here, and look at glory; and to stir you up a little thereunto, give me leave to tell you a story which may help you to see what base delights we rejoice so in.

It is written of Caesar that, travelling in his journey through a certain city, as he passed along, he saw the women for the most playing with monkeys and parrots, at which sight, thinking it strange, he said, What, have they no children to play with? So, I say, it is a base thing for us to be so toying with these worldly delights, as though we had no better things to look to, when we are carried away with fair buildings, rich household stuff, riches, high birth, and the like; what are all these but monkeys and parrots unto this glory?

I confess, in themselves they are good things, but when these put Christ out of doors, and take up your heart so as we think most of them, then all is not well. Nay, even in the church, how are our hearts carried away from better things? When we see one with a better fashioned gown than we, one with a better plume, oh our hearts run on this all the sermon time, never resting until we have the like. If it be thus with us still, O God, where is our calling to glory and virtue? Where is that kingdom we aspire after, when we hunt so eagerly after these things, in themselves so vain, got with so much ado, kept with so many fears, and parted with with such a deal of sorrow, and thus forget that calling of him who calleth us to glory and virtue?

It were good, methinks, that every man, when he is a-going to these idle sports, should thus reason with himself: O my soul, whither now art thou a-going? to see such a show, to see such a fair house, to see this mask and yonder play, and this and that company? If these seem to delight thee, yet what are they compared to glory? Are they not all vanity? Why art thou so eager in vain things. Oh why are we told here of a calling unto glory and virtue, but to stir and lift our hearts unto the search of such a calling which

we are called unto, and in regard thereof to set a low price on all the things of this earth? There are many of you, I know, that dare not in your hearts say against that which I now speak, and yet you labour not for the same. Well, I wish you deceive not yourselves. Never think that you have learned anything, until your hearts be warmed and affected at these things. Oh worldly-minded men, and so taken up with the things of this life, with the base drudgery of this world!

2. The next is, to value the children of God highly for the graces of God in them, so judging of them. Not that I take upon me, as some have foolishly done, to judge and know certainly such a one to go to heaven or not. I determine not of such, only I mean that such in whom we see God's graces shine in a holy life, we must judge that such are called. And to what are they called? To glory, and eternal glory. You see how much ado we make here of great heirs, though we shall never be the better for them. How we do prize, embrace, dandle them in our arms, who at age never thank us again. If we delight so in these great heirs, why prize we not the heirs of heaven? why delight we not in God's children, who are greater heirs? Perhaps they are in their minority and nonage, yet are they heirs of heaven, kings and priests of God. But perhaps they are wronged and abused by some in this world, yet are they great heirs still. How darest thou despise or abuse any of these little ones? Sayest thou that thou art called to glory and virtue? Hast thou any portion in Christ, and despisest such? If thou wert called to glory, thou wouldst highly esteem of such.

3. The last is for consolation, a man that hath this calling unto glory, Oh how marvellously may such an one be joyful in all tribulations, sorrows, and crosses. Oh but, says one, I am in poverty, what shall I do? Stay a while, and glory will come, and thou shalt be rich as the best. Oh, may some other say, but I am tormented with sorrow and sickness, yea, am so loathsome, as doth make me stink in my own sight, and be a burden to myself and others,—a thing which may befall even God's dear children. Oh but think then even this loathsome vile body is appointed unto glory, and glory will come ere it be long. And so in my children and friends, in whose death, as a heathen said, we die often; yet I will rest in this, in that God hath taken them into perpetual rest, in that they are laid up in the bosom of my Saviour, and are heirs of glory. I will think them all most safe. Oh but grisly death comes; what of all this? This shall cheer me most of all. There may well be a little struggling, but I shall overcome: this shall be to me the door of life and rest. Then will I think and expect the bright morning shall come, and look for a

glorious wakening. So of all Satan's temptations, how many, mighty, or great soever they be, though they vex me sore for a time, yet I shall get double strength by them, having once overcome, for he who most wrestles thus hath most strength at last. All they shall make me but so much the stronger to contend for this glory; yea, all the sufferings of this life shall not be able to rob me of the same; for strong is my Redeemer to confirm me unto the end. What shall I say more? If we were not novices, and unacquainted in this our calling to glory, we could not be so distempered at our own crosses and losses, and those of others. What will not the hope of glory go through? Lord, so work upon our hearts, that we may know what the excellence of this our calling is to glory, that so we contend for the same.

## The Pattern of Purity

*And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*—1 John III. 3.

I shall not need to stand on any envious division of these words: if you please shortly for your memory's sake to observe these three things:

1. The workman. 2. The work. 3. The pattern to be imitated.

1. The workman is 'every one that hath hope in him,' every one that looks to be like the Lord Jesus in the kingdom of glory, he is the man must set about this task. 2. Secondly, The work is a work to be wrought by himself; he is a part of the Lord's husbandry, and he must take pains as it were to plough his own ground, to weed his own corn, he must purify himself; this is the work. 3. Thirdly, The pattern by which he must be directed is the pattern of the Lord Jesus his purity. Put him for a pattern, and instance; look unto him that is the author and finisher of our faith; as you have seen him do, so do you; as he is pure, so labour you to express in your lives the virtue of him who hath redeemed you. These be the three particulars.

Not to stand on curiosity, but to fall to the work in hand, the work is purity, 'to purify ourselves;' that howsoever this is a task which is now laughed out of countenance,—purity is become a nickname, those that will be thus are counted the scorn of the world, a reproach to men,—yet it is a point so absolutely needful unto salvation, that if thou despise it thou despisest thyself. If thou hast a hope to be saved, thou must do this; so that if a man do not purify himself, and take pains this way and overgo the scorns of the world, and cannot get the mastery, but will be kept out of heaven for a laugh of the world, he is worthy to go to his place, he is worthy of damnation.

But for the workman that God puts this task on, it is 'every one that hath this hope.' What hope is that, you see in the verse before. Now we are the sons of God; it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him as he is, that is, they they that look to be like to the Lord Jesus in glory, they must be conformable in grace. Wilt

thou be glorious as he is in heaven, thou must have the image of his grace on earth; so that if we will be glorious, we must be pure.

Thou must not continue with a common heart, as foul hands are called common hands in the Scripture, we must wash ourselves, make ourselves clean. Now from hence I observed in another place this doctrine, Doct. 1. That a man that is careless of purifying himself, that man must have no hope.

A harsh point, to bring a thing to desperate issue, but what shall we do? Shall we encourage men to that hope, that they shall carry with them to hell? May we say, thou mayest hope to be like Christ in glory, when thou dost not labour to be like him in purity in this world? We should betray souls. And do you know, this is the beginning of salvation.

When a man hath run hitherto in a naughty course, and now comes to be resolved in his conscience, that if he continue thus and thus, and alter not his course, he shall perish, I say the revolving of his conscience that way is the beginning of his conversion. When a man sees no hope, if he do not alter and turn, this will make him good or nothing,—I proved it from many places of Scripture,—so that, ‘he that purifies not himself hath no true hope.’ The point I then chiefly insisted upon was, to take away all the objections that the devil, and flesh and blood, could make to keep a man from purifying himself with a false hope, that surely men may come to heaven notwithstanding this hard task; I put to you the infiniteness of God’s mercy, the mediation of Jesus Christ, the intercession of all saints, all the prayers thou canst make, all thy cries to God in extremity, all thou canst say, I proved they should not help thee one whit. No; the more infinite God’s mercy is, the heavier his wrath shall burn against thee, that dost not prepare thyself to receive that mercy; thou hast counted the blood of the covenant an unclean thing. He hath washed us with his blood, but thou wilt not be washed; thou rejectest that blood, delighting in uncleanness, that it had been better for thee Christ had never been incarnate, he is so far from helping thee that he shall pronounce sentence of damnation against thee, ‘Go, thou cursed, I know thee not.’ If all the saints in the world should lift up their hands to God for thee, all will do no good as long as a man resolves to continue in iniquity: ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.’ If thou continuest in the course of the world, and wilt not take pains to cleanse thy heart, there is no hope of thy salvation; so that this is harsh, but I say it is true, it is a thing not possible to be altered. Heaven and earth shall pass,

before the truth of this I have delivered shall pass. That man that taketh not pains to purify himself, that man must have no hope to be saved.

Obj. But if a man object, How doth this stand true, as soon as men have this hope they purify themselves?

Ans. I answer, Where the Scripture speaks of hope it is a divine hope, a work of grace that shall never disappoint a man; for hope is upheld and sustained by faith, as Hebrews xi. 1. For what is faith? 'It is the substance of things hoped for.' It is that that sustains and bears up the thing hoped for; so that hope is a pillar that is grounded on faith. Nothing is hoped for but what is first believed, on grounds taken from the word of God. As in faith, there is a dead faith, and a lively faith; now it is not every faith that saveth, but only that faith that is lively, and shows itself by good works; as James saith, 'What profiteth it, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and not works? can that faith save him? No, James ii. 14. Therefore the Scripture speaks of a lively hope, as well as of a lively faith: 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath regenerated us to a lively hope, 1 Peter i. 3.

So that here is the difference between this hope and the other: the one hath for his foundation faith, laying hold firmly on the mercies of God it is as sure every whit; Christian hope, that divine grace, is a thing as certain and infallible as faith is; for all that is hoped is picked from faith, faith is the ground of the thing hoped for; so that if faith cannot be shaken, hope cannot, which is settled upon and sustained by it.

Now, on the other side, an impure man that walks on in iniquity, what sustains his hope? Faith in God's promises? No; see God's book if there be any promise made to such a one: 'The mercies of God are from everlasting to everlasting towards them that fear him,' Ps. ciii. 17. And in the second commandment, 'The Lord will show mercy to thousands of them that love him,' Exod. xxxvi. 7. There be promises that way, but where is the least promise, the least syllable in all God's book, that it thou continuest not in his fear he will show thee mercy? Nay, if a man say, I shall be delivered, notwithstanding I do thus and thus, the Lord will not show mercy to that man. Deut. xxix. 29, he says, 'Thou that thinkest thou hast a promise of God's mercy, and hast no word to put thee in hope, but to put thee out of hope, know the godly's hope is a work of God's Spirit in their heart, it is sustained by a promise;' faith in the promise makes it God's word, and cannot fail; but the hope of a wicked man is not upheld by faith in the

promises, but by a foolish, a presumptuous conceit that he fancies in his own brain.

Indeed, beloved, it is a mad conceit that he hath, that he may do thus and thus; a strong presumption clean contrary to all that God hath set down in his word. It is as impossible as that God should be forsworn, as in the song of Zacharias: Luke i. 70, cl seq., 'The oath that he swore unto our fathers, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.'

It is an old oath, God swore that if thou be delivered out of the hands of thine enemies, if thou be freed and rescued from everlasting damnation, God hath taken an oath that thou shalt serve him. Now for a man that will not serve him in holiness and righteousness, and yet persuade himself that he shall be delivered from his enemy, what hope is this?

But you will say, 'If hope be so certain, what difference is there between faith and hope, if one be as sure as the other.' Many will grant, we may hope for salvation, but doubt whether they may believe it, they think they be many things come between this and that. But I say, it is a foolish distinction in respect of the point of certainty, for the certainty must force be the same, for nothing is hoped for but it is first believed.

'Faith is the substance of things hoped for,' giving the strength and sustentation to it. Therefore, Heb. vi. 19, it is called 'the hope which we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil,' that for certainty and reliability giveth as great firmness as the anchor doth to a ship, that keeps it from wavering; and the reason is, hope is not like the anchor cast downward, but upwards, entering into that within the veil, is pitched on Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation. Therefore, if we go by sea while we are in the sea of this world, this is it that bears us up against all surges and billows., But to the point propounded, that I may not forget to show what is the difference between faith and hope, if one be as sure as the other. I answer, 'The difference it is not in certainty, but in another respect, that is thus: faith is a thing that hath neither time nor place, but makes anything present. It puts a man as it were in real possession of eternal life; when he believes he hath it, he is in heaven already, but now hope carries us in expectation of it. There is a difference between them, we must stay in the mean time; for now 'it doth not appear what we shall be.' Now are we the sons of God, and faith apprehends that certainly, being an

heir, I shall have a kingdom in heaven, faith puts me in real and actual possession of that great inheritance. But stay a while, you are not there yet, 'it doth not appear what we shall be;' then comes hope and qualifies that. Oh that I should be here born to so great estate, and yet be scorned and despised in the world, and kept so long from it; here comes hope and quiets it. It is a patient expectation of that which is firmly believed by faith, that is the difference between hope and faith. Read Rom. viii. 24; there the apostle points to that difference, 'Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' As faith, so hope is of things unseen, hope is certain it shall enjoy the thing unseen. Where is the difference then? Faith puts me as it were in real possession of it, the other makes me patiently to expect the full performance of it. If we hope, we do certainly expect. This distinguisheth these two virtues so near. And then this patience is a thing described by hope: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Remembering without reasoning your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.' So that this patience, this expectation, this waiting, as it were, of God's leisure, is the thing that stays the stomach in the mean time, and that that doth distinguish this divine hope from faith. It is not the certainty, for they are equally certain, but the one brings always with it a settlement of the heart, with a patient expectation of the full fruition of the thing hoped for.

Then what follows? Nothing is so certain as the accomplishment of God's promise. He that builds his hope on faith in God's promises, nothing is so sure as he shall attain his desire. On the other side, he that builds his hope on the presumptuous conceit of his own brain, there is nothing so certain as that man's hope shall be vain, as Rom. v. 23, 'We,' saith he, 'have peace with God;' and not only so, 'we glory in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.' What is the meaning of that?

Beloved, it is as much as if he had said, there is a difference between divine and human hope. The one hope is, when I repose confidence in the promise of a man, and when I look for the thing hoped for, the man breaks, so that my hope cannot be firmer than that I grounded on. It breaks, I am ashamed and confounded, that I did repose my hope and confidence that way; for this, see Job vi. 15, in the winter time, there comes land floods: 'My brethren,' saith he, 'have dealt deceitful as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are black by reason of the ice, and wherein the

snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish away: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their ways are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded, because they hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.' In the winter time, when waters abound and there is no need of waters, there will be a mighty stream, but in summer being parched with heat, he turns himself thither, and there is no water to be found, he is ashamed; when a man's hope is disappointed, it makes him ashamed.

Then here is the difference between the hope of God's child, that purifieth himself, and of an impure person; when the time comes he shall have need of hope, his hope is gone, as this hope will, that he shall be saved, though he purify not himself. The devil may continue it as long as he continues, but come to death, there is the difference, he is ashamed and disappointed. You see, Prov. x. 18, which is cited there, 'The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish;' that is, thou mayest hope for salvation, as well as God's children, but what is the difference? 'The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.' Again, chap. xi. 7, 'When the wicked dies, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of unjust men perisheth.' So they have a hope, but a hope that shall perish as well as themselves, that shall be quite gone at the time of their death. Therefore, Job xxvii. 8, saith he, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' Give me that hope that I shall have the comfort of when God takes away my soul. Now, while thou art in this world, thou hast a hope as strong as God's child, and thou wilt not be beaten from it, but when the Lord takes away thy soul what wilt thou get by it? It shall stick upon the world without end; it shall vex and gnaw thy soul, that thou shouldst stick to a hope that deceived thee.

So you see what a case a man is in that takes no pains to purify. We can speak no more to a man's discomfort than to tell him thou canst have no hope. It is said of the Gentiles, before they knew Christ, 'they were strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, being without hope in the world,' Eph. ii. 12; and that is thy case. Let not the devil feed thee with a false hope, and say thou shalt be like Christ in glory, though thou art not like Christ in purity in this world. It is false, it cannot be; thou art in the case of a very Turk, notwithstanding thou hearest much of the Lord Jesus; thou hast received baptism, yet as yet there is no hope for thee unless thou repent. I beseech

you, as you tender your own salvation, yield to the truth of God's word. Let not Satan lead you on, and train you to destruction, to think that things may be otherwise than this preacher speaks, as the oracles of God. If we say that a man that purifies not himself cannot have hope, this is confirmed in heaven; whosoever hath this vain hope shall be ashamed. Therefore every one that hath this divine hope, that looks to be saved, to be like Christ in glory, he must without delay purify himself. So much for the workman.

Now, to come to the work. Then, what is the work? 'To purify himself.' 'Every one that hath this hope,' &c.

Doct. 2. Whosoever hopes to be saved, must set himself upon this work, to purify himself. But here is as great a difficulty as the other. Doth it he in the power of a man to purify himself? That is the work of God; and that David knew well enough, as in the 51st Ps., ver. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;' and we know it is the great purchase of Christ; they are purified that are purchased by him.

You must not make one truth of God to destroy another; therefore, for the clearing of it, consider what the apostle writes to them: Philip, ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Mark how one depends on another, and then you shall see these things may stand very well together: 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' We must go about the work; but why so? 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

The meaning is, God doth not work things in us or with us, as we do with a spade or a shovel; that is, that we shall be mere patients only, but he works with us suitably to the reasonable soul he hath bestowed upon us. He hath given us understanding and will, so, though the Lord be the first mover and worker, and that we are not able to do anything, yet notwithstanding, as soon as God's grace hath seized on us, presently it puts us on doing; what God worketh in thee, thou must work thyself.

Therefore know, that when God finds a man at the first, when he is without grace, he is not able to stir, nor to do anything; talk of purifying himself, you may as well talk to a dead man. When God first visits with grace, we are not able to work, to do anything, why, we are stark dead; as it is said, 'And you that were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened,' Eph. ii. 1, so that God comes first, and finds a man stark dead. He may work natural

works, civil works, moral works, but to do works he shall find in heaven, to lay a foundation for the time to come, he is able to do nothing of that; for things of heaven, he is utterly dead in sins and trespasses. Therefore, John v. 25, it is said, 'The hour is coming, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and as many as hear his voice shall live;' that is, the force of God's quickening Spirit, the voice of Jesus Christ coming to a dead man, the powerful word of God, seconded with the lively Spirit of Jesus Christ, this finding a dead man conveys life into him, that presently he begins to hear and see. Though first there be an influence of life coming to us from Christ Jesus, yet presently, as soon as life is infused, wherein we are more patients, presently, I say, as soon as the life of grace is come, we hear, and do, and work, though God works the first act of a man's conversion, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' saith God; 'if any man opens, I will come in;' as soon as grace is infused, let me come in, Christ is there, and thou wert not aware of him.

But as soon as a stock of grace is given, presently, thy will must work, and thou must say, Lord, come in; he knocks as soon as thou hast grace, he enables thee to give a will, that thou mayest open. Though principally God, yet there is a concurrence between God and thee; and this is grace, when thy will is made active and able to do things, that now the things done by God's grace are attributed to men. Ezek. xviii. 31, God says, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' make you a new heart. So in 2 Cor. vii. 1, saith God, 'Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' So that here is grace indeed, when thy will is enabled to open to Christ, to repent, to believe, to pray to Christ thyself. This is a thing needful to be stood on, because many will be very willing to hear that on God's part; Oh, if God will send grace, that they may not be put to take pains, then all is well, they like that well. But if thou hast hope, thou must work thyself, not as if thou didst it of thyself, no, God hath given thee ability, he hath given thee life, he would have thee go about thy business, he gives a stock whereby thy will is freed to do so much as God will accept; thou shalt have power to do that which God will accept of as well as the best service. I always remember that place, Rev. iii. 8, 'I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.' Mark, oh, if I had so much grace as others, I would purify myself; nay, but hast thou any strength, a little

grace? Be not a dastard, a coward, but resolve in the work God hath called thee to and then thou wilt do it.

‘Thou hast kept my word,’ a little strength and a good heart will do it. Thou idle servant, that which thou countest little is a talent, it is a gift fit for the great King of heaven and earth, it will carry thee far, if thou hast not a deceitful heart; if thou hast an upright heart, God giveth thee strength, that thou mayest purify thyself, as he is pure. But wherefore serves grace?

If the Lord have given grace, he will not have thee idle, but this grace frees the will, that thou must go about the work with success. Therefore, I beseech you, that ye be not deluded by this, so making one truth oppose another. When the Son visits with grace, thou art free; wherefore comes the Son? To make thee free. Thou hast thy will bound up, thou couldest not affect the ways of God; the Son of God hath freed this will, and now requires that thou shouldst use it, to purify thyself as he is pure; so for that point it is clear.

Now for this, that a man should purify himself, what need I bring many arguments; if the first will not do it, nothing will do it; if thou doest not, thou art lost, there is no hope.

1. This must be done; and then, 2. It may be done.

Therefore God gives his Spirit and grace, that though the work comes originally from him, ‘For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it,’ Ps. cxxvii. 1, yet if a man say, I will do nothing except the Lord build the house, let him build it if he will have it built. No; the Lord will have it built, but thou must be a workman. ‘The foundation of God standeth sure. The Lord knoweth who are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,’ 2 Tim. ii. 19. The foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth who shall believe in him. There is a privy seal put to this, ‘the Lord knoweth who are his;’ but there is never a seal, but this purging that is for letters patent that be open; this is not a close rule, but thou mayest view and read it thyself; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ There is the broad seal, whereby I may know that I am one of the number, that I shall appear in glory when Christ appears. Therefore if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared for every good work.

Mark how a man works actively and passively. He is 'prepared and sanctified for the master's use,' but is he a mere patient? No; he must purge himself from these things. So there must be an active and passive working. When the Lord hath done the first work, the Lord looks thou shouldst put thine hand to, and be doing; but I say, there is no hope if I do not take pains, and therefore I must of necessity purify myself. All the matter is now, seeing it cannot be avoided, it must be done, and is facible.

How may it be done?

Resolve on the thing, that it must be done, and then I will give directions how to do it. The examples of the world are like a stream that carries a man clean out of the way of purity; but seeing there is no way but that I must, through good report and bad report, what must I do then?

1. Remember we come to do service to a Father; that is, for encouragement. God did of his own free accord, not for any goodness in us, cast his love on us; he hath adopted thee for his son; he puts thee about his work; he will spare thee, as a man spareth his own son. This is thy case, thou art not like a mercenary servant, that is only to earn his wages; thou hast it by inheritance, because thou art a son, and the Lord looketh for filial, and no servile service of thee. If a servant doth not his work, the master puts him off, and takes a better; but God doth not stand with thee on the strict observance of the law, as if he were to reckon with thee for wages, the Lord requires that thou do thy best, and the Lord will spare thee. Go truly and painfully about thy work with the strength God hath given thee; the Lord will spare thee, and will not turn thee off, and take another, but will deal with thee as with his son; he takes it in good part when thou doest thy best: that is for thy encouragement. The keeping of God's word, as he will accept, may be done with a little strength: then how shall I do?

(1.) First, Go to the fountain; let the cock run. What is the fountain of all cleanness? The blood of Christ; as Rev. i. 5, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood.' There is the first thing, begin with faith. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that must wash me from sin. Thou must not go like a moral man, to labour by multitude of acts to get a new habit; but thou must work from another principle: all this cleansing must come from the blood of Jesus Christ. And how may I apply this? By faith. So thou must go every morning, and present thy soul before the Lord, and look on him crucified, and say, Lord, thou didst shed thy blood to cleanse my soul from the spots of sin; have faith, rinse thy soul, as it were, in the blood of

this immaculate Lamb; apply the blood of Jesus Christ not only for justification to free thee from the guilt of sin, but let faith work, as it may be applied for sanctification, to wash away the spots and pollutions of sin. This is certainly the most effectual means that can be imagined. Go to the well-head; look to that main and principal beginning, like a Christian, and not like a moral man; that though thou art polluted and defiled, yet the blood of the Lord Jesus will purge thee from all sin, spot as well as guilt, as we see written, Heb. ix. 13, 14; 'For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.' Mark that. You talk of a purgatory: there is the purgatory. That true purgatory is the fountain that is laid open for the house of Judah to wash in: serving not only for expiation of thy sin, that it shall not be laid to thy charge, but it serves to purge thy conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It is as effectual for sanctification, being applied by faith, as it is for justification.

Therefore, as I may speak with reverence, make thy breakfast, as I may say, every morning, of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, and this will give thee more life, more ability, and strength, the multiplying and continual repetition every day of the act of faith, laying hold on Christ's body broken, his blood shed. It is a most effectual means; try it, and you shall find the experience of it.

(2.) No means in the world so effectual than, when a man would go to Christ, to look to his ordinances. What are they? His word and his sacraments. Come like a Christian, and not like a moral man. Go to the fountain for justification and sanctification where it may be had, thou shalt find then greater effects than ordinary. Then for the word, it is an effectual means whereby we may purify ourselves: we may read Eph. v. 26, 'Even as Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word.' The blood of Jesus Christ washeth thee, there is the main washing; but notwithstanding, there be certain conduits and pipes, whereby the virtue of this is conveyed. Christ doth sanctify and purify thee, by washing, by water, by the word; so that when a man comes with faith in his word, in his promises, this is a special means. Note one place more: John xv. 2, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' 'Now you are clean through the word that

I have spoken unto you:’ nothing is more plain; the word of God taken with faith is a special ordinance, whereby thou mayest come to purify thy heart. But how is that? How may I apply the word thus?

1. First, Consider the word of God is a word of power. When thou comest to the ministry of the word, remember that God hath made them able ministers of the Spirit, not only of the letter. Christ is with them to the end of the world. They are not only such as do prescribe barely this and that, and give no strength. No; we are ministers sealed: the Lord accompanies the external ministry of the word with the internal power of his Spirit, that when thou comest to church, thou comest only for the ordinance sake; the Lord hath pleased to make that a door of grace effectual, and he shall not only barely command, but he shall be a minister of the Spirit, shall enable me to do the things God requires. Oh, if a man come as to a market of grace, and say, Lord, thou, thou hast commanded me to come, and to expect from their mouth the donation of the Spirit, thou hast touched their tongue with the fire of thy blessed Spirit, to show that that shall be a means to convey grace. Now if a man could come thus, the word would go far, and be very effectual, whereas we come now to hear rather a lecture of moral philosophy than for God’s Spirit.

2. Again, The promises in the word of God, when thou dost apprehend them spiritually, they are a wonderful means to purge. Many think that they should apprehend only the promises of justification. Nay, faith extends; wheresoever God hath a tongue in his word, there faith hath an ear to hear, and a hand to lay hold on. The oath that he swore to our forefathers, that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life: there is a word God hath sworn, that I shall serve the Lord Jesus; and beloved, if this be a word of truth, and if my faith can apprehend and apply it, notwithstanding many difficulties, though there be oppositions of men and angels, I am yet to wrestle with principalities and powers. But look to the Lord, the Lord hath sworn thou shalt serve him, all thine enemies shall not hinder. Where is thy faith now? Bring faith to this promise, this oath of God: and what will it make a man do? It will make us go out against all oppositions, though we have walls of brass and chariots of iron against us. But hath God said they shall go out?

Lay hold on that; believe that as firmly as thou wilt believe the promise of justification. So the word of God will be made a wonderful effectual means; only let us come, like believers, like true Christians, and the Lord will

do wonders, above all we can imagine and think, if we can come in the right way. Well, that is the word.

3. But the Lord hath appointed his sacraments. It is a strange thing that the first sacrament of regeneration there should be so little use made of it. It is a popish error, and cannot be yet weeded out of men's hearts. They think, what is in baptism? It washeth away what is there for the present, but it serves for no other matter to purify afterward; a gross and popish error. You must know it hath virtue and effect, that must be made useful for cleansing thyself even at this hour: as Rom. vi. 1-4, 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life.' Mark how the apostle fetches his ground and foundation from baptism, not as past, but as having present operation and force. If thou hast faith to overcome thy corruptions now, the force and effect of baptism is in thee; it hath a regard for the time to come, as well as for the time past; therefore say, Lord, thou hast appointed thy blessed sacraments, to be a seal for the confirmation of thy promises which thou hast made, that I should be washed; Lord, I present thy word, thy own seal; I beseech thee, make it good to my soul. So that if a man look to his baptism, and present it to the Lord, I say, it will be a more effectual means of cleansing thee, than if thou look back, and apply it only for thy present state at the time of baptism; and be of the Lord's Supper. But I cannot go to particulars, these be the main things.

First, Remember to whom thou goest, to a Father; then go to Jesus Christ, then to his word and promises, then make use of his seals and his blessed sacraments, sue God of his word and deed, challenge them, and when thou art thus prepared.

3. Then go and read a lecture to thyself of watchfulness. What it is to watch, that implies when a man is in great danger to be surprised, that all is untrusty within him, and false abroad; then reason, I had need of a strong watch of every side; I have a false nature, and this flesh of mine is ready to betray me into the hands of the world and of the devil; therefore there must be a marvellous strong guard. I must not suffer my affections to rove, that is the way to bring in the devil, even seven devils, whereas if I keep a watch all will be well. James i. 14, it is said, when a man is tempted, he is tempted of

his own lust, but is he not sometimes with the world and the devil? No; all the temptations of the world and devil will do no hurt. Look to that within; there is a concupiscence; the world and devil cannot tempt thee but by working on thine own lusts; therefore look to thyself within, that there be no parley, no intercourse between them. Make a covenant with thine eyes, with thy tongue: perhaps thou wilt go to a place where there is nothing but filthiness; is this watchfulness? Dost thou know the corruption of thine own nature? 'Be not deceived, evil words corrupt good manners;' put what gloss thou wilt upon them, evil words show an evil heart, and evil words and an evil heart, hid before in the cinders, now make a great flame. Therefore seeing this corruption will not be wholly weeded out, yet it must be kept under, that the forces without may not join with them within.

Oh, much ado we have to keep ourselves from being surprised within. Then suppose the devil comes not as to Eve, but to Adam, for Adam's temptation was more dangerous than Eve's. If the devil comes in his own colours, then it is nothing, every one will flee from him; but he comes as to Adam, by the woman, perhaps by a friend, by a great man. Let us know when there is any temptation, any motion this way, this is a way to let in these and these enemies: as 2 Kings vi. 32, 'Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him, and the king sent a man before him; he said to the elders, see how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away my head, look when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?' Mark, let this be thy case: within, thou hast a false heart; there is danger without; one comes and entices thee to do this and that; what shalt thou do? Shalt thou entertain and listen to, and suffer this treacherous motion to enter into thy soul? Let not thy lust lay hold on it within, then care not for a thousand devils, for ten thousand worlds, for 'the -feet of his master follows, his master' the devil will be there presently, on the first motion.

A man that hath this resolution to suppress sin at the first motion, as soon as it is born,—resolving, I will shut the door, there is the feet of the devil behind, that will murder my soul,—shall find comfort. And then again, a man that is resolved not to live in any known sin (perhaps there be some sins of infirmity that will stick to a man's soul), but there be sins that waste the soul, uncleanness, swearing, extortion, and especially such sins as we are subject unto by our calling, and the course we follow, utterly unlawful and unwarrantable, and known by the word of God to be so. As if a man make a trade of living on usury, this is a sin goes with me all the days of my life; it is

with me waking and sleeping, a main sin that compasseth me round. If thou mean to purge thyself, thou must not live in any one known sin, for that wastes grace. When a man multiplies sin, he increaseth the stock of original corruption. There is nothing more sure than that we say, that original corruption is equal in all. It is true naturally. Every man's face answereth to his neighbour's, as face to face in water; none better than the other; but though there be an equality that way, I may add weight myself. Two men are weighed, they are just alike heavy; but if one of them contract his spirits, he overweighs the other; if he add his will to his natural poise, he is heavier than the other. So, notwithstanding, the wickedness of sin is perhaps as much in one as another; yet when I use my will, and multiply and repeat, that is a sign that custom of sin hardens the heart, and makes the stain and spot grow deeper, that now thou canst not wash it out. Therefore be sure, if thou wilt go to heaven, that thou do not continue one hour in any known sin, for the more thou dost, the more thou strengthenest thyself in sin.

I should now go to the third point, the pattern to which we should conform ourselves. The glass we should imitate is our Saviour Jesus Christ, as he is pure. It is not meant thou shouldst ever hope to be as pure in quantity. As is not a note of quantity, but of quality, it shows a likeness.

'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;' that is, as by the angels in heaven, cheerfully, readily, and willingly, though not in the same quantity; so that the life of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the word of God, must be our pattern. But you will say, How am I able to attain to this? I answer, the law of God prescribes to us a perfect form of obedience, though it be not possible for me to fulfil it, and so the life of our Saviour Christ, we are not able to express the virtues in him, and his purity; yet there cannot be a better pattern than the law, and the life of our Saviour Christ.

A man that would have his child to write a fair hand, he will not give him an ill copy to write by, but as fair as may be, though there be no possibility the child should write so well as it. So we cannot possibly attain to that purity in Christ, yet the copy must be fair. Scholars, if they will have an elegant style, they set the best orators before them. Thus, though the law of God be perfect, though such a thing as a man is not able to fulfil, yet it is a fit pattern; the copy must be fair, that I may mend my hand by it.

And thus, if we go on following our pattern, as the scholar's hand, by practice, mends every day, though it never come near the copy, so shall we grow in grace; for, as the prophet speaks, 'then shall we know if we go on in

knowing,' Hos. vi. 3. A Christian must mend his pace every day, as he learns his Master's will, so to be transformed into the image thereof, that the virtues of God may shine forth in him, that his 'path may be brighter and brighter unto the perfect day,' Prov. iv. 18, and towards that measure of the age of the fulness of Christ Jesus.

## The Beast's Dominion Over Earthly Kings

*For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, to give up their kingdoms to the beast, until the word of God shall be fulfilled.—Rev. XVII. 17.*

The occasion of this day's solemnity hath been long and well known, and we have often in this place spoken of it; and it were a thing not unseasonable for the day to set out in its lively colours that facinorous act, which will scarcely be credible to posterity. It exceeds my conceit to set it out in the right colours. I have therefore taken a text tending that way, and serving for our present purpose.

It pleaseth our blessed Saviour, out of his love to his church, not only to give directions what to do and what not to do, what to believe and what not to believe, but to foretell likewise all future calamities, that so the church might be fore-armed, and might not be surprised with terror upon the sight of some sudden or strange accident, as especially the flourishing estate of Antichrist. He therefore foretells all, both the beginning, the growth, the strength, the proceeding, and at last the destruction of that man of sin.

The church in this world is always under some prophecy, it is always under somewhat that is unfulfilled; for until we come to heaven, there is not an accomplishment of all prophecies.

This Book is a setting down of prophecies of future events to the end of the world.

This chapter sets out in lively colours the state of the pontificality, the state of Rome, under the bishop of Rome, the pope, and not the state of Rome under the heathen emperors. It sets down likewise the judgment of God in this life upon this beast, and upon the whore that sits upon the beast.

The description is large in the former part of the chapter. It would take up a great deal of time to unfold that; but because I have divers other things to speak of, I will pass that by.

The judgment of God upon the beast and whore, is set down partly in the verse before the text: 'The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast

shall hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give up their kingdoms to the beast,' &c.

Here the judgment is set down, what it is and by whom it shall be: by the ten horns, that is, the ten kings. And, secondly, what they shall do; and that is set down in order.

First, These ten horns, these ten kings, western kings, 'they shall hate the whore.'

Hatred is the beginning of all actions that are offensive; for it is the strongest and stiffest affection of ill, as love is the strongest of good affections. 'They shall hate the whore;' it is not only anger, but hatred.

'They shall make her desolate and naked:' that is the second degree. They shall leave her; they shall strip this strumpet of her ornaments and strength, whereby she set out herself.

'They shall eat her flesh:' that is the third. That is, what they have given her before to enrich her withal, that which made her in such well liking, that which commended her, that which is her living, the riches of the pope's clergy, gotten, most of it, by ill means, they shall take from her.

But that is not all, but there is a higher degree than all this: 'they shall burn the whore with fire.'

So that in the foregoing verse you see is set down what the judgment is, and who shall be the executioners of this judgment.

But why must all this come to pass? He riseth to the highest cause: 'God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree with one consent to give their kingdoms to the beast.' God afterwards put into their minds to hate the beast.

So that in this verse is the severity and the mercy of God, his justice and his goodness. His severity in putting into the hearts of these kings to agree with one consent to give up their kingdoms to the beast. A great judgment so to besot them. But here is a limitation of that severity at last, till the time come, until the word of God shall be fulfilled; that is, until they shall cease to be thus deluded by the bishop of Rome, and then they shall begin to hate the

whore as much as ever they were deluded by her, 'and shall eat her flesh, and consume her with fire.'

For the explication of these words, they being somewhat hard, I will spend a little time to unfold them. And, first, I must show who is this beast.

'For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give up their kingdoms to the beast.'

The beast is mentioned in three places in the Revelation: in the ninth chapter there is mention of the beast coming out of the bottomless pit; and in the thirteenth, of the beast that rose out of the sea; and here in this seventeenth, of a scarlet-coloured beast, 'having seven heads and ten horns.'

The beast, in a word, is the state of Rome, sometime under the heathenish emperors, sometime under the pontificality. The question is, Whether the beast here spoken of be the state of Rome under the Roman persecuting emperors before Christianity prevailed much, or the state of Rome under the usurpation of the bishop of Rome?

I answer, undoubtedly it is here meant of the state of Rome as it is upheld, the whore; the beast, that beast; for it is meant here of one that seduced by lying miracles, of one that should come in a mystery, of one that should deal with fornication and such courses.

Now heathenish Rome, it overcame men by violence and by force, and not by whorish insinuations, by drawing them on to idolatry. It is said in the fifth verse that upon her forehead was a name written, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots.' Babylon in a mystery, and this mystery is a great word too with them. The mystery of the mass; in everything there is a mystery; all their ceremonies are mysteries. This word 'mystery' therefore, in the forehead of the whore, showeth what beast it is that is here meant.

It is observed by divers writers, that in the frontlet of the pope's diadem there is written this name, 'Mysterium,' as in Julius the Second's time; but afterwards, when they smelled that he was construed thereby to be the very whore, they razed out that, and put in Julius Secundus, &c.

'And she sits upon many waters.' 'She sits.' Mark, the Spirit of God will not suffer us to err. What is the regiment of the pope called?

‘Sitting.’ Such a pope sat so long; the whore sits in the very phrase. And what is the seat called? The see of Rome, the see of antichrist. Divers other particular things there are to show that he means Rome, that is, the state of Rome under the bishop of Rome, to be the beast here spoken of.

Especially considering the connection of this chapter with that following, where is set down the final destruction of this beast. Now we know that heathenish Rome ended long ago; therefore that beast which is here meant must needs be that which follows in the next chapter, and therefore it must needs be Rome as it is under the bishop, the pope of Rome.

It is said in the thirteenth chapter that this beast made the former beast to speak, did enliven and quicken the former beast. So indeed this beast, Rome considered under the pope, which succeeds that beast, Rome as it was under the Roman emperors, quickens the former beast; for now all is as glorious as ever it was in heathenish Rome. For after that the Goths and Vandals had possessed Rome, the pope put some life into the empire of Rome, and did himself become emperor. For indeed the emperor of Germany, though he be entitled King of Rome, yet that is but a mere titular thing; the eagle is deplumed of her feathers, of her authority; it is only the title he bears. And if any emperor come to Rome, the pope will make him swear fealty; and he must not long stay in Rome, he cannot endure that.

And it is well said in the Revelation that this beast is the image of the former beast, for the pope is altogether like the emperors almost in everything. For the emperors were crowned, the pope for failing hath three crowns; the emperors had their scarlet, this is a purple-coloured whore in scarlet. They spake the Latin tongue, and forced all nations almost to speak Latin, as a monument of their slavery; so all in the popish church is in Latin, their prayers in Latin, all in Latin, even for the simple and sottish people to use. Ancient heathen Rome had their grave senators, the pope hath his cardinals. The heathen emperors, as Domitian and others, would be adored as gods; so likewise is the pope of Rome adored. And mark the slight, he hath a crucifix upon his feet, and kings must kiss that; and so with adoring of the cross they adore his person, as they did Heliodorus, that heathen emperor. Thus in everything almost they agree with ancient Rome, and in many other things I might run over their likeness to the former beast.

Now this beast, to describe him a little better, that we might know what these kings did, when they gave up their kingdoms and thrones to the beast, it is said in the thirteenth chapter that the dragon gave power to the beast.

The dragon is the devil; and as he wrought effectually in the former beast in heathen Rome, to make war with the saints, so is this beast, pontifical Rome, stirred up, and acted by the devil, the dragon, to persecute the church. So that this beast hath the power and the spirit of the dragon, the devil himself.

And that you may discern that I do them no wrong, consider how the dragon and this beast, which is moved, and led, and acted by the spirit of the dragon, agree in their courses. I will name two or three to you.

The dragon's course is to make us distrust God. You know how in paradise he taught our first parents to distrust the word of God: 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,' Gen. iii. 5. So the force of popery is to dishonour and to discredit God's truth, to put out the people's eyes, to lead them blindfold, to make the Scripture a matter of error and heresy, and bid the people take heed of it; as if God meant to deceive them, to go beyond them in giving them his word; as though it were not a word of salvation. As the dragon himself said to Christ, 'If thou wilt fall down and worship me, all these will I give thee,' Mat. iv. 9, so the pope takes upon him the dragon's power. These that will be good sons of their church, these and these preferments will he give them, when he hath as much right to them as the devil had to those.

The devil fell from heaven at the preaching of the word, at the preaching of the gospel. The apostles, when they returned from preaching, told our Saviour that they saw Satan fall down like lightning. So antichrist falls by the preaching of the gospel, by the breath of the Lord's mouth. He is not able to stand before it no more than Dagon before the ark. The word preached is as fire to consume him. So he is like the dragon in that.

In disposition he is like the dragon. The devil is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, the father of lies. So likewise the pope is a liar; all popery is nothing but lies. Therefore, 2 Thes. ii. 11, it is said, 'they are given over to believe lies.' Popery is a grand he. It is a he in the primacy; for it came in by forgery and intrusion. It is a he in purgatory, which is a mere conceit. It is a he in their miracles, which they have devised to maintain their false worship with. It is a he in their works of supererogation, that they can fulfil more than the Law requireth. So that all popery, consider it distinctly from our religion, because they have that which we have, and some patches of their own, consider it by itself, it is a mere he.

Besides that, they maintain the doctrine of equivocation, which is a he, a justifier of lies, which is worst of all.

And to murder: this present day and occasion tells us that murders come from them. Their doctrine maintains it; and they make orations in commendations of traitors, as Sixtus Quintus did in praise of him that killed Henry the Third, king of France, and the bloody massacre of France is pictured up in the pope's court. As the devil is a liar and a murderer, so is this son of the devil, who is led by the spirit of the dragon; in disposition they are alike.

In course of life they are alike. The dragon is said to draw the third part of the stars of heaven down to the earth; that is, to draw men which were as the stars of heaven, to make them deny their religion. So this dragon, this pope, the instrument and vassal of Satan, he draws the third part of the stars from heaven, and he draws men from the love of the truth by preferment and honour. Men that are learned, men that are otherwise of excellent parts, he draws them from heaven to earth; that is, he draws them from the knowledge of the truth and goodness to earth, and lower than earth too if they do not repent, even to hell itself, from whence he came. Thus I might go on to show that this beast is Rome under the pontificality, and not Rome under the heathen emperors; likewise that this beast is acted, led, and guided by the spirit of the dragon, by reason of the resemblance which it holds parallel with him in these and other things. So much for explication of this beast.

But why is the state of Rome called the beast?

Daniel first knew the great empires: the one of Babylon, called a lion; the Persian monarchy, a bear; the Grecian, a leopard; but here in this chapter is a strange beast, that hath all the cruelty and fierceness of all those monarchies, called therefore a beast for her fierceness and cruelty.

God's church, they are sheep and lambs. Christ himself the Lamb of God; the opposite church of antichrist, a beast, a cruel beast. If you go to plants, God's church are lilies; the opposite kingdom are thorns. If you go to fowls, God's church are doves, turtles, mild and gentle; the opposite church are eagles and birds of prey.

But I say they are called beasts for their cruelty. The state of Rome under those heathenish emperors was a beast; and in those ten persecutions

the emperors are rightly called beasts. So likewise Rome papal is a beast. Our religion, true religion entertained, makes of beasts men; the true knowledge of Christ alters their natures, turns lions into lambs, as the prophet saith, Isa. xi. 6. But the popish religion, it makes of men beasts, makes them worse than themselves. For these gunpowder traitors, many of them, as they were by birth gentlemen, so their dispositions were gentle and mild, divers of them, not of the worst dispositions, only that bloody religion made them worse than their nature was. So I say papal Rome is a beast, and popish religion makes men beasts. run Well, I will not enlarge myself in the uses of this point, because I shall speak of it afterward, if the time will give me leave, only this, have nothing to do with this beast, keep out of her paws, keep out of her claws. A lion, or a cruel beast, may seem to be calm for a while, but a lion will, as we say, show a lion's trick once a year. Meddle not, therefore, with this beast. It is a beast. So much for that, what the beast is, the state of Rome under the bishop of Rome.

‘For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give up their kingdoms to the beast.’

Whose? The angel sets down in the verse before, ‘the ten horns, the ten kings, the ten western kings.’ Whether it be a certain number for an uncertain, or whether it be a certain number, I will not dispute of now, but take it so as it cannot be disputed against, a certain number for an uncertain. A number of the western kings gave up their kingdoms for a while to the beast, until the word of God should be fulfilled.

But mark the phrase, ‘God put it into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast.’ Will God put it into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast? Why, then, the pope of Rome need not pretend Constantine's donation, that he three hundred years after Christ gave unto them many territories about Rome; but they may depend upon a higher donation, ‘God put it into the hearts of the kings to give up their kingdoms to the beasts.’ Here is a higher title than the donation of Constantine.

But we must know that this is not meant, as if God gave him a right by putting into the hearts of the kings to give up their kingdoms to the beast, but God seeing these ten horns, these ten kings to be in a sinful estate, who deserved to be left of him, and to be given up to further illusion, and by withdrawing his grace to give them up to the occasions of sin, so this seducing beast and whore, he put into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast.

But this must be a little cleared. Is God the author of sin? 'God put it into their hearts.' He did not only rule the events, 'but he put it into their hearts,' &c.

I answer, the phrases of the Scripture are well enough known in this kind. 'God gave them up to a reprobate sense,' Rom. i. 21. The falling of the people from Rehoboam, it is said, 'it was of the Lord;' and God bade Shimei rail. Divers such phrases there are in the Scripture. How must these be understood? Thus: not that God doth allow or command any thing that is evil, much less that he doth infuse any evil into men, so that when it is said he put these things into their hearts, here is neither an outward command nor an inward infusion. What is it, then? Here is a finding of them in an evil and sinful estate, and God useth that evil, and mischief, and wickedness that he finds to his own end and purpose; he infuseth no malice or evil, but finding of it, he useth it to his own particular end and purpose, and makes way and vent for it upon particular occasions. These ten kings, he infuseth no love of superstition into them, but finding them evil, and not as they should be, subjects of his kingdom, and mis-liking his sweet government, it was just with God to give them up to be slaves to the beast, and by consequence to the devil himself, that spake and wrought by the beast. So I say God took away the impediments, and opened a way to their evil disposition. He used their evil disposition to this or that particular thing, even as a workman that finds an ill piece of timber, he makes not the timber ill, but when he finds it ill, he useth it to his own good purpose; and as a man, it is Luther's comparison, as a man that moves a horse that is lame, he doth not put lameness into the horse, but useth him to his own purpose being lame, so God, finding these men evil in the general, he directs this ill into particular courses, to work itself this way and not that, in this particular action, not in that. For God, although he be not the author of evil, yet he is the orderer of it; and he determines and directs it both to the object and also to that end which he pleaseth, In a word, consider sin in three distinct times: before the commission, in it, and upon the performance. Before, God doth not command it, nor infuse it, but disallow and forbid it. In the sin, he permits it to be done.

How? By subtracting of his grace in not working, then by offering occasions that are good in themselves, and thirdly, by tradition, by giving men up to Satan; as here the beast is given up to Satan, and the kings are given up to the beast. So that God gives men up by subtraction of his grace, and by tradition; and then he doth uphold them in the committing of sin,

upholds the powers. And when it is done, applies them to this particular, and not to that particular. In the doing of it, he limits it, he sets the bounds of it, both for the time of it, as also for the measure of it, as here in the text, 'Thus long shall the ten kings give up their crowns to the beast, and thus far shall they go, until the time come that the word of God shall be fulfilled.' So he limits sin in the committing of it, both for the measure and also for the time. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the back of the righteous,' Ps. cxxv. 3.

Thus you see the meaning of the words, 'God will put into their hearts that is, by withdrawing of his grace, which they deserved by their sinful courses; and offering to them this man of sin, this beast, which shall come with such efficacies of error, so that his grace being withdrawn, and they given up to the devil, to Satan and the beast, they shall without doubt be deluded and seduced, but with this limitation, until the time come that the word of God shall be fulfilled.

I might be large in this point, but it is not so suitable to the occasion, only somewhat must be said for the unfolding of the text. So much, therefore, for that.

'God put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give up their kingdoms to the beast.'

They agree all unto it; and therefore it was not a thing done by force. Rome and the heathen emperors did compel men, did overcome men by force of arms. These agree. It was a voluntary and a free act in them. Necessary it was in regard of God's judgment, but it was free and voluntary in regard of themselves; for with one consent they gave up their kingdoms to the beast.

Thus having unfolded the meaning, we come to observe some truths and conclusions that do arise out of the words. I will not mention all, or the most that might be observed, but only some special.

'God put into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast.'

Here, first of all, from this ariseth, God's special providence in ill. In the greatest evil that can be, there is his special providence apparent:

‘God put into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast.’ Observe here many acts of his providence, the withdrawing of his grace, the giving them up to Satan, and to ill occasions; the presenting them with good occasions, which, meeting with an ill disposition, makes them worse; for good occasions meeting with an ill disposition makes it worse, makes it rage the more, as the stopping of a torrent makes it rage and swell the more; as also the limitation of all this, ‘until his word shall be fulfilled.’ Thus in this work, heaven, and earth, and hell meet in one action. Thus it was in that great action of the crucifying of our blessed Saviour. There is the action of God in giving his Son to be a sweet sacrifice, and the action of Judas, and the devil in him, betraying of Christ, and the action of the soldiers in crucifying him. Saint Augustine, in the unfolding of this point, of the providence of God in evil, observes how many may concur in one action, God without blame, man without excuse. God without blame; he finds men ill, and leaves men deserving to be left; he takes away his grace, and as a judge gives men up to Satan. Man without excuse, because man works willingly: ‘They with one consent gave up their kingdoms to the beast.’ That is the first.

The second is this, that the will of man may be swayed by divine governance, and yet notwithstanding work most willingly and freely.

Here God puts into their hearts to do this, and yet they willingly and with one consent gave their crowns to the beast.

God first hath his providence in ill, and then that providence is such that it doth not rob man of his liberty, because God finding man in an ill course, he forceth him not to this or that particular ill, but directs him only: ‘The hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters,’ Prov. xxi. 1. A man when he findeth a river of water, he doth not make the stream, but only makes way that it may run this or that way, as it pleaseth him. So God finding the hearts of kings, or the hearts of any, as the rivers of water, he opens vent that they should run this and not that way; that they should be given to this, and not to that. Here is the action of God, and yet the free liberty of man.

But how could this be free, when they could not avoid it?

I answer, They were not privy to God’s directing; they worked not in conscience of God’s moving, but they followed their own lusts and will. Between God’s work and man’s will there is always sin. God never works immediately in man’s will; for man’s will is free, but man’s sinful free will is

the next cause in sin. Although God put it into their hearts, yet he found them sinfully disposed.

And then, the judgment is not bound or tied. The hearts of these kings told them that they might give their crowns or not give them to the beast. Their judgment saw they had reason to do it, though their judgment were corrupt. So a sinner sees reason to do this or that, and although it be corrupt reason, yet it moves him at that time. His judgment is not bound up, but God lets his judgment be free, though he take away his heavenly light, and so he judges perversely. That is the second.

The third is, that it is a terrible judgment of God to be given up to a man's own will, to leave a man to his own consents.

It is here spoken by way of judgment, that 'God put it into their hearts to give up their kingdoms to the beast.' And indeed so it is a terrible judgment.

There are some objections to be taken away for the clearing of this weighty point.

How is it a judgment or a punishment when it is voluntary? 'They willingly gave up their kingdoms.'

I answer, The more voluntary and free a man is in sin, the more and greater the judgment is; and as when sin is more restrained, either inwardly by the Spirit, and by the conscience, or outwardly by the laws and terror, the more mercifully God deals with men. So the more free the current of the disposition runs in ill ways, the more wretched a man is.

Yea, but will the heart of some atheistical person presently say, What punishment is it, as long as I have liberty in evil, and meet with no hindrance in my courses, and feel no harm, but rather the contrary, as many that get their riches by ill means, and those great papists, those great usurpers, we see what estates they get to themselves?

I answer, Spiritual judgments are so much the greater, by how much they are less sensible, because if they be not sensible to us here, they will be the more sensible to us hereafter. And those that have their will most here, shall suffer most against their will hereafter. It is the greatest judgment in this world for a man to have his will in sinful courses. He that shall make an idol

of his will, especially a man that is in great place of honour, that shall make all ways serve for the accomplishment of his will when he hath it, he is the most miserablist man in the world; for he that hath his will most in courses unjustifiable, shall suffer most against his will when he cometh to a reckoning. Such men therefore are the more miserable, because such taking themselves to be absolute persons, and their ways the best ways, though they have many determents from their base courses, yet they will hear no counsel, and therefore the harder to be reclaimed. It doth not therefore take away from their punishment, but rather aggravate it.

I beseech you, let me press this a little, that these judgments are great judgments, although we do not feel them, when with a free consent we give ourselves unto ill. It is a heavy judgment when God leaves us to our own lusts, and takes away the guidance of his Spirit. We had better that God should give us up to the devil for a while to be tormented; we had better be in hell, if a man might come out at a certain time, than to be given up all our life-time to do with our own consent and will, that which is liking to our own will and lust, because by yielding to our own will we yield to the devil that rules in a man's affections and will. For a man's affections, when they are carried to evil, they are the chariots of Satan. When the devil sees excessive sinful affections, as excessive sinful joy and delight in sinful pleasures, he being about us, is always carried in these affections, and carries us also strongly in the ways that lead unto eternal perdition.

We judge, when a man suffers some outward punishment, as casting into prison or the loss of his sight, oh, he is in a fearful case; but what is the case of a man blinded by Satan and his own lusts? a man that is a slave to his own base affections, and by consequent to the devil, which rules in his affections, and so consequently to damnation? a man that lies under the wrath of God, that hath no heart to repent? If a man had spiritual eyes to consider the case of that man, he would never pity so much the case of those men that suffer outward losses, as he would pity those which he sees to live, and oftentimes to die, in evil courses of life.

This should therefore be an use of direction to us, that seeing we hear that God rules the hearts of men; that he takes away his Spirit, and leaves men to occasions, we should pray to God to rule our hearts himself. Lord, take thou the rule of our hearts, to govern them thyself. It was a good prayer of the ancient church: 'O God, from whom all holy desires and all good counsels do proceed,' &c.. Indeed, it is he from whom all good counsels do

proceed. These ten horns, they were ten kings. No doubt but as they were men of great place, so of great parts; but without God's Spirit, without his light, the greatest and the wisest man is but mad. He is as a man out of his wits, puzzled in darkness, and knows not which way to go. When God gives men over to their own lusts, to their blind affections, they lead men to judgment, and they must needs fall into the pit.

Let us desire God to put into our hearts holy desires, holy purposes, for from him all holy desires come. Let us desire him not only to govern our estate, and to preserve our bodies from danger, but, Lord, keep thou our hearts. We cannot keep our hearts of ourselves. Do thou bend our understandings, bow our affections and our wills, that they may run in the right way.

And to stir us up to this the more, we must know, that that evil which we do not, we are beholding to God for, as much as for the good we do. Why do not men, having an ill disposition and corrupt nature, do ill? Because God offers not occasions of ill. If God should offer occasions, they would commit the evil as well as others. It is God that puts into men's hearts to hate that evil. If God should take away his Spirit, men would not hate evil when occasions are offered, as these men did not when the occasion was offered: 'They gave up their kingdoms and thrones to the beast.' So that we are beholding to God for all the ill that we do not; either it is his not offering occasions, or else his giving us strength in the occasions. This we forget. We are apt to say, This wicked man hath done this; this good man is fallen into this; this man hath done that. But where is our devotion at this time? We should rather say, Lord, it was thee, for causes thou best knowest; for if thou hadst left me, especially when occasions were presented and offered, and there was a correspondent corruption in my heart to close with the occasion, I had fallen into the like sin. It was thy keeping, and not my goodness.

One thing more; the beast is expressed before in chap. xiii. to be led by the devil. So that howsoever the devil, who by St Paul is called the god of this world, and the pope the subordinate vicar to the devil, and so by consequence he is the devil, for the devil, the dragon rules him. Howsoever, I say there be the devil, the god of this world, and the pope in this world, the vicar of that dragon; yet there is but one monarch, one that rules all, both devil and pope, and all the wicked limbs of both to his own ends. It was God that put it into the hearts of these kings to give up their kingdoms to the beast. It is he alone that is absolute, that gives up the liberty of the chain,

both to men and devils: thus far they shall go, and no further. It is a good saying of the schools, That there is no ill so ill, as there is good that is good: there is not any ill so strong as God is good, but every ill must come under the government of God. The devil himself, nor the vile heart of man, cannot go out of his rule, yet may run out of his commandments. But then it runs into his justice. He may go against the revealed will of God, but then he runs into his secret will. There is no ill in that degree that God is good; but every ill is in somewhat, and from somewhat, and for somewhat, that is good, as it is over-ruled by God. The crucifying of Christ, which was the worst action that ever was, yet it tended to the greatest good, viz., the salvation of mankind. So this giving to the beast of these ten thrones by these ten kings, it was a sin and a punishment of their sin; but it was for a good end, as we shall see afterward, if the time will give leave.

This should teach us absolute dependence and subjection to this great God. They need fear no creatures that fear God. They need fear no devil, nor Turk, nor pope, nor all the limbs of them; for God is the absolute monarch of the world. He can do what he will; and if God be on our side, who can be against us? It is said he is a wise politician that can make his own ends out of his enemies' designs. The great governor of heaven and earth can do so. He can put a hook into the nostrils of the leviathans of this world, and can draw them and rule them as he pleaseth. They may do many things, but it shall be all to accomplish his ends and purposes. They shall do his will. God put it into the hearts of these kings to fulfil his will; he put it into their hearts to agree to give up their kingdoms to the beast, and so they did submit themselves to antichrist for a great while.

In the next place, it is expressed how this came: 'They gave their kingdoms to the beast.' We are to see how far faulty these kings were, and how far faulty the pope, the beast, was, to whom they gave their kingdoms. For it may be objected that these men they did but obey God, for he put it into their hearts; and for the pope, they offered their kingdoms to him, and who would not receive offered gold? But here is a deal of devilish deceit. For, first, God gave them over to themselves, and they gave themselves and their kingdoms to the beast. What then was sinful in them? This, to give their kingdoms to the beast.

This, they betrayed their kingdoms. Here is a wrong to God, a wrong to themselves, and a wrong to their subjects. A wrong to God, whose vicegerents they were. Did he give them their kingdoms to give them to his

enemy, to give them to the beast, and by consequence to the devil? Doth God raise up men to rule that they should enthrall themselves and their kingdoms to the beast, to give them to God's enemies? No; kings reign by him. The pope saith, By me. Is their constitution of men? No, kings reign by God; they derive their authority from him: 'It is he that hath power over kings,' Dan. ii. 21. They reign not if he will, and they may rule if he will, by his will permitting, else no man can reign. 'By me kings reign.' If, then, they reign by him, it is a treason against God to betray the kingdoms that he hath given them into the hands of his enemies. It is a wrong to Christ. Whereas they should kiss the Son by kisses of subjection; as princes use to do in the eastern countries, to fall down and kiss their sovereigns' toes, they do in this the clean contrary.

Here is a wrong to themselves. They betray their own authority; that when God hath made them kings to rule they will be slaves; and it is a great sin for a man not to maintain his standing, as it is well observed by his Majesty, who, if ever prince did, doth vindicate himself, and challenge his regal authority: and it shall continue, and make him live even to the world's end. It is the greatest sin for a man to betray himself. Every man is to maintain that place and standing that God hath set him in. These ten horns they wronged themselves and their place; God made them kings over their people, and they become slaves to an antichristian priest.

It was a great wrong to their subjects. Kingdoms, we know, follow their kings; and if Jeroboam make Israel to sin, all Israel will quickly sin. Diseases come from the head; if the head be naught, there will be a disease in the body ere long. A greater stone being tumbled down from a hill, it carries lesser stones along with it: so great kings, when they fall themselves, they draw their kingdoms after them. Therefore the phrase of the Scripture is, 'God put into their hearts to give,' not only themselves, but their kingdoms, to the beast. For commonly the idol of the people is their king, and, being led by sense and not by faith, they fear him more than they fear God; and their own restraint more than they fear hell; and so they come to this damned religion by depending upon him. Therefore it is a wrong to the people, knowing they are so slavish by nature and wanting faith, are fearing, terror-led by the present command of their king. Thus it was a wrong in these kings every way.

But the pope, the beast, what was to blame in him? He did but take that which was offered him. 'They gave their kingdoms to the beast.'

I answer, Indeed, he took that which was offered him, but he abused these kings, he abused the Christian world. He had no title to these kingdoms, but was a fraudulent possessor of them, because he came to them by a slight. He raised himself to the popedom by the ruins of the empire; for, upon the divisions of the empire, the emperor having enemies in the east, he was fain to rest in Constantinople, and thereupon Rome being much neglected, at last was overrun by the Goths and Vandals; and the pope, taking occasion of the absence of the emperor, set up himself, thus raising himself by the ruins of the empire; and then, he being established, set up Pepin, father of Charles the Great, and put down Childerick; who, being a weak prince, he deposed, and set the other up, that he might gratify, him so. So he colloqued with princes. And then again, he won respect and authority from the horns by diabolical and vile courses. For, first, he abused their understandings, keeping them from the Scriptures, and then he abused their affections, and drew them this way and that way with toys. They gave him great matters, and he gave them indulgences and pardons, and consecrated grains, and such like things. ‘ Then again, he would oft force them to yield by excommunications, and many false titles of Peter’s successor and Peter’s chair; so, by the terror and dread of excommunication he awed them.

Again, he wrought by subtilty, joining with one prince against another, setting one against another; and, if he joined with any party, he had such a slight that he would be sure to make him a slave to the papacy, one way or other, or else he would excommunicate him; and then, before they should be absolved, they must either pay a great sum of money, or else they must go such a voyage, or set such men or such on such an enterprise.

And then again, he gave dispensations to sell souls; and so men might do what they would, they should have pardon, otherwise they should have excommunication.

And then again, he had preferments for the sons of the horns; cardinals’ places for their second sons, that they should be great princes; he had high places for them.

Then again, he laid his foundation on false grounds. He would be universal bishop; and the church could not err; and all of them must fetch and determine of their matters from him; and appeal must be made to none but to him; and in certain cases none could satisfy the conscience but him. So that he greatly raised his authority by these false and cozening means; and all that yielded to him were a deluded company of people, that were deluded by

the false and subtle courses he took. And therefore, although they gave their kingdoms to him, yet he possessed them by a fraudulent title; the means he used were diabolical.

Well! we see here the judgment of God upon the Christian world. It was not only a judgment upon these kings, as they were kings, but God punished the people's sin in the slavery of these kings to the beast.

See here the judgment of God upon kings and princes for not esteeming, as they should do, the glorious gospel of Christ; for they, both princes and people, had it, but they esteemed it not, but delighted in untruths; therefore God gave them up to believe lies.

We are not, therefore, over much to pity our ancestors. Though they deserve pity, yet we excuse them overmuch this way; for certainly God is just in his judgment, who, seeing them delight in lies more than in his truth, took away his grace, and gave them up to this beast, that they should give up their authority, both prince and people, to him. And because they would not be ruled by God's will, thinking themselves wiser than he, he appointed them to be ruled by one that should be ruled by the devil; for the devil was in the pope, and who would serve the devil if he knew it? But because they would not yield unto Christ's sweet government, therefore he gave them over to a government fit for them, even to be governed by the beast.

I beseech you take notice of this point. When we entertain not the glorious gospel of Christ, the good word of God, that word that declares salvation unto us, and which is an instrument to work grace in us, to fit us for heaven; that word that is the seed and the food of our new birth, the evidence of our inheritance; that good word which is the greatest jewel under heaven; when we do not value that, it is the greatest error that can be, and it is just with God to give us up to this and to that error, if not unto popery, yet unto some one error that the devil is in, and contrary to the Spirit of God. Do ye think, if a master should see his servant take ill courses, and would not do according to his appointment and admonition, that he would not leave him to take his own course, and so let him do his own will, that thereby he might see his folly in not being ruled by him? So it is just with God, when he sees that we do not make much of his gospel, of his soul-saving gospel, that we will not have that alone, but traditions with it, and that, besides Christ, we must have other mediators, as if Christ were not rich enough, it is just with God to give both prince and people up to the beast. Let us, therefore, make much of the gospel. What moved God to give up the eastern empire, those

glorious churches in Saint John's time, unto the Turk? Nothing but this: they did not value the gospel. What moved God to give up those western kings to Romish antichrist,—for those two, the Turk and pope, are twins; they had their beginning at once, about seven hundred years after Christ,—what moved this, but only, when God had dealt graciously with them at the first, and gave them his truth to save their souls, which is the most comfortablest thing in the world to have God discover what he means to do with us, and what he would have us to do, when he discovered his will to them, and saw them leave his will, saw them leave gold, and take dross, prefer the traditions and wisdom of men before the wisdom of God, it was just with him to give them up to believe lies.

‘They gave their kingdoms to the beast’ (mark the limitation here ‘until’) ‘until the word of God should be fulfilled.’

I see I cannot make an end of the test. A little further, and so I will conclude.

Here is an ‘until;’ here is a stop. The devil and the beast had their time to seduce the kings, and the kings had their time to be seduced, and to give up their kingdoms, but God hath his time, Christ hath his time. Christ gives his enemies time, and then takes time himself, ‘until the time that the word of God shall be fulfilled.’

We see here, then, a mixture of mercy with justice; that after God had given them up justly, not only the eastern empire, but also the western kings to the pope, yet notwithstanding here is an ‘until.’ God limits ill not only for the measure of it, but also for the time of it. God at length turns the stream of things; so that these kings that were thus abused and baffled by this man of sin, this beast, at last they grow wise, by the instinct of God, and hate the beast as much as ever they loved her.

So, then, this is the point, that the same God that by divine providence gave way to these kings to abuse the doctrine of the gospel, and that gave way to these people, that were unthankful, to yield themselves in such slavery to the pope, yet notwithstanding, in mercy, God at the last put into the hearts of these kings to withdraw their necks from this yoke, and to put their necks under Christ's yoke.

This ‘until’ hath had a beginning many years ago, for we know, to omit other kings of other countries, King Henry the Eighth, of famous memory,

take him without those things we cannot upbraid,-5 now he was a man of great and excellent parts, as he was of great vices. He was an excellent instrument of Christ to unhorse the pope, to shake off his government, to hate the whore, and to eat her flesh; that is, to overthrow the monasteries, those cages of unclean birds, and those Peter pence, those exactions; for indeed the pope made England his ass to bear his burdens. It would move any man's patience to see how pitifully the popes of Rome have abused this island, so that we may now truly say, as Christ saith, 'If the Son make you free, you are free indeed,' John viii. 36. Christ hath made us free, the gospel hath made us free, and ever since the coming of the gospel we have flourished. King Henry shook off the yoke first, and after him King Edward, and after him Elizabeth of blessed memory, and now our gracious king. So that this 'until' it begun long since to hate the beast, and to eat her flesh. One thing there is yet undone, 'to burn her with fire.' If they hate the beast, and eat her flesh, this will come too, to burn her with fire; even the ten kings that were subject to her before shall do that.

We see wickedness shall not thrive always. It shall not always be night, but the sun shall arise at the last. Impostures shall not always abuse the world. Their madness shall be made manifest at length, as Paul saith, 2 Tim. iv. 18. This is our comfort, that there is an 'until,' a time prefixed of God to discover and to lay open all impostures; and now the time is come that most of this should be fulfilled. Some of these words of God are fulfilled. The beast is hated; and now the beast is known to be the beast, to be cruel. Witness the blood of saints, the murder of kings, those horrible acts that are allowed from Rome. The beast, I say, is now discovered and hated.

The affections that are due to the beast is hatred. If ever we hated anything, we may hate the state of Rome. It is a beast, and the object of hatred, and ever was; and if ever, I say, we hated anything that was deservable of our hatred, it is that. Why? Do we not hate a harlot? Do we not hate an old strumpet, an old painted strumpet? Do we not hate her that is a bawd? There was never bawd, there was never whore, that did the thousandth part of that harm that this bawd, this beast, this whore of Rome hath done, drawing so many thousand souls to hell.

Of all the judgments that ever were since the beginning of the Christian world that God hath visited the pride and wickedness of men with, there was none so grievous as to suffer this man of sin to rule in the church. The

spiritual judgment of the papacy it is the greatest judgment of God that was ever inflicted upon any.

We hate them that misuse us under the pretence of love, that cheat and cozen us, and we delight in their punishment. There was never cheater, never cozener like this. And surely so God hath fulfilled his word, that she is hated even in our children, that know but the grounds of religion, to whom Christ hath shined by the evidences of his truth, that have the Spirit of God in them. They hate those impostures, those abuses of Christian religion, with which this beast hath deluded the Christian world, which shows that they have a contrary spirit to the Spirit of God. And indeed so they have; for, besides their own base government, they maintain the corruptions of men, feeding the pride and vanity of men's natures with outward, formal, empty things; so that the very weak ones, even children, now they hate the whore, hate her impostures, hate her cruelty, hate her lying, and all.

I see the time is past: I can go no further, but will draw to an end, only a little to stir us up. Shall God then reveal and discover this painted strumpet, this bawd, and shall we labour to conceal her ill? shall we daub, shall we make her better than she is? Shall we hinder God's purpose? God's word is, that she shall be revealed; the princes shall hate her, and consume her with fire. Let every one of our purposes help God's purpose, and providence, and decree in this point. That this shall be, it is God's purpose; and whosoever stops it, certainly they bring the judgment of God upon them. Those that would rear up Jericho again, we know what befell them; and they that rear up Rome, that begins now to be discovered, they bring the judgment of God upon them. God will perform this as well as he performed the other. As he put it into the hearts of these kings to betray their kingdoms to the beast, so he will put it into their hearts to hate the whore.

Now that we may hate her, let every one labour in his place: ministers in their place to lay open their impostures, their cozenings, and all their filthiness, whereby they deceive the people; magistrates in their place to countenance the ministers, to see the laws executed as they may. These that through ignorance are seduced, that are not Jesuited, for there is no hope of them; but others, their persons many times in the policy of state may have favour, but not their religion.

Let us all take heed that we grow in knowledge: let us labour to make more of the gospel of Christ. The more Christ appears in glory, the more antichrist will appear in shame. Let us labour by prayer, and not give God

over by prayer, to plant the love of the truth in our hearts, to entertain the truth with love, to value it according to the respect it deserves at our hands, and let us labour to be moulded into that truth, to obey it; else, though we have it, yet if we do not love it, if we be not transformed into it, though our wits and parts be never so great, we may be seduced to error. God gave over these kings, men of great place and of great parts, —because they did not love the truth,—to believe lies.

My purpose was to have showed the danger, if we do not further God's purpose in discovering this wicked antichrist: a state wherein the devil, the dragon, is effectual, and this book wondrously sets down the danger. It is another manner of danger now to relapse, and to apostatize, after the appearing of the glorious gospel of Christ, than it was a hundred years ago under darkness; and we know it to be so. Of all the judgments in this world it is the greatest for God to give up a man to decay in his love to the truth, to affect this cursed religion, that the sentence of God hath passed upon, and it must be fulfilled, 'That they shall hate the whore, and burn her with fire, that she shall be left desolate and naked.'

But you may object. Alas! how is that likely to be, when we see now what strength the beast hath gotten, and how he ruffleth in the world at this time; how he triumpheth and trampleth the poor church under his feet?

Well, it is but a living before death. Undoubtedly Babylon is fallen, it is 'fallen,' saith John in his time, Rev. xvi. 8; that is, it is as sure to fall as if it had fallen already. The word of God hath said so. The power of man cannot hinder it. He hath put it into the heads and hearts of the kings to betray their kingdoms; he shall also put it into their hearts and heads to hate and burn the whore with fire at the last. It must be so. The angel said it was done, as if it were done already. It is as sure as if it were done. Therefore let us never take scandal at the flourishing state of the enemies of the church abroad; let us never dislike our religion for that. Babylon is fallen. The time will come when it shall be done. Heaven hath concluded it, and earth cannot hinder it; no, nor hell neither: God hath said it, and shall not he do it? It is the word of him that is Lord of his word; because he is Lord of hosts, and Lord of the creatures. It is the word of him that is Lord of lords, that is Lord of heaven and earth, Lord of all things. He hath said that Babylon is fallen; and therefore it must be so, he being Governor and Lord of all things, and of his word too, that can make all things prove serviceable to his purpose. Let us comfort ourselves, therefore, as if it were present, and not take offence at the

state of the beast, and the whore's flourishing, but present him to yourselves as he is set out in the text. See him growing, see him rising, see him decaying, and at last see him cast into the bottomless pit, to burn in the lake of fire for ever. It is, you see, the word of God from heaven, that he is fallen, and cast into the earth as a millstone, and shall never rise again. He shall never quicken again. Heathen Rome was quickened by papal Rome: the pope quickened the former beast; but there shall never be beast after this Rome, and therefore he is said in this chapter, 'to go into destruction that is, he, and his state, and all without repentance, shall so go into destruction, that there shall never be other beast.

And that that shall help this destruction forward, shall be the course that themselves take. God as he hath decreed their destruction, so he hath appointed that their own plots, which they have devised for their own maintenance, shall turn to their confusion. Do you not think that the ruin of the pope will be by the Jesuits, who are grown, by their pressing themselves, and by their pragmatistical meddling into princes' affairs, by their drawing and assuming all business to themselves, and by their striving and bringing all to their profession, to such hatred of the world, that even these means, which they themselves take, will be the means of the overthrow and downfall of popery? As the counsel of Ahithophel was the means to infatuate him, so their own courses will cause their own overthrow.

In the powder treason, they thought they had been made for ever, but God turned their wickedness upon their own heads. And now in these later times we may see that God takes his cause into his own hands; and you know who spake it by observation, Haman's wife, 'If thou begin to fall, thou shalt not prevail, but shalt surely fall before him,' Esther vi. 13. So if God take the matter into his own hands, as he hath done already, let them fear. For they shall surely fall and not prevail, Until he hath wrought his work in Sion; until he hath thoroughly purged his church, they shall prevail. There is a little time allotted them, but it is nothing. Let us see by the eye of faith what this book saith of them, that they shall be destroyed; and let us look on the courses they themselves take which will cause their destruction. Was there ever anything that weakened popery so much as this desperate attempt that we now celebrate this day? Indeed, if we go to an ignorant papist, and tell him what doctrine they teach, and what upholds their doctrine, tell him of the powder treason, ask him concerning the traitors, he will mince the matter, Oh, they were unfortunate gentlemen, &c. But how did Sixtus Quintus mince the matter when they had success in the massacre in France; when

many thousands of people were slain against the law, slain under pretence of being married and bidden to a marriage? He was so far from disallowing the act, as that he caused it to be pictured in his palace. So if these had achieved this, they had not been unfortunate gentlemen; they had been made, they had been sainted, as some of them are, St Garnet! St Devil! If the devil himself will help them, and further popery, he shall be sainted; and if they be never so base, yet for their rebellion and destruction of kings, they shall be sainted by them. Will not this provoke men to hate the beast and the whore, to make her desolate and naked, and to eat her flesh, and to burn her with fire?

Well, the time is past, I cannot finish the text as I thought to have done. To speak to the particular occasion I need not, it is yet fresh. And what should we speak of the gunpowder treason? The Jesuits and priests, having the devil for their midwife, they are big of such like plots; hell, Rome, and Satan, and the Jesuits, those frogs of the bottomless pit, they are full of devising such attempts. But I rather thought to speak against popery, against the beast and her religion at this time, than rhetorically to amplify that act of theirs, when indeed we are ready to have a new one continually, for they are always plotting and devising, I mean those Jesuits. Our comfort is to look to the Scripture, to look here what shall be the end of these frogs and of the beast. Ere long they shall be cast into the burning lake. Let us bless God that we live under this government, of so gracious a prince, that hath more weakened the pope by his learned writings, than ever any prince did. So much for this time.

## The Church's Echo

*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.*—Rev. XXII. 17.

This book of the Revelation is an history of the state of the church, from the first coming of Christ to his second coming.

These two last chapters set down the glorious condition of the church, in the latter end of the world, and as it shall be in the consummation of all things, when the present state of things shall determine in the 'second coming' of Christ. For howsoever, no doubt but there is set down the glorious condition of the church in this world in part, yet the desire of the church rests not in any condition here, therefore it is carried to the consummation and perfection of all. There shall be a kind of new world at the conversion of the Jews; but when the church is under that blessed condition, yet it is under desires still of farther perfection, till an end be made of all things. Therefore this saying here, 'Come,' hath reference to the future state of the church. All the desires of the church are restless till the consummation of all things in the latter coming of Christ. It carries all before it in a desire; 'come, Lord,' therefore to call the Jews; 'come, Lord,' to confound antichrist, which must be before that. For the Jews will never come in till the scandal of idolatry be removed, and when all this is fulfilled, then 'come, Lord,' to make an end of this sinful world.

As it is with a river, it carries all before it, till it discharge itself into the ocean, where it is swallowed up, so it is with the desires of a Christian. They carry all in the mean time, between heaven and them, in a stream, and never rest till they be swallowed in heaven itself, and the 'second coming' of Christ to finish all things; and then is the period of all happiness, and the accomplishment of all promises, 'when Christ shall come to be glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. i. 10.

The words they are, as it were an echo, an answer back again of the bride, the spouse of Christ, unto his promise of his coming, which he makes twice in this chapter, in ver. 7, 'Behold, I come quickly;' and in ver. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly;' and he comes not empty-handed, 'My rewards is with me.' Now the church here echoes back again: Christ saith, 'I come,' and the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' The words contain the most heavenly desire that can be, of the most excellent personage in this world, the queen,

the bride of Christ; and it is a desire to the most excellent person absolutely, Christ himself, a desire of his coming; and it is stirred up by the most excellent Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. For the meaning of the words is this, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come,' not as distinct and severed, but the bride by the Spirit saith, 'Come,' the Holy Ghost in the bride, as it is Rom. viii. 26, 'We know not what to pray, but the Spirit makes intercession.' How is that? The Spirit makes intercession, by making us make intercession; for what Christ doth, the Spirit causeth us to do, for there is one Spirit in Christ and us. So the bride, by the motion of the holy and blessed Spirit, says, 'Come.' The order of our discourse upon these words shall be this, First, to speak of the person wishing, and her condition, the bride.

And then of the desire of this excellent personage, the bride.

And then of the moving cause that stirs up the bride to desire the coming of Christ.

First, For the person, the bride.

The church is sometime compared to a woman for weakness; sometimes to a wife, for faithfulness to her husband Christ; sometimes to a bride, because she is contracted to Christ in this world; sometimes to a mother for her fruitfulness; sometimes to a virgin for her chastity; here to a bride, because this life is but the time of contract, but the consummation of the marriage shall be in heaven. Now this contract is between the church and Christ, and between every particular soul and Christ; for both are the bride of Christ. Even as it is the same soul that is in the little finger and in all the whole body, the same soul enlivens both, so it is the same Spirit in the bride in general, and in every particular Christian, therefore the bride is both every particular Christian's and the whole church's. Now the contract that is made between the soul, and between the church and Christ, it is by the Spirit of God, which knits the soul to Christ, and Christ to the soul; and for this end, that Christ might be a husband, and contract this bride to himself in our nature, he married our nature that he might marry our persons.

There is a threefold degree of union:

An union of nature, grace, glory.

The union of nature was, when Christ took our nature upon him. The union of grace is, when we take his nature, when we partake of the divine

nature. The union of glory is when we shall all be in heaven. The first is for the second, and the second for the third. Christ became bone of our bone in nature, that we might be 'bone of his bone' with him in grace; and so perfectly one with him in glory. We see the bride, that is the person. Here I might take occasion to speak of the sweet comfort that issues from this, that the second person in the Trinity should dignify us so much, as to take us to unity with and contract us to himself. But I will not speak much of this point, having spoken more at large of it out of the Canticles. , If marriage be honourable, what is this marriage and contract which is indeed the pattern of all other? Others are but shadows to this.

Use 1. Hence comes the sweet security and peace of the church, from this contract between Christ and it; for all our debts are discharged by this. He took upon him our sins. And then the church hath interest in him and all his in this contract and marriage which is to be consummate; all that he is and hath is the church's. 'All is yours, because you are Christ's,' 1 Cor. iii. 21, seq. What a large comfort is this, if we had hearts to consider of it and to improve it! His grace serves for the church: 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace.' John i. 16. So we may say of all the privileges that Christ hath, they are first in him and then in the church. The church shines in his beams. And as it is matter of wondrous comfort, so it is likewise matter of more special comfort, in case of infirmities. The church is a woman, therefore the weaker vessel. Now God, that bids us 'bear with the woman, as the weaker vessel,' 1 Peter iii. 7, to honour her with the honour of gentle usage,—for that honour is meant,—he that teacheth man his duty, will he not perform it himself, to bear with his church, as the weaker vessel? Especially when it is the condition of the marriage, Hosea ii. 19, 'I will marry thee to me in mercy.' We may claim mercy as a part of our dowry by Christ, pardoning mercy, forbearing, pitying mercy. We make not use of this comfort when we are discouraged.

Use 2. But this teacheth us likewise how to carry ourselves to Christ as we should do, chastely. To take heed how we judge of things, we must keep our judgments chaste. A Christian hath not liberty to riot in his opinion, to run at random, to see what carnal reason saith. No; he must think what Christ thinks, and submit his judgment to him. And he must have no will of his own; he must give it up to his contracted husband, Christ, and be content to be ruled by him in all things; he must forget his father's house and his former condition, and not to make this marriage, as carnal professors do, a cover for their adulterous unfaithfulness. What is the course of many Christians? They make the profession of religion a cover for their ill dealing,

for their unfaithful courses. What a shame is this! It is abominable. What makes the faults of wives worse than the fault of single persons? Because they are contrary to covenants, besides many other inconveniences, the confusion of offspring and the like. But this is one grand difference, to make the exaggeration of the fault, it is contrary to former covenant. Those that are swearers and filthy persons, that disgrace religion, and yet notwithstanding cover themselves under pretence that they are contracted to Christ, they are baptized and come to the sacrament, &c., such wretched persons shall know ere long what it is to dally with religion. What is the aggravation of the faults of such persons? They deal as filthy adulteresses do, they make religion a cover for their wretched courses. God is merciful, Christ died, we are Christians, we are baptized, &c. This is an obligation to a stricter life. It gives men no liberty, but is a stricter bond to a holy life, the renewing of the new covenant again and again. Therefore there is no comfort for any such wretched persons, that countenance themselves under the profession of religion. It adds a greater degree to their offence. O ye adulterers and adulteresses, saith St James, 'know ye not that the love of the world is enmity with God?' James iv. 4. When we let our hearts loose to vain things, and yet pretend that we are contracted to Christ, we are adulterers and adulteresses.

I beseech you therefore, in the name of Christ, for it is our office that are ministers, to bring Christ and his spouse together, we are Paranymphe, friends of the bridegroom, as it is in the New Testament. Let me entreat you in good earnest, those that have not seriously given up their names to Christ, to be contracted to him, to join with him in good earnest, and to resign all to him in your inward man, in your judgments, and wills, and affections, and then you shall find it the most comfortable condition in this world. Indeed, all is nothing to the comfort of this condition, to be in deed and not in outward profession only, in covenant with Christ, to be contracted to him. If not, if you will take liberty under the profession of religion, to live loosely, to be swearers and filthy persons, to use your tongues as you list, as if you had made no promise to Christ, as indeed we all have, what will be the confusion of your souls ere long! Oh that we dallied with religion! that we were entreated to be as we should be by all sweet bonds! and yet we preferred our own lusts and base affections. This will be the aggravation of hell and damnation itself; this entreaty of Christ, and the excellent prerogatives and privileges that we have in Christ. And in the mean time we stand more upon our own base courses, and will not leave anything to give up ourselves to Christ. But I mean not to dwell on this point. This is the person, 'the bride.' She is called 'the bride,' and not the wife, because she is only contracted here

on earth; and she is called 'the bride,' in opposition to the whore of Babylon in this book, that is, the filthy adulteress, the false church. The true church of Christ is a bride and a virgin; in heaven she shall be a wife. The false church is a whore. She defiles herself with idolatry and abominations. So partly for distinction from itself in heaven, where it shall be a wife, and partly in opposition to the false church, she is here called a bride.

To come, in the next place, to the desire of the church. How should the church know she is a bride? This is one way, the desire of the marriage. Where there is a true contract, there is a desire of the marriage, of the consummation of it, a desire of the coming of Christ. In this there are two things considerable.

First, that Christ will come.

And then the church hath a desire of this coming. That Christ will come, I need spend no time to prove it, for it is an article of faith, 'He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' And he will come to make an end of what he hath begun here. He came to redeem our souls. He must, and he will come to redeem our bodies from corruption. He came to be judged and to die for us. He must come to be judge of the quick and dead. He came to contract us, he will come again to marry us and to take us where he is. He loved us so, that he came from heaven to earth where we are, to take our nature, that he might be a fit husband, but he will come to take us to himself. We shall enter 'into his chamber, to the palace of the great King,' Ps. xvi. 15. He will come, there is no question of that.

The uneven carriage of things in this world to the eyes of men evinceth so much. You see how it is here with mighty persons that shake off Christ's yoke, how they bear sway, how Satan plays freaks \$ in opposing Christ; he rules in the children of pride. This must not always be so. There must and will be a time when Christ will 'be glorious in his saints.' Now the life of Christ in the saints is a 'hidden' life; there must be a day of revelation. And even as it was in Christ's first coming, there was all kind of arguments and witnesses to prove that he should come in the flesh, a choir of angels from heaven to witness it; and on earth, the wise men among the Gentiles; and among the Jews, old Simeon. There was men and women, all kind of witnesses. So in his 'second coming,' there is all kind of witnesses. In this chapter here is Christ, and the angel, and John, and the Spirit, and the spouse, the church in general and every particular soul. Their desire of his coming shows that he will come; for the desires stirred up in the heart by the Holy Ghost, they will not be in

vain. The desires of his coming show that he will come; for spiritual desires must have their accomplishment. There will be a coming of Christ, there is no question of that.

And the church here desires it. It is the disposition of the church to be carried in her desires to it; wherein we will show the ground of this desire, and then the use that we are to make of it.

The grounds why the church desires the coming of Christ are manifold.

1. First of all, look but to the present condition of things in this world, the state of things, the scandals that are in the church. There will be a desire in the church that all scandals and offences maybe removed, as it is in the gospel, 'Christ will come and take away all that offend.'

2. Look again to the state of the church here, it is but a persecuted, afflicted estate, nay, those that should countenance the poor church, how roughly is the poor church used oftentimes of those! Those that should encourage the church, their rugged and rough usage stirs up this desire in the church, when those that should be most encouragement are oftentimes the greatest discouragement., 3. Then again the church hath antichrist to oppose it, and false brethren in it, false persons that hang in then' affections to the world. And however they make a show, yet their minds are carried to pomp and to a false religion, because they are besotted with a proud carnal disposition, which they prefer before the simplicity of the gospel; vain persons in the bosom of the church, that know not what the glory of the church is.

4. Then again, if we regard even the weakness of the church itself, it breeds a desire of Christ's coming; for, alas! there is but a weak sight in men; and variety of sight where there is weakness, breeds variety of judgment; and where there is variety of judgment, there will be jealousies even among good persons; and these are irksome to the Spirit of God in any that love the sweet peace and concord of Christians, that are contracted to Christ. This will not be avoided in this world. Only those that are wise and strongest in grace, they will be the greatest peace-makers, and bear with the weak in this kind.

5. Then again, while we are in this world, there is not the best thing but Satan will put his foot and claw in, except grace overpower him. The magistracy and ministry, alas! how are they many times profaned and abused by Satan and corrupt-hearted men, that know not how to manage them

graciously and fruitfully? The magistracy that is for good, it is turned oft-times for grievance, as if all the world were made for them, and they to do nothing but to have others idolize them. And then for the ministry, those that should be teachers of others, many times discourage those that they should cherish; and as the prophet complains in this time of the false prophets, they discourage those that they should encourage, and strengthen the bands of the wicked, and grieve those that God doth not grieve by their false carriage, taking contrary ways to God's Spirit. They grieve those that they should cherish and comfort, and strengthen the hearts of those that they should take down, by flattery and false applications. This will be to the end of the world, notwithstanding the excellent ordinance of God, by which God works his own good ends. While the world stands there will be a taint upon God's ordinance till Christ come, and then all that grieve and offend shall be taken away. There shall be no sun nor moon then, for the Lamb will do all. There shall be no magistracy nor ministry then, 'God will be all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28.

And so for all conditions. There is no condition nor nothing that is good in the world, but Satan labours to bring a vanity upon it, and the corrupt heart of man is prone to yield to him; this will be to the end of the world. Therefore we should not be over much offended, to see things carried otherwise than we would have them. Why should we wish for that condition that will never be in this world? Wish we may, but we must wish it in its own time. It will be hereafter. Let us labour that it may be so then, and bear with all here as patiently as we can.

6. Again, take the best Christians of all, in themselves, in their own particulars. Alas! what a conflicting life hath a Christian with his own heart! Sometimes, in general, he can see truths very clear, but, in a particular, some passion or other, of anger or revenge, &c., it clouds his judgment, that he cannot see what is to be done, what is best. The reason is, the imperfection of the work of mortification, hinders him in his passages and business, that he cannot clearly decide of what is best at this time. St Paul complains of this, that he 'could not do the good that he would, and that he did the ill that he would not,' Rom. vii. 21. There are none but they carry some of these dregs with them in this world, that hinders them in their designs and determinations. Only those that have the power of God's Spirit in a greater portion than the rest, they get more victory over these things, and can more clearly see anything than others. Yet notwithstanding, all have some impediment this way, even the best.

7. The necessities of this life enforce a great deal of trouble; the supplying the necessities of nature and of the condition that God hath set us in, which all shall have an end then.

8. Then again, the relation, between Christ and this contracted spouse, and every faithful soul, enforceth a desire of his coming. It is the time of the church's contract; she is a bride now, she is contracted. Now all the time between the contract and the marriage, it is a time of longing and desire; therefore the church cannot but desire the second coming of Christ. It is the nature of imperfection, where there is truth in imperfection, to desire perfection. You see the little seed that is sown in the ground, it breaks through the thick clods, because it is not in its perfection till it be in the ear. Nature hath given it an instinct to break out. So where the seed of grace is, it will break out and shoot forward to desire still and still, till it comes to perfection. Grace being an imperfect state here, it puts forward in desiring that perfection that it cannot attain in this world, but in the world to come. Therefore the Spirit and the spouse say, 'Come.'

9. And then, from the nature of the affection of love itself, where it is planted. It is an affection of perfect union. Contract will not serve, but marriage must come after. Love will not satisfy itself in imperfect union, but it cries, 'Come, come,' still. It is carried in a restless desire till it come to perfection. Therefore put the case the Jews were called and converted, and antichrist subdued, hath the church an accomplishment of the period of her desires, to say no more, 'Come?' Oh no! Yet Christ is not come as he will. There is not a perfect consummation of all; until that of time itself, there will be a desire of the bride and spouse to say, 'Come.' Thus we see what grounds there are of this desire.

Quest. But is this only true of the church militant here below? Doth not the church in heaven say, 'Come,' too?

Ans. Yes, the church in heaven saith, 'Come,' too. The church in heaven and earth are but one family. They are, as it were, but one parliament. There is the higher house in heaven, and the lower on earth, and both say 'Come.' What is the reason that the church in heaven saith, 'Come?' Because the church in heaven have bodies that be rotting in earth; which bodies helped them to serve God on earth, fasted with them and prayed with them, and endured pains and toil with them. The soul accounts itself imperfect till it be joined to its old companion the body again. Therefore it desires, 'Come,

Lord,' that my body may be united to me again; that so we may both perfectly praise thee in heaven.

Then again, they have not all their company; all the saints are not gathered; and they will not be merry indeed till they all meet in heaven. Therefore that all may meet, even the church in heaven hath a desire, 'Come, Lord.' So both heaven and earth agree in this, they meet in this desire.

Use 1. This may be a ground of trial, whether we be truly the bride of Christ or no. The ground of the trial may be gathered hence. Whither is the bent of our desire carried? Is our condition so here, as that we desire to be as we are still? Then all is naught with us. The church, we see, saith 'Come.' Nothing will content her in this world. So those hearts that are wrought upon by the Spirit of God, nothing here will content them, but still they say, 'Come.' The disposition in carnal persons is clean contrary. They say, as it is in Job, 'Depart from us, we will none of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14; they are of the mind of the devil in the Gospel, 'Why dost thou come to torment us before our time?' Mat. viii. 29. Do not come. If it were in the power of most men in the church, whether Christ should come to judge the world or no, do you think they would give their voice that way, that Christ should come? They would never do it: for they know how unfit a condition they are in for the second coming of Christ. If thieves and malefactors might have liberty to choose whether there should be assizes or no, surely they would never have any. So it is with the men of the world, that live in sinful, wretched courses; that abuse their tongues and their bodies; are they of the disposition of the bride, to say, 'Come?' Oh no! They know they have not done their duty. Therefore let us enter deeply into our own souls, and try whether cordially we can yield this desire of our hearts to say, 'Come?'

(1). Therefore, to spend a little time in further search, if we can truly say 'Come,' we will desire Christ to come into our souls now, to rule our souls now, to come and make way for himself in our hearts. Is it possible for the soul to desire to go to Christ, that will not suffer him to come to it? If Christ rule not in us, we shall never reign with Christ: if Christ's kingdom come not to us, we shall never enter into Christ's kingdom. Therefore the soul that hath this desire truly, to say, 'Come,' it will give Christ entrance into it and let him 'come' by his ordinances. 'Come,' Lord, by thy word! come by thy Spirit into my heart! close with my heart! drive out whatsoever is there that will not give thee liberty to reign as thou wilt! These desires will be in a true heart. It will not cherish wilfully those desires that are contrary to this.

Shall we think that that Christian that saith these words in good earnest will put Christ away in his ordinances, and not care for to hear his word, nor care to meet Christ here in earth, and yet pretend a desire to meet him in heaven? Where is Christ here? Is he not in his congregations and assemblies of his saints? Those, therefore, that despise the ordinances of God, and yet pretend that they desire that Christ should come, do they not profane the Lord's prayer when they say, 'Hallowed be thy name,' 'Thy kingdom come'? They pattern it over; they do not mean it in good earnest. When they despise the ministry and the ministers, and whatsoever is Christ's, despise the motions of his Spirit, and will not suffer him to rule in their hearts, but are ruled by rules of policy and reason and flesh, can they say, 'Come'? No! They do abominably profane the Lord's prayer. What kind of service is that, when their desires are quite clean contrary? It is a protestation contrary to their faith, and therefore it is a nullity. They profess in their prayers that they would have Christ to come, and yet their course of life is contrary; they would not have him come.

(2.) Again, those that truly desire Christ should come, they will be subordinate helpers under Christ, to promote those things that tend to his coming. Before Christ comes, antichrist must be abolished and consumed; the Jews must be converted, and the number of the elect must be consummate and finished. Therefore what shall we say, when those that pretend to desire the coming of Christ shall countenance heresies that must have an end first? And those that are against wholesome laws to be made in that kind, those that countenance idolatry and false worship, establishing what Christ must abolish before he come, can they say, 'Come,' in good earnest? Their course is contrary to what they pray. Therefore in deed and in good earnest we pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' and say with our souls as the church here, 'Come,' when we set ourselves to abolish heresy and false worship of God, that is adulterous, and promote the true service of God; when we labour in our places that the number of the elect may be consummate; when we labour that our children may be God's children, and our servants may be God's servants, and every one in our places labour that the kingdom of Christ may be enlarged—if we put not to our helping hand to that we pray for, it is a contradiction. Those, therefore, that live scandalous lives, in scandalous courses and speeches, and hinder the conversion of people's souls, and labour to draw them to wicked, hellish courses, when they post to hell themselves, and labour to draw others into cursed society with themselves, they cannot truly say, as the church here, 'Come.' Let us take it to heart, that we do not mock and dally with religion. It

is a greater matter than we take it for. It is impossible but a Christian that saith his prayers in earnest, should be thus affected, unless we make a mockery of religion.

(8.) Again, if we can indeed say ‘Come,’ there will be a fitting for this coming, a preparing ourselves for it, for our going to Christ. Is it not so in civil things? And doth not grace work that that nature doth, in a higher degree? If we desire that a great person should come to us, will there not be a fitting of our houses, of our apparel, and entertainment suitable to the worth of the person? or else a man may say, Surely you look for nobody this day; there is nothing fitted and prepared. So if we pretend we desire Christ to ‘come,’ and yet notwithstanding we are careless of getting knowledge and of purging our souls, of growing in grace, careless of being such as Christ may delight to come unto, this carelessness of fitting and preparing ourselves shows that we do but in hypocrisy speak the words when we have no such thing in our hearts. Those that desire the kingdom of Christ, and the happy condition of Christians in another world, they desire the way of it here, that is, by fitting and preparing themselves for that estate; and indeed it will work those effects as it is Tit. ii. 12, and other places. What is the motive there to live a holy and righteous and sober life? ‘Looking and waiting for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ There he inserts a holy life between the two comings of Christ, showing that the believing the end of both, will work this effect in the change of our lives, ‘to be sober to ourselves, and just to others, and holy to God.’ ‘The grace of God hath appeared,’ that is, in the first coming of Christ, ‘teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,’ See., and then looking forward still for the second coming of Christ, ver. 13. So that he believes that the grace of God hath appeared in saving our souls by the death of Christ in his first coming; and he that believes that he will come to be glorious after in his second coming, certainly he will live justly and soberly and righteously in this present world; he will fit himself for that estate that he professeth to desire. Let us try ourselves by these evidences in some measure, and not think our state good till we can say from our hearts, ‘Come.’

But are Christians always in this state of soul that they can say, ‘Come’?

Ans. I answer, they are alway in some degree fitting themselves for Christ; but, notwithstanding, they are not alway so exact and watchful, that they could wish that he should come at this time. Take the comparison from a wife, a spouse: she heartily desires the coming home of her husband; yet

perhaps sometimes things may not be in so good order as to wish that he were here now; nay, I have not yet prepared. This is the state of careless Christians, that have soundness of grace, and yet are careless. They desire the coming of Christ, and they love the glory of the life to come, and endeavour weakly for it; yet they are so careless; some corruption hangs on them, that they have not so mortified and subdued as they should do; they are not yet so fitted as they should be. Therefore God often rouseth such by afflictions and other courses in this world, to wean them more from the love of the world, and to prepare us, because we are slothful and careless to prepare ourselves. So I say that sometimes the best Christians may be more indisposed than at others, by reason of security growing on our souls, so weak are we and beset with temptations. Therefore let none be over much discouraged with that, but let us strive as the church here, to be in such an estate as we may always say, 'Come.'

Well, upon trial, if we find ourselves not so disposed as we should, how shall we carry ourselves that we may say, 'Come'?

Use 1. Let us labour to purge ourselves by mortification more and more. 'He that hath this hope purgeth himself,' 1 John iii. 3. And let us endure God's purging of us, and justify God's purging of us by afflictions, and think that God hath this aim. Certainly this is to make me more heavenly-minded, to raise my affections up. I will therefore hear the anger of God; I have deserved it, and he hath holy ends in it to make me partaker of his righteousness. Let us purge ourselves by grace, and endure the course that God takes to purge us by daily crosses, for God aims by it to wean us more and more from the world.

Use 2. And let us labour daily more and more to unloose our hearts from the things below. Those that would remove a tree, they loosen it from the root of it; so our affections are rooted to earthly things, therefore we should labour to loose them daily more and more, by the consideration of the uncertainty and vanity of all things. They are not that that will stick to us and give us content, when we shall stand in most need of them. Here we must leave the things of the world, as we find them here, we must part with them. Therefore we should labour to unloose our hearts, and to plant, and set, and pitch them where they may be safe, and swallowed up in better things.

Use 3. And to this end often meditate of the excellency that shall be in the second coming of Christ. Oh the glorious time then! See the means how

the church comes to be stirred up here to say, 'Come.' Christ saith before, that he was 'the root of David,' the 'bright morning star.' He sets out himself gloriously, and the gloriousness of that time. Then the church, hearing what the excellency of that state will be then, and the excellency of Christ, the Church hath desires suitable to those manifestations. Therefore let us meditate of the state of the church what it will be, and of the excellency and glory of Christ when he shall come to be glorious in his saints, what a happy condition it will be! And to feed our meditations, let us be oft in hearing and reading of these things. If we hope for anything to come in this world, as if a young heir that shall have great possessions, the more he grows towards years, the more he thinks, I shall have this manor and that, he thinks of the possessions he hath; so a Christian, the nearer he grows to heaven, the more he thinks upon and talks and is willing to hear of that condition that he shall have. The more we are in meditation, and, to help meditation, the more we are in thinking, and speaking, and conferring of these things, what will befall us ere long, if we be God's, the more our affections will be raised up, as we see in the spouse here; upon the manifestation of the excellency of Christ comes this desire after the coming of Christ. This is one reason of the deadness of our hearts. We do not awaken them with such holy thoughts as we should, and we are not under those means as we might oftentimes. There cannot be anything more sweet and powerful to draw up our souls than meditation in this kind.

Use. 4. Again, that we may be able to say 'Come,' let us labour to be more and more spiritual, that the Holy Spirit may rule our spirits; and then the Spirit is always for 'Come.' Nature saith not 'Come,' because it is above nature; I mean nature not corrupt saith not 'Come.' It is a hidden secret to nature. Nature saith, Stay still. It hath no desire to it. The flesh is contrary altogether. But the Spirit in the spouse saith, 'Come.' The Spirit doth all. As the soul doth all in the body,—it acts it, and leads it, and comforts it, and gives beauty to it,—so the Spirit first knits Christ and us together. There is the same Spirit in Christ the head and in the church, there is one common Spirit in head and members. And when it hath done so, it acts, and leads, and sanctifies, and purifies the church. It acquaints the church with the good things that God hath given her, acquaints her with the deep meaning of God, the love of God in Christ. It acquaints God with our desires. He knows our meaning in our prayers, and we know his meaning. It acquaints us with the state we shall have after, and assures us of it. It is the 'earnest' of the inheritance. The Spirit and the graces of it are not only the earnest but a part of that inheritance, a part of heaven where our bodies shall be spiritual; not

that they shall turn to be spirits, but they shall be ruled wholly by the Spirit, as the soul rules the body.

As it is in a river, it is impossible that the stream should run higher than the spring-head from whence it comes, so it is impossible that our desires should rise higher than the spring from whence they come. The desires of nature cannot go higher than nature. The desires of the flesh are fleshly, but spiritual desires, as they spring from heaven, they have a noble original and head, so they carry to heaven again. Therefore, as the Spirit comes from God the Father and the Son, so it carries us back again to the Father and the Son; as it comes from heaven, so it carries to heaven back again. That is one way to know whether our desires be spiritual or no. Our desire of death and of the coming of Christ, if it be from wearisomeness of life, and from afflictions in the world, so nature may desire. I were better be dead than to be thus, as Jonas wished death, and the children of Israel, and Elias in a passion, Oh that I were dead, &c. But if those desires spring from the Spirit, then they come from heaven, from the consideration of the excellency of the state we shall have there, that it shall be better with us, and that death is but a dark passage to a glorious condition. We may know our desires are spiritual from the rise of them, if they come from spiritual and holy and heavenly considerations. The Spirit doth all in the spouse that is holy and spiritual.

Therefore let us give entertainment to the Spirit of God; and be where we may have further and further communion with the Spirit in spiritual ordinances. The preaching of God's holy word, though it be meanly esteemed by the world, it is the ministry of the Spirit. In the hearing of it the Spirit is given. If we would have the Spirit, let us attend upon the ministry of the Spirit. And let us study Christ, and make him all in all. Saint Paul questions with the Galatians; saith he, 'I would know of you, how came ye by the Spirit? by hearing of Christ's gospel or of the law preached?' No; it was by the gospel, Gal. iii. 2. So that not only the ministry in general, but the evangelical ministry that unfolds Christ, and the infinite love of God in Christ, the excellent condition we have in this world and look for in the world to come; the Spirit is effectual with these thoughts to make us holy and heavenly. The law beats down, but the gospel, especially these evangelical truths, make us spiritual. Therefore we should be willing to hear spiritual points. There are a company of men that love to hear curious and nice points, and if a minister be quaint, and satirical, and unfold points suitable to their apprehension, they can digest this; but come to speak of things about nature, of Christ, and the benefits by him, they are spiritual, they are remote

and transcendent about their nature, that they cannot relish them. But he that hath the Spirit of Christ, of all points, there are none to those that unfold Christ and the benefits by him, the glory that we hope for by him in another world.

And let us not grieve the Spirit, but give way to his motions. The Spirit is now among us in his ordinance, knocking at our hearts, and desiring entertainment. Let us give way, and not quench the good motions that he stirs up; and the Spirit shall be given more and more to us: 'The Holy Ghost is given to them that obey him,' Acts v. 82. And let us beg the Spirit. God 'will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him,' Luke xi. 13. As if he should say, the Spirit is the best thing God can give. You that are evil can give 'good things to your children;' but your heavenly Father hath one good thing instead of all; he will give his Spirit. Therefore, when we find our hearts dead, and dull, and earthly, and base-minded, think thus, Alas, I am a lump of flesh now. Where is the Spirit of God? Certainly if I had the Spirit in me, I could not be as I am. If we love our souls, we will take this course; we trifle with religion else. God doth all by the Spirit. The Spirit is Christ's vicar. Here is no need of a ministerial head between the spouse and Christ, the Spirit and the spouse are so near together. There is such a conjunction between Christ and his church, that where the Spirit is, he stirs up desires of his coming. Only let us attend upon the means and ordinances that he hath left in his church, and let us consider we are not for this life; we are not to live here always. The child in the womb is not for that life, and when it is in the world, it is not for this life. There is a third life that we are for. An imperfect state rests not till it come to perfection. Our best is behind. Let those that are naught fear the second coming of Christ. Let Herod, and Judas, and the beast of Rome fear, that shall be cast into the burning lake. Let Felix tremble, the corrupt judge, and all that live in corrupt courses. But we that profess ourselves to be Christians, and hope for better things in another world, let us labour to banish base fears: and to this end let us labour to be spiritual, and not to be led by the flesh. Whosoever is Christ's, hath the Spirit of Christ, or else he is none of his, as it is sweetly, and largely, and heavenly proved, Rom. viii. 14, seq. We have nothing to do with Christ, unless we have his Spirit, to stir up motions and desires of better things than this world can afford.