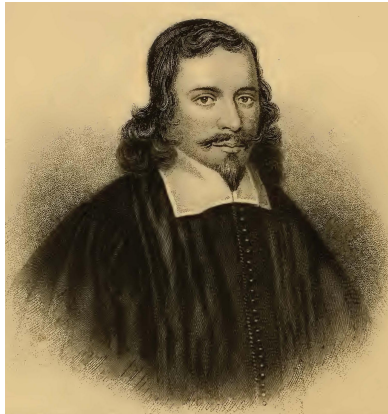


CHRIST ALONE EXALTED

IN THE
PERFECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAINTS,
NOT WITHSTANDING SINS AND TRIALS;

BEING THE

COMPLETE WORKS OF



TOBIAS CRISP, D.D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AT BRINKWORTH, IN WILTSHIRE;

CONTAINING

FIFTY TWO SERMONS
ON SEVERAL SELECT TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

NOTES EXPLANATORY OF SEVERAL PASSAGES IN THEM,

BY JOHN GILL, D. D.

VOL. I

AS PUBLISHED BY Grace-Ebooks.com

SERMON I

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

JOHN xiv. 6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.

In the 33rd verse of the former chapter, you shall find Christ breaking the sad and doleful business, which he knew well would go near to the hearts of his disciples, namely, his departure from them: "Little children, yet a little while ye shall seek me, but shall not find me." Peter, upon this, asks him whither he goes? He tells him, whither he cannot follow him now, but afterwards he shall. Now, knowing how sadly this went to the hearts of his disciples, He laboured to raise them up, and to establish them against the drooping that these sad tidings might occasion; and that is the beginning of this chapter, "Let not your hearts be troubled:" and therein doth endeavour to stir up their spirits first, by telling them the expediency of that departure of his: it was the purpose of God, that as all things should be wrought effectually by Christ, so the communication of all these things to our spirits, should be by the Spirit of Christ. Now Christ tells them expressly, "That except he goes away, the Comforter cannot come to them;" he, that must have the dispensing of those things to their spirits, namely, the Comforter, cannot come unto them. But, secondly, he stays not here: he encourageth them with another argument; "I go to prepare a place;" and he tells them the place where; "In my Father's house are many mansions." And, least they should suspect, he tells them, "If it were not so, I would have told you." And because he would not speak in a cloud of these things, he tells them, "You know whither I go, and the way ye know," Now Thomas comes in with an objection; "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Christ answers him, in the words of the text, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

I will not spin out the tune about the coherence and analysis of this text: the main point is briefly this:

"Christ is our way, so that there is no coming to the Father but by Him"

In the handling of which truth, let me tell you, that I know this doctrine is generally received, as it is generally delivered; but, I fear, in the particularising those things that make up the full truth of the doctrine, every spirit will not, nor can receive it. That you may, at least, see the clear truth in the bowels of this general doctrine; (for, beloved, you must know there is hidden manna, in this very pot) I say, that you may both see it, and taste the sweetness of it, let us consider, First, in what regard Christ is said to be "the way to the Father." Secondly, What kind of way he is. Thirdly, From whence he doth become this way. And, Fourthly, What use we may make of it.

I. In what sense Christ is said to be our way, that there is "no coming to the Father but by him." You all know beloved, that every way high-way, or pathway, necessarily imports two terms, from whence and whereunto; when a man enters into a way; he leaves the place where he was, and goes to the place where he was not. Christ being our way, the phrase imports thus much to us, that by Christ we pass from a state and condition wherein we were, to a state and condition wherein we were not; the last term is expressed in the text, "He is the way to the Father;" the first term must be implied. To come to him, ye must leave some condition where we were before. Bear a while with the expression, till I open the thing to you.

The state, from which Christ is our way to the Father, is twofold; first, a state of sin; and secondly, a state of wrath. The state whereunto Christ is the way, is, indeed, expressed here to be to the Father; the meaning is, to the grace of the Father, and to the glory of the Father. The sum is this; Christ is our way, from a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace and glory, that there is no coming from the one to the other, but by Christ. But we must descend to particulars, that we may know the fatness and marrow of this truth; which indeed hath an inebriating virtue in it, to lay a soul asleep¹, with the admirable sweetness and, excellency thereof; no music can tickle the ears as this truth may, when it is truly and thoroughly dived into: no,

nor tickle the heart neither. Beloved, I must tell you, when your souls once find this real truth, they cannot choose but say, we have found a ransom.

First of all, Christ is a way from a state of sinfulness. Now what mystery is there in this, more than ordinary, will you say? Beloved, it is certainly true, there is nothing of Christ, there is nothing comes from Christ, but it is in a mystery; the gospel seems to be clear, and so it is, to those whose eyes Christ opens, but certainly it is hid to some persons that shall perish. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, O Father, because it pleased thee." But what hiddenness is in this? There is a two-fold consideration of sinfulness, from which Christ is our way in a special manner. There is first, that which commonly we call the guilt of sin, which indeed is the fault, or a person's being faulty, as he is a transgressor. There is, secondly, the power or dominion of sin. Christ is the way from both these. First of all, Christ is the way from the guilt of sin; for a man to be rid of the guilt of sin is no more but this, namely, upon trial to be acquitted from the charge of sin that is laid to him, and to be freed from it: or for a person, in judgment, to be pronounced actually an innocent and a just person, as having no sin to be charged upon him: this is to be free from the guilt of sin. A man is not free from a fault, as long as the fault is laid to his charge; he is then free from the fault, when it is not charged upon him. All the powers of the world united are not able to pronounce a person faultless and an innocent person, but only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the way by which a poor sinner, even in this world, may be pronounced an innocent person; even in this world, I say; and be acquitted and discharged from the fault and guilt of his sin. It is impossible the law should do it; the apostle speaks of it expressly, Rom. viii. 2, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and death." Here it is put upon Christ, to free from the guilt of sin. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, for sin condemned sin in the flesh." "The law," saith the text, "could not do it;" not that the law could not pronounce innocence where innocency was: not that the law could not condemn sin, where it is condemnable by its authority: the law can do this, if it can find subjects whereupon to do it. But the law runs upon these terms, as it finds a person himself

without fault; so it pronounceth sentence upon him; if it finds a fault in his person, then it chargeth this fault upon the person alone, as thus: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Till then thou canst not be absolutely freed from the acting of a thing in its nature that is faulty; thou canst not hear it speak any otherwise but of faultiness, which it chargeth upon thee.

Much less can the heart of man acquit him as an innocent person, or do away from him that sinfulness, namely, the guilt of his own sin. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts." "If a man say he hath no sin, he is a liar," with St. John, "and the truth is not in him." If the heart should say to any man he is an innocent person, it doth but lie.

If angels should spend their strength, and should be annihilated, to procure the innocency of a poor sinner; alas, their very being is too poor a price, or too mean a value, to take away the sins of the world.

Beloved, to go a little further in it, it is not man's righteousness that he does, though assisted by the Spirit of God in the acting of it, that can pronounce him an innocent person, that can be a way to him from his fault and guiltiness. This you know, that the payment of the last half year's rent is no payment for the first half year's rent, nor is it amends for the non-pay-ment of that which was due before; if that had been paid before, this likewise must be paid now. Suppose a man could perform a righteous action without blame, what satisfaction is this for former transgressions? Nay, beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing but menstruousness, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, in the best of man's righteousness, "All our righteousness is a menstruous cloth:" but as for Christ, that blessed Saviour, he is able to "save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" not only to save them in respect of glory hereafter, but also to save them in respect of sinfulness here; to snatch them as a fire-brand, out of the fire of their own sin, to deliver them from their own transgression. Christ, I say, is the way, and the absolute and complete way, to rid every soul, that comes to God by him, from all filthiness; so that the person to whom Christ is the way, stands in the sight of God, as having no fault at all in him. Beloved, these two are contradictions, for a person to be reckoned a faulty person, and yet that person to be reckoned a just or an innocent person; if he be

faulty, he is not innocent; if he be innocent, he is not faulty. Now it is the main stream of the whole gospel, that Christ justifies the ungodly. If he himself justifies him, there is no fault to be cast upon him; mark it well, as that wherein consists the life of your soul and the joy of your spirits. I say, it holds forth the Lord Christ as freely tendering himself to people, as considering them only as ungodly persons receiving him; you have no sooner received him, but you are instantly justified by him, and, in this justification, you are discharged from all the faults that may be laid to your charge. There is not one sin you commit, after you receive Christ, that God can charge upon your person².

A man would think, that there needs not much time to be spent to clear such a truth as this is, being so currently carried along by the whole stream of the gospel. But, beloved, because I know tender hearts stumble much at it, give me leave to clear it unto you by manifest scriptures, such as are written in such great letters, as he that runs may read them. Observe, that in Psalm li. "Wash me," saith David; what then? "I shall be whiter than snow." Snow, you know, hath no spot at all, no fault, no blemish. David shall be less blameable, have less faultiness, have less spottedness in him, than is in the very snow itself. In Canticles iv. 7, you shall find Christ speaking strange language to his church; admirable language indeed; "Thou art fair my love," saith Christ, "thou hast no spot in thee at all." I do but cite the very words of the text; therefore let none cavil, least they be found fighters against God; "she hath no spot in her." In Isaiah liii. where he speaks admirably concerning the effectualness of Christ's death, he tells us, "That the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all:" thy iniquities, my iniquities; as our forefathers' iniquities, so our posterity's iniquities; the iniquities of us all the Lord hath laid upon Christ; they cannot lie upon Christ, and us too. If they be reckoned to the charge of Christ, they are not reckoned to the charge of the person that doth receive this Christ: but "The Lord hath laid them upon him," saith the text. And what iniquity? Doth he lay upon him some iniquity, and leave some iniquity to us? Look into Ezek. xxxvi. 25, and you shall see the extent of iniquities that God hath laid upon Christ; that he takes away from the sinner, I mean the sinner justified by Christ that received him: there you have the covenant largely repeated, the new covenant; not according to the covenant God made with our fathers:

and the first words of the covenant are these: "I will sprinkle you with Clean water, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." prom all your filthiness; small sins, as some will call them; great sins, turbulent sins, scandalous sins, any sins, any filthiness; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. Look into Ezek. xvi. 7, a notable chapter indeed, setting open the unsearchable riches of the love of Christ to men; "I found thee-polluted in thy blood," with he; such blood "that no eye could pity thee, or do any good to thee." Well, no creature doth pity him; was it so with God? No. "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; yea, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee live; when I passed by thee, thy tune was the time of love," saith God, "I spread my skirt over thee." Marls it, I pray you; not a scanty skirt to cover some of this blood and filth, but a broad skirt, a large skirt, a white raiment, as Christ calls it himself, in the Revelation; "I counsel thee to bay of me white raiment, that thy nakedness may not appear." It seems there is such a covering of Christ, that he casts upon a person, while he is considered in his blood, that covers his nakedness, that none of it doth appear: and yet, a little further in Ezek. xvi. then was she dyed in deep water, after she was in covenant; "yea I thoroughly washed away thy blood:" and this was added, that no man might cavil. It is true, God casts a covering over our sinfulness, but it is our sinfulness still; it is but covered; nay, with the Lord, I have washed it away; "then washed I thee with water." But some will say, these are obscure texts, and mystical; a man cannot build upon these, that faultiness is not reckoned to believers, being taken off by Christ. To come, therefore, to a clearer manifestation of the gospel, mark what the apostle saith in Ephesians v. 27 Christ "purges and sanctifies his church that he might present it to himself not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it may be holy, and without blame." The words run in the present tense; not that in glory only we shall be without spot, but now, even now, we shall be without blemish, we shall be without spot and wrinkle; and that he might now present us to himself. So in 2 Cor. v. 21. you shall see the truth spoken more emphatically, the apostle runs in a mighty strain in this business; "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Both terms are expressed in the abstract; he was made sin for us; here you see plainly, our sins are to be translated to

Christ, that God reckons Christ the very sinner³; nay, God reckons all our sins to be his, and makes him to be sin for us; and what is the fruit of this? We are thereby made the righteousness of God in him. If we be righteousness, where is our sinfulness to be charged upon us? He tells us expressly, in 1 John i. 7. "That the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" the blood of Christ doth cleanse us: he doth not say, the blood of Christ shall cleanse us from all sin; but he with, for the present time, the blood of Christ doth cleanse us from all sin. John the Baptist hath this expression, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." He takes them away. How doth he take them away, and yet leave them behind, and yet charge them upon the person that doth believe? The person must be discharged, or else how can they be taken away. This is the main thing imported in that notable sacrifice of the scape-goat, Lev. xvi. 21. The high-priest must lay his hand upon the head of the goat to be carried away into the wilderness; the text saith, "It was the laying the sins of the people, and that when they were laid upon him, he goes into the wilderness." He goes into the wilderness, and leaves their sins behind him; then the end of this service were frustrated; for he was to carry them away upon him: so Christ, as the scape-goat, hath our sins laid upon his back, and he carries them away; and, therefore, in Psalm ciii. 12. it is said, "that God removes our sins from us, as far as the East is from the West; he casts our sins into the bottom of the sea." Besides all these texts of scripture, I might produce multitudes more, if need were, for this purpose; but, I think, there can be nothing in the world more clear than this truth, that Christ is such a way to a poor believing soul that he might receive, that he might take and carry away all the sins of such a person; that he is no longer reckoned as having sins upon him.

But some will object, do not those that receive Christ actually commit sin?

I answer, yea, they do commit sin, and the truth is, they can do nothing but commit sin. If a person that is a believer hath any thing in the world, he hath received this, that if he doth any thing that is good, it is the Spirit of God that doth it, not he; therefore; he himself doth nothing but sin, his soul is a mint of sin. But then, you will say, if he doth sin, must not God charge it where it is? Must not he be reckoned to be a sinner, while he doth sin? I answer, no; though

he doth sin, yet he is not to be reckoned a sinner⁴, but his sins are reckoned to be taken away from him. A man borrows a hundred pounds; some man will say, doth he not owe this hundred pounds, seeing he borrowed it? I say, no, in case another hath paid the hundred pounds for him. A man doth sin against God, God reckons not his sin to be his, he reckons it Christ's; therefore he cannot reckon it his. If the Lord did lay the iniquity of men upon Christ (as I said before), then how can he lay it upon their persons? Thou hast sinned, Christ takes it off; supposing, I say, thou hast received Christ. And as God doth reckon sin to Christ, and charges sin upon him, so, if thou be of the same mind with God, thou must also reckon this sin of thine upon Christ; his back hath borne it, he hath carried it away.

For my part, I cannot see what every person will object; I will endeavour to make this truth clear as the day to you. Do but consider with yourselves what Christ came into the world for, if not to take away the sins of the world? He need never to have died, but to take away the sins of the world. Did he come to them away, and did he leave them behind him? Then he lost his labour. Did he not leave them behind him? then his person is discharged of them from whom he hath taken them: but if the person be not discharged of them, he is not a justified person in himself; neither can you account his person justified as long as you account his sin upon him. It is a contradiction to say, that a man is innocent, yet guilty. Beloved, then here is a point of strange ravishing usefulness to souls, that can but draw towards it and receive it. All the difficulty lies, whether it be my portion, and thy portion; whether I may say, Christ is my way, thus from this guilt, that there can be none of this charged upon me. I say, if thou dost receive Christ, if thou dost but set footing into this way, Christ; as soon as ever thou art stepped into this way, thou art stepped out of the condition thou wast in. Men's receiving of Christ! what is that? you will say. To receive him, is to come to him; "he that comes to me I will in no wise cast out" Mark; many think there is such a kind of sinfulness that is a bar to them; that though they would have Christ, yet there is not a way open for them to take him. Beloved, there is no way of sinfulness to bar thee from coming to Christ; if thou hast a heart to come to him, and, against all objections to venture thyself with joy into the bosom of Christ, for the discharge of all thy sinfulness; Christ himself (which I tremble to

express; though it be with indignation) he should be a liar, if thou comest to him, and he casts thee off. "Every one that will," saith he, "let him come and drink of the water of life freely." You shall find, beloved, the great complaint of Christ, thus, "He came to his own, and his own received him not:" and to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The truth is, men dote upon the establishing of a righteousness of their own to bring them to Christ; and it is but presumptuous, or licentious doctrine, that Christ may be their Christ, and they receive him, and be considered simply ungodly, as enemies: but they are abominably injurious to the faith of Jesus Christ, to the exceeding bounty of that grace of his, who saves from sin, without respect of any thing in the creature, that he himself might have the praise of the glory of his grace. The covenant, concerning the blotting out of transgressions, is a free covenant: "Not for thy sake do I this, be it known unto thee," saith the Lord, "for thou art a stubborn and stiff necked people; but for my own sake do I this." All this grace to acquit thy soul, here and hereafter, comes out of the bowels of God himself; and he hath no other motive in the world, but simply, and only, his own bowels, that put him upon the deliverance of a poor wretch from iniquity, and discharge of sin, from that load which otherwise would grind and crush him to powder: I say, his own bowels are the motive. God neither looks to any thing in the creature to win him to shew kindness, nor yet any thing in the creature to debar him; neither righteousness in men that persuades God to pardon sin; nor unrighteousness in men that hinders him from giving this pardon, and acquitting them from their transgressions; it is only and simply for his own sake he doth it unto men.

Thus you have seen the first particular, that I have endeavoured to clear from all cavils and objections that may be laid upon it.

In one word, beloved, mistake me not, I am far from imagining any believer is freed from acts of sin; he is freed only from the charge of sin; that is, from being a subject to be charged with sin; all his sins are charged upon Christ, he being made sin for him; yet Christ is not an actual sinner; but Christ is all the sinners in the world by imputation⁵; and through this imputation all our sins are so done away from us, that we stand as Christ's own person did stand, and doth stand in the sight of God⁶. Now, had not Christ made a full

satisfaction to the Father, he himself must have perished under those sins that he did bear; but in that he went through the thing, and paid the full price, as he carried them away from us, so he laid them down from himself. So that now Christ is freed from sin, and we are freed from sin in him; he was freed from sin imputed unto him and laid upon him, when he suffered; we were freed from sin as he takes it off from our shoulders, and hath carried it away; "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." That is, with sin. And what follows? "And I will give you rest." As long as the burden is upon the shoulders, so long there is no rest. Therefore this doth necessarily import, that Christ must take away the burden, that we may have rest.

Secondly, Christ is not only the way from the fault of sin, but he is the way from the power of sin. There is a threefold power of sin; there is first, a reigning power; and secondly, a tyrannizing power; and thirdly, a bustling or ruffing power of sin; and they are all three of them distinct. Christ is a way from all these in believers: from the reigning power of it; so the apostle speaks expressly, Rom. vi. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." Grace there is Christ himself. "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of righteousness unto life; but, thanks be to God, ye have obeyed the truth." The meaning is this; while we are under the law, and have no better help, sin reigns in us, the law cannot bridle it in; but when we come under grace by Christ, the dominion of the law, or rather the dominion of sin, which the law cannot restrain, is captivated and subjected by Christ; "I will subdue your iniquities," as it is spoken by the prophet Micah. We are discharged from the fault and guilt of sin, that is, absolutely at once⁷; but the discharge from the reigning power of sin, that is done by degrees; the faultiness of sin is left behind the back of the believer, but the power and resistency of sin lie all along in the way; but still Christ breaks through, and makes way, 1 Cor. x. 13, where you have this admirable expression, "No temptation hath happened unto you, but such as is common to men; God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way that you may be able to bear it."

There is a tyrannizing power of sin, that is, not when sin is chosen of

the soul, as that under which the soul both affects and will live; but when sin hath gotten a present over-mastery of the soul, and in spite of all the spirit can do, will keep it under. This, I say, is the tyranny of sin; and this was the case of the apostle Paul, Rom. vii, "When I would do good, evil is present with me: I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin; so that the good I would do, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that do I" In regard of which he makes a bitter complaint; but mark the end of all, "But thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here you see, that though sin hath a tyranny over the spirit of a person, yet through the Lord Jesus Christ this tyranny is abated.

Yet, Thirdly, it is abated by degrees; for the bustling power of sin, namely, though it cannot be entertained, yet it will be troublesome to the soul. Now Christ is the way, by degrees, also, from this trouble of sin; for by degrees he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, and brings down the power of it by treading down Satan, that is the egger on of sin, to make it so troublesome; by overcoming the world, that administers occasion of this troublesomeness; "Fear not," saith Christ, "I have overcome the world." But still, I say, he doth this by degrees, and so he doth it by degrees, that sometimes he lets the work be at a stand; and sometimes the tyranny shall be over the spirit, and the spirit shall be under that tyranny a good while; sometimes the spirit shall be under the troublesomeness of sin, and be constantly exercised with it. But you must know, that it is neither the tyranny, nor the troublesomeness of sin in a believer, that doth eclipse the beauty of Christ, or the favour of God to the soul. Our standing is not founded upon the subduing of our sins, but upon that foundation that never fails; and that is Christ himself, upon his faithfulness and truth. Men think they are consumed, when they are troubled with sin why? because of their transgression. But mark what the Lord saith; "I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It is not, *you* change not, therefore ye are not consumed; but *I* change not; I have loved you freely, I will love you freely, I cannot alter: "Whom he loves, he loves unto the end:" it is in respect of his unchangeableness.

Though there be ebbings and flowings of the outward man; nay, of

the inward man, in the business of sanctification; yet this is certainly true, "That believers are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation." They are kept in holiness, sincerity, simplicity of heart; but all this hath nothing to do with the peace of his soul⁸, and the salvation and justification thereof: Christ is he that justifies the ungodly; Christ is he that is the peacemaker; and as Christ is the peace-maker, so all this peace depends upon Christ alone. Beloved, if you will fetch your peace from any thing in the world but Christ, you will fetch it from where it is not. "This people," saith the prophet Jeremy, "hath committed two evils." What are they? "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that will hold no water."

What is that fountain of living waters? Christ is the fountain of peace and life; and men forsake that peace that is to be had in Christ, when they would have peace out of righteousness of their own, out of their great enlargements, out of humiliations. These are broken cisterns, and what peace is there in them? Is there not sinfulness in them? Who can say, I have washed my hands? If there be sinfulness in them, where then is their peace? Sin speaks nothing but war to the soul. Let me tell you, beloved, you that look after peace from the subduing of your sins; what peace can it afford you, in case there be any defects of subduing of your sins? There can be no peace.

Suppose God had nothing in the world to charge upon you; but only that sinfulness in the very subduing of your corruptions, what peace could you have? what could but God find in us? Suppose your eyes were enlightened to see yourselves, how much filthiness there is in all your wrestlings; I say, how much defects and infirmities might you see? Could you choose but fall foul upon your own spirits, for these infirmities and defects of your best performances, seeing the wages of sin is death? What can you run to then? None but Christ, none but Christ, While your acts, in respect of filthiness, proclaim nothing but war, Christ alone, and his blood, proclaim nothing but peace. Therefore; I give this hint by the way, when I speak of the power of Christ subduing sin; because, from the power of it in men, they are apt to think their peace depends upon this subduing of sin. If their sins be subdued, then they may have peace; and if they cannot be subdued, then no peace: fetch peace where it is to be had; let subduing of sin alone for peace⁹; let Christ have that which is his

due; it is he alone that speaks peace. It remains, we should speak further, that as Christ is a way from sin, both in respect of fault and power, so he is a way from wrath: and he is a way to the grace and glory of the Father, and what kind of way he is. But the searching into every corner of this truth, for the sitting of it, hath brought me exceedingly back beyond my expectation. I shall have further occasion in the afternoon to speak of it.

¹Matt. xi. 28. Heb. iv. 3 Isaiah xxxii. 18.

²That is, to condemnation; because all have been charged on Christ, and he has made satisfaction for them; and besides, in this manifestative justification the Doctor is speaking of, there is an open and full discharge from all sin.

³That, is by imputation; not as the author and committer of sin; and, in the same way, God reckons our sins to be Christ's; not as committed by him, but are imputed to him.

⁴Not that the believer who has received Christ, ceases to be a sinner in himself; for the Doctor affirms, in this same paragraph, that he commits sin, and does nothing but sin; and much less that he ceased to be a sinner before he was a believer or from the death of Christ, as D. W. in his "Gospel Truth, &c." falsely ascribes to him, on account of this passage; but the sense is that a believer having received Christ is not reckoned as a sinner in the sight of God, and in the eye of justice, and as considered in Christ, all his sins being charged to him, and expiated and atoned for by his sacrifice; as also, seeing such a one has received, with Christ a discharge from all his sins into his own conscience, he should reckon himself, and his sins, as God does, who reckons them to Christ, and not to him.

⁵ This shews what is the Doctor's true sense in a former passage, p. 7, where he says Christ is "the very sinner;" that is, by imputation, as here explained, and not an actual sinner. One would be tempted to think, at first reading this clause, that the Doctor was for universal redemption, when he says, that Christ is "all the sinners in the world" by imputation; and, perhaps, such expressions as these with some others that will be observed hereafter, made the learned Hoornbeck conclude, that he held the doctrine of universal redemption; but his sense is not, that Christ personated all the sinners in the world, or had all the sins of every individual person

laid on him; but that he was all those sinners in the world, or represented them, whose sins were imputed to him; and these, as he often says in his sermons on Isaiah liii. 6, were the iniquities of the Lord's people, of the church, and of the elect.

⁶Col. ii. 10.

⁷Acts xiii. 39.

⁸That is, to make peace with God for his soul, since Christ is the peace-maker, saviour, and justifier; otherwise to be kept in these things contributes to spiritual peace of mind, under the influence of divine grace, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

⁹Let it be observed, that the Doctor is speaking not of subduing sin, as it is an act of God's grace, and owing to the power of Christ, who has made an end of it, and so made peace; on this subduing of sin peace depends, Mic. vii. 18, Deut. ix. 24, but of men's subduing sin, by their own power and strength, and in order to make peace with God; whereas subduing sin, or mortifying the deeds of the body, believers are concerned for, is not of themselves, and done in their own strength, but through the spirit; power, and grace of God; and not to make peace with him, but to show their dislike of sin, their gratitude to God, and that they are debtors to him, to live after the spirit, Rom. viii. 12, 13, wherefore subduing of sin is to be let alone for the end mentioned, in order to peace with God, that Christ might have his due and glory, who has both made and speaks peace; otherwise subduing of sin, or the weakening the power of it, by the spirit and grace of God, is the concern of every believer, and is wished for by him, and makes for the tranquillity of his mind.

SERMON II

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

JOHN xiv. 6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.

Now we go on: Christ, as he is the way from sin, so he is the way from wrath; and, indeed, must be the way from wrath, when he is the way from sin; wrath is but the wages of sin, the effect wrought by sin. Take away the cause, and the effect dies; destroy the root, and the branches wither of themselves. Man's sin is the root of wrath; when sin is destroyed and abolished, wrath must needs sink and perish. Christ is so the way from wrath, that all that receive him are wholly discharged, both from God's affection of wrath, (as I may so speak) and from the effects of that affection of his. Wrath is considered in these two respects: first, Simply, as the displeasure of God itself; the offence that God takes: secondly, In the fruits of this offence, that he manifests in the expression of his indignation and displeasure. Christ is the way, the only way, the effectual and infallible way, from all this wrath, to all that do receive him.

First, From the affection itself of wrath. Let me tell you, beloved, (I would to God you could receive it according to the manifest evidence of Scripture) God no longer stands offended nor displeased; though a believer, after he be a believer, sins often*,

*As every believer does, and yet God is not offended with him; the meaning is not, that his sin is not offensive to God; it is in its own nature being contrary to the nature of God, as the Doctor in a following page observes, and where he also distinguishes between God's being offended with the sins of believers, and with their persons; and it is in this latter sense he is to be understood here: for God loves them with an everlasting love, and has no fury in him towards them; and

besides all their sins are fully satisfied for by Christ who thereby has took away all cause of offence, that is, sin. So the very learned Witsius, referring to this passage of the Doctor's, observes, he is to be understood, (*respectu plenissimae illius reconciliationis quam impetravit Christu,*) in respect of that most full reconciliation which Christ has obtained, and which is adjudged to believers in justification. 12, sect. 7.

yet, I say, God no longer stands offended and displeased with him, when he has once received Christ; and unto them, saith God, "Fury is not in me," Isa. xxvii. 4. And in Isaiah liii. 5, (among many other notable expressions of God's being well-pleased towards poor sinners through Christ) he saith, "He was wounded for their transgressions;" you have this admirable expression of the effect of his wounding, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:" satisfied, here, is as much as pacified; they are all one. The travail of the soul of Christ makes God such amends for the sinfulness of believers, that he can no longer stand offended and displeased with them. If God doth remain offended with them, there is yet some of their sinfulness remaining to be taken away, that this offence also may be taken away. All their sins must be taken away from them, and all offences will be removed from them. But, except God will be offended, where there is no cause to be offended, (which is blasphemy to speak) he will not be offended with believers. For I say he hath no cause to be offended with a believer, because he doth not find the sin of the believer to be the believer's own sin, but he finds it the sin of Christ*;

*Being imputed to him, and atoned for by him; and so the offence by it, to the justice of God, is ceased, having an ample satisfaction. So the above-mentioned judicious professor Witsius gives the sense of the passage. "God is not offended without a cause, there is no cause of offence but sin; Christ has borne and taken away all the sins of believers, and the most just offence of God for them; and not only some part of the offence, but all, all entirely, therefore there remains none that lies upon believers; to these God says, 'Fury is not in me, Isaiah xxvii, 4.'" Ibid.

"He was made sin for us; God laid the iniquities of us all upon him.

The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin: He bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and if he bear our sins, he must bear the displeasure for them; nay, he did bear the displeasure, the indignation of the Lord; and if he did bear the indignation of the Lord; either he did bear all, or but part: if he did not bear all the indignation of the Lord, then he doth not "save to the uttermost those that come to God by him;" as he is said to do, Heb. vii. 25. I say, not to the uttermost, because here is some offence, some indignation, left behind; and for lack of taking this indignation upon himself, it falls upon believers. So that, either you must say, Christ is an imperfect Saviour, and hath left some scattering of wrath behind, that will light upon the head of the believer; or else you will say, he is a perfect Saviour, and takes away all displeasure of God; then there remains none of it upon the person of a believer. Beloved, for my part, I understand not what clouds are in the mind and judgment of other men; to me it seems, there is no truth more abundantly cleared, in all the Scriptures, than this one truth of the transferring of our sins, and so the offence for them, wholly upon the back of Christ; and thus a poor soul hath rest from the indignation of God, as Christ takes the burthen of from his shoulders. There is a, twofold burthen; first, In sin itself; and secondly, In the indignation of God for it. Who can bear this indignation of his? Christ alone, and he hath borne it.

Yes, but you will say, Is not God offended at the sins of believers, when they do commit them? Hath Christ taken away the offence against sin by his death?

I answer, No; therefore do not mistake yourself; there may be easily a mistake for lack of serious pondering the words I deliver. I have not said, God is not offended with the sins that believers commit; but God stands not offended with the persons (Jonah iv. 6. 1 Kings ix. 4, 5.) of believers, for the sins committed by them. He hath that everlasting indignation against sin as ever. And as there is the same contrariety in sin against his nature, so there is the same contrariety in God's nature unto sin. All contraieties have a mutual contrariety against each other; as water is contrary to fire, so fire is contrary to water; as sin is contrary to the nature of God; so the nature of God is contrary to sin: there is an abhorrency of God to that sinfulness, but not an offence in God to the person that commits that sin; because

the offence of God for that sin hath spent itself upon the person of Christ; and, by having so spent. itself, there remains none of it to light upon the person of a believer (2 Sam. ii. 13.); Christ having borne all this offence for sin. And therefore, as I said before, either grant Christ hath satisfied. the father, that he is pleased in his beloved son, according to Christ's own speech; either grant this, or say, Christ hath not done all: In Matt, iii. is heard a voice from heaven, at the baptizing of Christ, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well. pleased." He doth not say, *with whom* I am well pleased, but *in whom* I am well pleased; that is, in whom I am well pleased, with you. Though in our natures, and in the sinfulness of them, there is matter of displeasure, yet in Christ, for all this, God is well pleased with us. And yet there is none of God's indignation against sin lost in all this, because he is 'net offended at all with the believer: for he hath satisfied his own offence in his Son more fully than he would have satisfied it in our own persons; we must have been everlastingly suffering, before. God would have been fully satisfied. Now, therefore, as the payment elf a great sum all at one payment, and at a day, is a better payment, than by a penny a year, till a thousand years be out mark what I say; so Christ's satisfying the Father at once, by one sacrifice of himself, is a better satisfying of him, than if we should have been infinite days in paying that which his justice requires, and his indignation to sin doth expect. So here is no derogation to the loathsome nature of sin, and the purity of God, and the great offence God takes at sin; but only here is the transaction of it from the person of a believer, to the person of Christ himself, that willingly took this upon him: and not only did he take it upon him, but it was according to the determinate counsel and purpose of God that he should do it; nay, the pleasure of God, "It pleased the Father to bruise Him," Isaiah liii. 10. So much briefly for the affection of wrath, and how much Christ is a way to take away that affection of God's wrath; that is, wrath simple, as it is an offence from him to a believer.

Secondly, Christ is a way to take away the effect of God's displeasure; Christ is the only way to take it away. "Shall I give the fruit of my body," saith the prophet Micah, vi. 7, "for the sin of my soul? thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil?" No, alas! this will not buy out the penance of one sin, when he hath sinned; it is all too mean a price: there must be a better to take away that

wrath; that is, the heavy punishment of God from a believer. I say a better price than this; not a dearer price to us poor men, but yet a more clear and acceptable price unto God; a price, in its nature, infinite and invaluable; but, of this price, not a farthing goes out of our purse; there is the greatness. Christ is a way to take away all wrath, in respect of the heavy hand of God, which is the fruit of man's sin.

In brief, beloved, the sum plainly is this, Christ is so the way from wrath, that God doth never punish any believer, after he is a believer, for sin; I say, God doth not punish for sin*.

*The reason is, because the whole punishment, due to his sins, has been borne by Christ, his surety for him; and to inflict punishment twice for the same sins, once upon the surety, and again upon the believer, is contrary to the justice of God, as well as derogatory to the satisfaction of Christ; for either he has borne the whole of punishment, or only a part; if the whole, which is the truth, then none can be laid upon the believer; but, if only a part, Christ's satisfaction is not complete, and then the believer must be a co-bearer and co-saviour with Christ, as the Doctor observes; neither of which ought to be said.

This seems to be a harsh proposition to many; but give me leave to clear what I say; and so, according to the clear evidence of truth, reject or receive what I deliver to you. In Isaiah, liii. 5, a chapter of most admirable excellency to set forth the wonderful and incomprehensible benefit of Christ: observe it, "He was wounded for our transgressions;" mark the punishment; "He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and by his stripes we are healed." Now, beloved, I will ask but this question; Are the wounds of Christ only part; of the punishment? or, are they the whole of our punishment? The bruising of Christ, were they to be part of the punishment our sins deserved? If they were but part, we must bear the rest ourselves; but then, we must be co-saviours with Christ, co-bearers of indignation and wrath. Isaiah liii. 5, "He hath trodden the wine-press alone," saith the text; "He looked for some that might help, and wondered, and there was none." No creature in the world was able to be a helper with him.

I speak of believers only; they do not bear one lash of that deserved wrath, that is poured out for sin, not one lash or stroke; Christ trod it alone himself. Yea, but you will say unto me, Doth not God afflict his children and believers? All the world seeth and knoweth he doth; therefore, why speak you against this? Beloved, give me leave to ask you is there not a great deal of difference between God's afflicting believers, and punishing believers for sin?

Yea, but are not the afflictions of believers for sin?

I answer, No: afflictions are unto believers *from* sin, but not *for* sin*.

*That is, they are not punishments for sins, or are in a way of vindictive wrath for them; but they are in love, and for the good of God's people; they are fatherly chastisements for sins, in order to take them away, or purge them from them, or prevent them, or preserve from them, as the Doctor afterwards explains himself.

What is the meaning of that, you will say? God, in afflicting believers, doth not intend to punish them, as now laying on them the desert of their sin, for that is laid upon Christ; but he doth afflict them in part to be a help to preserve them from sin: I say, All afflictions to believers are to keep them from sin, rather than punishment unto them for sin. Yet, some will say, No men in the world are afflicted, but their afflictions are for sin; I answer, Yea, there are that have been. The disciples put a question to Christ, when the man was born blind; "Whether did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Saith Christ to them, "Neither he nor his parents:" not that neither of them hath sinned, but that neither he, nor his parents had any sin, as a cause of that affliction or trial upon him; but that the power of God might be seen in him. So God, afflicting a believer, hath no respect unto sin, as if he did afflict for sin. For my own part, I cannot see how a man can say, Christ bore all the punishment of sin, if we bear any of it ourselves. And, if Christ did not bear it all, I cannot see how Christ can be a sufficient saviour, without some other to help him out, in that which he himself did not bear. I speak all this, beloved, the rather because when poor believers are crossed and afflicted in any kind, they are presently ready to suspect, God hath cast them off for their sins, and is angry with them for sinning against him. I say, in respect of sin he

hath committed, which he thus suspects, there is not the least drop of the displeasure of God, not the fruit of such displeasure comes near him; "But every son whom I love, I rebuke and chasten," saith the Lord. God seeth that afflictions will purge, therefore he gives them. The father gives not his child a purge to make him sick, but to take away some bad humours that made him sick, and for the prevention of disease, or for the removal of some disease; that is the father's end in purging the child. And this is the end why God afflicts his people; not for their sins, but to take them away, (Isaiah xxvii. 9.) that is, to prevent the hastiness and inconsiderateness of a believer, that he may not be so rash, running headstrong in his own ways, but may be the more considerate for the time to come. It is most certainly true, beloved, that as soon as ever a person is a believer, he is so ingratiated into God, and with him, that there is nothing in the world from that instant, unto a believer, but mercy. God managing his mercy in his own way for the best to his; sometimes by the rod, as well as by sweet-meats; but still he runs in a way of mercy. "All things shall work together for good;" this is God's way to believers. And if this could but be received of them; and that even then, when they are gold cast into the fire, that God, all that time they are in the fire, as the prophet Malachi speaks, sits "as a refiner;" then they would be more quiet in the expectation of that purity, in which they shall come forth, when the time of their coming forth is: when you see the refiner cast his gold into the furnace, do you think he is angry with the gold, and means to cast it away? No, he sits as a refiner; that is, he stands warily over the fire, and over the gold, and looks unto it, that not one grain be lost; and when the dross is severed, he will out with it presently, it shall be no longer there. Even so Christ sits as a refiner; when once his gold shall have its dross severed, then he takes out his gold, and it becomes as gold seven times purified in the fire. But still, I say, as a fruit of wrath, God never doth punish, or afflict, or chastise; (which word you may rather use, because it is the ordinary phrase of the gospel) "Every son I love, I rebuke and chasten."

In brief, Christ is the way from wrath, not only in respect of the present, but also in respect of the future; I mean a way from everlasting damnation. Give me a believer that hath set his footing truly in Christ, and he blasphemes Christ that dares serve a writ of damnation upon that person. Suppose a believe be overtaken in a

gross sin, it is a desperate thing, in any man, so much as to serve a writ of damnation upon this believer; it is absolutely to frustrate, and make void the mediatorship and saviourship of Christ, to say, any believer (though he be fallen by infirmity) is in the estate of damnation. (John v. 24. I Thess. i. 10. Rom, viii. 38, 39) And I say unto thee, thyself, whoever thou art, that thou art ready to charge damnation upon thyself, when thou art overtaken, thou doest the greatest injury to the Lord Jesus Christ that can be: for in it thou directly overthrowest the fulness of the grace of Christ, and the fulness of the satisfaction of Christ to the Father. Art thou a believer, and yet art thou in danger of damnation? Wherefore hath Christ suffered? Hath he died in vain? If he hath not died in vain, but hath borne thy damnation, how shall he pour forth this damnation upon thee again, unless he be unjust? which is blasphemy to speak.

But you will say this is presumption; then may a man go on, and do what he list, there is no fear of damnation: this is the way to take the bridle from men, and make them kick up their heels as the wild asses upon the mountains.

I answer, it is true, were a man to be guided by himself, and to order his own way, according to the pleasure of his own will: but, beloved, you must know, that the same Christ that hath borne the wrath of the Father, and the effects thereof, doth free poor sinners from damnation; the same Christ takes as strict an order, to restrain and keep in the spirits of a man, as to save that man. Beloved, although a wild ass, being loose, runs at random yet this ass may be taken, and so tamed, that he may be set as loose as he was before: yet he will not run as unruily as he did before, by virtue of his being tamed. It is true, our natures themselves are mad, and, if they had the reins, would run wild; but you must know, that Christ breaks this wildness, and then he dare let a believer loose to that, in respect of which, an unbeliever, a wicked man, would take advantage to sin, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. Here the Lord discourses of Ephraim; "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning a of himself," thus: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:" here is a wild bull, an unruly creature. You may be sure Ephraim was thus: God hampers Ephraim well enough for all this; "Convert thou me, and I shall be converted; so after I was converted, I was ashamed, I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed and confounded within myself" Mark

you, I pray, now let Ephraim loose; alas! Ephraim is ashamed. Ephraim would blush to look after that which he was mad after before; he is confounded within himself; he cannot tell which way to stir now, as before. Christ doth break the spirits of him; so that there is not now the licentiousness in him, through the power of Christ, which was naturally in him, till the power of Christ came upon him.

Why must not hell and damnation be a bridle to keep men in, will you say?

I answer, marks what the Psalmist speaks, Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be a willing people." Here you see how tame the people of Christ are. Thy people are a willing people. How so? By fear of damnation? No such thing. But in the day of thy power, and in the beauty of holiness," they shall be a willing people. First, the power of Christ comes over a person, that frames his spirit to a willingness and aptness; then comes the beauty of holiness, that wins, persuades, allures, and draws them to willingness; and where there is a willing spirit to walk with Christ, there is no danger of taking liberty. The philosophers observe a rule, that the will is not compelled; a man cannot constrain his will. Let the will of a person but be to the pleasure of Christ, nothing can constrain him to go beyond Christ; he may haply be over-reached, and be over-taken, but he will never break loose; he will never run away, though the gate stands open on every side. The brass and pasture are so sweet that Christ hath put a believer into; that though there be no bounds to keep in such a soul, yet it will never go out(I Peter i. 5.) of this fat pasture, to feed in a barren common Therefore, in answer to the objectors, who naturally think there is a way open to such licentiousness, by taking away all wrath from a believer, and that therefore he will break: into all manner of excess, I tell you, the power of Christ restrains him. Thus I have dispatched the second thing, from whence Christ is the way; he is the way from sin and wrath; wrath in the affection, wrath in the effects of it.

I come now, in the next place, to consider how Christ is the way, not only from sin and wrath, but the way, and the only way, to grace and glory. Grace, in scripture, admits of a double acceptation, proper and improper. We usually take grace for that which is improperly grace; for we commonly call grace those divine qualities and virtues, and holy dispositions and actions, wherewith we are possessed, by which

we do improve and employ ourselves in the world. This we usually call grace; and in some sense, it is grace: but that which is most properly grace, is nothing else but merely favour and bounty, and loving kindness itself; and so, consequently, all sanctification is not, so properly grace itself, as the fruit of grace; God first casts his favour and loving-kindness upon a person, then out of his favour flow the several fruits of his loving-kindness; and the fruits are those fruits of the spirit, frequently mentioned by the apostle. Now Christ is a way to grace in both these respects; Christ is a way to favour and loving-kindness in God; Christ is a way to all fruits or graces, as you call them.

He is a way to loving-kindness itself, and the favour of God: this, loving-kindness and favour of God, consists in these branches; first, in a willing reconciliation of God, unto an alienated creature. A person is then said to be received into grace, when he hath been cast off, and forbidden to come near; as when princes cast men out of their favour, they confine them, and remove them from them, that they shall not be near the court: now when princes are pleased to cast a fresh aspect upon those persons again, and so call them to court, and to be friends with them, this is properly grace. So, beloved, after God seems to have cast off a person, and to put him far off from himself, and to remove him out of his sight, to confine him from coming near him; when he will return to him again, and will show him the light of his countenance, that he did formerly hide, this is properly favour. The apostle, you shall find, doth expressly mention this reconciliation of God, and ascribes this grace merely unto Christ alone, "Ye who were sometimes afar off," mark but the expression, "hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" here you see the ingratiating reconciliation by the blood of Christ. "God was in Christ," saith the apostle, "reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them; in Christ reconciling," and therefore "Christ is the mediator of a better covenant," (as the apostle expresseth, Heb. viii.) Nay the apostle tells us expressly, he is the only mediator, and there is no other to reconcile men to God, but Christ alone; "There is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." So, we see plainly, to be at peace with God, there must be only the Lord Jesus Christ that must make peace; he himself is the way. I remember a passage in Job, when there seemed to be a variance; between God and him; first,

Job tugs at a pitiful stand, "I cannot answer him," saith, Job, speaking of God; why so? "There is no day's-man that may come in between us, that might lay his hand upon us both:" as much as to say, there is no hope of agreement with God, till another interpose himself, and be a day's-man; that is, hath power over us both. Such effectual umpires between men are indifferent, and have both parties in difference in their power, to command the one, and the other; to command the creditor to yield, and to prevail with the debtor to pay as much as he is able; and this umpire is Christ alone.

There are many other expressions of God's grace; of his loving-kindness and favour, and it is plain, throughout the whole scripture, that Christ is the only way to all. As to that adoption that the apostle speaks of, (when he breaks out into admiration) saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" "Is it a small matter to you" (saith David, speaking to some of the servants of Saul, persuading him to marry the king's daughter) "seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law?" So say I to you, "Is it a small matter to you to be the sons of God?" Oh! great love! But this great grace and favour is only by Jesus Christ. In Gal. iv. 4, 5, it is plainly Christ that brings this grace of adoption, to make us sons; "In the fulness of time, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Here you see, all that Christ doth, is to this end; that at length, through that he hath done, we might receive the adoption of sons. As Christ is away unto the pure grace, and mere favour, and loving-kindness of God; so also unto all the fruits of grace, all the manifestations of it in the expression of God's loving-kindness, in the fruits of the Spirit. To give you some instances:

The first of all these kinds of the grace of God, that he doth ever bestow upon a person, is, The opening his eyes to see himself filthy and to see what he is: here begins a closing with Christ, to see a need of him, and to see the usefulness of him being received. Now mark this great business, of the opening of the eyes of a person, and you shall see he is a way unto it, Isa. xlii. 6, there the Father doth treat with Christ, and in his treaty he speaks thus to him, "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes. "You see this, it is Christ that must open the blind eyes of men. Beloved, men

are mistaken that think that the law makes them to see their own vileness; for a gracious sight of our vileness is the only work of Christ. The law is a looking-glass, able to represent the filthiness of a person; but the law gives not eyes to see that filthiness bring a looking-glass, and set it before a blind man, he seeth no more spots in his face, than if he had none at all; though the glass be a good glass, yet the glass cannot give eyes; yet, if he had eyes, the glass might represent his filthiness. The apostle James compares the law to a looking-glass, and that is all the law can do; to have a faculty to represent; but it doth not give a faculty to see what it doth represent: it is Christ alone that doth open the eyes of men, to behold their own vileness and filthiness; and when Christ will open the eyes, then a man shall see himself what he is.

Secondly, Repentance is a great grace; yet you shall find, beloved, in Acts v. 31, that it is merely the work of Christ to give repentance unto men; God hath exalted him to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. "It is Christ that grants repentance unto life; and if ever you will repent, with a kind repentance, either you must fetch it from Christ, he must be the way, or you must go without it.

Faith is a grace of graces, the root of all graces to believers, and this is properly Christ, and none but Christ, that works faith in a believer; the apostle speaks this expressly, Heb. xii. 2, "Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." He is the author, it is he that begets it.

Thirdly; Consider the whole spiritual life; Christ is the only way to all spiritual life whatsoever. "I live," (with Paul) "yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." There is no life, but as Christ lives in men. Whence is the natural life of man? It is from the soul; the soul once separated from the body, is dead; so long as the soul is united to the body, the man is alive; Christ is the life of every believing soul; Christ is he that frames and gives life to men. Eph. ii. 1, "Ye that were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened;" he it is that quickens men when they are dead in trespasses and sins. And in John v. 25, you have this admirable expression, "That the time is coming, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear his voice shall live." There is no life but by Christ alone; he is the way to all spiritual life whatsoever. So in brief, beloved, there is

not a scrap (as you may say) pertaining to a Christian, but it comes from Christ alone.

Fourthly, God hath therefore filled Christ full of all things, that we might fetch all from him. The apostle tells us expressly, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." St. John, in the first chapter of his gospel, tells us to what purpose he was "ful of grace and truth," saying, "And of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace." The Psalmist, (Psalm lxxviii. 18,) hath this expression, "Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them." The apostle, quoting that text, turns the words thus: "Thou hast given gifts to men:" it is as much as to say, that God bequeathed as much to Christ, as shall serve for his body; and this he distributes to the body, according to the proportionable need of it. The head is first the fountain, and hath all animal spirits planted in it; then doth it from itself derive all those animal spirits to every part, from whence all have their several motions. So that, I say, the supply of all the believer's wants concerning grace, be it in matters of mortification of sin, be it in the performance of duties of piety, mercy, and justice, or any other whatsoever, the supply of all must come from Christ alone, as he speaks himself Rev. i. 8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" of all things. "All my springs" (saith the Psalmist, Psalm i lxxxvii. 7.) "are in thee." He speaks of Christ in the name of God, as if God spake to Christ his Son; "All my springs are in thee:" therefore you shall find God always dealing with men, as Pharaoh dealt in Egypt with his own people; they came complaining of their wants to Pharaoh: "Go to Joseph," (saith Pharaoh) "hear what he saith;" he turns; all over to Joseph. Thus doth God deal with men: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him," with God the Father: therefore, Christ saith, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:" so that Christ is judge alone; as Christ will dispose of all things, so his Father sets to his seal, and under writes his hand, and never examines what Christ doth; but every deed that is signed by Christ, the Father, without any more ado, seals it, and manages all things by the hand of Christ; therefore, Christ saith, in the last of Matthew, "All power is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth." "The Father made all over to him, every thing. The truth is, beloved, the Godhead is absolutely a being of itself, (Deut, vi. 4.) but this Godhead was

pleased to unite the humanity to itself, and the Godhead having the humanity united to it, is one person*.

*That is the Godhead, as subsisting in the Son of God, is a person of itself, and taking the humanity into union with it, both became one person.

Thus it pleased Christ to manage all things in the world, not in the Godhead alone, but as the Godhead hath the manhood united to it. You must not conceive, when God makes over the managing of things to Christ, that he sits still. But the Godhead hath now the manhood united to itself; so it is Christ, God and man; that works together; and, by this kind of way, there is nearer and better access for us unto God; because here is an humanity that is of some relation unto us, and so of near acquaintance with us. The Godhead, in its simple nature, is of too remote, a distance, for us to come near.

Fifthly, Moreover, he is not only a way to grace, but the encreasing of it is in Christ. The apostle (Col. ii. 10.) tells us, that "we are complete in him, who is the head of the body, the head of all principalities;" not only that we have substance and being, but that we are complete in him: and, in the latter end of the chapter, the apostle follows the allusion of the head and body, and faith, that the "parts having nourishment ministred by joints, increase with the increase of God." When the parts are united to the head, and the head, through the veins and nerves conveys nourishment to those parts, then the parts not only live, but increase with the increase of God. The apostle, I Pet. ii. 4, saith, "To whom coming as to a living stone," (speaking to believers,) "you as lively stones are built up a spiritual house:" he doth not say, stones that have life, but "lively stones;" they have more than bare life; nay, further, as lively stones are built up" together. There is a growing up by the power of Christ, in coming the living-stone," as the apostle doth there call him.

And that is not all neither; we have not only growth by the grace of Christ, but restoration (Psalm xxiii. 3.) and recovery in case of relapse. Suppose a believer fall, the same Christ that gave him life, and set him upon his legs, must raise him up again when he is down; "Though I fall, yet shall I not be cast down," saith he; that is, I shall not be left, but shall be raised again: "The ransomed of the Lord" (Isa. xxxv. 10,) "shall return unto Sion, they shall rejoice with

everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away." They shall return to Sion; they were of Sion before: a man is not said to return, except he were in the place before, and so is coming again; so the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Sion. How? they are ransomed of the Lord; it is the ransom of Christ, that brings them back from bondage to their Sion again; and when he brings them back, he brings them back "with everlasting joy upon their heads; they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fly away."

Thus I have endeavoured to declare the main thing, in what kind Christ is a way from a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace.

I should have further considered what kind of way Christ is, and upon what grounds Christ is become such a way as he is; but I consider the season; I shall not therefore trespass upon your patience, though my fingers itch to be dealing in that which remains. There is abundance of excellency behind; Christ he is a free way; Christ is a near way; Christ is a way of quick riddance of all business you have to do in the way; Christ is a firm way, there is no fear of sinking; Christ is a satisfying and pleasant way; "All thy ways are pleasantness;" Christ is a safe way, there is a continual guard and conduct in that way; Christ is an easy way to hit; "Way-faring men, though fools," (saith Isaiah) "shall not err therein;" Christ is a spacious way, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room," saith David. Now all this is founded upon the good pleasure of God; he will have Christ to be the way: it is founded upon the interest that Christ hath in God; it is founded upon the purchase of Christ, that hath bought this for man; it is likewise founded upon the conquest of Christ, as he makes his own way, and beats all off that keeps thee from finding this way; it is founded, lastly, upon his bowels to the sons of men, that can never pass over the gulf, till he hath made himself a bridge for them. These things I should have showed you by setting forth the excellency of this Way. But of these hereafter.

SERMON III

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

JOHN xiv. 6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.

I HAVE a word or two to speak more fully, if possible it may be, to satisfy such as are not fully resolved in the things I formerly delivered. Christ, I said, is the way from wrath, from the wrath of the Father; from wrath in its affection, (as I may so speak;) from wrath. in the fruits of this affection of wrath. I delivered this position indeed: "The punishment, or the rod of God, or rather chastisement, is not *for* sin, but *from* sin." Some stumble at the expression, peradventure thorough mistake. In brief, therefore, beloved, to clear both myself and your judgments, if it be possible; when I say that believers are not afflicted for sin, I mean thus; God, when he afflicts a believer, he hath not an eye to the desert of his sin, and there upon doth lay part of this desert upon his back; for Christ hath borne the whole desert of sin upon his own back. Whatsoever desert of sin the believer doth bear, Christ did not bear it, or else God takes satisfaction twice for one thing. Mark it well, I pray, beloved, if the Lord will scourge a believer, as now pouring out upon him what his transgressions hath deserved, wherefore did Christ die? Christ died to satisfy for the fault of sin; and, in his death, God was actually satisfied, as you shall find it in Isaiah liii. "He beheld the travail of his soul, and he was satisfied with it." With what was he satisfied? He was satisfied with "the travail of his soul;" with the burthen his soul bare, with the punishment of sin that was upon him. If God was satisfied with the "travail of his soul," how can God come to exact a new satisfaction by pouring out his wrath for sin upon believers? To be satisfied, and to ask more is a contradiction; either he was not satisfied, or, being satisfied, he could ask no more. In brief, therefore, beloved, consider thus much, there is not the least action,

or rather intention of any revenge, for a sin committed, when the Lord in any kind afflicts his people: all the revenge, that sin deserves, Christ hath taken away and hath borne it upon his own back; and, therefore, he is said to "save to the uttermost (Heb. vii. 25,) them that come to God by him." He saves to the utmost, saith the apostle; he hath not left a dram, nor a jot behind, not so much as the least scatterings of wrath to light upon the head of a believer, for whose sake he bare the indignation of the Lord. Whereupon the very nature of affliction in general is altered and changed; as death in particular: it was the wages of sin at first; it is become the bed of rest now;" They shall rest in their beds, each in his uprightness," saith the prophet. Afflictions were the rod of God's anger; they are now the gentle purges of a tender father. God heretofore afflicted for sin, now God afflicts men from sin; "This is all the fruit," saith the prophet, "to take away his sin:" not to take away the present sin, as if affliction did make an end, and so blot out transgression; this doth directly strike at the heart of Christ himself*.

*For it is Christ's work to take every present sin from off the conscience of the believer, by the application of his blood and sacrifice; hence he is said to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away," that continues to take away, "the sins of the world."

But "this is all the fruit to take away sin," that is, to break off sin, to prevent sin. "Before I was afflicted (saith David) I went astray, but now have I learned to keep thy law:" therefore, (saith he) "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" in this regard, because of prevention.

If you will but carry it clearly without carping, or a spirit that seeks contention and quarrelling, you never need to stumble at such a position as this; for afflictions are the smiles of God, as gracious as the choicest embraces. God never manifests loving stroking of a soul, more than he doth, when he afflicts it, to make his love appear in these afflictions. And the truth is, as Christ has purchased rest and peace for believers, so he hath likewise purchased afflictions for them too; the wisdom of God seeing afflictions as useful as dandlings themselves: but still, I say, this remains firm, that Christ is a way from all wrath whatsoever, as it is the manifestation of God's displeasure unto the creatures sinning; and thereby pouring out the

desert of this sinfulness, or the fruit of the desert of this sinfulness, upon them; Christ is a way to the state of grace; grace in respect of favour, grace in respect of the fruits thereof; and this we have dispatched.

The next thing considerable is, "What kind of way Christ is to those that come to the Father by him?" I shall speak as briefly as possible I may. Take notice, in general, that the Lord hath laid out Christ as a way, with all the possible conveniences that may either win a people into this way, or satisfy and refresh a people that are in this way; (Prov. ix. 1,2,3. Cant. v. 1.) he hath so furnished Christ, the way, with all possible accommodations, as there cannot be devised what the heart of man himself can desire; but he shall find it in this way, Christ: so that all I shall speak of this subject is, that as it may give abundance of light; so you may apply it all along, by way of motive to stir you up, to quicken you to set footing into this way, in respect of those several conveniencies that do accompany it.

In the first place, There is this great and ineffable excellency and accommodation in Christ, the way, that he is a free way for all corners to enter into, without any cause of fear, that they shall trespass by entering: he is a free way, I say: a way that costs nothing; a way barred up to no person whatsoever; a way whose gates are cast off from the hinges; (Psa. cxii. 16.) nay, rather, a way that hath no gates at all unto it; a cheap way to us; a costly way indeed unto the Father, and to Christ too. O beloved! a man might study a while to find out, whether there be more preciousness in Christ himself, as he is our way, or in the fitting of Christ to be our way. The person of Christ is invaluable, there is nothing to be compared with him: but considering him as our way to salvation, whether there be more preciousness in that, or in the fitting of him for it, is not so easy to determine. Ye are bought with a price, (saith the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19,) not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Observe it, I pray, that Christ might be a fit way for us to the Father, it cost the Father, and Christ himself that, in comparison of which, silver and gold, and the most precious, things in the world, are called but corruptible things; which makes the apostle break out into a way of expostulation and admiration, rather than into a way of affirmation; "Oh! what manner of love is this, that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should

be called the sons of God! Greater love than this can no man show, than to lay down his life for his enemies. What did it cost the Father? It cost him that, that was most precious to him of all things in the world; it cost him his Own Son, not a cessation of the being of his Son, but the bitterness of his Son: though a man doth not lose his child, yet it goes to heart of him to see his child tormented; much more when he himself must be forced to be the tormentor. Abraham thought God put him hard to it, when he must be the butcher, to slay his own and only son, his dear Isaac. God, the Father, was put to it as much, nay, much more: in Abraham the thing was but offered, God would not have him do it actually; yet it went to his heart that he should be appointed to do it; but it would have cut his heart if he had done it, if he had cut the throat of Isaac. If nothing could content him before he had a child, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" What would Abraham have said, if receiving a child, he should have been made a butcher to his own child? Yet the Father was put to this, to make Christ a way to believers: "He was his only beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Prov. viii. 30, "I was daily his delight, (speaking of the Father and Christ under the notion, wisdom) I was his delight, rejoicing always before him in the habitable parts of his earth." Must it not come near unto him to part with such a Son? Nay, must it not go near to him, that he himself must not only be a spectator of all that cruelty, but the principal actor himself in the tragedy? He doth not only leave Christ to men, but when men could not fetch blood enough, he takes the rod into his own hand, and will fetch it himself from his beloved Son: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," saith the prophet, Isa. liii. 10. It did not only please the Lord, that men should bruise him; but "it pleased the Lord" himself "to bruise him." It was a strange apprehension, that God should look upon the anguish of the soul of Christ, and, instead of breaking out into furiousness against the instruments of cruelty, he himself should be satisfied with beholding it; as much as to say, it did his heart good to see it; "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" not only satisfied towards men, but satisfied himself: it gave him content to see the travail of his Son. Certainly, beloved, the bowels of God must infinitely be beyond the reach of the creature, towards a poor sinner, that he could go so far in a contrary way to his own Son; that there might be the fruit of these bowels to his enemies. One would think, God should rejoice to

see the confusion of his enemies;" and not rejoice to see the bitterness of the travail of the soul of his Son, that his enemies might escape scot-free: but this. it cost the Father; he must not only behold, or allow the suffering Of his Son, but he must be an actor of it himself: nay, he must be pleased in it.

Certainly, the Father was exceedingly pleased with it, because it doth commend the great end of the Father: the main end he drove at was the salvation of sinners; and this, in his wisdom, he saw the fittest way; that it could not be done, but by this' way; therefore it pleased him, in that his purpose should not be frustrate of his end. You know, when a man hath a great mind to a thing, if the way he goes in prospers not, he is displeased; if it prosper, he is contented in it, he delights to see his business succeed; so was it with the Father.

You may see what it cost Christ too, as well as the Father; the Father must resign his part in his Son; a great matter, not only to part with him, in respect of death, but in a manner to part with him in life too; "My God, my God, (saith Christ) why hast thou forsaken me?" Here, you see, God parts with him in life; and Christ must part with his life, as well as the Father must part with the Son; nay, in some manner, Christ must part with that which is better than his life, with the glory and majesty of his divinity. He did not part with the essence of his divinity, but with the glory of it; he parted, as Phil. ii. 6, "Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation;" he did empty himself, as the meaning of the word is; he did put off and lay aside the majesty and glory he had, that he might seem to be a mere Carpenter's Son. For a king all his life-time to undergo the notion of a beggar, and not to recover out of this estate all his whole life, but even to lie down in this low condition in the grave, it would seem a great loss unto him: man would reckon this a great matter, for a king to debase himself so low; it cost Christ more than this; look upon all the sufferings of Christ; look upon death itself; together with the reproach and shame of it. The death he died, was called "A cursed death of the cross;" although he was not ashamed, that is, he despised the shame; yet shame and reproach he must bear. So, if we look upon God and Christ, as making a way for men, it is not a free way, it is not a cheap way, but looking upon ourselves, that have received the benefit of this way, and this Christ,

it is a free way indeed, free for man, without any cost or charge; free, as he is a way to all sorts of men, none excepted, none prohibited; whoever will, may set footing in Christ. There is nothing can bar one person more than another, from entering into Christ as a way. I know, beloved, this seems harsh to the ears of some people, that there is no difference to be made among men, not only poor, as well as rich, but that the wicked, as well as godly, are admitted; that is strange. But let me tell you, Christ is a free way for a drunkard, for a whore-master, for a harlot, an enemy to Christ; I say, Christ is as free a way for such a person to enter into him*,

* That is, who has been such a person; not that continues so, as is presently observed; the sense is, that such are free to come to Christ, notwithstanding their former life, and that without any conditions and qualifications fitting them for his acceptance; and so stand upon as good a foot with respect to Christ's free and hearty admittance of them into him, the way, as the most godly person in the world.

as for the most godly person in the world. But do not mistake me; I do not say, Christ is a free way to walk in him, and yet to continue in such a condition; for Christ will never leave a person in such a filthiness, to whom he hath given to enter in himself: mark; well what I say; but for entrance into him, Christ is free a way for the vilest sort of sinners, as for any person under heaven. If Christ hath given a heart to a sinner, to set footing into himself; that is, to receive, to take him for his Christ; if Christ hath given him a heart to take him for his Christ in reality, to take him truly and unfeignedly: Christ is a way for such a person to the Father, though he be the vilest person under heaven. And he is to him a way unto the Father, even while he is ungodly, before he is amended; and he may take his part in this Christ, as an ungodly person, as well as when he is righteous. In this regard I say, Christ is a free way; God looks for nothing in the world from the sons of men, be they what kind of men soever, he looks for nothing from them, to have a right to Christ; but he did freely give Christ unto them, without considering of any thing that they might bring along with them.

Nay, more, God doth not only not look for any thing, but he will not take notice, nor regard any discouragements in men, to keep them from the inheritance, to keep him off from giving unto them a right

unto Christ.

I would fain have this point cleared, and fully and exactly proved, because, I doubt, many persons will not receive it; but; I tell yon, we must not be afraid to set forth the praise of the glory of God's grace, as fearing the squeamishness of some men: first, therefore, consider, that Christ is delivered Over unto to be their way unto the Father, of mere gift, of free gift: what is freer than a gift? That Christ is delivered over to be a way to the Father, by a mere and absolute gift, is most plainly expressed, Isaiah xlii. "I will give thee," saith rite text, "to be a covenant to the people." In matter of gift, what is there in the richest man in the world, more than in the veriest beggar, to partake of it, supposing the thing that comes to him as gift? A beggar can take a gift as well as the richest man; nay, a thief, that is condemned to the gallows, may receive a gift of the king, as well as the greatest favourite in court; and, if any thing be tendered as a mere gift unto a thief, his very being thief, and his being ready to be executed, is no prejudice in the world to bar him from participating of that which shall be stowed upon him as a gift: if Christ be a free gift unto men, then it must follow, to whom the Father will reach out Christ,: there is nothing in that person to hinder the participating of him.

But some will say, though Christ be a gift, yet he is a gift upon condition.

I answer, I cannot say but there is a flat contradiction, to say he is g gift, and yet conditions required. What are the conditions in a covenant, but a mere bargain and sale? I will do this, and thou shalt do that; do this, and thou shalt have that: what difference is there between this, and a bargain and sale? That God should require conditions of men, is but to receive Christ's upon bargain and sale; but Christ must be really and actually a gift. When the king gives a pardon to a thief, what are the conditions? Peradventure the thief can do his king service, if his life he spared; but if his life be spared upon service doing, it is not a gift, but a bargain, as much as to make contract, thus, do such a piece of service, then life is yours. I say it derogates from the nature of a gift, that there should be a condition required; and the gospel, that is, Christ given over to men, cannot be said to be freely given over to them, if man must buy him: mistake me not, I speak not all this while against holiness and righteousness,

that becomes a people to whom Christ is a way; for holy and righteous they shall be; Christ will make them holy, and put his spirit into them, to change their hearts and to work upon their spirits; but this is not the condition required to partake of Christ; Christ himself gives himself, and then he bestows these things when he is given. I say, Christ is given to men first, before they do any thing in the world; and all they do, they do by Christ present in them; "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." We do not so much live, but by the life of Christ, which is life in us. All the actions of life proceed from the soul, now present; how then comes the actions of the soul to be a condition to partake of the soul, that gives life, and, by its presence, works such actions? Christ is the soul of every believer, that animates, and acts the believer in all things whatsoever; must not this life, Christ, be put into a believer, before he can actuate life, which is a stream springs from that life? how then can this be a condition to receive, to have Christ, when Christ is first come, by whom these things; that are called conditions, are afterwards wrought, he himself being present to work them? So, say I, God bestows Christ upon men to be a way to bring them to the Father; he is an absolute and free gift: there is no other motive that Christ should be any one's saviour, than merely the good pleasure of the Father, the bowels of God himself; "Not for thy sake, but for my own sake; not for thy sake, thou art a rebellious and stubborn people, but for my own sake." Here is the freeness of Christ, to a person coming to him, when he comes merely for God's sake; and God merely upon his good pleasure will do it, because he will; "He hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth: it is not in him that willeth, (saith Paul, Rom. ix.) nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy." So that Christ becomes a way unto them, not out of their will, not out of their disposition, not out of their holy walkings, but out of that mercy that proceeds out of the mere will of God; his own good pleasure is the only fountain and spring of it. Beloved, I beseech you, seriously ponder and consider, that the gospel is therefore called the gospel, because it is glad tidings unto men; and so the angel interpreted it, "Behold, I bring glad tidings." Why glad. tidings? In this respect glad, the poor sinner, he is a broken creature; nay more, he is a dead creature, "Ye, who were dead in trespasses and sins." That life now

is reached out unto such a person, that is a dead person; herein it is plain, that there comes forth that grace from the Lord, that a creature being dead, who can act nothing towards life, yet he shall receive life. "The time is coming that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it, shall live," John v. 25. How come they by life! is there any action of theirs towards life? They are dead; it is the voice of the Son of God puts life into their dead souls; and it is glad tidings, that though the creature can do nothing, (John xv. 5. Isaiah xxvi. 12) yet Christ brings enough with him from the fountain of the Father, to bestow upon them, to bring them to him. To show you a plain scripture, that Christ becomes a way to the Father, merely as a free gift, without any thing in man required, look into Isaiah Iv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," that is, every one that hath a mind, "come to the waters, he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come and buy wine and milk without money, and without price," saith the prophet; and then he falls upon an objurgation in the next verse; "Wherefore spend ye money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfies not? Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness: incline your ear, hearken, and your soul shall live; I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David? Here is the closure of all; dost thou thirst, that is, hast thou a mind really to Christ, that Christ should say really to thy soul, I ant thy salvation? It may be thou dost suspect, saying within thyself, Christ is not my portion; I am not fit for Christ; I am a great sinner, I must be holy first: this is bringing a price to Christ; but you must come without money, and without price: and what is this to come without money, and without price? It is nothing but to take the offer (Rev. iii.18. John vii. 37) of Christ, these waters of life, to take them merely and simply as a gift brought, and this is a sure mercy indeed: these are the sure mercies of David, when a man receives the things of Christ, only because Christ gives them; not in regard to any action of ours, as the ground of taking them; I mean, in regard of any action of ours, that we must bring along with us, that must concur that we may partake of this gift. Hosea xiv. 4. Christ speaks there thus to his people, "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely;" that is, I will love them for mine own sake. Rom..iii. 23, 94, the apostle speaks excellently concerning this free grace of God bestowed in Christ upon them; "For all have sinned and come short of thο glory

of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Mark, brethren, first he takes off all creatures, and all that a creature can do, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" then he shows how we should partake of justification, namely, freely through Christ. Rom. v. The apostle speaks at large concerning the participation of Christ, to be our Christ of mere free gift, where he makes a large comparison of our participation of sin from Adam, and of our participation of life from Christ; and still in every passage, speaking of participating of life from and by Christ, he comes in with these expressions of gift, and that it comes freely. Rom. v. 15, "But not as by the transgression of one, so is the free gift; for if through the transgression of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Christ, hath abounded unto many." There is grace, and the gift by grace; so running in this expression in the 17th verse, he saith, "For if by the offence of one, death reigned by one much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." Still, I say, observe it, that we partake of life in Christ, and by Christ; and it runs altogether upon this strain, that it comes by mere gift.

Do but look in Ephes. ii. 4-10, and there you shall perceive how clear and full the apostle is in this business, that Christ is made a way to life absolutely and merely of free gift; "But God," saith he, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved: and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Jesus Christ, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Mark how he goes on; "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Still he runs upon mercy and grace, and works he excludes, that no creature might boast.

If any thing were done on our part, to partake of Christ, we might have whereof to boast. So likewise speaking of Abraham, Rom. iv. 2, "For if Abraham were justified by works, he had whereof to glory:" we should have to glory, if we should have the least hand in

the participating of Christ; therefore God would give Christ freely unto his creature; because man should have no stroke in participating of him, that so it might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that we should not glory; yea, "That no flesh should glory in his presence." And therefore the same apostle, Ephes. iii. 12, tells us, that from this grace "we have boldness, and access with confidence through the faith of him." In regard that Christ is given unto men 'to be a way unto the Father, and merely of free gift, hence it is that We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Should we regard our own works or qualifications, there would be some mixture of distrust; we should have some fear that God would find out such and such a thought; therefore we could never come with boldness and confidence, if we did not come in Christ as a free gift bestowed upon us: for if there were one condition,(Rom. xi. 6, and iv. 16.) and the least failing in that condition, God might take advantage upon that default, and so possibly we might miscarry; and we being jealous and privy to it, that there are faults in all we do, we should be "subject all our lives to bondage," (saith the apostle,) and should fear that God will take advantage of all that which is undone on our part; and so not fulfil what he hath promised on his part. But seeing we have Christ bestowed as free gift of the Father, "we come with boldness and access to the throne of grace." To establish, or a little more to clear this, look (Heb. x. 18, 19, 20,) "Now where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin; having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." How come we to have boldness? Through the new and living way made by the blood of Christ; not a new and living' way by his blood and our actions, but by his blood; that is, only by his blood, merely by his actions; and so passed over freely to us; this is that which makes us come with so much boldness.

Look into the closure of all the scriptures, you shall find there can be nothing imagined more free; nay, so free, as the participating of Christ to be the way to the Father; nothing so free as this, (Rev. xxii. 17,) "Both the Spirit and the bride say, come; let him that heareth, say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, (mark file expression) let him take of the water of life freely." Hast thou but a mind to Christ? come and take the water of life freely; it

is thine; it is given to thee; there is nothing looked for from thee to take thy portion in Christ; thine he is as well as any person's under Heaven: therefore, you shall find our Saviour exceedingly complain of this, as 'a. great fault, "You will not come to me, that you might have life;" "He that comes to me, I will in no wise cast him off;" upon no terms. Thou mayest object a thousand things, that if thou shouldst come, and conclude Christ is thy Christ, he will reject thee, and that it will be but presumption; but, in so doing, thou rejectest thyself, and forsakest thy own mercy; but Christ saith, Whosoever he be, what person soever, "I will in no wise cast him off, if he come unto me."

Secondly, as Christ is a free way, made over to men by free gift, without any thing in man to partake of this Christ, so he is a safe way to those that do take him: I say, Christ is a safe way, a secure way; here is no danger of miscarriage in Christ. Let men take any other way in the world to heaven, but Christ, and there are thousands of dangers, and thousands of ways to miscarry; but there is no way that a soul can possibly miscarry, that takes Christ for his way. "Satan hath desired to winnow thee," saith Christ, Luke xxii. 31, speaking to Peter, "but I prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:" nay, he undertakes so, for them that come to him, "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them." Believers that receive Christ, have not only the guard of angels to secure them, but they have the guard of the Spirit of Christ, that shall lead them; not only lead them into truth, but lead them into all truth. The Spirit will not take believer and lead him by the hand, and set him into the way, (as a friend doth, to lead one a mile out of town, and then leave him alone to go the rest of the way,) no, but the Spirit leads him into truth, and into all truth; he will be a companion of the soul, to secure it; a conduct to the very harbour and haven itself. It is a privilege of this nation, that merchants may have a convoy, a navy royal, it may be to go out with them, but it will hardly come in with them; therefore there is not absolute security in this convoy; but he that takes Christ, he hath the Spirit to go in and out before him; to go forth, to come back, to be all the way with him; nay, he hath given himself to be his protector. I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 4. In all other ways there may be danger, in respect of rubs, in respect of difficulties or troubles that may arise in them: but, do but look in Isa. xxxv. you shall see what safety there is in this way of Christ, unto

those that make choice of him, in respect of any danger that may lie in the way. Isa. xxxv. 8, the prophet tells us, "That a highway, there shall be, and that way shall be called the way of holiness, and the unclean shall not pass over." And verse 9, (mark the security) "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall be found there; but the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there:" no lion, no ravenous beast, nothing to make them miscarry. If a man haply travel through a wilderness, there may be bears and lions; as in New England, and in other foreign parts, they lie open to many dangers: so let a man choose righteousness; I mean his own righteousness, as his way to heaven: Oh! what a world of danger lies here! Satan hath continual advantage against him from that righteousness; his own corrupt heart is ready to swallow him up; but there is no lion in the way, Christ.

Thirdly, As lie is a safe way, so he is a lightsome way; Christ, I say, is a lightsome way to the Father. Solomon tells us, "It is a joyful filing for a man to behold the light of the sun." It is a great heaviness and bitterness to the spirit of a traveller, to be benighted; to be overtaken with darkness is very uncomfortable; therefore, when we come to the summer-seasons, they are the best seasons for travellers, because lightsome and long. All ways to the Father, but Christ, are mere darkness; nothing but darkness; Christ is the light of the world; "I am come a light into the world: He is that light, that lighteth every one that cometh into the world."

Fourthly, Christ (and this is an excellent consideration) is a near way; all that take him to come to the Father by him, have a short way to the Father, in comparison of any other way whatsoever: Christ is the string, ether ways are the bow; all other ways are compasses about; nay, they are labyrinths, in which men use themselves, after they are wearied with toil; Christ is a near way to the Father; "He is nigh that justifieth me; who shall condemn me?" Isa. 1. 8. But more especially observe, how near a way Christ is to the Father; you have it excellently described in Rom. x. 6. "The righteousness which is of faith, (that is, of Christ) speaks on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep? That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead: but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; this is the

word of faith which we preach." Mark, when a man chooses Christ for his way to the Father, there needs no clambering up to heaven to fetch down Christ, nor digging to the bottom of the deep to fetch him up; Christ is such a way to the Father, that instead of bringing the man to the Father, he brings the Father down to him; "The word is nigh unto thee, even in thy heart." Therefore, the apostle tells us, "You who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13. Just as if there were such a course taken, that the Indies (whence are all treasures) should be brought and set at the suburbs of London; just so doth Christ bring the Father unto men, and becomes such a way, as there is but one step, from the lowest condition of sinfulness, to the highest of being a son of God. There is but one step between the Father, and them that choose Christ to be the way. And therefore the first thing Christ preached, was this, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" what is that? It is present. You have heard much, I suppose, of your northern passage to the Indies; a great deal of time hath been spent to find such a cut, that the voyage may be done in half the time. O look upon Christ, he is such a way to the Father, that the voyage is done in a step from a state of ungodliness, to the state of justification, to the state of salvation settled upon the soul. Christ is such a way, that there is but one step from one term to another. Look now but upon the old way of the law, there must be a continuance "in all things written in the book of the law to do them:" there must be a going on to perfection of righteousness, before men can come to justification unto life and salvation. This is a long way.

Now, how neat hath Christ made the way unto the Father? thus near, "He that believeth, shall be saved" Let me be bold to tell you, You are in as full an estate of justification before God; you are in as true a state of salvation, you that are believers; as they that are now already in heaven*:

*That is, their state of salvation is real, and they are in as safe a state, and have as good a right and claim as the saints in heaven, though not in equal possession; they are heirs of it, kept unto it, and shall certainly enjoy it; and are as completely justified as they; and, therefore, their state of justification is as full.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved;" such a near

way is Christ.

Yet still people will be cavilling, Where are good works all this while? What, justified by faith alone! Saved by Christ alone! Let me tell you, if Christ be the way, works are not the way, except they be Christ*.

*They are ways which God has ordained his people should walk in, in order to glorify and serve him, as follows, but not the way of salvation.

But must not we work? Yea, but for other purposes; the Lord hath propounded other ends for which we are to work;" Ye are bought with a price, (that is done,) therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits: Being delivered, (our safety it seems is past,) being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we serve in holiness and righteousness, without fear before him, all the days of our life." Do we serve towards deliverance? Then deliverance is not before serving; but saith Zachariah, "Being delivered, we serve," Luke i. 74. First, we are delivered from wrath, before we step a step into any duties whatsoever;(we do not the duty to be delivered, but we do the duty because we are delivered.)

And, seeing all things are settled by Christ for us, of free gift, all we do is for Christ himself; I say, that we do, we do for Christ, not for ourselves*.

*Not to obtain righteousness, life, and salvation to ourselves, but for the honour and glory of Christ.

If we do it for ourselves, we do but labour in vain. Suppose we could compass never so much good by doing, it is but labour in vain, it was compassed before hand for us. If a man will run a hundred miles for money, if that money be proffered to him before he step out of his house, at his door, his journey is in vain; seeing he might have had it before he stepped out of his door; and that which was the. end of his journey, might have been attained without troubling himself at all. Christ comes and brings justification, loving-kindness, and salvation, he lays them down, presents them, delivers them to the heart; when we are ungodly, he enters into covenant, that we should become his. What need than all this travel for life and salvation, seeing it is here already?

Obj. But, seeing we get nothing by it, this is a discouragement for men to work, may some say.

Ans. It is true, it is a discouragement to all selfish men to work; and whether a man work or work not at all, it is all one, if it be but for himself; if a man work never so much, if he be wholly selfish for himself, God rejects it; but when a man will work for Christ, that hath a touch of the loving-kindness of Christ, and therefore stands ready to speak forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath so freely saved him; for such man to work, is as welcome to him for Christ's sake, as if he were to work for his own salvation. You have many ingenuous spirits in the world, who will be more free to serve a friend that hath already raised them, than others will be to serve a master, that they may be raised: there is a service of thankfulness, which usually is more cordial, more sedulous, than all mercenary services that are forced. This is the true service of a believer in serving Christ; his eye is to the glory of Christ, in regard of what Christ hath done already for him; and not in expectation of any thing Christ hath to do, which he hath not done. He looks upon all as perfectly done for him in the hand of Christ, and ready to be delivered out into his hand, as several occasions require; and being thus completed by Christ, not to be mended by the creature, having nothing nothing to do for himself, all he doth, he doth for Christ. Thus you see Christ is a near way unto the Father; there cannot be possibly a nearer way; so that now there is a great deal of labour and bitterness saved: thus you may be encouraged to receive Christ for your way. There are some remarkable considerations in Christ, wherein he is our way, wherein we may receive him, wherein is abundance of comfort; but the time hath out-stripped me.

SERMON IV

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

JOHN xiv. 6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.

The next thing considerable is, what kind of way Christ is to the Father. First, as you have heard already, he is a free way; there is not a bar set up against any person in the world, the way is open: it is a foul delusion of Satan in the heart of any man whatsoever, to say, Christ doth not belong to me; I would fain have Christ, but I may not close with him; let this consideration be never so plausible, it is a false consideration; for there is no bar in the world, if there be but a heart to step into him. If a man have a mind to step into the king's highway, which is the subject's privilege, no man can say to him, you trespass in so doing: it is made to be common for all: so is Christ a common way to all sorts (1 Cor. vi. 11. Acts vi. 14.) of persons whatsoever, to whom there is a heart given to step into him.

Some are offended that I should say, Christ is a way even to the drunkard, and to the whoremonger; and the vilest sort of persons have as good a right to Christ for their way to the Father, and to apply Christ to themselves, as any. But, be not injurious to the grace of God; be not injurious to yourselves and others: what saith Christ himself, speaking to those justiciaries, the Pharisees, both devout and blameless men in their lives? even "that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while they are shut out." If we, the ministers of Jesus Christ, should preach that a whore hath right to lay hold upon the kingdom of God in Christ, to lay bold upon Christ for salvation; this would be counted a licentious doctrine. Take heed you cast not dirt into the face of Christ; "Publicans (saith he,) and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven;" I say it, therefore, and say it boldly, the wickedest wretch that stands here at this present time

in the presence of God, if the Lord hath but given a heart to that wicked wretch, now at this instant, willingly to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, to take the Lord Jesus Christ for his Christ, though he be now in the vilest condition that ever he was in his life; I say, if he have a real willingness (Luke xxiii 42.) at this instant, to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, it gives him an absolute, complete, and perfect interest in Christ; he is as much his Christ, as the Christ of a saint saved in glory. We are ready to run another strange way: if a man have a little holiness and righteousness, he thinks now that in regard of that holiness and righteousness, he may without presumption close with Christ; he doth in this overthrow the way of the gospel; "He came to save that which was lost," saith the text: but a person it seems must be *found* before he be saved. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" but a man must be righteous before he have to do with the calling of Christ: see now, whether this be with, or against the gospel. Free grace therefore, even to sinners, is no licentious doctrine, nor doth it a jot maintain the continuance in sin. I say, therefore, Christ belongs to a man that closeth with him, though he be in his sinfulness: Christ indeed washes, cleanses, and adorns a person, when he is clothed withal; but there is none clean, till Christ himself enters, who makes clean where he enters.

I thought good to speak briefly thus much by way of addition to what I have delivered before: did I know the objections of persons against what I delivered, I should gladly endeavour to give satisfaction to them: but observe, you shall find the whole strain of the gospel run continually thus: "Christ came to save the lost:" "he died for the ungodly:" "while we were sinners, Christ died for us:" "he received gifts for the rebellious,, that the Lord might dwell among them:" and such like are the terms of the gospel, upon which Christ is tendered to our souls. Now; then, I say, to every afflicted soul, art thou rebellious, an enemy, ungodly, an harlot, lost? Nay, art thou worse than enmity itself? if thou art not worse, Christ came for thee, while thus, though no better: he comes to tender himself into thee to take him, whilst thou art thus, before thou art any better. Now if this be true, when Christ is reached out unto thy spirit, why art thou so doubtful? why wilt thou answer, no, I dare not close with him, he belongs not to me? But, suppose Christ should speak from heaven as audibly to thy spirit, as I do to thy ear, and say, Be of good cheer, as vile a sinner as thou art, I am thy Christ: wouldst thou

close with him then? should that be gospel indeed? I tell you, Christ cannot, Christ will not speak more from heaven than he doth in his gospel; if you find he speaks in his gospel; it is much as if he spake it to your spirits from heaven. It was a delusion of the rich man in the parable, he would have Lazarus go and tell his brethren from him in what torments he was: what saith Abraham? "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they hear if one arise from the dead," Luke vi. 31. I say unto you, if you will not hear the voice of the gospel, neither would you hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, for you would suspect whether it were Christ or no.

Well, but you will say, this is a way to lead men to a licentious course of life.

I say the contrary: it is the only way to lead men into a more enlarged way of holiness, than any way in the world, and this I will declare by and by unto you.

We have further considered, that Christ is a safe way; that Christ is a lightsome way; that Christ is a near way; we cannot dwell upon these; we will go on to make good what I promised to you; the consideration of Christ as a free way, to all comers; is the only way to build men up in a more enlarged course of holiness and righteousness, than all the devices in the world can raise them to. Let me tell you, the rarest self-denial, the frequentest prayer in the world, the greatest study, the most beating down of the body by exactest fastings, reckon what other graces you can, they come all short to build up a man in obedience to the will of Christ; they all come short of this one thing, to lay hold upon him as a man is a sinner; and to receive it is an undoubted truth, that Christ is as much my Christ now, as he is the Christ of a saint in heaven. And this will further appear, if we enquire how Christ is such a way, as there is no way, wherein there is a quicker and better riddance of the businesses and employments believers shall have in the world, than in Christ. I will note one thing by the way, before I go on, to make clear this thing, and that is this; it is a received conceit among many persons, that our obedience is the way to heaven; and though it be not, say they, *causa regnandi*, yet it is *via ad regnum*: though it be not the cause of our reign, yet it is the way to our kingdom*.

*This is a distinction of Bernard's, which some divines are

very fond of; though, I think, he only says, it is *via regni*, the way of the kingdom; so it may be the way or course of those that belong to the kingdom, and yet not be the way to it: obedience and good works are to be performed by all these that are in the way; they lie in the way, and are taken up and done by those that are in it; but they themselves are not the way, but Christ: and the learned Hoorubeeck observes, *Sum Controvers.* 1. 10. p. 716. The Doctor allows, in some following passages, that sanctification of life is the business a believer has to do in his way Christ; and that good works are concomitant unto heaven to those that shall come thither; and he also enumerates the several ends of doing good works, though not for salvation; which shews, that he was far from being an enemy to good works, or for giving into licentious practices.

Pardon me; if I give you a hint or two of another thing before I go on: let me deliver you this position; there is no believer, under heaven, doth come to heaven before he hath served his generation: there is no man a believer, and hath received Christ, but after he hath received Christ, he is created in him unto good works, that he should walk in them. (He that sprinkleth them with clean water, that they become clean from all their filthiness, puts also a new spirit in them, and doth cause them to walk in his statutes and testimonies:} "He takes away their stony hearts, and gives them hearts of flesh; he writes his law in their inward parts, and puts his fear into their hearts, that they do not depart from him." So that I say in conclusion, sanctification of life is an inseparable companion, with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ. But withal, I must tell you, that all this sanctification of life, is not a jot the way of that justified person unto heaven; it is the business a man hath to do in his way, Christ; but it is not the way itself to heaven: (Titus iii. 14. Matt. v. 16.) if there be no more to clear it but the very text, it is enough: Christ here saith, "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me:" now I ask this question, are our works of sanctification Christ himself, or are they not? if they be Christ himself, then there are thousands of Christs in the world: if they be not Christ; then there is no coming to the Father by them; because the coming to the father is by him alone, and by him as he is the sole way.

Now what derogation is there in this unto works, to say, they are not the way to heaven; they are concomitant unto heaven; unto persons that shall come thither: the truth is, since redemption is managed by Christ, the Lord hath pointed out other ends and purposes for our obedience, than salvation; salvation is not the end of any good work we do: the ends of our good works are, the manifestation of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth of the praise of the glory of the grace of God: and as it is the setting forth the praise of God's grace, so actual glorifying him in the world; the doing good to others, to be profitable to men; the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ in them, where he will be found according to the promise: these are the special ends that obedience is ordained for; salvation (2 Sam. xxiii. 5. John xix. 30.) being settled firm before. All that I will endeavour to build up; is this, to keep the true prerogative of Christ to himself alone and that no righteousness of man intrench upon those privileges that are only his. Take away any thing of Christ; and give it to any creature, and you deny Christ in part; you destroy the gospel, the life of which stands in the soleness and oneliness of Christ, from the beginning to the end of our perfection.

Now, to come unto that which I promised; Christ, I say, is such a way unto men, that whosoever chooseth him for their way by him they come to a quick riddance and dispatch of all the business of holiness and sanctification, which they are to do, while they are in Christ the way: as it is with merchants that go to sea, it may be the end of their voyage is the Indies; but they have business in France, Holland, Spain, or Turkey, and they put in there; their business is not the way to the end, but it is something they have in the way to do, before they come to their journey's end. All our obedience and righteousness are but so many several businesses here, which we are to dispatch, while we are in our way to Christ, toward heaven; and while Christ is our way, he provides so for us that our business goes on. Now this Christ that we have chosen to be our way, is he alone that oils the wheels of our spirits, and puts them into a nimble frame. Therefore, (in 1 Pet. ii. 3.) "To whom coming (saith the apostle) as unto a Living Stone, (speaking of Christ) ye as lively stones are built up:" mark it, I pray you; Christ being a "Living Stone," makes every one that comes to him "living:" he doth not only give life to a person to be active in doing, but he gives liveliness to him to be nimble, in activeness; (Psalm cxix. 32.) as we say, such a man is a lively man,

when he is quick in his business. The Lord Jesus is as a strong arm that draws a bow; the greater the strength of the arm is, the swifter is the flight of the arrow, and the further the arrow reaches; a weak arm makes the arrow fly slowly, and fall quickly; the Lord Christ being the strength of every soul, he draws the bow with a mighty arm. Do but conceive the more qualmish or sick any man is in his stomach, the more unapt such a person is to labour, he is soon tired and spent: now from whence proceeds the qualmishness of the stomach? It proceeds from want of spirits, or from weakness of spirits: weakness of life is the occasion of faintness in the stomach. But suppose there be a strong life, strong spirits in men, they are mighty to labour. Such is Christ our way, saith the apostle, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory: I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, Christ is life itself; "In him was life, and that life was the light of the world." There is no life, like the life of Christ; it is a fountain of life; all life that is besides, is but the stream of that fountain. If, therefore, Christ be our life within us, according to the strength of that life, such is the strength of the spirit. A great rooted tree you know, sends up abundance of sap into the branches; whereas a small rooted tree feeds the branches leanly; the larger the root is, the larger the sap, and bigger the growth, and the fuller is the fruitfulness of the tree. Now Christ is a large root of the soul, where he is once received; and as he is such a root, so there are answerable spirits coming from him. Mark what the apostle saith, though he confesseth of himself, he could do nothing of himself; yet, saith he, I am able to do all things by Christ that strengthens me;" yea, so able to do all things, that he confesses to the praise of Christ's power, "When I am weak, then I am strong;" as if he had said the stronger my strength is in myself, the weaker I am to any thing: but the less strength there is in me, the more strong am I in Christ: therefore he sends us to Christ for strength; "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." I beseech you, consider, if you would be active persons indeed, you must have it from him in whom all power and activeness consist. You that are poor maid-servants, or widows, you do but little in the world, your stock doth not reach far; but if you were married to a rich merchant, or some such great man, you could do much more; because by the marriage of such a man, you are interested into a large stock, and his stock is yours: so closing (Hosea ii. 19, 22. John i. 16) once with the Lord

Christ, the whole stock of Christ is yours; in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and riches, and graces besides; "For it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. Now, when we have a great stock to trade upon, there may be a great deal of doing; and, for lack of stock, there cannot be so much dealings; so, as there is a fulness of stock in Christ, there may be a fulness, of activeness in you; especially, when Christ doth give you, with that stock of life and strength, a faculty of ability, to act (1 Chron. xxix. 14. Matt. xxv. 20. Phil. ii. 13.) that stock; when he gives not only strength, but wisdom to manage such strength unto advantage.

"Besides, Christ is such a way, that the business you have to do in the way, shall be done by him exactly, completely, and neatly. There is never a school-master in the world can teach the perfect trade of walking uprightly, but Christ alone; therefore in the new covenant, you shall find this one of the main clauses, "They shall be all taught of God:" that is, that Christ who is God and man, the mediator of the new covenant.

Men are but bunglers, that are taught by any other but God. We that are the ministers of the gospel, leave you dunces in christianity, in matters of practice, until the Lord Jesus Christ come into that ministry, and, by his Spirit, teach your spirits and then when he comes, you shall be exact in skilfulness; "I am wiser than my teachers," saith David: so when Christ comes to teach you, you shall be wise as your school-master. Now if a school-master cannot make true Latin, the scholar will hardly do it; if the scrivener cannot write well, the scholar will but crow's-claws, as we used to say: learn this truth, if you will be exact in the christian scholarship, in the mysteries of Christ; go to school to Christ; that is, take Christ for your Christ; wait upon him to instruct you to direct you, to make you skilful; then shall you be infinitely more exact, than by running to any other teacher in the world. Christ, then you see, is such a way, by which we attain to a quicker riddance of all the business we have to do in this way, than any other course besides.

Consider in the next place, as Christ is away of quick riddance, so he is a sure way, a firm way, a hard way; there is no fear of sinking while we keep this causeway, this road, as I may call it. Gluts of rain make some clayey, boggy ways, sinking; both cart and man, and all, may stick fast and sink in them: as for Christ, he is a way so rocky,

that all the rain that falls upon this way, runs away; it makes it never a jot the more sinking. A man may be as firm, as secure in the greatest storm, as he shall be in the fairest weather. I mean thus, Christ will not deceive; every thing in the world else will deceive a man, but Christ will never deceive him: you have observed, sometimes, I know, some places that have been as green and fair to the eye, as the best way that ever men set foot into; but set your foot into them, and you sink up to the neck, they are boggy quagmires. I must tell you, while men make their own righteousness and obedience their way to the Father, they seem to be in a fair and green way, which promiseth firmness; but he that dares to trust himself in the way of his own righteousness, to the Father, shall find himself so sinking, that if Christ come not and pluck him out, he shall sink over head and ears. Ye that go to the Father, and think to set yourselves in his presence, and stand in his delight, in the way of your own righteousness, shame and confusion of face will cover you before you are aware. (Paul durst not be found in it, but looked upon it as dung; dung you know is sinking; the righteousness of Paul, he saw it, he knew it, it did not only stink in the nostrils of God as dung, but it was a sinking way; he himself could never keep firm footing to go to the Father by it; therefore, he saith, Phil. iii. 8, 9, "I account all but dung, that I may, win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, that is according to the law, but the righteousness that is by faith in Christ." Let a man venture himself upon Christ, as he is a way to the Father, and he shall not sink. "Fear not," saith Christ, in Isaiah xli. 10, "I am with thee, be not dismayed; I am thy God; I will help thee, I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee, with the right-hand of my righteousness:" "I will uphold thee;" all the righteousness of man is not able to uphold him: nay, there is that in man's righteousness that will sink him: where there is sinfulness in men's actions, in their righteousness; that sinfulness is enough to trip up their heels, to lay them in the dirt, to lay them flat upon their backs, (Rom. xi. 10.) that they cannot rise again. Let men come before God with this righteousness, if God find fault with that in which they present themselves, they are gone for ever: "Let a man keep the whole, law, and at last fail in one point, he is guilty of all." See then, how; firmly he stands, that is built upon a rock. He that builds upon Christ, builds upon a rock; nothing can shake (Matt. vii. 2.5.) him: he transgresses, it is true, but Christ

carries away his transgression, that before it comes to the eye of the Father, it is gone into the wilderness; "He casts it behind his back, he throws it into the bottom of the sea, it is blotted out," as the text speaks. So that still, I say, as water falling upon a rocky way, glides away as fast as it falls, that the way is as hard as before the rain fell, and a man may stand as firm there as before: so all our sinfulness, while we are in the way Christ, as thick as it falls, Christ hath so made himself such a way, that it passeth off from us to him, and from him also. We have garments made now a-days, that if rain falls it will glide off a man, and so not soak into him. Christ is our garment; all the wet that falls upon us, lights on him; it falls from us to Christ himself; that is, all our transgressions, when once we are in Christ, pass from us (Zech. iii. 3. Isaiah vi. 7.) to him. Now he hath a garment as well for himself, as for us; that though our sins fall from us to him, yet they remain not upon him. The Lord, indeed, laid the iniquities of all upon Christ; but he passed away all this iniquity from himself, by making full satisfaction to the Father. If Christ should have our sinfulness remaining upon him, when it glides from us, he himself would be a sinking way to us. If Christ were sinful in the eyes of God, we could never be clean in his eyes; it is through his cleanness we become clean. Now Christ is such a way to believers that receive him, that he took away all their sins from them, bore them all, and left them in his own grave, and raised himself without them. So here is no sin charged upon believers, nor upon Christ; it was laid upon Christ, it is true, but he hath cast it off, and sweat it out; it is evaporated and gone from him too.

Thus you see Christ is a firm way, a secure way, to a person; he shall not stir, he shall not be moved, as long as he keeps Christ to be his way. Once again, As Christ is a firm way to believers, so he is a most pleasant way; I say, a most delightful, a most refreshing and recreating way; Christ is a way, as if it were all strewed with flowers; there is nothing but mirth and sweetness in him. In Prov. iii. 17, there you shall find Christ spoken of, under the notion of wisdom, of whom it is affirmed, "That her ways are ways of pleasantness:" not only pleasant ways, but ways of pleasantness; as if there were nothing but pleasures; as if the ways were substantial pleasures, or full of all manner of delight. Do but observe a notable expression in Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2, he speaks as if he had been an apostle in the time, or after the time of Christ: you may see, by him,

what a pleasant way Christ is to all those that choose him for their way: in the 1st verse, you have him expressing himself thus, "The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." He means thus, That whereas men lived as in the wilderness, and in a desert place; that is, in a sad and solitary condition; they shall be translated into such a way, into such a pleasant way, that there shall be gladness and rejoicing; there shall be the blossom of roses in this way. And to illustrate the pleasantness of the way into which Christ translates his, by translating them into himself, he goes on in the 2d verse, "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God;" nothing but pleasure: it is compared to Lebanon, the sweetest place in the world; to Carmel and Sharon, places of great delight: such shall be the way chalked out, and held forth unto believers. Look into the last verse of the chapter, and see what a way of pleasure Christ is unto all those that receive him; "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away." Behold the mirth that is in the way, Christ! there is nothing but joy and gladness.

But some will say, Believers find it otherwise: there is not such joy and gladness, but they are often oppressed with sadness and heaviness of spirit.

I answer, There is not one fit of sadness in any believer whatsoever, but he is out of the way Christ;*

*That is, as to the enjoyment of him, as it is afterwards explained; or with respect to the exercise of faith, or comfortable walking in the way, Christ, as becomes a believer; otherwise he that is once in Christ is always so; he can never be out of him, as to interest in him, and salvation by him.

I mean, in fits of sadness in respect of his jealousy of his present and future estate; he is out of the way of Christ, he enjoys not him as he ought, while he is in such fits. Therefore, the apostle puts believers upon rejoicing always; "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say,

rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. There is matter of nothing but joy in him: while there is mourning in believers, there are meltings, in those mournings; and more joy in the mourning of a believer, than in all the mirth of a wicked man. I appeal to you, that have had melted hearts, whether you have not found a secret content in your meltings, that you rather fear the change of that mourning, than that you are troubled with it?

That, which is a most common proverb in the world, is most certainly true in this present case, "Some men for joy do weep, others for sorrow sing." I say, believers weep for joy, and never mourn more kindly, than when they see the joy of the, Holy Ghost, in the freeness and fulness of the Lord Christ, poured out upon them: there is never any more kindly mourning for sin, than that mourning, when the soul is satisfied of forgiveness of sins: I say, the soul is first satisfied with forgiveness of sins, before there is that real kindly mourning in those that are believers. You have heard of some persons, I know, that have been condemned to be executed, who at the scaffold have been so obdurate, and stiff-necked, that not a cry, not a tear came from them; yet, just when their necks went to the block, upon the coming of the pardon, when they were discharged, they that could not weep a tear, nor be affected with their estate, no sooner; do they see a pardon, and themselves acquitted, but they melt all into tears: so it is with believers, the more they see Christ in the pardon of sin, and the love of God in Christ to receive and embrace them, the more they melt. Therefore, Solomon hath a notable expression; "If thine enemy hunger, (saith he) give him bread; and, if he thirst, give him drink; so shalt thou heap coals of fire upon his head," Prov. xxv. 21, 22. As much as if he should have said, Kindness is the best way in the world to melt the most obdurate wretch. Thus God deals with men through Christ; he gives them bread when they are hungry, and drink when they are thirsty; and thus he heaps coals of fire upon their heads; that is, he melts them.

So, you see, what an admirable way Christ is, all full of pleasure; there is the Spirit of Christ to make music unto a soul. "Speak comfortably unto my people," saith God: and this is the office of the Spirit, and the Spirit doth nothing else but speak comfortable things. Christ is a way, as the cellars of wine are unto drunkards, that are never better than when they are at the cup; and, therefore, no place

like the cellar, where there is fulness of wine always to be tipling and drinking: I say, Christ is such a way; and let it not be offensive to say so, for the church speaks in the same language, Cant. ii, 4, 5, "He brought me (saith he) into his wine-cellar; stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." Christ hath such variety of delicates served in continually, and such sweetness in this variety, that the soul is no longer satisfied than it is with Christ. Here is not staying with cups, much less with half cups, but staying with whole flaggons; there is a kind of inebriating, whereby Christ doth, in a spiritual sense, make believers, that keep him company, spiritually drunk: he overcomes them with wine. "In that day, saith the Lord, I will make a feast of fat firings, full of marrow, of wine well refined upon the lees," Isaiah xxv. 6. Here is abundance, it is a feast, and "a feast of fat things full of marrow," which is the best of fatness; a feast "of wine well refined upon the lees," pure and clarified wines; this is the entertainment Christ hath for those that keep him company. the Psalmist, in Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8, hath an excellent expression to this purpose, (speaking of the excellency Of Christ) saith he, "Therefore the sons of men shall put their trust under the shadow of his wings:" well, what follows, when they put their trust under the shadow of his wings, that is, when they shall make choice of him to be their way; "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasure." Mark," of thine, for (saith he) With thee is the well of life:" here are not only pleasures, but rivers of pleasures; here is not only life, but a well of life; such dainties and delicates, such curiosities and rarities, as the world can never shew, nor see, nor taste. We read in the Revelations, of "a white stone, and a new name written in it, which none could know, nor read, but he that had it." This I am sure of, there are delights in Christ, none can possibly reach unto, but those to whom Christ doth give himself, and those that receive him: therefore, in Matt. xi. 25, our Saviour thanks his Father thus; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, because it pleased thee." And it is worth observing, he doth not thank him, that he hath revealed them to the mighty, and great; and wise, that abound in all the manner of abilities far above others, but "unto babes;" there is much in that phrase; a babe is the weakest of all sorts of men; implying

thus much, that the weakest of all believers, in the body of Christ; as I may say, the feeblest babe, shall partake of such hidden things, such excellencies of Christ, that all the world shall never be able to dive into, reach, nor comprehend; and Christ himself takes such delight in their societies, that he takes occasion to bless God, the Father, that he is so large for his sake, to do so much for them, above what he did for others. So ye see, Christ is also a pleasant way, a way of exceeding great content and delight; there is yet one thing more.

Christ is a way, of all the ways in the world the most easy to be hit; there is no difficulty to find it out, nor to find out a progress in it. Many ways may lead unto a comfortable end; but there are so many cross ways to turn men out, that they lose themselves. In the way of works a man may presently lose himself; there is not one work he doth, but he commits sin in it, and so he presently steps aside, and loses himself, and must begin again, and go about, and come where he was at first. God will never let any soul come near unto him, that comes to him with any sin whatsoever; if there be any one sin, all must be undone, a man must begin again, as they say. I speak this of the righteousness of man, while he makes that his way to God. Therefore Christ is the way; there is no stepping aside in Christ, no losing of him. There cannot be an error committed, which when a man comes to the Father by Christ, shall be taken notice of, as an error from that person: so, I say, it is the easiest way in the world to be hit. It is true what Peter saith of Paul, "Many things in his writings are very hard to be understood;" but mark, in the gospel, things that do pertain unto the justification of a sinner, are written in such great and plain letters, that he that runs may read them. Do but observe a few expressions, which shew how easy it is to hit the way, Christ himself being the way; in Isa. xxxv. 8, "A highway there shall be, and the wayfaring men; though fools, shall not err therein." the Psalmist tells us, that "the commandments of God give light unto the eyes;" the gospel out of question makes the simple wise: there are some things you know, that you are able to teach fools; though you are not able to teach them deep mysteries.

Beloved, Christ the way to salvation, makes himself so plain to those that come unto him, that though they be very fools, yet they shall not mistake, nor err; nay, though fools and wayfaring men: a

wise man, if he be a wayfaring man, that is, a stranger, may miss his way; but if a man be a stranger, and a fool too, it must be a very easy way that he hits. A fool may hit a way in which he hath long conversed, which strangers may easily miss; but, saith the Holy Ghost, the way that Christ is made to men, is such a way, that "fools, though wayfaring men, shall not err therein.

Again, Christ is the way, and such a way, as is a spacious, large, elbow-room way, as I may so say: there is abundance of largeness and elbow-room in Christ the way to the Father; therefore Christ himself saith, "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." When Christ comes to bring liberty to men, then they are at liberty indeed: therefore, it is said, Gal. v. 1, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage:" when a man enters into Christ, he enters into liberty and freedom; there is a contracted bondage in every way and condition but Christ alone.

But some will say, How do you answer that place in Matt. vii. 14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it?" How can Christ be such a way of liberty, when the way is said to be an exceeding strait and narrow way?

I answer, (first mark the words that go before) Christ speaks not this simply, but comparatively; the way is strait and narrow, in comparison of that he speaks of; for the words before are, "Broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that enter in thereat:" then he comes in afterwards with these; "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life;" that is, in comparison of the vast liberty and scope the world takes to walk in, and the vast rangings of their vain hearts, it is a strait way; but, simply considering him in himself, he is a large way; large in respect of the number that go in it, and in respect of the elbow-room in it. In a narrow way, few can go a-breast, it will hold but a few men; but, in open broad ways, many may go together. Mark, now, how Christ is a large and spacious way; "He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2*.

* The design of the apostle in these words, is to comfort his little children with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin, through weakness and

inadvertency: but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation, not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of those that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances, to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude, that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that this might and would be the case. In the writings of the apostle John, the word *world* admits of a variety of senses; and therefore the sense of it in one place cannot be the rule for the interpretation of it in another; which can only be fixed as the text or context determine: sometimes it signifies the whole universe of created beings, John i. 10; sometimes the habitable earth, John vi. 28; sometimes the inhabitants of it, John i; 10; sometimes unconverted persons, both elect and reprobate, John xv. 19; sometimes the worser part of the world, the wicked, John xvii. 9; sometimes the better part, the elect, John i. 29, and vi. 33, 151; sometimes a number of persons, and that a small one in comparison of the rest of mankind, John xii. 19; in one place it is used three times, and in so many senses, John i. 10, *he* i. e. Christ, "was in the world," the habitable earth, and "the world," the whole universe, "was made by him;" and "the world," the inhabitants of the earth, "knew him not;" and which is not to be understood of them all; for there were some, though few, who did know him: and I will venture to affirm, that the word *world* is always used in the apostle John's writings in a restrictive and limited sense, for some only; unless when it designs the whole universe, or habitable earth, senses which are out of the question; for none will say Christ died for the sun, moon, and stars, for fishes, fowls, brutes, sticks, and stones; and that it is never used to signify every individual of mankind that has been, is, or shall be, in the world; in which sense it ought to be proved it is used, if any argument can be concluded from it in favour of general redemption.

See what a spaciousness there is in Christ, that the whole world, the multitude of people of all sorts in the world, may have elbow-room in this way.

But, secondly, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way:" what is this straitness? to this question perhaps you will answer, a strict, austere, and severe life; a preciseness and exactness without giving to a man's self any liberty whatsoever: this is the straitness of the way, that leadeth unto life. But give me leave to add, I confess the stricter christians can walk the better; and Christ will more and more confine the life of a believer unto a holy exactness; but, under favour, I conceive, this is not the meaning of the text here, that by the straitness of the way, is meant strictness of conversation: but rather the meaning is, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" that is, it hath not that latitude in it, that generally men think it hath. What is that? men generally think, that besides Christ, there is something more in the way that leadeth to life, and that is a man's own righteousness; not only Christ, but a man's own righteousness jointly together with Christ; these are the way to salvation: this is the conceit of many men; but I say, it is strait and narrow, in this regard, that all a man's own righteousness must be cut out of the way: it must be so narrow, that there must be nothing in the way, but Christ; when a man's own righteousness is taken into the way, besides Christ, then it is a broader way than Christ allows of; he allows only that way to*

*Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his "Vindicae Legis," p. 32, finds great fault with the Doctor's sense of Matt. vii. 13, 14, applying the words to Christ, which he represents as a forced interpretation of them; whereas nothing is more easy and natural, for, as Christ elsewhere calls himself a door, and a way, John x. 9, and xiv. 6, why not here a gate and a way? Moreover, if any thing besides Christ is here meant, there must be more ways than one to heaven, and Christ could not be the only way; for certain it is, that the way here spoken of leads to eternal life, for nothing else can be meant by life: and as to what this writer says, that then by the opposition, not wickedness, but the devil himself would be the broad way; it may he replied, that not the devil only is opposed to Christ, but every thing that is wicked, yea that has the appearance of good, but is not really so; and the broad way may very well be thought to take in the devil, and all his lusts, which men will do, and walk in; and not only open vice and prophaneness, but all the false guises of religion and

holiness, and a man's own polluted and pharisaical righteousness, to which Christ and his righteousness stand opposed. Matt. v. 20.

himself. And that this is the meaning, seems to me by the words that follow: "Beware (saith Christ in the next words) of false prophets, that come in sheep's cloathing, that inwardly are ravening wolves:" it seems, in this Christ gives a warning, how to beware of false prophets, by telling men, "That strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life:" And what false prophets were they? if you consult with Luke, Acts xv. 1—24, you shall understand who these false prophets were, and withal, the meaning of this text: there you shall find that these false prophets were they that troubled the church, anti occasioned that assembly, the first council that ever was: some (say the council)" that went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, you must be circumcised, and keep the law, or else you cannot be saved:" these are the false prophets Christ meant, that would make the observation of the law, of Moses, and circumcision, to be co-partners with Christ, as way to salvation; to whom say the apostles, "We gave no such commandment." You shall find that in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, all the apostle's contests were with such "false prophets that came in sheep's cloathing;" they were not false prophets that came in wolves' habits, that are openly prophane and scandalous; they can deceive no man, they shew themselves to all; but they are "false prophets in sheep's cloathing;" that is, they seem to be sheep, they seem to be austere; they seem to preach nothing but righteousness and holiness; but yet they are ravenous wolves; how so? they make men build upon their own righteousness, and not upon Christ, and so destroy poor souls: these are those the apostle bids us beware of, in Gal. iii. 1, 2, 3, "Who, saith he, hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Thus he argues against the false prophets, that will establish the righteousness of man as the way to life.

In a word or two, there are two things more considerable, I will but

touch them; Christ is a shady way; in hot weather, men much desire shady places: you know the case of Jonah, when he was scorched with heat, God provided for him a gourd, and how: comfortable was it upon him? Christ is a shady way: "Hide thyself for a little moment, till the indignation be over-past," saith Christ, Isa. xxvi. 20. When the scorching glooms of God's wrath break out into the world, Jesus Christ is a hiding-place, "till the indignation be over-past."

Again, Christ is a quiet way; (Isaiah xxxii. 17) there are some private ways men affect, because there is but little disturbance; but in some other ways, especially in some common road-ways, there is nothing but quarrelling and revelling; but Christ, he is a quiet way; all is peace while you are in Christ; "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13; believe, and there is all peace for you; "being justified," (Rom. v. 1,) that is, while you are in Christ to justify you, there is "Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and nothing but peace. I see the time is past; something else I should have considered, especially the ground why Christ is such a way, but I shall rather break off abruptly.

SERMON V

CHRIST'S PRE-EMINENCE

COLOSSIANS 1:18.

THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE.

THIS admirable, sweet, and comfortable apostle of the Gentiles, makes it the master-piece of his apostleship, to woo and win people unto Christ: "We are the ambassadors of Christ, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God:" as in all the rest of his epistles, so especially in this, and more especially in this 1st chapter, he shews an excellent faculty he hath this way, in this business of wooing people to come to Christ: he observes what most effectually takes with people to beguile their spirits, as he speaks himself, with a kind of craft to catch their affections; especially, if you observe from the 15th verse of this chapter, and so on, you shall find, the apostle meets with every thing that is most enamouring and taking with the people. The world is mightily taken with beauty, with completeness, of person; Oh! saith one, let me have a beautiful person, it is no matter how poor: if beauty be so taking, then, saith the apostle, I will present a rare piece indeed to you, in presenting Christ; for such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his; he (saith he) is "The image of the invisible God;" that is one commendation of his. But, will some say, so is every man as well as Christ; what rareness is there in Christ in this regard? It is true, man is after the image of God, but where the apostle calls him "The image of the invisible God," he speaks in an eminent manner; therefore, you shall find him expressing himself more fully, in setting forth the rare beauty of Christ, in Heb. i, 3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is the image of God to the life, as I may say; he is so like him, you cannot know one from the other: he hath so the perfections of God, that there can be nothing more like than he is unto the Father,

expressing the brightness of his glory. But there are some, though they find beauty, yet that alone will not take; besides that, some men look for lineage, what stock a person is of: is he come of a good house, of a noble and royal blood? blood is a great matter, especially with high spirits. Well, if this will take, then there is no stock like of Christ; he is of the greatest house in the world; "The firstborn"

*He is the *first parent*, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered.

(saith the apostle) of every creature:" he comes of that great house, of God himself.

And so doth the creature too, you will say; what rarity is there in Christ above the creatures? they all come of God.

I answer; But, beloved, the creatures are of, and in the house of God, as the apostle speaks of Moses, in Heb. iii. 5, "As servants in the house;" Christ as a Son; Christ is not only of royal house, but he is born of flint royal house; he is the natural Son of the Father, "This is my beloved Son;" so that he is of the very blood-royal; (as I may so say with reverence) and he is not a younger brother in this house neither, for he is the firstbegotten of the house; that is a great matter among persons to marry the heir of a family; so he is. Nay, more than that, he is the only-begotten of the house; there is never another in all the family; and that is a great encouragement, he is "the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," saith the apostle, John ii 14. So that if men go all the world over, to find a match in the noblest house, they will never meet with such a one as this of the Son of God. Thus he commends him. But yet some are ready to say, "Suppose he be of a noble house, he may be in disgrace, and he may live privately, and have no authority, nor be able to do any great matters." If this will do, then the apostle commends Christ as the rarest, in respect of his power and authority; "All things were made by him, and for him;" that is, all things in the world are at his command and beck; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; "At his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" every thing goes through his hands.

"Yea, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court that is a blur upon him.

I answer, No, he is not so great in the country, but he is as great in the court too; for, as he hath the whole world under his power, so he hath the great king at his back; he commands in heaven, as he doth upon earth; there is nothing he can ask of the Father, but it is answered; he never has a nay; if any come to be suitor to him to put up a petition, he is sure to speed.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, though he have never so great power in court and country; if he be poor, I shall live but poorly with him; if he were rich, and had abundance of wealth, then there were some hope, some encouragement to take such an one.

I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country, than he is rich in treasure; so you shall find in the 19th verse, "It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell. "All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hid in him; he hath the whole world to dispose of; therefore silver and gold are not to be compared unto him.

Yea, but yet there is one thing more; though he hath riches, yet he may prove a niggard, close-fisted, he may keep all to himself; the party that hath him may be poor enough, for want of contribution.

But, beloved, he is not more rich himself, than he is liberal to contribute of his treasure, to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he hath. Therefore, in chap. ii. 10, (for he follows this subject all along,) the apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, "That in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily," but "You are complete in him who is the head of the body. "The head, you know, is not a niggard: what fulness the head hath, it communicates to every part: Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. And, as the head is not sparing, but disperseth, and scattereth all that is in it, so that every member shall have a share; and note share merely to keep life and soul together, as we say, but a share to make a man complete: so, if any persons in the world would devise what they could desire in such a one to match themselves unto, you shall find that a creature cannot frame those perfections, in its fancy, which it would enjoy; I say, men cannot frame any perfections, to come so near the real perfections of Christ, as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "Bachelors' wives, and maids' children, must be rare creatures;" that is, their fancy will devise what kind of one they will have, and what

kinds of perfections they desire. Let the fancy devise what kind of perfection it can, to please sense, Christ shall really out-strip, in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance doth out-strip a shadow."

Now, the apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of wooing unto Christ, he comes to close in the words of the text; and so declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was," That in all things he might have the pre-eminence;" that he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather than he; and he set above every thing in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare excellencies, and perfections, and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the pre-eminence in all things. In handling of which, we shall consider,

First, What the pre-eminence is, which Christ ought to have.

Secondly, Why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; And then a word or two of application.

First, What is this pre-eminence that Christ should have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence: you all know, to give a person or thing the pre-eminence, is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for: I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better, and more certainly bring to pass what we desire, than any else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence, is, to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than any thing, for every use and purpose to make of him: I say, above and before any thing whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient unto such purposes than any thing else is.

But more particularly, that we might the better see what the pre-eminence is, that Christ ought to have; you must know, that there is an infallible pattern drawn out unto us, according unto which we are to write our copy. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give unto Christ, is, the pre-eminence that the Father hath given unto him before us, and revealed unto us, that we may, in our way, give the same to him; therefore, we must consider a while what pre-

eminence the Father gives unto Christ. You shall find, that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world: he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance: first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There, is nothing in the world, the Father loves and delights in, as he doth in his Son. All the delight the creatures have, from the Father, are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. That Christ hath more abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world hath, I will give you but one passage or two, for the clearing of it. Look into Prov. viii. 30, 31. By the way, you must note, first, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by all, to be Christ alone; and that which is indeed affirmed of wisdom, can be affirmed of none but Christ. Among other particulars, note these two, to manifest it is Christ, and that he hath that choice affection of the Father: "I was set up (saith Wisdom here) from everlasting." I was set up from everlasting: none was everlasting but the Father to set him up; none could be everlasting but the Sun to be set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in time. Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; I was set up from everlasting; it doth properly set forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God did lay the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and several creatures; but I was set up from everlasting; as much as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant of God's affection to Christ above any creature in the world, mark what he speaks in verse 30, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: I was daily his delight in the habitable parts of the earth; I was by him as one brought up with him;" the meaning is, Christ is here considered as the darling of the Father. All the creatures in the world are brought up by God, in a large sense; but he was brought up with him, that is to say, he was the very fondling of him. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent abroad; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shews the difference of affection to one before the other. Bringing up with him as an argument of affection; "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight." He made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight; that is, he could not look upon any creature in the world, and delight in it, but this delight he

had in his Son, did swallow up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight of the Father hath such a pre-eminence in the Son, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world doth actually participate of one jot of the love of the Father, but by the Son, and for the Son's sake; as the Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. That love the creature participates of, it participates of it by Christ; you know, when we partake of sweet streams that run in rivers and channels, we are beholden to the spring for the stream; and what the spring receives, that it conveys to the channel from the ocean. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first (1 John iv. 19.) rise of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him is all love diffused to the creature.

You know, that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how do we partake of God again?" God is in Christ, (saith the text,) reconciling the world unto himself:" so that this uniting again to the Father, in the participating of the love of the Father, comes again in Christ; "You that sometimes were afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ:" afar off, in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but made nigh, that is, reduced again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ*.

*This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ.

Here is the pre-eminence of Christ above the creature, he hath infinitely more of affection; he is the spring and fountain of that affection that the creature partakes of. Now, then, we are to give this pre-eminence unto Christ, that reveals, this unto us, that so we may see the pattern according to which we are to walk, and do likewise. We should, so make Christ the choicest in our affection; we can never place love and affection more orderly, than by placing affection according to the pattern God sets; so far as we affect according to God, and imitate him in affecting, so far are our affections placed aright: to put the cart before the horse; to affect things of lower degree, above things that are higher; to give pre-

eminence to things that should come behind, and to bring that behind that should have pre-eminence, is the disorder of man's affection; it swerves from the pattern and example of God himself. So then, Christ hath the pre-eminence over all persons with us; when he is really promoted and exalted above all creatures in the world in our affection: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" saith Asaph; "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of thee." Here is the pre-eminence of affection given unto Christ, when there is nothing in the world in the affection comparable unto him. You shall see the like in the Canticles, v. 9, 10, the church discoursing about her beloved, the strangers ask her, "What is thy beloved, more than another beloved?" she answers, "My beloved is the chief of ten thousands." Here is the pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they fell upon him with "Thou art more worth than ten thousand of us." Here was the pre-eminence given to the King. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; nay, let all things in the world be set with Christ, they are trash to him; then, I say, is given real pre-eminence unto Christ, when, in affection; in regard of the excellencies of Christ, he is set above every thing in the world.

Secondly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence besides; namely, in a far more enlarged and multiplied proportion of gifts and parts above all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin of his Father, whose mess is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The apostle, Phil. ii. 9, tells us, "That God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name;" and in Heb. i. 9, he hath anointed his Christ, "He hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." You shall find, that God promotes Christ even above angels; Heb. i. and ii. insists mainly upon this point, in how many respects God exalts Christ above angels; "To which of his angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have begotten thee? But, I say, principally in respect of parts and gifts, you shall find that that which God bestows upon Christ, is far more than he bestows upon any creature. In John iii. 34, it is said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" we receive drop by drop of that we have; we have it but scanty, to that which Christ hath; he hath received the Spirit not by measure. The truth is, Christ receives a proportionable gift as head; now a head not only requires to have what should supply itself of spirit; but such a proportion as

is sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot; therefore, it must needs have more than the several parts themselves; we need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our head, and therefore as a head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gift's than others; for others are but to find for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body too. Thus should we give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father hath exalted him above creatures, giving unto him more than unto creatures; nay, giving unto creatures all they have by him; I say, so should we give him the pre-eminence likewise. Whither should a creature go for water, but unto the spring? whither should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not a derogation unto Christ, that all fulness should be in him alone, and we forsake this fountain of fulness to go unto broken cisterns that will hold no water? Mark it well, as often as ever you run to any creature in any necessity or exigence, either before you go to Christ, or instead of going to Christ; so often you rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God hath given unto him, and you should give unto him. If any creature in the world seem in your fancy to have a helpfulness, a likelihood of strength, and of supply; and this likelihood of supply seems more likely than one from Jesus Christ; so far is the pre-eminence of Christ brought down, and the creature hath gotten a pre-eminence above him. Look to it, beloved, while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come this way, or it will never come, Christ is wholly neglected of you: and you that are of a more spiritual strain, that when you are under any trial, run to any grace, or temper of spirit in you, or any qualifications, or any performances you can tender; and look after them, as the thing that most likely will furnish you with what you want, while you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings along with himself; so long you deny unto Christ the pre-eminence of those parts and gifts God hath given unto him above other things. If God hath given unto any creatures more than unto Christ, you might rather have sought unto them than unto Christ; you might more properly look and wish for supply in them than in Christ; but if Christ hath more than any creature in the world; nay, if Christ be made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether for the spirits or the outward man; then must he have this pre-eminence to be sought

unto rather than any thing in the world, for the furnishing of you, and supplying you with that, that must come from this fountain.

Thirdly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation to bear up all things: the apostle tells us, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11; and in Heb. i. 2, speaking of Christ, "As the brightness of the Father," he saith also, "That he doth uphold all things by the word of his power: God then gives, to Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ must not be the foundation to bear up all things, but other foundations shall be laid; as if there were a firmer or securer bottom to bear up than Christ himself. In Isa. xxviii. 16, you shall see what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ as the foundation; "Behold, (saith he,) I lay in Sion for a foundation, stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." St. Peter hath an addition hereunto, in Peter ii. 4, 5, "An elect, precious stone, a living stone, unto whom coming, ye as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." Mark what pre-eminence he hath given to Christ, to be such a kind of foundation to uphold all things.

To give a touch of these things: first, he is a stone, the firmest bottom in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it from sinking: give Christ this pre-eminence too. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter.

He is a "tried stone," saith the text; that is, more than barely a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have, that have *probatum est* over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armour of proof hath, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet pierceth it not; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone;" there is a *probatum est* written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a *probatum est* is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness. (Heb. x. 14. Zech. iv. 7.) tried by the Father, first, in his secret council; he found that nothing in the world could

stand under that business which was to be done; he was tried by him on earth; "he made the iniquities of us all to meet on him," Isa. liii. 6, and yet they could not make his back to break; here he was tried, he made him a butt for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood to it: he was tried by believers; they have put him to it to the utmost: he is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose.

He is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," saith the apostle, that is more: he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. You know, when the Holy Ghost sets forth the glory of the church in the Revelations, under the name and title of such and such precious stones, of which the foundation, the gates, and the walls were made, it is set forth in way of excellency, that they are precious stones; here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone; precious to God, nothing so delectable as what he doth; precious to believers, precious in respect of beauty (no beauty like his); precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," come not near in value to the ransom of the soul; but Christ hath ransomed it, and is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never make up a sum to buy out the soul: therefore he is precious, precious in value and worth: all receipts in the world spend out their virtue, and are dry things, to the virtue and excellency of Christ: such is the virtue that is found in Christ, that let him but come and lay his mouth to the foot, where the thorn is, he draws out the thorn; nay, he lays his mouth to the plague-sore (Num. xxi. 8, 9. John iii. 14, 15.) of the soul, and he sucks out the venom; it is true, he drinks his own bane; for the present, it costs him his life: but he sucks out the poison (1 Cor. xv. 56.) from the person that makes use of him. There are many precious stones, they say, that are of admirable virtue, but yet none is compared unto Christ. He is "a sure foundation," saith the prophet, that is more; not only precious, but sure; so sure, that lay what load you can lay upon the back of Christ, he stoops not; and, therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; they were made of brass, on purpose to shew their strength, whereon the whole weight of the porch of the temple lay, Christ hath this pre-

eminence given unto him of the Father, that although an infinite weight were to be imposed upon him, yet he should go away with all. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who; being barred up in the city among the Philistines, takes the gates of the city, and carries them up into a mountain, and there lays them: he is so "sure a foundation", that lay the load of all the sins you ever committed; lay the load of all the sins of all the people that shall be saved by him, yet he stoops not; these break him not, he will carry them away as easily as Samson the gates: add to that, the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them? ye will say. Yea, he will do them for you, and in you: first, he will do them for you, namely, in fulfilling righteousness in his own person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he doth all *for* them, so he doth all righteousness *in* them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend; you think it is the last duty you shall do for him, to carry him to the grave; though you may have bearers, you shall go under the corpse, but the bearers shall have all the weight upon their shoulders, so that you go easy, in respect of the assistance of the bearers: all the duties we have to do, may seem weighty; this is a hard saying, and that is a hard saying, who can obey it? But, know, that the Lord Christ is such a pillar, such a bearer, to take all the weight of duties upon his back, that he carries the burthen; and so carries it, that you shall go but as the friend of the corpse, the burthen shall be off from your shoulders. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ takes not men simply from doing, but he takes away the heaviness and the task. We look upon duties as a yoke and burthen; but mark what Christ saith, "Take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burthen, for it is light." How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burthen, and yet light? It is a yoke and burthen in itself, to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, He is so *sure a foundation*, that, besides duties; lay all your burthens upon him, his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burthen of your spirits, the burthen of your outward man, all the burthens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities: Christ, I say, is *a sure foundation* to bear all these; to

bear the burthen of all the cares of all the people of God; "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," saith the apostle. Finally, he is *a sure foundation*; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, he will renew them and enlarge them.

Besides, he is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this imports, it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence, to be the foundation. Besides, as it is the act of God, so there is a certainty that God himself must be drawn dry, before Christ shall, or be left any jot unable to do that which is imposed upon him: look, therefore, what God himself, in heaven, is able to do, as he is God: all this is Christ made able to do, by him that sends him about this employment: so that he must be spent, before Christ shall be dry. If a father hath a child, that he prizeth as his own life, a slave in the gallies, he will send the ransom of his son to the gallies; he will spend all that ever he hath, rather than his son shall not be redeemed. There is no wise man sends a servant about any employment in the world, but he furnishes him thoroughly to dispatch that business about which he sends him: it is a vain thing for a master to send a servant for five pounds worth of anything, and not give him so much money. Doth God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to sustain the burthen of sins, and not furnish him to do the work he sends him about? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might dispatch it.

Finally, He hath such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near him. Here is the pre-eminence Christ hath; of the loadstone, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws all to it, and communicates, of its own virtue, to the iron it draws: this is: most like to Christ; Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him; and, as he draws them after him, so he communicates his own virtue to them: so that now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin: and not only so, but he communicates a power to them, to make other things lively. You have an observation, when once a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another: it is most certain Christ hath this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life

from him, he gives unto them to be instruments of life unto others— "When thou art converted (saith Christ to Peter), strengthen thy brethren." Now, seeing Christ hath all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and not upon any thing else whatsoever; and so far as we do lay all upon "this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this livingstone;" so far as we will venture all upon him, we so far give him the pre-eminence: but, if he will be setting buttresses to the house that is built upon a rock, what is this but a disparagement to the foundation? If the foundation be firm and good, wherefore then served buttresses? It is apparent the house will sink, when it cannot stand alone without them: so far as you set up any props unto Christ the foundation, that is to bear up all by himself, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and give him not the pre-eminence. I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, Why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?*

*Side by side, or in equality with him.

I answer, Because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so: if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will, we, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honour to him, whom he will honour: "What shall be done to the man whom the King will honour? Thus shalt thou do to him, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown-royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel, and horse, be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, whom the king delighteth to honour and bring him on horseback through the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the

king will honour," Esther, vi. 8, 9. As much as to say, Those the king honours, the people must honour with him: so, if God the Father will honour the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a law to us; we must honour him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; nay, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ hath bought this pre-eminence; he hath paid for it to the uttermost value of it. He that buyeth a lordship, it is fit he should be lord of the manor; it is not fit any inferior tenant should be above him, as long as he hath purchased and given a price for it: Christ hath purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing; "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" with it; and therefore he ought to have it.

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favourites in states sometimes, that have the doing of all businesses of state, in respect of the favour of the prince; but the state comes to ruin, and they also, if they be not able to manage the state. If any creature in the world should have the pre-eminence given to him to manage all affairs in the world, but Christ himself; certainly, it would prove to the world, as the poet feigned it did by the son of Phoebus, that went about to drive the chariot of the sun: Phoebus could manage the same in order; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire: I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world, and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he hath so many irons in the fire, some of them burn for want of looking to; therefore, Christ should have the pre-eminence, because he can go through stitch with whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because

he hath best deserved it at our hands: we usually honour those people to whom we are most bound; according to the kindness received, so is our exalting of the person. Now, what creature in the world comes near to Christ in loving kindness and desert at our hands? Where had we been, had not Christ slept in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh! what a fearful account should we have come unto at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ before hand cancelled all that God could charge us withal, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God; "In him you live, move, and have your being;" by him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way; all you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, come only from this fountain, this Christ, who hath purchased all of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, let the creature be exalted above him; but if he leave all the creatures of the world behind, and out-strip them, good reason there is, according to his desert, he should have the pre-eminence. The apostle, considering the infinite desert of Christ to be exalted by men, breaks out into this vehement expression, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed with a great curse, 1 Cor. xvi. 22, so deserves (John xxi. 17.) this Christ at the hands of man.

Now for application of it: is it Christ's due to have the pre-eminence? then bring down every thing that exalts itself above Christ; rear and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ in you; you that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down, this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ; if you will have any thing in the world, let Christ hear of it. When men would have any thing of a king, they never go to the scullion in the kitchen; but to the favourite, by whom the king hath declared he will deliver things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as, Joseph said, he would do; so, I say to you, would you have any thing of God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you would have, he answers you with a curse; "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" as he with direct you, so you shall speed: if Christ say, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ will make a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; if Christ hath once past the deed, the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it:

"If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed:" for "of his fulness we do receive grace for grace." In John xvii. 2, it is said, "The Father hath given to him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life." As you will have these things, go to Christ; if you go any where else in the world, but to Christ, you shall go without; they are to be had no where else. God hath given him the pre-eminence; he must rule all, he must determine, and the Father will yield; "The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man. The government is laid upon his shoulders:" therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will speed for any thing of him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ.

But must not we serve in duty, will you say?

I answer, ye must serve in duty and obedience, but look not that that duty should bring any thing; it is Christ brings every thing you get; you get nothing by duties: assure yourselves, while you look to get by that you do, you will but get a knock; because of so much sinfulness in the duty; but if you will have any good, you must get it by Christ: your duties you perform, are that wherein you are to walk in the world, and before the world, that you may be profitable to men; but as for getting any thing, assure yourselves, while your labour to get by duties, you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to punish you for such presumption, if not for the filthiness of the things you perform.

And as you must bring every thing down that exalts itself above Christ; so you must set Christ above every thing; know, this will be "the great condemnation, that light," that is Christ, "is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light:" they love to run to other things, and to forsake the light; this will be the condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was, "That he might have the pre-eminence in all things."

SERMON VI

THE NEW COVENANT OF FREE GRACE.

ISAIAH xlii. 6, 7.

AND I WILL GIVE THEE FOR A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLE, FOR A LIGHT OF THE GENTILES, TO OPEN THE BLIND EYES, TO BRING OUT THE PRISONERS FROM THE PRISON, AND THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS OUT OF THE PRISON-HOUSE.

The Lord is pleased by this sweet evangelist of the Jews, this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to pour forth his own gracious thoughts and purposes concerning his dear Son Christ; in this chapter especially, he reveals and declares himself from the beginning of it.

It is worth the while to mark the coherence, to see how these words come in.

First, He declares who it is that he sends into the world for such a business, by two titles, in verse 1, first, he calls him a servant, that is, in respect of the employment and business he hath to do, wherein he is to serve the Lord: and in reference to this business, he tells us what he doth, that this his servant may dispatch it effectually, "Behold my servant, (saith he,) whom I uphold." Secondly, he calls him his elect, and that in reference to the designation or separation of him, the singling him out unto this business. And he doth further amplify the description of him, by the tenderness of this elect unto him, "My elect, (saith he,) in whom my soul delighteth:" here is the description of the person; Christ is this person, as you shall hear by and by, whom he thus describes.

In the next place the Lord propounds the great end for which he doth elect this his servant, and uphold him, and furnish him with his Spirit: For he saith also, "I have put my spirit upon him;" and the end of it is, "That he may bring judgment to the Gentiles:" here you

see who he is; how he is furnished; and to what end he is furnished: "A servant upheld, the Spirit put upon him," to the end, "that he might bring judgment to the Gentiles."

The Lord proceeds further, and shews how this, servant of his shall deport and demean himself; after what manner he shall carry this business in the world, "To bring judgment to the Gentiles." He describes this in two circumstances. First, Christ shall dispatch this business of the Father, not in a ruffling or stirring way: he shall not make a great noise, as men use to do, sounding trumpets before them, when they do any good; but as you have it in the 2d verse, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his Voice to be heard in the streets: he shall go privately about his business. And, secondly, he doth illustrate the manner of managing and ordering this business, by the tenderness of the Spirit of this Christ towards those people with whom he shall deal; he doth, I say, illustrate this tenderness of his Spirit admirably, in the 3d verse, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smocking flax shall he not quench? he shall not deal roughly or harshly, but gently, and mildly; and yet as little noise as he shall make, though he shall not seem to promise any great thing by his privacy of deportment and carriage; yet, for all that, in the 4th verse, the Lord, by his prophet; tells us, that he shall be never the further off from, performing the business he takes in hand: "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth."

And then, in the 5th verse, the Lord is pleased to confirm this, by undeniable arguments, that there shall not be a failing in Christ to compass this great business; the arguments, I say are strong "Thus saith the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out: he that spread forth the earth, and that that come out of it; he that giveth breath unto the, people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:" he is not a mean person that undertakes this thing, but the mighty Lord; he that hath done all great things in the world, that have been done heretofore, it is he that undertakes it; and therefore, there is no fear that it should fail.

Having thus discoursed in general, concerning the business of Christ in the world, and the manner of managing it; he comes again with the same thing, and descends unto particular instances and illustrations of what he delivered before, but generally: therefore, first, In the beginning of the 6th verse, the Lord is pleased to shew

forth the authority and commission by which Christ is authorized unto this great business; "I the Lord (saith the text) have called thee in righteousness:" this call is the commission of Christ: "No man takes this honour unto men, but he that is called of God, (saith the apostle) Aaron was." That gives authority to a business, to be called of God. Secondly, He reiterateth the helpfulness of God, as well as his call unto it, in the following words, "I will hold thy hand, and keep thee." And so, thirdly, he falls in with an explication or interpretation. First, How Christ shall compass this great business which he calls him out unto; he shall do it thus, by the Father's "giving of him to be a covenant for people." Secondly, What Christ is to do, or the end for which he is called out to be a covenant. Before it was said, "To bring judgment to the Gentiles;" that was his business in the end of the 1st verse; now he expounds what this judgment is, "It is to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison," &c.

There are two main things in the text. The first is, The way by which Christ compasses the great business of the Father upon earth, and that is, by being "given to be a covenant to the people?" Secondly, The business itself, whereunto he is called out, that is, "To open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison." So you see how sweetly these truths hang together.

For the words themselves, there are these particulars considerable in them. First, Who it is that speaks, this gracious language in the text; you shall find, in the beginning of the verse, it is the Lord: "Thus saith the Lord, I will call thee, and give thee for a covenant."

Secondly, We may consider the person to whom this gracious language is directed and spoken; and that is unto Christ; expressed only in this place by the name of *thee*; and "give thee for a covenant." Mark here I pray you, it is not, I will give myself; it should be so, if the Father had spoken to, or of himself only: but it is plain here are two several persons mentioned, *I* and *thee*; if there be two several persons, then it cannot be God speaking to himself; it must be the Father speaking to the Son, to Christ.

Yea, but you will say, It is somebody else that speaks, and is spoken unto.

Nay, but mark in Isa. xlix. where the same expressions are used, that

are in the text; and then you shall plainly see, it is the speech of the Father unto Christ, by many circumstances that will illustrate it. In the 5th verse he begins thus:— "And now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him;" it is none but Christ that brings Jacob back: "And you that were sometimes afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ." And in the 6th verse, he saith, "Is it a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel?" Who is it that raiseth the tribes of Jacob, and restores the preserved of Israel? None but Christ, who is the Saviour of all that are st;red. Here he begins to fall upon some of the words in the text itself. "I will also give thee for a light unto the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Here it is plain now that it is only Christ; for none is the salvation of men unto the end of the earth, but Christ alone. Again, look in the 8th verse and you may see more of the words of the text: "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people." Here you see likewise, that he who is the Saviour of Israel, is he who is given for a covenant to the people. And in the 9th verse, "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth; and to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves:" so here is the same thing delivered more plainly, and Christ more fully expressed. This I have opened more at large, because all I shall speak will depend upon the opening of this truth.

Thirdly, In the next place, we are to note, what he speaks unto Christ here, even gracious language in respect of us. He will give him for a covenant."

Fourthly, Note here unto whom the Father gives Christ for a covenant; the text saith, "Unto the people, and unto the Gentiles;" that is, to Jews and to Gentiles, to all sorts of people.

Fifthly, Note the end and purpose for which, the Father gives him to be a covenant unto the people; "To open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison."

So, you have the parts of the text, which afford many excellent truths, and we might single them severally out. But for the sake of brevity, I will reduce the whole substance of this text into one

proposition.

Doct. "The Father is pleased to give Christ for a covenant to the people and Gentiles, to open their blind eyes, and to bring them as prisoners out of prison."

This doctrine, you see, is directly the words of the text, adding only that explication, that it is the Father that doth give Christ. There is abundance of marrow and fatness in this present truth I have delivered unto you, more than people usually can find out in it. We will endeavour therefore to break the bone, that all the marrow may be seen, and none of it may be lost. For this purpose, we must desire you to observe these following particulars.

I. What it is for Christ to be a *covenant*, or, the *covenant*.

II. What it is for Christ to be given to be a covenant.

III. What it is for Christ to be a covenant *to open the blind eyes*.

IV. If time will permit, we will then consider to whom this Christ is given to be a covenant; who they are that may partake of him, given to be a covenant unto them.

I will begin with the first of these, what it is for Christ to be a covenant; and herein will consider two things.

First, What this covenant is, that Christ is unto us. Secondly, How Christ himself is said to be this covenant.

First, What this covenant is, which Christ is unto persons. First, A word or two in general concerning the nature of a covenant. The common and usual manner of covenants, as you all know, is this; namely a mutual agreement between parties upon certain articles, or propositions, propounded on both sides; So that each party is bound and tied to fulfil his own conditions, which if either of them fail in, the other is therefore freed from his part, and the covenant becomes nullified, void, and frustrated. You all know, this is the true nature of a common covenant.

There are two sorts of covenants generally, wherein God enters with men. There are divers particular covenant, but I will omit to speak of them; such as the covenant with David to establish his throne to himself, and to his posterity; this the prophet Jeremy speaks of at

large, which I shall only touch upon and mention, the rather, because some are conceited there was no other covenant made with David, but the covenant of grace: Jer. xxxiii. 20, "Thus saith the Lord, if you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day nor night in their season; then also may my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites, the priests, my ministers." This covenant is for the establishment of his throne, and this is a different covenant from the covenant of grace; that is common to all sorts of believers, one with another; but I omit that.

There are two main general covenants God enters into with men; the one is called the first covenant, the old covenant, the covenant of works; it stood upon these terms, "Do this, and live." The other is called a new covenant, by the prophet Jeremiah; and, by the apostle, in Heb. viii., it is called a better covenant, a covenant of grace. As for the first, the old covenant, the covenant of works, which stood upon these terms, "Do this, and live," it is very probable, if not certain, that Christ was this first covenant unto men, even the covenant of works; for, however it be not a covenant of grace, as the second and new covenant is, yet it may, in some sense, be called a covenant of grace, in reference unto other creatures; for all creatures are under this tie, to do this; that is, what their part is which God hath imposed upon them; yet no creature hath this privilege of grace, that in doing this, he should live: the sun doth his part, he runs his race; yet the sun lives not in, or upon the performance hereof: brute creatures do their part; that is, the trade they were set about; yet, they die and perish, and are no more, when they have done. "What then is man; that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psalm viii. 4; that he should have life, and no other creature in the world, seeing there can be no difference in the creatures of themselves; the difference must be in the grace of God, which makes it that some creatures should live by doing, and others not. In Prov. viii. 31, you shall see the ground of this covenant; when the Lord made all things in the world, Wisdom, which is Christ, there tells us, "That she was the delight of the Father, and her whole delight was with the sons of men:" I say, the foundation upon which the difference was built, between man and other creatures, that he hath this covenant by grace, others not, is this, "All the

delight Of Christ was with the sons of men:" he himself singled out the sons of men to be his delight, as he was the delight of the Father; and for his sake the Father will do more for them, than for other creatures.

But, now, the covenant which the Lord mentions in this place, by the prophet, is not the first, but the second covenant; "I will give thee for a covenant to the people:" he means here, not the covenant of works, but the covenant of grace; which covenant is mentioned Jer. xxxi. 33, and renewed again by the prophet Ezekiel, in chap. xxxvi. 26. And also Heb. viii, where you shall find both the covenant itself, and how; and in what sense, Christ is said to be that very covenant unto men. In verse 6, this is appropriated unto Christ, to be his great privilege, to have the sole hand and managing of this new covenant: "But now, (saith the apostle,) he hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant:" and what is this "better covenant?" Mark what follows in verse 8, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers:" for in verse 10, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more:" here is the substance of the covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Now, all that I will note briefly out of all this, shall be only one proposition, wherein you shall see both a vast and comfortable difference between this new covenant, and all other covenants that God made with men; it differs, I say, exceedingly, and the comfort lies in the difference, which is this.

All other covenants of God, besides this, run upon a stipulation; and the promise runs altogether upon conditions on both sides; the condition on God's part was, they should live; the condition on man's part was, that he might live, he must do this: and mark, the conditions in that covenant were such, that in case man did fail to

perform his condition, the covenant was broke, and God was free from giving life; which accordingly came to pass; for man failing in doing, the covenant was actually broken, disannulled, and frustrated, and man lay under the curse of the breach of the covenant in not doing. But in this covenant of grace, to wit, the new covenant, it is far otherwise; there is not any condition in this covenant: mark what I say, and I beseech you hear me with an impartial and unprejudiced opinion. I know I shall go against the strain of some: but, I hope, what I shall deliver, shall be firmly proved from scripture. I say, the new covenant is without any conditions whatsoever on man's part*.

*This, though abundantly confirmed by the following arguments, is found fault with by some, particularly by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. p. 59, and yet is no other than what some of the most judicious divines have asserted, particularly the famous Witsius; "We, (says he in (Econom. Faeder. lib. 3. chap. 1, sect. 8,) agree with them, who think, accurately speaking, that the covenant of grace has no conditions on our part, properly so called." And elsewhere, he has these words: "This is owned, that this is the true and proper condition of the covenant of grace, by which it is chiefly distinguished from the covenant of works, that all righteousness in which the right to life is only founded, is performed by the mediator and surety of the covenant; hence it follows, this righteousness being admitted, that *no condition, properly so called, can be required of the elect*, by which they obtain for themselves freedom from punishment, and a right to life." Animadv. Irenic. chap. 14, sect. 5. And indeed what some call conditions of the covenant, as faith, repentance, and obedience, are no other than parts or blessings of it, which are absolutely promised in it. See Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, or what the Doctor afterwards calls the fruits and effects of the covenant.

Man is tied to no condition that he must perform, which if he does not perform, the covenant is made void by him.

The first argument is this, The covenant is called an "everlasting covenant;" and here, in Heb. viii. God saith, "I will be merciful to your iniquities, and your sins will I remember no more." Now suppose there were conditions for man to perform, and suppose man

did fail in those conditions, what were become of the covenant? Man did fail in the condition, whilst there were conditions before in the first covenant, and thereby the covenant was frustrated. Man is not now so confirmed, but if there were conditions for him to perform, which if he did not perform, the covenant should be broken; I say, he is not so confirmed, but he might fail in those conditions: nay, if those be the conditions, that some men conceive, then he daily fails. And, if the covenant stands upon such conditions, the covenant is frustrated, so soon as the conditions are broken. So, I say, if the covenant stands upon any conditions to be performed on man's part, it cannot be an "everlasting covenant," except man was so confirmed in righteousness, that he should never fail in that which is his part.

But, you will say, There are many conditions mentioned in this covenant; it is said, that there must be "a law put in the mind, and written in their heart," with many other such things.

I answer, beloved, It is true, God saith, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," &c. But do you find in this, or in any other, mention of a covenant, that this is the condition to be performed on man's part; I say, that this is the condition of the covenant, and such a condition, that if a man perform it not, the covenant is frustrated? There is no such thing in the text.

But you will say, Conditions, or no conditions, a man must have his heart in this manner.

I answer, It is true, by way of consequence, that after we are in covenant with God, he will bestow these things upon us as fruits and effects of that covenant; but, it is not true, by way of antecedence, that God doth require these things at our hands, before we shall be partakers of the covenant.

Arg. 2. Observe, I pray, and you shall plainly perceive, that man hath no tie upon him to perform any thing whatsoever in the covenant, as a condition that must be observed on his part; let the covenant itself be judge in this case: it plainly shews where all the tie lies, and as plainly shews, that the whole performance of the covenant lies only upon God himself; and that there is not one bond, or obligation, upon man to the fulfilling of the covenant, or partaking of the benefits of it. Mark it in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, or in

Heb. viii.; read those passages over, wherein the tenure of the covenant is contained, and you shall easily see where the tie is, as Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, I will put my law into their minds, and write it in their hearts:" he will put it in, and write it;" and he will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people." The word *shall*, here, is a word of over-ruling; it is a word of power; as if he had said, I will order it so: it follows," And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me : " how, by their own study and industry? no; see John vi. 45, and you shall see that that condition, of knowing the Lord, is to be performed by the Lord, for it is there said, "They shall all be taught of God." Observe, also, the larger expression of the covenant, in Ezek. xxxvi. 25, and there also, you shall plainly perceive, that still all the tie lies upon God himself, and nothing at all upon man: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you: A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: And I will put my Spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them, and shall dwell in the land:" and in verse 29, "I will save you from all your uncleanness, and I will multiply the fruit of the earth, I will do it." Where is there in all this one word that God says to man, Thou must do this? If God had put man upon these things, then they were conditions indeed; but, when God takes all upon himself, where are the conditions then on man's part?

Give me leave, I will ask you but this question; suppose there should be a fault (I make but a supposition) of performing in this covenant, whose were the fault? Must not the fault, or failing to perform the covenant, be his, who is tied and bound to every thing in the covenant, and saith, he will do it? If there be a condition, and there should be a failing in the condition, he that undertakes all things in the covenant must needs be in fault: but the truth is, these particulars mentioned are not the conditions of the covenant, but they are consequents of the covenant; the main substance of the covenant is included in these words, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." But, "sprinkling with clean water, taking away a stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh;" all these are nothing but the fruits

of the covenant, which is, that God is the God of such a people, and the people are the people of such a God. For by virtue of this union, or uniting himself to his people, God doth cleanse and purge, he doth sanctify and refine them. As he becomes the God of his people, so he purgeth (Acts xv. 9.) and cleanseth them. He doth not come first to men, and say, make yourselves clean; get you the law of God in your minds; get you the fear of God into your hearts; get you power to walk in my statutes; and, when you do this, then I will be your God: if it did run so, then here were conditions indeed; but, it runs not thus; all the tie lies upon God's part, to do (Psalm lvii. 2.) every thing that is mentioned in the covenant.

But you will object, and say, if all lies upon God's part and man must do nothing, then all his life time he may do what he list.

I answer, you must make a difference between doing any thing in reference to the covenant, as the condition thereof, and doing something in reference to service and duty, to that God who freely enters into covenant with you. I say only, that in a way of condition of the covenant you must do nothing.

Art. 3. Nay, the covenant in the actual substance of it, is made good to a person before he can do any thing*.

*Christ, who is the covenant itself, the sum and substance of it, must be first given to a man, before he can do any thing good; for *without* Him we *can do nothing*; and faith must be given, *without* which we cannot *please* God.

The main thing in the covenant is God's being the God of a people, and the model and draught of that, nothing but God's love to man; God's love to give himself to man; God's love to take man to himself. Now this love of God is cast upon man before he can do any thing: before the children had done good or evil, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Shall I need to tell you, that the covenant is then fulfilled in the substance of it, when men are actually justified. When men are justified, God hath made good his covenant unto them; he is their God, and they are his people: now where are the conditions of this covenant? Take but notice what the apostle saith, and tell me what conditions you find in it? Rom. iv. 4," Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." "But," saith he, in verse 5, "to him that worketh not, but

believeth on him that justifies the ungodly," &c. There are two phrases here, to shew there can be no conditions to make up the covenant on man's part; first, "to him that worketh not;" if there must be no working to partake of justification, then there is no conditions unto it. And again, if we must "believe on him that justifies the ungodly," then justification is past over to a person whilst he is ungodly: now, where is the condition of the covenant, while there remains nothing but ungodliness in men? But if these things must be fulfilled as conditions, namely, to change our hearts, and such like; then we are not justified as ungodly, but as righteous; and so it directly contradicts that of the apostle. We must therefore conclude, that this covenant, which is then made good when a person is justified, is conferred and bestowed on him, before there can be any such thing as a condition in him.

Yea, but you will say to me, peradventure though works be not the condition of the covenant; yet, we hope you will yield, faith is the condition of the covenant.

I answer, beloved, I beseech you observe me warily in this, for I am now upon a nice point, and I shall desire to go as evenly as the scripture will guide me in it. I must needs tell you directly, and according to the truth, that, faith is not the condition of the covenant*.

*This also is condemned as an error, by D. W. Gospel Truth, &c. p. 57; but it is with great propriety and truth here asserted; for faith is the fruit of electing grace, the gift of God, the operation of his Spirit, and of which Christ is the author and finisher; and is not of men, or in their power to produce in themselves, or exercise; yea, it is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and not a condition of it; or is what men have in consequence of their being in the covenant, and not as the condition of their entrance into it. And the same is acknowledged by great many divines, particularly that excellent writer, often quoted, Professor Witsius: "The covenant of grace," says he, or the Gospel strictly so called, which is the formula of the covenant, seeing it consists in mere promises, properly prescribes nothing as a duty; it requires nothing, it commands nothing, no not indeed, believe, trust, hope in the Lord, and the like."— Econom.

Faeder. 1. 3. c. 1. s. 18. And again, "Nor does that seem to be accurately said, that *faith is a condition* which the law requires of us, that we may be accounted righteous and guiltless with God. The condition of justification, properly speaking, is no other than perfect obedience; this the law requires, nor does the gospel substitute another, but teaches that the law is satisfied by our surety Christ; moreover, it is the business of faith to accept of the satisfaction offered to it, and, by accepting, to make it its own." Ib. c. & sect, 52.

"He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned." Is not faith here the condition of the covenant?

I answer, There is no person under heaven shall be saved till he have believed. This I grant; yet this will not make faith to be the condition of the covenant. For, first, consider faith as an act, our act, and as we do it, so I say it is a work; our act of believing is a work. If therefore we perform the condition that is a work for the enjoyment of the covenant, then the covenant doth depend upon a work; but it doth not depend upon a work, for the text saith, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," &c.

You will say, In that text, believing is required to the justifying of the ungodly.

I answer, An ungodly person, after he is justified, believes: but you must understand it, it is not the faith of the man that simply and properly justifies, but it is that Christ in whom he believes; believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly: it is he that justifieth, that is Christ. It is not believing that justifies. Mark well that phrase; him that justifieth. Justification is an act of Christ, it is not an act of faith.

But you will say, It is an act of Christ by faith.

I answer, Then Christ justifies not alone. Is faith Christ himself? If not, then Christ must have a partner to justify, or else faith doth not justify, but Christ alone doth it. Nay, I say more, Christ justifies a person before he believes; for, he that believes is justified before he believes; for I ask you, whether in justification a man must believe a truth or a falsehood? You will say, he must believe a truth; then say I, it is a truth that he is justified before he believes it; he cannot believe that which is not, and if he be not justified, that he may believe it, he then believes that which is false. But he is first justified

before he believes, then he believes that he is justified*.

*Justification before faith, though cavilled at by many, is certain; since God justifies the ungodly, and since faith is the fruit and effect of justification, and the act which is conversant about it, and the object must be before the act; and besides justification took place at the resurrection of Christ; yea, from all eternity, as soon as he became the surety of his people; and which has been embraced, affirmed, and defended by Divines of the greatest note for orthodoxy and piety, as Twisse, Pemble, Parker, Goodwin, Ames, Witsius, Maccovius, and others. See my Doctrine of Justification, p. 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 54.

But what then serves faith for?

I answer, It serves for the manifestation of that justification which Christ puts upon a person by himself alone: that you by believing on him, may have the declaration, and manifestation of your justification*.

*And, indeed, for what else can it serve; since it is neither the cause, nor matter, nor condition of justification? at most it can only serve as the hand that receives the righteousness of Christ for justification, and claims an interest in it, and takes the comfort of it: nor does the Doctor say, it serves *only* for a manifestation, but that it does serve such an end; as it is certain it does, as has been owned by many judicious Divines; and particularly the learned Hoornbeeck thinks, that the difference between Dr. Crisp, and others, may easily be made up, by distinguishing justification into active and passive; the former is the act of God justifying, the latter the termination and application of it to the conscience of believers; the one is done at Christ's satisfaction, the other when a person actually believes; "this indeed is a manifestation of that." Summa Controv. 1. 10. p. 705. And afterwards he says, "We do not reject the distinction between justification as made in Christ and as manifested to the soul, though in the explication of it, we do not in all things agree." p. 720. And it is the former, and not the latter, that is properly justification, as Maccovius observes, "It is said of

God that he justifies, Rom. iv..5, and of us that we are justified, ch. 5. not that there is therefore a twofold justification; for that which is passive is improperly called justification, and is only the sense of active justification." And what then is this passive justification, which is by faith, any more than a perception, evidence, and manifestation, of what is properly justification?

Mark what the apostle saith, whereby you shall find the true use of fairly, that is not the condition, without which we receive no benefit from Christ; but rather it is the manifestation of that which is already done, and received. Heb. xi. 1, the apostle saith, "Faith is the ground of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." I pray you observe the apostle's expression, there is abundance of light in it. Faith is the evidence of things, it is not the being of things; and it is the evidence of things not seen. A man is justified, and that by Christ alone, but it is not known to him, it is an unseen thing. Well, how shall he see this, and know that it is so? The text saith "Faith is an evidence;" faith gives evidence to this thing, faith makes it known; by faith we come to apprehend it; by faith we come to rejoice in it, as we apprehend it to be our own. It is true, indeed, Christ has honoured faith admirably; but let us take heed we do not over-honour it, to give the peculiar reserved prerogative of Christ himself unto it: if faith were a concurrent thing with Christ, and Christ did justify a person alone, what would follow? Consider, when a man is justified, he is justified from all unrighteousness, and if his faith justifies him from all unrighteousness, this thing will unavoidably follow; that that thing which is full of unrighteousness will justify a man from unrighteousness; as much as to say, a man is justified from sin by sin.

But you will say, Faith is not sin.

I answer, No, faith itself is not sin: but that faith acted by believers is full of sin; and the fulness of sin in it, makes faith in some sense, a sinful faith: and if it be sinful, how can that which is sinful justify man from sinfulness? What need Christ be without all sin to justify a person, if any thing else could do it that hath sinfulness in it? You must either say, there is no sin in your faith, or else you must say, you are justified by that which hath sin in it; yet, I say still, as faith is an evidence, a manifestation, so it may be said to be our

justification: that we are, in regard of our own hearts, and our own spirits, justified by faith; but God-ward, as we stand actually before him, a discharged people from sin, and so consequently partakers of the covenant; as we stand thus, I say, it is not faith that justifies, neither wholly, nor in part; but Christ alone freely for his own sake, considering a person as ungodly, so he justifies him.

Beloved, let me tell you, though faith itself cannot thus be called our righteousness; yet in respect of the glory that God ascribes to it, that it seals to men's souls the fulness of righteousness, how can you consider a person a believer, and withal ungodly? When men are believers, they cease to be ungodly: but if they are not justified till they believe, Christ doth not justify the ungodly, but the godly; and then that truth which I have delivered, Rom. iv. 5, cannot hold current, "That we must believe on him that justifies the ungodly;" but rather, we must believe on him that justifies the righteous. But, as I said, we do not believe that we may be justified; but we do believe, and truly believe, when we are, and because we are justified. So that still it stands firm, we are not justified, we are not in covenant, we partake not of the covenant, by any condition we perform, till which performance the covenant cannot be made good unto us; but we are in covenant, and Christ makes us to be in covenant, for his own sake, without any condition in the creature, "Shewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy;" without any thing, I say, the creature is to do, to this end, to partake of the covenant.

In the next place consider, how Christ himself can be said to be the covenant. For the text tells us, that he doth not only give Christ that there may be a covenant with men; but, saith he; "I will give thee for a covenant:" he himself is made the covenant. I answer, Christ is the covenant three ways. First, He is the covenant fundamentally. Secondly, He is the covenant materially. Thirdly, He is the covenant equivalently.

First, Christ is the covenant fundamentally; that is, he is the original of the covenant, the beginning of the covenant. The covenant of grace takes its being from Christ. Adam was all mankind, as all mankind was in Adam, in the loins of Adam: so Christ is the covenant, and all the covenant is, as it were, in the loins of Christ, and springs out of him: he is the covenant, maker; he is the covenant; undertaker; he is the covenant-manager; he orders the

covenant; he is the covenant-dispatcher he doth every thing in the covenant; he makes the articles; he draws God the Father, and man, to an agreement unto the articles; "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3. "And God is in Christ reconciling the world"

*By whom are meant, not all the individuals of mankind, for these are not all in Christ, nor all reconciled to God, multitudes dying in enmity to him, nor all interested in the blessing of non-imputation of sin: whereas each of these is said of the world here: but the elect of God, who are chosen in Christ, whose peace, Christ is, whose sins are not imputed to them, and against whom no charge of any avail can be laid, and particularly the people of God among the Gentiles are here designed, who are frequently called the world in scripture; being the world which God loved, for whose sin Christ is the propitiation, and of the reconciling of which mention is particularly made, John iii. 16; 1 John ii. 2; Rom.xi. 12, 15

unto himself, 2 Cor. V. 19. Christ brings God down to the terms of the covenant, to yield to them. Christ brings man also to be willing to it. Heb. viii. 6, Christ is called "The Mediator of a covenant." A mediator, what is that?. A mediator of a covenant, is the person that hath the management of it on both sides. A covenant is no covenant till it be concluded, and done: there may be articles, but it is not actually a covenant till both sides are agreed: so there cannot be a mediator of a covenant, till there be one that is able to bring both sides together, and make up a conclusion. And thus Christ is the covenant, or the mediator of the covenant, as he manageth, all things in it. Job hath an excellent expression, to shew forth the soleness of Christ to deal in the covenant between God and men; he makes a bitter complaint and pitiful lamentation; he knew not how to deal with God, and gives this as a reason of it, (Job ix. 32, 33,) "For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. A day's-man; it is Christ that is this day's-man; it is all one with an umpire, or a mediator: he must come between, and lay his hand upon us both: what is that? upon God and us: the meaning is," he that is the day's-man, the mediator, must be

such a person that hath power on both parties that enter into covenant together: he must lay his hand upon God; that is, he must have power with God, and bring God to such terms as he propounds; and lay his hand upon man, to bring man on; and when he lays his hand upon both, then he is a mediator of the covenant. And, in this sense, Christ is a covenant, as he hath the managing and dispatching of all the business of the covenant, from the first to the last.

Secondly, As Christ is fundamentally, so he is materially, the covenant; Christ himself is the covenant, as he is Christ. This seems strange; but there is an admirable wisdom of God to be adored in this thing: the covenant substantially stands in this; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Now Christ he is both these in himself; he is God unto his people, and he is the people unto God, and before him. Both these meet in that one Christ, and are both of them admirably illustrated to us, Matt. i. 23, where, upon the birth of Christ, the angel saith, "They shall call his name Immanuel; which, being interpreted, is God with us:" Christ is, "God with us," not only as Christ's Godhead did take the human nature simply; but Christ is "God with us, that is, Christ is so ordered by the Father for men, that the Father may see the deity and humanity made up in one, to wit, Christ's person; and so, consequently, all the people, that are the people of God, are considered in Christ, as part of him: for Christ is considered two ways, either as he consists of the Godhead, and one individual human nature; or, as he consists of that and a compact of many persons considered as members of Christ's mystical body: so Christ is the head, and all those that are in covenant with him, are members; and this head and members together make up one complete and entire body. Consider Christ thus, and then you shall see in him God, the God of his people, and men the people of God, and both these meet together only in Christ.

Christ, in a very few words, doth very excellently set forth this his own being, materially, the covenant, John xvii. 22, 23, "And the glory thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, as we are one." Here, first, he speaks of unity among themselves, as members have unity in one body: then he goes further in the next verse, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;" as much as to say thus; I, as I have assumed humanity, and besides the humanity, have sumed the members of my mystical

body, so I am in them, and they in me; and by this my being one with them, and they one with me, they become one with us both; so, God to be the God of his people, and the people to be the people of God, meet in this one Christ, God and man; Christ as head united to his members, and they as members in covenant with him.

Thirdly, Christ himself is said to be the covenant equivalently; I mean thus, Though the main substance of the covenant be filled to believers as soon as they are justified, that is, while they are ungodly; yet there are particular branches, or rather fruits of the covenant, to be fulfilled to believers in their season: to have God more abundantly pouring out himself in all manner of graciousness, this is to be fulfilled in season. Now, Christ is said to be the covenant, as a present pawn, or earnest, delivered into the hands of a person, at the very instant of his justification; which pawn, is of equal value and worth with the whole covenant, when it is fulfilled to the uttermost: so, Christ being given over to men, as a pawn and earnest, they have, at the first instant, the whole covenant equivalently. If a man deliver money to another, and he receives a pawn worth the money, then he hath the money in his hand, though not in specie, yet in value, he hath as much as the money is worth; and so, by consequence, it is as much as if he had the money itself. Christ, delivered over in justification, is of equal value with all that is to be fulfilled, when the covenant is fulfilled to the uttermost. He being of equal value, it follows, that Christ is the covenant by estimation, though not in respect of the accomplishment and fulfilling of the several knits.

Thus I have done with the first branch: this I desired to clear more fully; because I find the world is marvelously puzzled with the mixture of other things besides Christ in the covenant: we will go a little further this morning, because I would dispatch that I intend, and would not willingly leave any thing, not knowing when, or whether ever I shall see your faces again. I will therefore enter upon the next thing of great concernment: I hope there hath been no mistake of what I have spoken, and then I know the truth of it will justify itself against all contradiction.

II. The second thing is, what is it for Christ to be given for covenant? I answer, All that benefit that Christ is, or all that Christ can be to a person, is a mere deed of gift; and it, comes only as a

very true and real gift unto men, upon no other consideration, but simply the Father's good will*, (*Isaiah lxxv. 1) to make a gift of it; this dependeth necessarily upon what we shewed before. If that which we have hitherto spoken be not true, this cannot be true; if the covenant be with condition, and the condition to be performed for the covenant; then certainly Christ is not a mere gift. That which a man buys or pays for, he makes a reckoning of it as due debt: he cannot make a reckoning of it as a gift: but you see it plainly in the text, that Christ is given to be covenant; Christ is not bought to be a covenant, he is not paid for. Covenants between men I know are thus, if a man has a house or land to sell, there are articles drawn up and agreed upon; and he that must have the land, must pay for it: it is not so in this covenant; but it is as in covenants that are deeds of gifts, which run thus, I will freely bestow this upon you: so God bestows his Christ freely, passing him over to men, without any thing from them in consideration of this Christ which is bestowed. And this imports two things; I say, that Christ is a gift, imports two things.

First, That in the participation of Christ, God requires nothing of man; he expects nothing from man in consideration of that Christ he bestows upon him. I say, he requires nothing, he expects nothing, he will take nothing; nay, he will not give Christ unto men, except they will take him freely, without bringing any thing for him.

Secondly, This gift, Christ, being given unto men, imports that there is no vileness, no sinfulness, no kind of wretchedness of man, that can be any bar to man from having a full part and portion in this Christ: a gift implies them both. I shall open them both, as clear as may be.

First, I say, Christ is conveyed unto men as a gift; without the Father's requiring any thing of them, or expecting any thing from them; but only barring them from bringing, or thinking to bring, any thing to this end, that they may have a part or share in Christ.

I shall first declare, and make clear, that it is directly contrary to the nature of a gift (considered really as a gift) to require, or expect any thing in consideration of that which is given. When things are passed over to a man upon consideration, either: they are passed over by bargain and sale, or else by way of bribe. When a man

desires his cause may go well in a suit of law, he will give the judge something; but the consideration must be, that the judge shall carry the cause on his side; this that the judge receives, is not a gift, but a bribe, because something must be done for it. When a man must have such and such lands, or such and such goods, and there is a contract, you must give me so much money, and you shall have them; these lands and goods are not gifts, when money must be paid for them.

If we must bring any thing to the Father in consideration of Christ the covenant, then here is a bargain and sale between the Father and us; I will give you my Christ, but you must bring me works, to wit, broken, and clean, and changed hearts, and the like: this is a mere bargain and sale. In Rom. iv. 4, you shall find plainly and clearly, how the apostle directly overthrows the being of a gift upon this supposition; if it could be received, that a man must bring any thing to his justification, he plainly affirms, a gift ceaseth to be a gift when any such thing comes in; "Now to him that worketh, is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt:" mark, I pray you, well, "to him that worketh:" that is, would you bring your humiliations, your prayers, as conditions that God may perform his covenant? Do you bring any thing in the world, and work any inherent righteousness? Then saith the apostle, the reward, that is, the accomplishment of the covenant, is not reckoned of grace; if you bring works, the gift; ceaseth to be a gift, it must be reckoned to be a debt. Either then you must lay down all works, and let them cease in the business of partaking of Christ, or else you must conclude you must not receive Christ of grace, but of debt: and the apostle doth make it more clear, Rom. xi. 6, "And it by grace, (that is, by gift, for grace and gift, you must understand, are all one: grace is nothing but the favour of God freely, and' of his own accord communicated; And if by grace) then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." If you bring grace unto works, or works unto grace; either the one, or the other, or both, are made void: as much as to say, these two things are inconsistent, they cannot stand together, that we should partake of Christ through grace and works both; they will not stand together: grace must stand alone, or works alone; for one directly overthrows the other.

And, beloved, to speak freely to you of these work-mongers, those buyers of Christ, that would bring something with them to partake of Christ; what would they bring? They say they will bring a good heart, or a changed life. I ask, what prize is this you bring? Do you bring any thing of your own, or that which is God's already? Suppose your hearts be never so purged and cleansed; what bring you to God? You bring that which already is his own; as much as to say, a man owes another a thousand pounds, and he will come and bring him this thousand pounds, for lands worth fifty pounds by the year. No, he must bring a thousand pounds more, if he will purchase the land: even so it is for a person to bring works for Christ, which works thou owest unto God already; no, first pay thy debt which thou owest, and then if thou hast any more, bring that unto God to purchase Christ withal. But alas, when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants; for all you have done is not yours, it was due from you before; how then can any thing you do be a consideration to purchase Christ withal?

Moreover, you that will bring works, and, in consideration of them, expect a part in Christ; what are the works you bring? A whip you shall have as soon as a Christ, in regard of your works: Oh, the filthiness of all the works of men, as they work them! There is nothing but filthiness in them; "Yea, (saith Paul) I count all things dung, that I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness:" therefore, as it is most presumptuous pride in men, so it is the grossest ignorance that can be, to dream of any thing that they have, do, or can do, in the partaking of Christ; they directly overthrow the nature of a gift: hast thou but one thought once, that God will accept thee in Christ, upon consideration that thou hast performed thus and thus; this very thought directly destroys Christ, considered as a gift: for if he be a gift, then he comes without any consideration whatsoever.

SERMON VII

THE NEW COVENANT OF FREE GRACE.

ISAIAH xlii. 6, 7.

AND I WILL GIVE THEE FOR A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLE, FOR A LIGHT OF THE GENTILES, TO OPEN THE BLIND EYES, TO BRING OUT THE PRISONERS FROM THE PRISON, AND THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS OUT OF THE PRISON-HOUSE.

IN the next place, as it is against the nature of a gift, so God doth not expect, nor will accept of any thing from men in consideration of Christ; and, for this, the scriptures are plain and clear, that the Father expects nothing in the world of men; no one qualification or spiritual disposition, before, or upon the communicating, of his Son Christ unto men: I will but name some few passages to clear this to you, that I may not seem to come in my own name, in this that I have delivered.

Consider, among other passages, that in Isa. lv. 1, it is plain there, you may see, that God looks for nothing in the world of men; be they what they will, be they in the worst condition, no matter what it is, they are the men to whom Christ offers himself; "Ho, everyone that thirsteth," (saith Christ) that is, every one that hath but a mind to come to him, every one that would take him, may have him: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" "Hearken, diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Eat, but not buy; for it is said, "Buy without money;" you may eat without price, and that which shall eat is fatness. Mark what follows, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make

an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David:" here you see the covenant mentioned. But what doth God require here in the covenant? No money, no price; the covenant runs all upon mercy; it is an everlasting covenant indeed, and an everlasting covenant of mercy. Now mercy is the doing a thing only and merely of gift: if a man will forgive a debtor, and ask nothing of him, then he is a merciful man: so far as men give, so far are they merciful; so far as they sell, there is no mercy in that. But here is neither money, nor price, nor any thing (Luke vii. 4,2.) at all in consideration of the covenant.

Likewise, in Hosea, xiv. 4, God saith by the prophet, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them:" he will love you freely, that is the term: he will ask nothing for that good he will do unto you, it shall be freely; and what is more free than gift?

Look also into that notable place, worthy of all consideration, Eph. ii. where the apostle speaks most admirably sweetly to this point, of giving and communicating Christ, and all that is Christ's, unto men, merely of grace, merely of gift, without consideration of any thing in the world; and there you have the reason, why God will do it merely of gift, and upon no other ground or cause at all, (in verse 4,) saying, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us;" (here is the great principle that gives being to all that follows) "even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (by grace ye are saved) Mark what follows, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that, in ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus: for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Here you see how notably the apostle takes off all things in the world, whereby man may imagine to move God to shew kindness, and give his Christ unto them; and attributes all to the riches of God's grace because of that "love wherewith he loved us." Hence it is that he bestows Christ by grace; "and by this grace are we saved, and that not of ourselves, not of our works, lest any should boast."

I will not recite many places: one more, and then I have done with

this. Look into the last of the Revelations, you shall see Christ is so a gift passed over unto men, that God looks for, asks, requires nothing of men to their partaking of him: in verse 17," Let him that is athirst come, and whoso will, let him come, and take the water of life freely." No matter for bringing of any thing with you; have you a mind to him? take him freely, God scorns to make a sale of his Son. If men take him as a deed of gift, well and good; if they will have him upon other terms, God never means to part with him. I tell you, could you bring angelical perfection and obedience, and present that unto the Father as a motive to him to bestow his Christ upon you; if you dare offer the perfectest righteousness in the world for Christ; I say, you shall be accursed for it. "If we, (saith the apostle), Gal. i. 8,) or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you? any other gospel, than salvation, and participation of Christ, by grace and free gift (for that is the doctrine he had established before, and, through the whole epistle to the Galatians, doth maintain)" let such person be accursed," saith Paul. And, concerning those that will preach any other doctrine, or will establish any righteousness of man, and pervert the people of God from the sincerity of the doctrine and gospel they have received; the apostle is so eager against them, that he breaks out into this expression, "I would they were even cut off, which trouble you," in the same epistle, chap. v. 12, and upon the self-same ground we have in hand, he thus expresses himself; and, why? because they overthrew the great intent of the Lord, and those great thoughts he hath of himself; namely, that the world may see what a God of grace he is. If a man comes with works, towards the enjoyment of Christ, he overthrows the grace of God, and frustrates the great end for which God sent Christ into the world: for as you see it plainly there in the epistle to the Ephesians, the place before mentioned, the Lord therefore comes to give Christ, to set forth "the praise of the glory of his free grace."

Secondly, This Gift (Christ I mean) given as a covenant, imports unto you, that as the Father looks for nothing in men to partake of Christ, so also it doth imply, there is nothing in men, though never so vile, that can debar a person from a part in this Christ. Some will not have Christ, except they can pay for him: others dare not meddle with Christ, because they are so vile and wretched creatures, that they think it impossible that Christ should belong to such wretched

persons as they are. You know not (saith one) what an abominable sinner I am; you look upon others, but their sins are but ordinary; but mine are of a deep dye, and I shall die in them: the rebellion of my heart, is another kind of rebellion than is in others.

Beloved, let me tell you freely from the Lord; let men deem you as they will, and make yourself as bad as you can, I tell you, from the Lord, and I will make it good, there is not that sinfulness that can be imagined in a creature, that can be able to separate, or debar any of you from, a part in Christ; even, while you are thus sinful, Christ, may be your Christ. Nay, I go further; suppose one person, in this congregation, should not only be the vilest sinner in the world, but should have all the sins of others, besides what he himself hath committed; if all these were laid upon the back of him, he should be a greater sinner than now he is; yet, if he should bear all the sins of others as I said, there is no bar to this person, but Christ may be his: portion; "He bore the sins of many," (saith the text) but he bare them not as his own, he bare them for many. Suppose the many, that are sinners, should have all their sins translated to one in particular; still there is no more sin than Christ died for; though they be all collected together. If other men's sins were translated upon you, and they had none, then they needed no Christ; all the need they have of Christ, were translated to you, and then the whole of Christ's obedience should be yours.

Do but observe the strain of the gospel, you shall find that no sin in the world can be a bar to hinder a person from having a part in this Christ that is given: look upon the condition of persons (as they are revealed in the gospel) to whom Christ is reached out: and the consideration of their persons will plainly shew to you, that there is no kind of sinfulness can bar a person from having a part in Christ.

Look into Ezek. vi. quite through; the person is there considered in a state of blood, of menstuousness, of vileness, and greatest filthiness that can be supposed; and when "no eye could pity" such a person, "or do any good to him; I passed by thee, (saith Christ) thy time was the time of love I swore unto thee, I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Construe this in a spiritual sense, conceive of a spiritual estate of filth, proportionable to a natural estate of filth. That very time of the vilest of our spiritual filthiness, is the time of Christ's love when he enters into covenant. Yea, but sure he case is

altered, before Christ actually swears. No; "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood." When? even then when "I sware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," First, he did sware, and then he did wash them: and not wash them, and then sware unto them, and enter into covenant with them. First, "I entered into covenant with thee, then washed I thee with water, and then put I jewels upon thee," &c. The first thing he doth, is, he enters into covenant, and the people become his people, and then he takes them in hand, and washeth and purgeth them, and not before.

Consider Christ's own expression, "I came to seek, and save that which was lost: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" here still the persons are considered in the worst condition, (as some might think) rather than in the best. Our Saviour is pleased to express himself in a direct contrary way to the opinion, of men. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners:" the poor publican that had nothing to plead for himself went away more justified than the proud pharisee that pleaded with God; "I thank thee that I am not such an one."

Men think righteousness brings them near to Christ beloved, righteousness is that which puts a man away from Christ*:

* When it is trusted to, and depended upon, and put in the room of Christ and his righteousness; or when it is brought to fit a man for Christ, and give him a right and claim to him, and his benefit.

stumble not at the expression, it is the clear truth of the gospel: (Matt. v. 20.) not simply doing of service and duty, doth put away from Christ; but upon the doing of duty and service, to expect acceptance with Christ, or participation in Christ, this kind of righteousness is the only separation between Christ and a people; and whereas sinfulness in the world can debar a people, their righteousness may debar them.

I need not tell you, what I have so often mentioned, that there must be a believing in him that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. what can you look for of an ungodly person? If there can be any bar in the world to hinder a man from taking Christ, you would think it should

be ungodliness; it is the ground of most, and all men's fears. But if the term ungodliness be not bad enough, consider, Christ goes further, even unto rebellion; he hath received, gifts for the rebellious, Psalm lxxviii. 18," Thou hast ascended on high, and led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

But some may be ready to say to me, Though God be never so free in giving Christ unto men; yet they may never have a part in him, except they have hands to take, and receive him.

I answer, I beseech you consider, and I answer peremptorily, that though men have no hands to rake Christ, yet may they receive him. I will clear this a little to you, first by illustration, or by way of similitude: a poor indigent person is speechless, he hath never a tongue; he is handless, he hath never a hand: he cannot ask with the tongue, he cannot take with the hand; if you have a mind to give, I ask, can you not give to such a person, because he hath not a tongue to speak, nor a hand to take? you may behold, and see the pitiful case of such a man, and your compassions may be stirred in you; and whereas he cannot put a garment upon his own naked back, yet you may provide raiment, and put it upon his back with your hands, as well as if he had put it on himself: and thus God deals in bestowing Christ upon men; we are dumb, and cannot speak, "We know not what to ask as we ought," saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 26, but God being rich in compassion, he beholds our miserableness; his own bowels stir him up. (Zech. ix. 11) Although there be no language in the creature to move him; yet out of these bowels of his, he will shew pity and mercy to us, and reach out his Christ, to those that have no hands to receive him, no faith to believe in him. It is the Lord put this Christ on the back of those persons (Isaiah lxi. 10.) on whom he hath pity and compassion. I say, that although we have no hand, yet the Lord puts this his Christ upon us; it is not we that put him on, but the Lord that puts him upon us.

Secondly, To resolve the case more fully and clearly, observe a distinction very needful to be observed and considered: there is a twofold receiving of Christ; there is, first, a passive recipiency; secondly, there is an active recipiency*.

* And an excellent distinction it is; the learned Hoornbeek

takes notice of it, and has these words concerning it; "Neither do we reject some distinctions of theirs (*i.e.* Dr. Crisp, and others, called Antinomians) as of the reception of Christ *primum* passive, *turn* active, first passive, then active."—*Summa Controv.* cap. 10. p. 720.

First, There is a passive receiving of Christ, and that is, so that Christ is received without any hands; but in an active receiving of him, he is not received without hands: you will say, what is this passive receiving of Christ? I answer, a passive receiving of Christ, is just such a receiving of him, as when a froward patient takes a purge, or some bitter physic; he shuts his teeth against it, but the physician forceth his mouth open, and pours it down his throat, and so it works against his will, (John. iv. 16, 17, 18.) by the over-ruling power of one over him, that knows it is good for him. Thus I say, there is a passive recipiency, or receiving of Christ, which is the first receiving of him; when Christ comes by the gift of the Father to a person, whilst he is in the stubbornness of his own heart, being froward and cross; and the Father forces open the spirit of that man, and pours in his Son in spite of the receiver*.

* This is to be understood of the state and condition, in which a man is, when God comes first to work upon him, in which he is passive; and the simile made use of, of a physician forcing a man's mouth open, and pouring physic against his will, is intended to illustrate, and does illustrate, the enmity and rebellion of the heart of man against Christ and his grace; and shews how disagreeable, to the carnal mind, are the methods which God takes when he first works upon it, either by afflictive providences, or by letting the law into the conscience, which works wrath there; and not, as D. W. suggests, in his Gospel Truth, &c. p. 101, as if men were said to receive Christ against their wills: for, as the Doctor after observes, when Christ has entered into the soul, and has revealed himself, and shown it his excellency and his beauty, it embraces him, and holds him fast; when his power comes upon it, it is made willing to receive him, whom, before, it had a dislike of, and an aversion to.

There is such a kind of recipiency mentioned in scripture, Jerem. xxxi. 18, 19, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus,

Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded." Mark how Ephraim (who is the representative of the church) stands affected and disposed; when God comes first to tame and break the spirit of Ephraim, God is fain to get upon Ephraim, as an horse-rider is fain to get upon an unruly horse, that was never broken; he must fetter him upon all four, that he may stand still before he get up. So God must fetter Ephraim before he can get up, before he can tame him; "I was as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke," nothing but kicking and spurning at first; afterwards Ephraim becomes more gentle; "When I was converted, I smote upon my thigh, and was confounded:" but before, Ephraim was a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Hence it is, that the entrance of Christ into a person is attributed unto the power of Christ; "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power;" the power of the Lord must overcome a person, before Christ can have a possession of him, in regard of the crossness of the spirit of man to the pleasure of Christ.

At the first, then, there may be a passive receiving of Christ, by which Christ may enter and doth enter into the spirit, (Acts ix; 3) though the soul reach not forth the hand to take him in; but rather on the contrary part, fight against him by keeping him from entering: but now when this Christ is poured into the spirit of a man by the power of the Lord, then he begins to work, to break, and to tame the spirit, to be at his own beck and pleasure: when Christ hath once revealed himself, and made the soul behold his beauty, and acquainted it with his excellency, then it begins to embrace him, and to hold him fast, and will not let him go.

Here comes in the second act of receiving Christ, when we, take him, perceiving he is a friend and coming for good, and that there is no good but by him. Christ is considered as given of the Father; and being given, the Father hath no regard to any thing (Micah vi. 6, 7.) a man can do for him, or any thing he can do against him. (Gen. xx. 6.)

But it may be, before I leave this, you will ask, is not unbelief a bar to have a part in Christ?

I answer, It is a bar to hinder the manifestation of Christ in the spirit; but it is not a bar to hinder one from having a part in Christ, on whom God doth bestow him. It is true, that you, nor I, can say by experience that Christ is ours, until we believe; as long as we continue in total unbelief, we cannot conclude to our own spirits that Christ is ours: but unbelief is not simply a bar to the bestowing of Christ, to such a person; he bestows him without any regard (Luke xix. 5) to belief, or unbelief: if unbelief should be a bar to hinder Christ from being bestowed upon men, where is the man to whom Christ should be bestowed? There is no person under heaven considered simply as ungodly, and under the notion of ungodliness, but he is considered as an unbeliever, as well as a sinner in other respects; so that to the Father's giving of Christ, unbelief is not a bar; only to the inward satisfaction of the soul and spirit, unbelief is a bar; a soul cannot be resolved till it doth believe.

III. And so now I come to consider the third thing I proposed, namely.

What it is for Christ to be given to open the blind eyes?

There are two things very remarkable in it, that he is given to do this: for hence I infer, and the thing itself will clearly bear it:

First, That Christ is actually passed over to a soul, and a possession of Christ is delivered unto persons, before ever their blind eyes are opened, or they come out of prison; that is, before they have any gracious qualifications whatsoever; and this is a truth that follows upon the former, that Christ himself is the first spiritual gift that the Father doth bestow upon any, before there be wrought any opening of the eyes, which is the first of all gracious qualifications wrought in a man.

Secondly, That the opening of the eyes, and bringing the prisoners out of prison, is the sole work of Christ; none doth this business but Christ alone when he is once given.

The first will need a little clearing (and thereby the second will be sufficiently evidenced) being a truth of very great concern, and yet seldom seriously considered; I say, that Christ is actually given and passed over to men, and made really theirs, before ever there be any gracious qualifications put into the soul of such a man. I say, as before, observe this caution, I speak of God's giving Christ unto

men, not of the manifestation of him unto a man to be his: there is, and must be faith, as I said before, for the manifestation of him to be ours; but there is no qualification wrought in the heart of any person, before Christ be actually passed over, and made his in the covenant. Now, I say, Christ is given and passed over to such a person, before he has any gracious qualifications; I do not mean, as some do, that God did actually decree Christ, unto such and such, before he put any qualifications in them; this is a truth indeed; but I say further, That God gives actual possession of Christ, and Christ takes possession of that person, before there be any qualifications wrought in him: now Christ is given, not only to perform some common acts of God's providence, but he is given as the covenant itself; he enters, and actually justifies a person, before any qualification be wrought in him.

Now I shall endeavour to clear this, by all possible evidence I can; the scripture is plain for it, in Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 8, and so forward; there you shall see that Christ is actually given unto men, before any gracious qualifications whatsoever be wrought in them; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," saith Christ; for they are his words, as he himself applies them, in the sermon he preached, Luke iv. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised."

Observe it, I pray you, Here Christ hath a business to do in the world; which is, "To bind up the broken-hearted;" and, the Lord hath anointed him to this business. What is that anointing? The Lord hath separated him, designed him to it; and according to his designation, places him where he may do it; this is meant by anointing. Now, when a man is set apart, and sent about such a business: he must be there corporally or virtually before that is done, which he is sent to do; he is sent to do a thing, therefore he must be there where it is to be done: a man is not said to do a thing, when it is done before he come; if Christ be sent to bind up the broken-hearted, and if it be his business; certainly they are not bound up before he comes to bind them; and if he comes to bind them up, then he is present before they are bound up.

But, peradventure, you will say, by this text, here are broken hearts first, before Christ be sent to bind them up; therefore there must be broken hearts before Christ come to the soul.

To this answer, That a broken heart is to be considered in double sense, either, first, Simply for a heart undone; or, secondly, For one sensible of its own undoing: you know, men are said to be undone, and broke, when their estates are broke; and their credit cracked; and, they may be said to be broke, when they have examined their own books, and find that they are, and so seek to their creditors to make agreement: they may be considered as broken, supposing and considering what their condition is simply in itself, as they are undone in it; or else, they apprehend themselves to be undone, and so make agreement.

Now, these two kinds of brokenness of heart considered, answer, It is most certainly true in the first sense, there is broken heart, before Christ is considered as present to bind it up; that is men are really undone, before he comes to restore them; but these persons are not sensible of their own brokenness of heart, until Christ comes and makes them sensible of it.

Therefore, if you will speak of the sense of breaking, I flatly affirm, Christ is actually given, and is come unto the soul, before sensibleness be wrought in the soul. Mark but the covenant as it is recited, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, who is it deals with the heart of man to take away the stoniness of it, and to give a meltingness unto it? "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh:" who is that? It is he that did obtain a more excellent ministry, by how much he we the mediator of a better covenant; even the mediator of this covenant, and it is he that takes away the stony heart; and, if he breaks it, how can there be said to be a broken heart, before Christ comes to do it?

Therefore, in brief, know this, Christ is sent unto men, as to bind up their hearts, when they are broken, so graciously to break them, when they are hard; first, he breaks them, then he binds them up; "He is sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of prison-doors the prisoners:" people think by their humiliations, sorrows, mournings, and obedience, and such like, to get Christ; but is plain that the very spirit of mourning is the

work of Christ upon a person, and he is present to work it too. Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication: and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn:" who was in that poured this spirit of grace, supplication, and mourning I, saith Christ. I, who was that I? It is he that was pierced, on whom they shall look that had pierced him; "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" this is he that poured out the spirit of supplication and mourning; so, if it be Christ was pierced, as is plain, then it is also plain that he poured out the spirit of grace, supplication, and mourning: how then can they mourn before Christ comes, when it is he, after he is come, that doth this thing?

Object any qualification whatsoever, and it will appear most evident and plain, that it is Christ himself, after he is come, that works it; even faith itself, which is called the radical grace of all graces, is not given until Christ himself be given men, who works this very faith; Heb. xii. 2, "Looking (saith the apostle) unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith he is the author; what faith can there be then till he comes to work it?"

Consider, Psalm lxxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, and you shall plainly see Christ is given unto men, before there be any qualifications of any grace whatsoever in them; "Thou hast received gifts for the rebellious," saith the Psalmist; "Thou hast given gifts unto men," saith the apostle: put them both together, Christ received for, and gave gifts unto rebellious men; consider, I pray, what gracious dispositions, and qualifications are considerable in rebellious men; as they are rebellious, there can be none considered: but Christ received for, and gave gifts to, the rebellious; therefore, he is given, and accordingly gives whatsoever any person hath, before he hath any thing.

There are many notable arguments in scripture most absolutely establishing this truth; that Christ is given and made over unto men before they have any qualification whatsoever. Col. i. 18, where Christ is called, "The head of the body, the church, and the beginning." These two metaphors illustrate and establish this truth.

First, Christ is the beginning. He that is the beginning of all things, is before all things; not only in the being of nature before all things,

but actually present before all things be begun. He that is the builder of the house, doth not come after it is begun to be built; but he is present at the place before a stone is laid, because he is the man that must lay it, he is the beginner of it; and if he be the beginning, whatsoever is begun, is after him that is the beginning.

Secondly, Christ is the head. This is the other metaphor, whereby is set forth, that Christ must upon necessity be in the soul, be actually passed over unto men, before they can have any gracious qualifications. A head is the fountain of all animal and sensitive spirits, and of all motion; without a head, a man cannot hear, see, walk, feel, stir, nor do any thing, seeing all these operations come from the head. Consider the body as headless, and all the senses are absent, and without a head nothing is done. Christ is the head of his church, (so saith the apostle) that is, he is the fountain of all spiritual sense and motion. You may as soon conceive that a man is able to see whilst he hath not a head; as to think, a man can have spiritual eyes, whether the eye of faith to behold Christ, or the eyes of mourning to lament one's wretchedness, before there be actually the presence and conjunction of Christ the head, unto such a body. Beloved, to think a man can have any spiritual sight, before Christ be actually united to the soul, is all one, as for a man to think to see, before he has eyes. The eyes are placed in the head; both the organs, faculties, and spirits all are in the head; how can a man see, that hath neither eyes nor spirits to feed them? which he hath not, while he hath not a head, where all these are planted. Christ must be the eye, and present, to give sight; therefore, the scripture expressly says, "That he is given for a covenant to open the blind eyes:" if to open them, then they are not opened before he gives them sight.

And, thirdly, As Christ is called a head, and a beginning; so also life, frequently in the scripture. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me," John xiv. 6. Can a man be an active creature, before there be life breathed into him? "The Lord, (saith the text) at the creation, breathed into man the breath of life, and so he became a living soul." He was like a stone, till he had life; but now, saith the apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. ii. 20. "And, by the grace of God, I am that I am, and his grace that was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all." Paul was an active soul. How? By the

grace of God," 1 Cor. xv. 10. That is, as a body, without a soul is dead; so every person, in spiritual actions, is wholly dead, till Christ the soul of the soul be infused into him, to animate and enliven him.

I shall not spend more time in urging more arguments; though I might be large to shew that Christ is the first thing given unto us, before all other whatsoever. For if this light be not enough, we must wait till the Lord in his time will reveal his truth."

IV. And now in a word or two consider, who they are, to whom Christ is given to be a covenant. All this is good news, will some say, to those unto whom it is sent. Many thousands cry out, Oh, but it is none of my portion, nor my portion, that Christ should be given as a covenant to me.

I shall not be large in this, though some may expect it; the text will tell in part, who those are to whom he is given for a covenant, to wit, the people, and the Gentiles, one, as well as another. God gives Christ to men without respect of persons, to Jews and Gentiles. You shall find through the whole course of the scripture, the persons to whom Christ is exhibited, are still expressed in the most general terms: if a man would know for whom he came, it is answered, "He came to seek and to save those that are lost; in due time, he came to die for the ungodly;" and "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The scripture runs upon this strain; why then should any man come and cry, "He died not for me, he is not given for me." Why, art thou a convinced sinner? He was given for thee, if thou art truly saying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The king puts forth a proclamation, and in it he pardons all thieves: what mad or foolish thief will say, Oh, but the king doth not mean me, he may mean others, but not me! Why, he means thieves in general, he excepts none: why shouldest thou say, not me? If there be the name of thieves in general, without particular mentioning of some, they will come in, and take their portion. Beloved, so Christ deals with men, he is given to the people, to the Gentiles; art thou of the people? art thou of the Gentiles? If thou art, why is he not given to thee? Nay more, it is the people and Gentiles considered as sinners?

But some will be ready to say, You know he is not given to all

people, and all Gentiles; some do miscarry, and possibly I may be among them, that do miscarry; but how shall I know that I am among the number of such sinners that shall not miscarry; and my portion is in, this Christ?

Beloved, here observe by the way, now we are speaking of knowing whether Christ be mine, or no, not simply of Christ's being ours, but of his manifestation, or of knowing him to be ours, how shall I know it? You will say, There are labyrinths, in which a man may walk, and by hap may chance to hit the right, in the finding of this great truth, so much searched after, how a man may know whether Christ be his or no. To lead you a plain and sure way; the best way for any man to know whether Christ be his or no, is to consider the conveyance in which he is made over to men; see the terms of conveyance, and according to these terms, such is the security of your title. Now the terms of conveyance (as I have often told you) are only such as in deed of gift, and a deed of gift universally exhibited and reached out. Therefore, I must tell you, there is no better way to know your portion in Christ, than upon the general tender of the gospel, to conclude absolutely he is yours, and so, without any more ado, to take him, as tendered to you, on his word; (Isaiah lv. 1.) and this taking of him, upon a general tender,

* This is the principal passage on which the Dutch professor Hoornbeeck, has laid the charge of holding universal redemption to the Doctor, concluding, from this general tender, or offer of Christ to all, that he held the universal satisfaction of Christ for all, and that all have an equal portion in it; from whence they might be assured Christ as theirs, and not from any condition in themselves: and, indeed the universal offer, cannot be supported without supposing universal redemption; which those, who are fond of, and yet profess particular redemption, would do well to consider. see Summa Controv. p. 703. 1. 10.

is the greatest security in the world, that Christ is yours. Say unto your souls (and let not this be contradicted, seeing Christ hath reached out himself to sinners as sinners.) My part is as good as any man's; set down thy rest here; question it not, but believe it; it is as good security as God can make thee: he hath promised, venture thy soul upon it, without seeking for further security. But, some will say,

he doth not belong to me: why not to thee? he belongs to sinners, as sinners; and if there be no worse than sinfulness, rebellion, and enmity in thee, he belongs to thee, as well as to any in the world:

* This is putting it upon a much better foot than the general tender; which is no security to any, of Christ being his; nor even general redemption itself, since all have not a portion in him, or are saved by him; but, Christ dying for the worst and chief of sinners, and his promise to receive, and his actually receiving them as such, are the best security, and on which a poor sinner, under a deep sense of sin may, rely; and be encouraged to apply to Christ, and lay hold upon him as his own Saviour. See the last paragraph of the next sermon, where the Doctor mentions a better security than the general tender.

and there is nothing at all can give thee a certainty he is thine, but receiving him on these terms; "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but, to as many as received him, (mark that) he gave power to become the sons of God."

He receiveth sinners, as sinners; he never shut out one of all those thousands, that came upon the tender of the gospel; he never put any by; "But to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God." Bring me any one instance in the whole book of God, of any one that hath come to Christ, and taken him upon the tender of the gospel, and yet he hath put this person by. It is true, in a shallow matter, concerning a bodily cure, the woman comes to Christ, and at the first, he would not hear, then he calls her dog; yet before they parted, Christ not only accepts the woman, but breaks out into admiration, "Oh! woman, great is thy faith!" But, I say, in the business of partaking of Christ, shew me an instance of any in all the book of God, that have ventured upon the general tender (Rev, xxii. 17.) of Christ, which was rejected. If there be no example, in all the scripture, from whence fetch you this bitterness of your own spirits, that you may not, that you dare not close with Christ?

But, you will say to me, If this taking of him be the best security, how shall I know whether I believe or no? Or how shall I know whether this my taking is not a counterfeit, but a solid, substantial,

real, taking of Christ.

I answer, By the reality of the thing. Do you it indeed?" If you do it indeed, it is a real taking. If a man should ask you; How do you know the sun shines? The light of it shews itself; and, by its light, we know it shines. How shall I know I believe? There is a light in faith that discovers itself unto men. The soul that really closes with Christ, may conclude he doth. If you give sixpence to a poor man, and then ask him, How do you know I have given you it, and that you have it? Why, saith he, I have it in my hand, and find, and feel I have it. So, ask your hearts this question, How do I know I believe in Christ? Do I cast my heart upon this truth? Do I receive it as one that I do believe, or do I reject it, or will not receive it? Then I do not believe: but if you sit down, and rest upon it, and receive it, and do in reality believe it; then you may absolutely conclude Christ is yours. In respect of time, I cannot amplify any further: but, I hope, for the present, this will give satisfaction. A word or two for application, and so I will conclude.

Is this a truth, as hath been by scripture proved to you, "That Christ is given a covenant to men, to open their blind eyes?" Then it is plain, they begin at the wrong end of the bottom, who begin to wind up at the graciousness of their own spirits, from thence to have comfort. If you begin at any other end than at Christ to get grace and comfort, you do as they do that take the inmost end of the bottom of the thread, and begin to ravel there; so that little or no work is done, but much and many a knot, and broken ends made, and the work quite spoiled; whereas, if they begun at the utmost end of the bottom, it would have run, without disturbance.

Beloved, Christ is given to open men's blind eyes; go whither you will, you shall never have your eyes spiritually opened, except you go to him: Oh, what a do is here with men, or in men, with breaking their own hearts, and forsaking their sins! And whither do they run? they run to their inherent righteousness, their qualifications, their prayers, their tears, their humiliations, sorrows, reformations, universal obedience, and the like; but is this to run to free grace and free mercy in Christ? nay, Christ, alas, is never thought of; he is clean forgotten, and wholly neglected, and not considered all this while. Here is ploughing with a wooden plough; here is a working upon a dead horse, or rather with one; what is in the heart of a man

to plough up the rock of his own heart? No marvel, that you sweat and toil and moil all the day long, and all lies in the same case it did: there is no strength to bring forth; because you go in your own, or the strength of the creature, and not in the strength of the Lord Jesus.

You know when a pump is dry, men use not to stand labouring at it till they sweat; but they first come, and fetch a bucket of water, and pour the water into it, and then they fall to pumping, and by virtue of the water poured, there comes more water up, and by continual pumping they fetch out abundance: so your hearts are dry things, there is no sap, no moisture, no life in them; Christ must first be poured in, before you can get any thing out; wherefore then stand you labouring and tugging in vain? Oh, stay no longer, go to Christ; it is he that must break thy rocky heart, before the plough can come over it, or at least enter into it. As I told you before, so I tell you again, you must consider Christ as freely given unto you by the Father, even before you can believe.

There is a story of Ebedmelech; the black-moor in Jeremy, who by his interest and favour with the king, got leave to go to the dungeon to Jeremiah to fetch him out; he carries ropes with him, lets them down and causeth Jeremiah to put them under his arms, and round about him; now Jeremiah by holding fast the ropes, doth not pull him into the pit, but he pulls Jeremiah out of the pit to himself. I speak this by way of illustration. Christ is our Ebedmelech with the Father, the great King of Glory; his dealing prevails that he may have liberty to pluck us poor Jeremies out of the pit and dungeon of sin and satan, of misery and destruction. How doth he this? He doth not first send ropes, and then come after, but goes and carries them with him; that is, Christ doth not send faith first to believers, and then comes after as drawn by it; no, but he comes and brings it with him, and he, being present, lets it down to them; and when they have it, they do not draw Christ down to them by it, but holding it fast, he draws them up to himself. So here is not faith first, and then Christ; but Christ comes first and gives faith to apprehend and lay hold upon him: Consider, therefore, Christ as your Ebedmelech, who comes and reacheth himself out to draw you up, and being first present, reacheth out faith to you, by which you may hold; so Christ fetcheth you out of the pit.

Wherefore (to draw to a conclusion) remember this, as you run to

Christ, so shall you prosper in every thing you take in hand; all the business that Christ undertakes shall go on a-main, whilst that the creature undertakes shall stand at a stop. Make trial, begin but with Christ; take him along with you in your entrance upon any thing, and you have a mighty counsellor to guide and direct you, for so Christ is called; and good counsel, you know, is very useful for a prosperous expedition of things. Again, you have a tower and refuge fully secure to retreat to, in case of extremity, or of over-mastership. It useth to be a prime piece of policy, being to combat with an enemy, to make sure of some good fort, and to maintain that; so that if the enemy be too strong, they may know whither to go to be hid and saved from the present danger; and without such a refuge they are all liable to be cut off; so do you begin with Christ; make sure of him when you enter into the field of the world; get but this fort, and you have a place of retreat upon all occasions, where there is most certain security, which the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against, for Christ is that impregnable rock; but this is not all.

Christ is also *aqua vitae*, water of life; take but Christ along with you, and then in all your travels no sooner do you begin to faint; but there is *aqua vitae* at hand; you may drink of it, and your spirits shall be refreshed and revived. What shall I say more to you? It is Christ that oils the wheels of your chariots, and makes you run the ways of God's commandments? It is he that fills the sails; you must needs lie at a calm, if he be not present to blow in them. Take Christ with you, and you have the wind at command. Many a mariner would give the world to have such a privilege as to command the natural winds, and to make them blow when, and which way he listeth; he would never then lie wind-bound. Beloved, you that have Christ, have the wind in your fists; you may be carried to any port you will. If you have him, you shall have a swift gale, and shall sail a-main by his power.

Therefore, if Christ be poured forth, and a gift unto men, and so cheap that you may have him for nothing, only receiving him, let this be your everlasting cry and song, none but Christ, none but Christ! or, rather, in the language of the Apostle, "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified?"

SERMON VIII

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY NO LICENTIOUS DOCTRINE.

JOHN viii. 36.

IF THE SON THEREFORE SHALL MAKE YOU FREE,
YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED.

Our Saviour here gives a hint to his apostles, that they should not look to fare better than their master. He speaks of hard usage in the world; for he came into it to fulfil a gracious and glorious ministry, bringing from the bosom of his Father the great and unsearchable love the Father had from everlasting in his thoughts towards his own dear ones; and so he takes all opportunities and advantages to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the sons of men; yet met he with much opposition. But although Christ knew full well that there were many cavillers laid snares to trap him in his words, and that they frequented the common assemblies where he preached, to catch something from him, whereby they might have a colour at least to upbraid him, and bring him into danger; I say, although Christ knew there were in all such assemblies some Scribes and Pharisees, and such like, yet for all this, when opportunity offered, he was graciously pleased to use much freedom of speech to them; and though some were carping and cavilling at his words and his person, yet some there were to whom the glad tidings of salvation did belong, who by his ministry received them, and so were comforted. It seems it fell out thus with Christ, in the two former chapters, and this out of which I have taken my text; for in these he was graciously pleased to hold forth the light of the glad tidings of salvation, wherein he used, as I said before, much freedom and boldness of speech, which occasioned the adversaries of the gospel to vent their poison, and spit the venom of their malice against him. He could no sooner speak a word of grace, but presently they were

upon the back of him.

These three chapters contain in them nothing else but a continued dispute between Christ and his enemies, intermingled with most admirable, sweet, and gracious expressions of him to his own people. In verse 30, after a large dispute and discourse, the Holy Ghost is pleased to tell us, That "many did believe in Christ" upon the words that he had spoken. Here you see a gracious effect upon some, that Christ knew before hand; upon which he took encouragement, notwithstanding all the adversaries' opposition, to be bold in speaking; and, perceiving that his gospel took effect upon some, nay, many of the people, he turns his discourse from these carpers, with whom he had so long disputed before, and begins to frame his speech to the capacity and condition of the new converts and believers; therefore, in verse 31, 32, our Saviour delivers himself to them in this manner: "If you continue in my words," saith he, "then are you my disciples, and the troth shall make you free."

Now, although it be apparent that Christ directs this speech of his to the new believers, yet in verse 37 the cavillers carp and cavil, whether wittingly or ignorantly I cannot say; they must needs have Christ to speak this passage unto them; and they presently, in a hot and captious way, reply to him: whereas he had said, "They should be, and the truth should make them free:" that is, as many of them as did believe; they presently retorted upon him, why? "We are Abraham's seed, we were never in bondage:" how can we be made free? They might have held their tongues, Christ never meant them, he never spake to them: and though they said, "They were never in bondage," in bondage they were, and in bondage like to be. However, Christ did not speak to them, but to believers; yet they will not leave him so, they will have a fling at him, therefore he answers their objection again. In the 33d verse, they made use of this argument to assert their freedom; said they, "We are Abraham's seed, we were never in bondage." What, doth he talk of making us free? He takes off this recoil with a two-edged sword. There is a double answer to the argument they make use of. First, therefore, Christ shews what the liberty is, and wherein it stands, he speaks of. Secondly, he shews that their plea is not good, for their being Abraham's seed was not a plea sufficient for their freedom.

First, Christ shews what true freedom is, that he thus speaks of; it is

namely this, "abiding in the house for ever."

Secondly, he shews that to be Abraham's seed is not enough to make them free; for the answer of Christ is thus: "He that committeth sin (saith he) is the servant of sin: now, the servant abideth not in the house always, but the son abideth in the house for ever:" as much as to say, Suppose you are Abraham's seed, yet if you commit sin, for all this you are servants, you are in bondage to sin; and, as long as you are, you have no liberty. All freedom consists in this especially, that Christ speaks of, that to the free indeed there will be abiding in the house for ever. The apostle, Gal. iv. 22, 23, illustrates to us the nature of this freedom (that Christ speaks of) in this place, and, indeed, sets forth the substance of it: "Do you not hear the law? You that desire to be under the law, what saith it?" The law speaks thus (saith he): Abraham had two children, the one according to the promise, the other of the bond-woman. These are a mystery: Agar signifies Mount-Sinai, in Arabia, which genders unto bondage. Now, Agar was the mother of Ishmael, but the seed of the promise is from above. The conclusion is this, saith the apostle" Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the sin of the bond-woman shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman;" but he that is free, is in the inheritance for ever: the bond-woman, and her son, must not abide in the house for ever, they must be cast out. Christ alludes to this, of Abraham's casting out of Ishmael; as much as to say, There may be those of the seed of Abraham, as Ishmael was, yet be cast out, being not the seed of the promise; they may be the seed of Abraham, but being the servants of sin, there is no abiding for them.

Now our Saviour having repelled and answered their arguments, he comes, in the words of my text, to shew the rise and fountain from whence this freedom he speaks of, springs, or takes its first beginning; "If the Son therefore make you free then are you free indeed."

The words I have read to you, are an hypothetical proposition, or a conclusion stated upon a supposition, and contain in them these particulars. First, the grace itself held out, and that is freedom. "If the Son make you free." Secondly, The original, or the cause of it; that is, the Son's making them so, "If the Son make you free. Thirdly, the quality of it, what kind of freedom it is; it is not a shadowy, or empty, useless freedom, but a substantial one, "Then

are you free indeed."

This hypothetical proposition reduced into a categorical conclusion, is no more but this, "They that the Son makes free, are free indeed."

Only there is one thing observable from the argument of Christ in this place, that will add a word to this proposition. These Jews, that did dispute with Christ, they pretended that there was no way to full freedom, but by being born of Abraham; so their being the seed of Abraham, gives them a complete freedom: now Christ takes them upon advantage; he will suppose with them in their sense, that if freedom were to be had by any outward privilege, it should be, by being Abraham's seed; if, therefore, Abraham's freedom be no freedom, as indeed it is not, then there can be none, but by one that is above Abraham. Now, saith Christ, the Son shall make you free: as much as to say, Abraham, the freest person in the world, cannot make you free, much less can any other but the Son. So then, the proposition is this, That they alone are indeed free, who have their freedom, from the Son of God; I say, they alone are free indeed, who are made free only by Christ; none in the world, nothing in the world can make free, but the Son of God.

Now, that we may suck, and be satisfied, at the breasts of consolation (for there is the sincere milk of the word in it), let us take briefly into our consideration these few particulars.

First, What the freedom is, whereof Christ speaks in this place.

Secondly, How Christ makes free.

And if time shall serve, Thirdly, Who they are, that are thus made free by Christ.

I will begin with the first, What this freedom is, whereof Christ speaks in this place. For clearing whereof, note, first, That freedom and liberty are terms of one and the same signification. It is all one to say, The Son makes free, or the Son gives liberty. Both the Greek word *enevipoι*, and the Latin word *liberi*, are promiscuously translated, either free, or men at liberty. It is true, I confess, this word *liberty*, hath gotten an ill name in the world, partly through the abuse of liberty, and partly through the malignity of some spirits, that strike even at the heart of Christ, through the sides of those that are Christ's; laying reproachful, ignominious, and shameful names,

upon them of libertinism. Now, because liberty and freedom are thus brought into reproach and disgrace, the true freedom, which Christ hath purchased and given, requires some clearing, least it perish and be lost in the rubbish of corrupt liberty; and so the people of God be jeered out of that which is their greatest portion.

I am ashamed to speak it, I would there were not occasion, that which is the very life and the sole comfort of the members of Christ Jesus, becomes such a reproach, through the malignity of the enemies of the gospel of Christ, that the very believers themselves are almost ashamed to go under the name of that that is their greatest glory. To be called a libertine, is the most glorious title under heaven; take it for one that is truly free by Christ, To be made free by Christ, in proper construction, is no other but this, to be made a libertine by Christ; I do not say, to be made a libertine in the corrupt sense of it, but to be one in the true and proper sense of it. It is true, indeed, Christ doth not give liberty unto licentiousness of life and conversation; of which we shall speak more by and by; but a real and true liberty Christ hath purchased, and given to all his members.

That we may the better understand therefore what this freedom is, that Christ hath purchased, and bestows upon believers; and, thereby, save it from the reproach of corrupt and licentious liberty: understand, beloved, that there is a threefold liberty. First, Moral or civil. Secondly, Sensual and corrupt. Thirdly, Spiritual and divine.

First, Moral and civil liberty is that which these Jews speak of, (misinterpreting the sense of Christ) such as you used to have in your cities; when a man hath served out his time, he is a freeman, he hath the freedom of the city, he hath liberty to trade in it: so Paul understood liberty, when he spake with the centurion; the centurion said he bought it with a great deal of money; but saith Paul, I was so born; I was born a Roman. But of this liberty Christ speaks not here.

Secondly, There is a corrupt liberty; that the apostle speaks of in Gal. v, 13. He tells us thus, "That we are called unto liberty;" but, saith he, "Use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh." A licentious liberty is nothing else but this, namely, when men turn the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the gospel of Christ, continue in sin, that grace might abound. Unto which the apostle affixes an abhorrence; God forbid, saith he, any man should make use of such

a liberty as this. I am confident of it, and affirm boldly, there is not one man made free by Christ, that makes it his rule, namely, to be bold to commit sin with greediness, because of the redemption that is in the blood of Christ: but that Christ who hath redeemed from sin and wrath, hath also redeemed from a vain conversation; and there shall not be a making use of the grace of God, as emboldening, and encouraging, to break out into licentiousness. All that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, have also the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously; the seed of God abides in them, that they cannot sin, as in the 1 John iii. 9, that is, they cannot sin after this fashion*.

* This paragraph, as well as a multitude of others, shew that the Doctor was no friend to licentiousness, and what a madness it is to charge so worthy a person with holding licentious principles.

Thirdly, There is a spiritual liberty; for of corrupt licentiousness Christ speaks not in the text neither; but of a spiritual freedom: and that it may be clear, he speaks of a spiritual freedom here, you may plainly perceive by the words going before; for whereas these Pharisees affirmed they were not in bondage; Christ proves they were, thus; "They were the servants of sin, (saith he), and he that is the servant of sin, abides not in the house for ever;" as much as to say, the bondage here, was such, as consisted in being under sin; so then, Christ here means a bondage and slavery under sin; the freedom, therefore, opposite to this, must needs be a spiritual freedom.

Now it will be worth our while to enquire, first, into the nature; and, secondly, into the quality of this spiritual freedom, that Christ brings with him to his own people.

First, For the nature of this freedom. The philosophers have a rule, that is of very good use, for clearing of divine truths; "Contraries illustrate each other." Freedom will be most clearly, or at least more clearly apparent unto us, by considering the contrary to freedom. The contrary to freedom is bondage; if we know what the bondage is that Christ speaks of, we shall better know what the freedom is.

We will awhile consider what bondage Christ speaks of here, to which he opposeth freedom, as I said before.

The bondage he speaks of, is a bondage under sin. Let us briefly consider what this is. This stands in these two things.

First, An obligation unto, and under the curse of the law, by reason of its transgression.

And, secondly, In the privation of all comfort and contentment, by reason of the same transgression.

First, I say, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the law, by reason of transgressing it, that is the first part of bondage under sin. A person is then properly and truly under bondage, when by reason of his transgression, he can make no escape from under the curse of the law, but must lie down to it, and be under the torment of it, as a bond-slave, even as a slave in the Turks gallies; though this man in his slavery, works ever so hard; (for of that he shall not want, work enough he shall have) yet, if, at any time he shall chance to slip or fall, whether it be through omission, or through mere infirmity and weakness, and want of strength; all his hard labour is nothing at all considered; but, when he fails in that insupportable bondage and task, he hath his stripes and blows.

This, I say, is the true state of bondage, when there is cruelty and rigour, without any regard to the impossibility to go under the task; the load and blows are laid on with weight; no crying, no promises, no excuses, no pleas, though ever so reasonable, can be heard; but, as there is a fault committed, there must be stripes inflicted. So it is with a person in spiritual bondage; a man is then under the curse of the law, by reason of his transgression, when doing what he can, (suppose as it should be) yet, if he fail but in one thing, that which he doth, is not regarded nor considered; neither is his ability to do no more, taken notice of; but, still as he slips, so the law lays on stripes.

There are two things, mainly to be considered, that do mightily embitter the condition of a bondman, who is under the curse of the law, because of his transgression.

The first is this, The threatenings and menacings of the curse, incessantly following one upon the neck of another, with loud outcries of bitterness against this soul transgressing. It is with a person in bondage to sin, under the curse of the law for it, as it was with Job in respect of the afflictions that were upon him: one comes and brings him word his oxen were taken away; he had no sooner done

but another comes and tells him his sheep were lost; and, no sooner had he delivered his message, but another comes and tells him his camels were stolen; and no sooner had he done, but one comes and tells him his sons and daughters were slain; so one after another the messengers came thick upon him. It is just so with persons in bondage under the law; it comes and threatens this curse; then it comes and threatens a second; and, no sooner is that ended, but it comes and threatens a third, crying out continually, Cursed, cursed, cursed, cursed. If the ears of the people were open to hear as much as the law speaks, they would hear nothing else but a peal of curses belonging to him that is under it. As for instance, a man under the bondage of the law for sin, can hear nothing but this, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Beloved, there is no man, but in some respect or other, every act that he doth, hath some infirmity and failing in it; and, in that regard, the law speaks, "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the law to do them." Thou canst no sooner pass from this act to another, but as soon as thou dost perform that second act, for the failings in it, the law cries, Cursed again; "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." As look into Rom. ii. there is a continued pealing out the law to those that are in bondage under it; "Tribulation and anguish, and wrath, to every soul that doth evil;" saving, that in Rom. iii. 19, the apostle tells us, this cursedness, this tribulation, and anguish, is pronounced by the law only upon them that are under it; so then, it is questionless, that to them that are under it, tribulation, and anguish, and wrath, and vengeance, do belong.

Now it is a kind of death, a very torment to be under such continual menaces; to hear nothing but execrations; to hear nothing but curses and bitterness, nothing but indignation and wrath; Oh! what a hell is it upon earth, for a soul to receive this sentence! What a bitterness is it for a malefactor, that stands, at the tribunal, to beat a judge, it may be, making a speech of two hours long to him, only reciting the extremity of the torment he shall endure, for the crimes he hath committed! Every repetition or addition of torment, denounced and sentenced, is a kind of fiery dart, striking fresh and fresh, to the wounding of the heart. Whoever they are that are under the curse of the law, by reason of sin, there is no voice speaks, or can be heard,

by them, for the loudness of that voice, Cursed, cursed, cursed, every moment, every hour; nothing in the world but cursed.

Beloved, let me tell you, this concerns not only persons that live in all manner of licentiousness, as drunkenness, whoredom, the profanation of the sabbath in the grossest measure; but, that I may speak plainly, this extends in a parallel line with them, to the exactest, strictest, precisest person in their conversation, though the world is not able to say (as men use to say) to them, black is thine eye; nay, though thou seem to be spiritual in all thy performances; nay, and largely too, yet if thou be under the law, in thy transgression, thou shalt hear from it, as many curses pronounced against thee, as all the profane wretches under heaven; the greatness of thy honesty and uprightness, whether in religion, or in matters of commerce and dealings with men, thy honest conversation, I say, hath the loud peals of curses sounding in thy ears. Suppose thou art a man diligently attending the gates of the house of God, given much to prayer, fasting, mourning, and weeping; yea, to great liberality, givest all thy goods to the poor, &c. Yet, I say, for all this thou mayest be under the curse of the law; that will pick a quarrel in the best of these performances: it will say, thus and thus, in this and that thou hast "not continued in all things that are written in the book of the law to do then;" concerning this, thou art under the curse of it as well as another.

Secondly, There are not only menacing and threatenings as fearful knell in thine ears from the law, while thou art in bondage under it; but also there is no more with it than a word and a blow. The Lord doth not deal with men in this case, as he deals with his own people, holding his rod before them to give them warning for an escape; but presently upon the transgression, the threatening is put in execution speedily without mercy, laying on the back of the transgressor, terrifying and racking the soul! Oh, the soul that is awakened, that hears the menaces, and feels the scourges of the law! Oh, what torments and anguish, what tribulation and bitterness must continually affright it! This, I say, is the commission of the law, to spare neither high nor low, rich or poor—nay, I will go further, holy or unholy, in respect of the practice of holiness, can exempt himself from the curse of it. It is true, as the apostle saith, the law speaks life: "Do this and live;" but poor comfort is it, because it first

requires such doings as are impossible to be attained; just as if a man should be condemned to die at a bar, with this promise: Take all England, and remove it, upon thy shoulders, into the West Indies, and then thou shalt be saved from this death*."

* Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 14, represents this passage as a decrying of the law; but what decrying of the law is this, to observe the true nature and language of it, requiring that which it is impossible for fallen man to do: he himself instances in the gospel, by way of reply, bidding a man believe a thing impossible to man's power, he observes; and is not this as much a decrying of the gospel? Indeed, there is this difference, the gospel not only encourages to believe, but it is often accompanied with the power of God, enabling men to believe, whereas the law is never attended with such power as to enable men to fulfil it; but this, he says, is extraneous to the matter in hand; but wherein it is so, is not said. See Lancaster's *Vindication of the Gospel*, &c., p. 215.

The judge had as good say nothing, for the thing is impossible to be done. The law, indeed, says, "Do this and live;" but where is the man that can do it, by continuing in all things without failing in one tittle, thereof? He that continueth in the whole law, and fails but in one point, is guilty of all; therefore, till you come to that perfection of fulfilling it, that you fail not in one tittle, never dream of the life that it holdeth out to you. If you have failed in one point, all you have done is ravelled out unto the end again; all your labour is lost; you are as much under (Rom. iii. 19.) the curse as if you had done nothing at all.

Yet further, beloved, the bondage under the law not only stands in the cursings of it, and in the presence of all evil thereby, but also in the privation of all comfort, that men might have under this torment: I say, a privation of all comfort; for there is not a word, not a tittle of comfort for the refreshment of a person under the law, not a tittle of comfort in all the law, from first to last. It is true, there was comfort intermingled in the promulgation of it, but the comfort is not from that properly so considered. As it contains in it a curse to the disobedient, there no comfort to any man that is under it, in respect of the curse it: I say, the law is to such persons (as Micaiah was

Ahab) to never speaking a word of good to them. But this is not all, for though the law be never so rigid of itself, if it would allow and suffer others to speak a word of comfort, there were some good thing in it; but it keeps under, and shuts up, that there cannot be a word of comfort heard from any other, Gal. iii. 23. There you shall find that the law is not only a terror of itself to those that are under it, but it is a most rigid, severe keeper, that there cannot come in the least glimmerings of light, and comfort elsewhere; for (saith the apostle there, of persons being under the law) they are shut up unto, or until the faith; for he calls the law a school-master until Christ; so that Christ himself hath not a word of comfort for them while they are under the law:

* Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 14, cavils at this passage. He observes, that by the law, in Gal. iii. 23, is meant the scripture in general; which, if so, is true of the law in particular; though not the whole scripture, but the law part of it must certainly be intended, since part of the scripture, at least, is written for comfort: he urges, that the apostle is speaking of the form of Moses's regimen, and of the fathers having no comfort by that means. Be it so: the same holds good of all other persons that are under the same spirit of bondage to the law; he suggests that the Doctor in representing the law as such a rigid keeper, that it will let none speak comfort to a man, excludes a mediator; it is certain that it does not direct to any, and whilst the soul is under the power of it, it will not suffer it to receive any comfort from Christ the mediator, or from his gospel, until this breaks in through the power of divine grace upon him, and delivers him from the bondage of the law. See Lancaster, *ut supra*, p. 216, &c.

when Christ speaks any thing, presently saith the law, this is not to you; this is for others that are exempted from my government, from my dominion; there is nothing of all this for you, you have nothing to do with it. I say, this is the condition of men that are kept under this bitterness of the law, that as they transgress, the curse of it is their prison: persons kept in this estate, how do they put off the comforts of Christ from them? There is none of them belongs to me, saith such a soul; I have sinned, and all the judgments of Christ are

pronounced against me, I must die. So long as you continue in this estate, the curses of the law are as frequently pronounced against you, as there are transgressions in you. There will not be one comfort of Jesus Christ to give refreshment to your spirit; but so long as you still remain in this estate, that you will conclude you are under the curse, because of your transgressions, you will forsake all the mercies of the gospel. This is, then, to be in bondage under the law; namely, for a man so to have it tyrannize and domineer over him, as to make him believe that as often as he transgresses, he must expect the sentence of the curse of it to be fulfilled upon him.

Thirdly, They that are in bondage under the law because of sin, as, they are subject to this misery, in respect of the privation of comfort; so the law, it is true, asks work enough, more than any man under heaven can now perform; but will provide nothing in the world, wherewith to bare things done. It requires the full tale of brick, but it gives no straw; it puts into no way where help may be had; it suffers no help to come in. Let me tell you, you that are under the curse of the law, that is, have still the law telling you that as you do fail, so you must have the curse; you shall find that when you do the will of God, it will exact the whole—the utmost tale of brick of you, and will give no help at all, though never so weak, and unable. Get it as you can, do what you will, when the day is done, the law requires that there be not a brick short. If you fail the least that can be in it, it is no matter, able or not able, you must have the lash, as well as those that have the greatest abilities in the world. It is a hard condition: I have opened it the more largely, that you may the better see the glory and happiness of that freedom Christ hath purchased for his people.

I will in a word give you a touch, who the persons are that are in this bondage; and then I will come to set forth the freedom itself; and, I hope it will not be tedious to hear of the freedom, when you have heard of the extreme bitterness of this bondage.

Who are under this bondage?

I answer, as I said before, Whoever you are, that will apply still to yourselves, the sentence and curse of the law, because of transgression; you that be still arguing and pleading, if I transgress, it is but justice, and I must expect to feel the smart of the rod. I say,

you that will still maintain and establish the curse, as a necessary attendant upon transgression and disobedience, and take this to be your condition and your portion, you are the men that are under the law—that are under the curse of it. I know, although you may think to wind yourselves out of the extremity of the curse, or from the rod of the law, by your strictness and exactness, and grow up to perfection in your obedience; yet all your perfection of obedience shall not be able to except you from the lash, till you have attained to such, that hath not one jot or tittle of failing or deviation at all; for if you fail in one tittle, you are gone for ever; for the law, as it attends great faults, so it attends little failings too; and, if you give it power over you, when you commit great sins, it will take power to itself, to whip, to curse you for small sins too.

I will come to discover what the freedom is, from the bondage Christ speaks of here; I say, this freedom is from all this bondage under sin and the law. First, Christ exempts men and discharges them, and acquits them from all the menaces, and threatenings, and all the bitter language that the law pronounces against the transgressors of it. Mark well what I say, Every person made free by Christ, is freed and exempted, that the law cannot, must not pronounce one curse against him: there is not one of all the curses in it, that belongs to such a man that is made free by Christ. This seems strange, that the law should not dare to pronounce the curse, where sin is committed; but not so strange as true; the freemen of Christ, when they transgress the law, as in all things they sin, yet when they sin, there is no curse, no menaces, no threatenings of the law to be executed upon them: should I come to instance, peradventure I should give offence to some; I would not willingly give offence to any; but the truth, as it is in Jesus, must not be concealed for fear of the anger of those that are enemies unto Christ: let me therefore tell you, suppose a member of Christ, a free-man of his should happen to fall, not only by a failing or a slip; but also by a gross failing, a heavy failing; nay, a scandalous falling into sin*;

* Through ignorance, weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan's temptations.

Christ making a person free, disannuls, frustrates, and makes void every curse (Gal. iii. 13.) and sentence that is in the law, that is against such a transgressor; that this member of Christ is no more

under the curse when he hath transgressed*,

* Sin often separates between God and his own people, with respect to communion, but never with respect to union to him or interest in him; for he knew what they would be when he set his love upon them; his love broke through all the corruptions of nature and sins of life in their conversion; and appears to continue the same from the strong expressions of his grace to them, notwithstanding all their backslidings. Now this does not suppose that God loves sin, nor does it give any encouragement to it; for though it cannot separate from interest in God, yet it often does from the enjoyment of him.

than he was before he transgressed. Thus I say, Christ has conveyed him beyond the reach of the curse; it concerns him no more than if he had not transgressed. For the illustration of this I beseech you to consider one thing, it is familiar to you, and the case is the same with Christ's free-men; suppose there are two men, equally guilty of felony and murder, both of them come to their arraignment; one of them hath his discharge or pardon from the king, having received satisfaction in his behalf; the other hath received no discharge at all. The judge goes on to pronounce the sentence according to the law; thou shalt go from hence to the place from whence thou camest, and from thence to the place of execution there to be hanged: now mark, these are two men equal in transgression; and therefore in themselves equally deserving the same sentence of execution; when the judge pronounces the justice of the law upon the one transgressor, he hath not his discharge, he lies under the sentence; but the other hath his discharge, (John viii. 36. Rom. viii, 1, and x. 4.) and therefore the judge speaks not a word of this sentence to him; I say again, the judge dares not speak a word of this sort to him; and when the man that is pardoned hears the sentence, he may hear it as the doom of his fellow; but he hears nothing of it concerning himself; so it is with the free-man of Christ, he may fall into the same sin that a reprobate falls into, (as Noah was once drunk, David did once commit adultery and murder) but as this man is the free-man of Christ, the curse cannot attack him: though the law say to the reprobate, that hath not freedom by Christ, thou shalt certainly be damned for this; yet the law cannot say one word of this

to him that is a free-man, though he commit the same fault, and be guilty of the same punishment; and the ground of all this is, that Christ hath made him free (Rom. viii. 2.) from it. Therefore, let me tell you in a word; if you be free-men of Christ, you may esteem all the curses of the law, as no more concerning you, than the laws of England concern Spain, or the laws of Turkey an Englishman, with whom they have nothing to do*.

* This passage is most grossly misrepresented by Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 13 who quotes it thus, "A man under grace hath no more to do with the law than an Englishman hath with the laws of Spain or Turkey; whereas the Doctor's words and sense are, that Christ's free-men should esteem the curses of the law, (not the law itself) as no more concerning them, than the laws of England concern Spain, or those of Turkey an Englishman; and to prevent any mistake, lest it should be thought that they have nothing to do with the law in any sense, being freed from the curses of it, he adds the words that follow, which most clearly shew, that he meant not an abolition of the law in all respects, but in respect of the curse of it, and that to Christ's free-men only.

I do not say the law is absolutely abolished, but it is abolished in respect of the curse of it, to every person that is a free-man of Christ; so though such a man sin, the law hath no more to say to him than if he had not sinned. Beloved, Christ is a sanctuary, he is a privileged place to every one of his free-men; the law is not able to serve or rather it is disabled from serving a writ *ad capiendum* upon the person that is walking in Christ, and keeps himself within those bounds; "He that continues in my word is my disciple, and the truth shall make him free. If you abide in Christ, and keep in Christ, no serjeant of the law dares come in to serve a writ; no accusation of the law can come in against you. Look what the apostle triumphing saith, Rom. viii. 33, 34," Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again." Mark well I pray you, Paul doth not say, that the elect never transgress; he confesses that there is transgression: but that which he triumphs in is, that though they transgress, there is nothing to be laid to their charge; no curse can

come against them, nor be executed upon them; there is no clapping them in gaol for their transgression.

Secondly, The free-man of Christ, as he is exempted from the curse and rod of the law, that is become a muzzle-chapt dog, he may pass and repass without the least snap—without the lest bite of it; yea, though he fall, (Micah ii, 8.) yet it cannot come at him to hurt him. So, in the second place, the free-man of Christ is let loose to enjoy the free Spirit, as David calls it, in Psalm li., or the comforting Spirit, as Christ calls it, in John xiv. 26. I say, this freedom consists in this, to have free society, and free discourse, with the free Spirit of God, so that the free-man of Christ may hear all the gracious language provided in the rich thoughts of God for him; he may hear, and that with application to himself, that his iniquities are blotted out as a cloud; that God will remember his sins no more; that they are cast into the bottom of the sea; they are laid all upon Christ; that the Lamb of God took them all away; that the blood of Christ cleanseth him from all sins. It is a marvelous freedom indeed, to have this participation of communion with this free Spirit of Christ, to hear such comfortable language to raise up a drooping spirit, to satisfy a languishing soul.

Thirdly, The free-man of Christ hath this freedom, that Christ doth all his work for him, as well as in him. He that is in bondage under the law, as I told you before, must do every thing himself, and that he doth, he must do perfectly; that is an insupportable thing, and heavy bondage, for a man to have more laid upon him than his strength is able to bear. The free-man of Christ, considering that he is weak, poor, and unable to work, Christ doth all his work for him. In Isa. xxvi. 12, the Holy Ghost tells us, he hath done all our works in us; and in the margin the words are rendered, he hath done all our works for us. But, look in Rom. v. 19, you will plainly see this freedom of the freemen of Christ, that they stand righteous in the sight of God, by that which he hath done for them. Christ hath so wrought for them, that they are as righteous, as if they had done all in their own persons: "As by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many are made righteous." Look here, and you shall see that Christ doth all the work for his freemen, that they should do for themselves; as if a man were commanded to bring in a thousand bricks by such a day, or else to

have the strapado; another man brings in all his bricks for him, while he doth not one for himself. What the other man doth for him is accepted as a full tale, even for this man, though he doth nothing himself. Even so it is with the free-men of Christ, he doth all for them that God requires of them to be done; and the righteousness of Christ stands in that manner theirs, as if they had done it themselves: "For by the obedience of one many are made righteous," not by obedience in their own person, but by the obedience of one man, Christ; even by the obedience of him alone, we stand thus righteous before God.

But some will say, By this it seems we take away all endeavours and employment from believers, the free-men of Christ. Doth Christ do every thing for them? Do they stand righteous before God, in respect of what he hath done for them? Then they may sit still: they may do what they list.

I answer, Will you deny this, that we are righteous with and that we are righteous with God by the righteousness of Christ? Or is it by our own righteousness? Then mark what the apostle saith, Rom. x. 3, 4, "They (saith he, speaking of the Jews), going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Either you must disclaim Christ's righteousness, you must disclaim your own; for, if the gift of God "be of grace, then it is not of works, else work is no more work; and, if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace," Rom. xi. 6.

But you will say further to me (for, except a man be a mere Papist, I am sure he cannot deny but that the righteousness by which I stand righteous before God, is the righteousness Christ doth for me, and not that I do for myself), you will ask me, I say, Doth not this take off all manner of obedience and all manner of holiness?

I answer, and thus much I say, It takes them off from those ends which they aim at in their obedience: namely, The end which Christ's obedience served: as much as to say, Our standing righteousness, by what Christ hath done for us, concerns us in point of justification, consolation, and salvation. We have justification, our peace, our salvation, only by the righteousness Christ hath done

for us: but this doth not take away our obedience, nor our services, in respect of those ends for which such are now required of believers. We have yet several ends for duties and obedience, namely, That they may glorify God, and evidence our thankfulness, that they may be profitable to men that they may be ordinances wherein to meet with God, to make good what he hath promised. So far we are called out to set, vices, and walking uprightly, sincerely, exactly, and strictly, according to the good pleasure of God; and, in regard of such ends, there is a gracious freedom that the free-men of Christ have by him; that is, so far forth as services and obediences are expected at the free-man's hand, for the ends that I have named, there is Christ, by his Spirit, present with those that are freemen, to help them in all such kind of services, so that "they become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," to do the will of God. Mark what the apostle speaks: "I am able to do all things through Christ that strengthens me. Of myself (saith he) I am able to do nothing; but with Christ, and through him that strengthens me, I am able to do all things." He that is Christ's free-man hath always the strength of Christ present, answerable to that weight and burthen of employment God calls him forth unto. "My grace (saith Christ) shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness." As you are free-men of Christ, you may confidently rest upon it, that he "will never fail you, nor forsake you," when he calls you forth into employments. But you that are under the law, there is much required of you, and imposed upon you, but no help to be expected. You must do all by your own strength; the whole tale of brick shall be exacted of you, but no straw shall be given you. But you, that are free-men of Christ, he will help you: he will oil your wheels, fill your sails, and carry you upon eagles' wings, that you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint. So, then, the free-men of Christ, having him and his Spirit for their life and strength, may go infinitely beyond the exactest legalist in the world, in more cheerful obedience than they can perform. He that walks in his own strength can never steer his business so well and so quickly, as he that hath the arms, the strength, and the principles of the great God of heaven, and earth; as he that hath this great Supporter, this wise Director, this mighty Assister, to be continually by him. There is no burthen, you shall bear, but, by this freedom you have him to put his own shoulder to it to bear it up.

It is wonderful to consider, that Christ should groan under the burthen, laid upon him by his Father, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet Paul and Silas should sing for joy, when their bodies were covered with gore-blood by reason of stripes: how comes this to pass, was Paul stronger than Christ? If not, why was he so joyful, and Christ so sad? God withdrew himself from Christ, and therefore, he saith, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the strength of Christ was present with Paul, that this very imprisonment was a palace and recreation to him; Christ bare all the burthens for him. Oh! were you but the free-men of Christ, and did you but know it, every affliction would be but a flea-biting; for he would bear all your duties and burthens for you; he would stand under the greatest weight that can be laid upon you, and bear it off your backs; the greatest burthen should never make you stoop, because there a sufficient strength to bear it up. There may be a heavy burthen laid upon the back of a child, and yet it may with ease go under it; because there is a greater strength that bears it up, it doth not lie upon the child. So long as Christ bears up your weight, it shall, he easy to you. You know there is a ceremony use among us, for men to carry the corpse of their friends to the grave; for fashion's sake they go under the corpse; but there are bearers appointed that bear all the weight upon their shoulders: so Christ bears all for his free-men; and this is the freedom men have by him, that if they are to bear any burthens, he comes and bears all for them; and they go as easily under them, as if they had none upon them at all.

You shall find the free-men of Christ, that they have also the constant attendance of the free Spirit of Christ waiting upon them. When Christ hath made any man free, he sends his Spirit from heaven, first to acquaint the soul with all that he hath done for him; and not to bring good news and be gone again; but, after the good news is brought: he waits and attends upon this free-man in all his journeys and travels to those mansions that Christ hath prepared for him; that so in the way, if he should faint, he would refresh him with the water of life to fetch it again; and, in case it grows weak and fails, the Spirit attends to administer cordials, to revive, and to renew the strength of this man again that thus fails; and, in case it grow weary, the Spirit is sent to take it up into his arms, into his bosom; in case the way is tedious, the Spirit is sent to take off the

tediousness of the way with sweet discourse, telling him what things are laid up in fulness of pleasures and glory, telling him what welcome there will be at his coming home; when there are many byeways in his way, that there may be no going out of the way, he will direct him, and lead him by the hand, and never leave him, till he hath delivered him up into the hands of Christ, and carried him unto mansions in glory. (Psalm xlviii. 14. and lxxiii. 24.)

Lastly, In a word, to speak of that, Who these free-men of Christ are. No man knows them, but only those that Christ takes out of bondage. Time will not give me leave to be large here; would you have any means how you may come to be the free-men of Christ? know this, that there is no consideration in the business of Christ, for the making of men free, but only their bondage in which they are. The sum is this, beloved, in brief, Christ doth not look that you should come forth and meet him, to mediate, or intercede, or beg, or bring a price in your hands, that you may be his free-men; but he looks upon persons as they are bound up, as helpless, as unable to will or do any thing; and, for his own compassion's sake, he takes up these, when they little dream, or think they ever shall be set at liberty.

But, you will say, all shall not be freed that are in bondage: how shall I then know, that I am one of the number of Christ's free-men?

I answer, "He that believeth shall be saved:" if the Lord give but to thy spirit, now truly to believe, thou art the very man for whom Christ was sent to proclaim liberty; I say, if thou canst believe and roll thyself upon him, cleave to him, and say, "I will not let thee go;" this is security enough; Christ was sent to deliver thee: "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast him out." I beseech you, consider, (the Lord God, in the abundant riches of his grace, give closing spirits to some of you at this time,) You think there must be a great deal of pains, by your endeavours, and on your parts, to have this freedom; but Christ doth not look for your pains; he came to save those that could not tell which way to turn themselves. And if the Scripture be true, (as most certainly it is) if thou believest he is thine, if thou believe with all thy heart, thy sins are forgiven thee; (though the very believing itself doth not*

Intitle to it, interest in it, or invest with it.

involve you in this freedom) but, if you would know, whether you have any part in this freedom or not, believing in the Lord Christ is a sufficient manifestation. Do but catch hold: of him, to have, thy deliverance by him, he must forsake himself, and deny his truth, if he cast or throw thee off.

SERMON IX.

MEN'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS THEIR GRAND IDOL.

ROMANS x. 3.

FOR THEY BEING IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEMSELVES TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

PROVIDENT and well-wishing pilots, observing the rocks on which many ignorant and heedless passengers have split and sunk, and where they themselves have escaped but narrowly, use to set up sea-marks as cautions or warnings to such as shall come after, that by other men's harms they may learn to be wary. It is the apostle's very practice in this place; in the former part of this epistle; and especially in chap. ix. he mightily contends for the free grace of God unto peace, life, and salvation, without works: "The children being yet unborn, having done neither good nor evil, but that the purpose of God might stand according to election, not of works, but of grace; it was said, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated: he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens:" I say, this is the main doctrine that he preacheth, from the beginning of the epistle, to the closure of chap ix.

Then he comes upon the Jews with an argument to their reproach: "The Gentiles that followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness, when they themselves that did follow after righteousness could not attain it:" and he gives the reason why they that pressed so hard after it could not attain it; "Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law." Why, what hurt was there in that, will some say? The apostle answereth, that hereby "they stumbled at that stumbling-block, as it is written; I lay

in Sion a stumbling-stone, and a rock of offence:" This it seems was the rock of offence; they would have their righteousness set up to do them good, and this they sought as it were by the works of the law.

But some men might think that the apostle had a bitterness of spirit, or some malice against his own brethren, and that this was but the fruit of it; therefore in the beginning of this chapter, he clears himself from any such base ends in his ministry: for his part he wishes with all his heart, it may be well with them, My heart's desire, and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved nay, so far as he may speak well of them, and the most he can say, he will; and he will not conceal any thing: in verse 2, he confesses, nay he bears witness to it, that "they had a zeal of God;" but yet he must not dissemble, he must deal friendly, though ever so plainly; though they had a zeal of God, "Yet it was not according to knowledge."

And because he had taxed them with ignorance, here in the text; he discovers what this ignorance of theirs was; and what the fearful and desperate fruits of it were; that whereof they were ignorant, was "God's righteousness, being ignorant of the righteousness of God;" the fruit of it is twofold, both very bitter, the one immediately issuing from the other.

First, This ignorance of God's righteousness put them upon a fearful mistake: "They go about, (upon this,) to establish their own righteousness."

Secondly, And that mistake put them upon another as bad as that, if not worse; therefore they submitted not to the righteousness of God.

The proposition the words afford us, is briefly this, (for we will sum up the whole verse into one head) namely; "That ignorance of God's righteousness puts men upon these two dangerous mischiefs, an establishing of their own righteousness, and submitting themselves to the righteousness of God."

Men will establish their own righteousness; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, while they are ignorant of it. Beloved, they were not so easily misled, as we are apt to follow them, having gone before us; we are like sheep leaping without looking, if any leap before us; it hath been the rock of offence, a stumbling-stone from the beginning to this day, and will be to the end of the world; there will be an establishing of our own righteousness, without

submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an ignorance of this righteousness.

Now, that we may take warning, and so escape the danger that they have felt the smart of already, it will be requisite we take into consideration.

First, What this righteousness of theirs and ours is, that they did, and we are apt to go about to establish.

Secondly, What it is to go about to establish this our righteousness.

Thirdly, What this righteousness of God is that they did not submit unto.

Fourthly, What it is, not to submit unto this righteousness of God.

Fifthly, What this ignorance is, from whence both these fearful evils issue, the establishing of our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God.

And, Lastly, What the issue in the end will prove. of these, or as many of these as the time will permit in their order.

To begin with the first, What is that righteousness of theirs and ours, that the apostle complains of, that being established, is a rock of offence?

I am not ignorant, that the eyes of stone persons are only, or most, upon a righteousness of man's own devising and contriving; such a righteousness as never came into God's thoughts; a righteousness according to the precepts and traditions of men; such a righteousness as our Saviour, in Matt. xv. 9, taxeth the Pharisees withal, who "Taught for doctrines the traditions of men;" and by their own traditions, as much as in them lay, made void the commandments of God: this kind of righteousness in our time proceeds from the presumption of men, that dare put any thing of their own, without warrant and commission from God, into the worship and service of God; charging things upon men as duties of religion, that God binds not men unto: for my own part, I am dear of the mind, that this kind of righteousness is far from the righteousness of God, the apostle here speaks of; and that it is the highest presumption that a man can possibly take upon himself, to set himself so in the place of God, as not only, not to command from him, but also to command without

and against him: law-givers hold themselves then most disparaged and contemned, when any inferior will take upon him to make laws without them, or against them. It will lie heavy when it shall once come to an account, not only upon the actors, but also upon those that may be the redressers, if this kind of righteousness established by some be not brought down, and laid in the dust.

But, under favour, I conceive that the apostle aims at a more sublime righteousness, than the righteousness in the precepts of men; he speaks of such a righteousness, which some it may be are too forward to establish, who yet abhor to establish the other, we have now spoken of: the righteousness the apostle complains of being established, is not the righteousness of man's making, but of God's own making, a righteousness according to his own will; I mean a righteousness consisting in obedience to the things that God himself hath commanded unto men; a righteousness which is a walking in all the commandments of God, though it be in a way of blamelessness; this very righteousness, I say, is that, which being established, proves a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence to all that shall establish it.

This may seem harsh, beloved, at first, but I shall make it clear to you from the apostle's own interpretation of himself, who best knew his own mind: that this is the righteousness he here speaks of, mark but the words immediately following the text, chap. x. 4, "For, (saith he,) Christ; is the end of the law righteousness to every one that believeth;" to what purpose doth he bring this passage, that Christ is the end of the law; but that by these words he might confute their vanity, who think to establish their own righteousness in the fulfilling of the law? As if he should say, you think by your keeping the law, by your righteousness you perform, you can attain to the end of it, that so you may obtain the grace and goodness of the Lord; but it is in vain, it is not you that can reach the end of the law; neither doth God aim at it that you should reach it, but he hath constituted and ordained Christ to be the end of it. Therefore the righteousness of God must be the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness that God aims at is perfect, a righteousness that reaches to the very end of the law; your righteousness can never reach to the end of it; it is Christ's alone that doth it.

And yet again, in verse 5, the apostle clears more fully what be,

means by our righteousness, for there he begins to make the distinction between our righteousness, and the righteousness of God, explaining what they both are: Moses, saith he, describing the righteousness of the law, saith thus, (that which he calls our own righteousness, in verse 4, from Moses, he calls the righteousness of the law, in verse 5,) "He that doth those things shall even live in them:" and if you will look into Levit. xviii. 5, you shall there see what the righteousness of the law is, which the apostle speaks of in this place: and if you observe but the margin of your bible, you shall find this very text, in verse 5, is wisely referred to that of Leviticus, "You shall keep my statutes, and do my judgments; which if a man do, he shall even live in them." See, the apostle makes use of the very phrase, "he that doth them shall live through them, and in them." It is the righteousness of the law, saith he; it is the keeping of God's statutes, and doing of God's judgments, saith Moses. By this, you may see what righteousness it is, that the Lord by the apostle speaks of; a righteousness that consists in doing the statutes and judgments of the Lord.

And if you will but consider ha Luke xviii. 11, 12, the condition of the pharisee, Christ speaks of, who went up into the temple to pray as the publican did; in him you shall see, I say, and easily perceive, what the righteousness was, that they went about to establish; for there the pharisee justifies himself in respect of many particular branches of the law: "I thank thee, (saith he) I am not as other men are, an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer, nor as this publican: I fast twice in the week, I pay tithes of all that I possess. Mark it well, I pray, see what it is that he pleads for, as that which must prevail with God for good to him; it is his own righteousness; and what is that? It is a righteousness according to the law; it is a righteousness of piety, of justice; "I fast twice in the week, I am no extortioner, nor unjust person, nor adulterer," &c. Now hear Christ's answer concerning this pharisee; you shall see what he thinks of this righteousness he speaks of; "The publican went away rather justified than he;" and the reason is, because he did go in the strength of this righteousness of his, to speed with God; his expectation was from this: it was not a righteousness of his own devising and contriving; but a righteousness according to God's law.

If you look further into Philip. iii. you shall find, the apostle speaks

fully to the case in hand, instancing in himself, in Verse .5, 6, 7, where he gives an account of his estate, in which he was before the time of his conversion. First, he saith, he had a zeal for God, and that put him on so hot, that he persecuted the church of God, merely out of ignorance; for, saith he of himself, "I did it ignorantly:" and "concerning the righteousness of the law (saith he) I was blameless;" mark that passage well; as all this was before conversion; afterwards he tells us, this was in the time of his ignorance, wherein he made full account that this righteousness of his was his gain; but, saith he, "what was gain to me, I accounted less; yea, and I suffer the loss of all things, that I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is by the law." By all these passages, I say, put together, wherein the apostle so fully expounds himself, it plainly appears, that the righteousness of the law, the establishing whereof; he here taxeth, as a dangerous mistake, and a fruit of ignorance, is that, wherein men walk according to God's own law blamelessly.

I am not ignorant, beloved, how this assertion goeth under the foul blur of Antinomianism, that blameless walking according to the law, being established, is a fruit of ignorance, and a cause of men's not "submitting to the righteousness of God." And no marvel it goes for such now; for, in the apostle's time it was accounted so; nay, it was objected against the apostle himself as direct Antinomianism: and, therefore, he was enforced to vindicate himself thus, "Do we make void the law, (saith he) through faith? God forbid!" he takes away the objection they put to him, upon his establishing of God's righteousness, and his overthrowing our righteousness. It was objected, that hereby he went about to make void the law; and, therefore, it is no marvel it holds still as an objection, that the maintaining of this principle is the overthrowing of the law. But, beloved, I must say to you, as the apostle did in the same case, "God forbid! yea, we establish the law," that is to say; in its right place. It takes men off from performing duties to corrupt ends, and from the bad use they are apt to make of them; namely, idolizing their own righteousness. And, therefore, he doth not condemn the use of the law, and our righteousness, simply: that which he speaks against here is the establishing of our righteousness. Our own righteousness is good in its kind, and for its own proper uses; but then it proves a fruit of sin, ignorance, and a dangerous stumbling-block, and an idol, when we go about to establish it.

I come, therefore, to the second thing, which is to clear this truth more fully, namely, What it is to establish this righteousness; or what establishing the apostle drives at in this place?

For the clearing of which, the antithesis, or the opposition, that he sets, will give you a great deal of light to understand his meaning and purpose here, by "going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God." He speaks here, therefore, of such an establishing of our righteousness, according to the law, as to bring it into the room, and stead, or place of God's righteousness. It is such an establishing of it, as that for it we cannot, nor will not admit, that the righteousness of God should do its office. So far forth, then, as any righteousness of ours encroaches upon the privileges and prerogatives of the righteousness of God, so that that cannot do its own work, or at least must be circumscribed in doing it, by this, so far is there an establishing of our own righteousness, which is a fruit of ignorance, and is a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence.

It will be worth the while, therefore, to consider, When our righteousness is said truly to be established in the room and stead of the righteousness of God. This will be cleared by the consideration of the main scope and drift of men, in the performing of the righteousness which they establish. When men put that upon their own righteousness, which should have been put upon God's only; when men make that the sanctuary and refuge that God's righteousness only should be, then is it set up as a grand idol, and established in the room and place of God's righteousness. To clear the case to you, by some particular instances: it is a thing of great importance, as at all times, so now at this time of eminent danger, the sword being over our heads, and over the whole nation (the Lord having revealed to the spirits of men, by his truth, that in case of eminent danger, there should be a great deal of zeal to God); that the people of God should be put mightily on, to deal with God in this present extremity and necessity; but, I am afraid, many *have a zeal of God*, in this very case, but yet, not *according to knowledge*; for that too many (ignorantly and zealously, I confess, yet, I say, too many), in this zeal to God, for their own safety and security, too much establish their own righteousness: and, I fear, if there be a miscarriage after so many fasting-days, and so much praying and

seeking God, that the fruits will be the establishing of our own righteousness, in the room and place of the righteousness of God. As, for example, when sin abounds, whether personally or generally, what is the way to get off, or get out of such transgression? appeal to your own spirits, you that are spiritual; is not this your end, you propound? To fast, and pray, and mourn it out; this that which must bring you a discharge of your sins; this is that which must bring you tidings that God will be pacified towards you, that God will turn away his anger from you; if you do but fast spiritually, mourn bitterly, pray zealously with strength of spirit, this is that that shall overcome God.

I ask, or I beseech you rather ask your own spirits (I mean still, you that are spiritual), Do not your hearts run out continually this way? Do they, or do they not? What, then mean all the complaints of yours upon the defects of your fastings, your humiliation, self-denial, and the subduing of your corruptions? That this is that which pulls down the wrath of God upon us; is not this common among us, as long as men do not mend, there is no hope that God will? And, if every man would mend one, this is the way to redress the evil of the times? Beloved, let me deal plainly and freely with you; they that put deliverance from sin and wrath, upon the spiritual performances of that righteousness, which the law, commands them, they put that righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God; they make it as great an idol as can be; for they make it to be that which God's righteousness only is. I speak not against the doing of any righteousness according to the will of God revealed. Let that mouth be for ever stopped, that shall be opened to blame the law that is holy, just, and good; or shall be the means to discourse people from walking in the commandments of God blameless*.

* Is this Antinomianism? Or, can such a preacher be called an Antinomian?

All that I speak is this, That it will prove a rock of offence in the end, if it be not turned from; namely, That we should expect that our own righteousness should bring down a gracious answer from God to our spirits; that when we have done our work, in effect, that must prove our mediator and messenger from God; and, as that will speak, so will we have peace, or remain in bitterness of spirit. What can the righteousness of God himself do more than this, to have

power with God, to prevail over God for good to us?

Beloved, although some, peradventure, may magnify performances done in a spiritual way with attributes and titles even of God's own peculiar; I mean with attributes of omnipotency and invincibleness; certainly there is no omnipotency but God himself, and the righteousness that is God's own; the best righteousness that ever any man could act, or perform in all his life, is not able to divert the least effect of sins, or wrath, or procure or obtain the least smile of favour from God. You know, that "God is a God of purer eyes, and cannot behold iniquity;" you know, that iniquity is that which separates between God and a people; now what is the perfectest righteousness which the best man upon earth performs? Is it not full of unrighteousness and iniquity? "All our righteousnesses (saith the prophet Isaiah) are but as filthy rags;" and, saith the apostle, "I account all as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness." Is there dung and filth in the best of man's righteousness; and can this righteousness have power with God, and prevail over him?

Look upon Christ himself, when he did bear the sins of many, upon his own person; he himself was deserted and forsaken of God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is Christ forsaken, when the sins of men are upon him, and shall men's persons be accepted and received in respect of such an act of theirs that carries sinfulness in the face of it? Nay, that carries an universal leprosy in the nature of it? Suppose your righteousness were a fulfilling of the whole law of God, if you fail but in one point, that very failing in one point, makes you guilty of the breach of all the rest; and, when men stand guilty before God, shall they plead that which is full of guilt, to procure favour, mercy, or grace from him? No, no, the sacrifice of God, which is accepted of him, must be a male lamb, and" a lamb without blemish;" till, therefore, you can purge your righteousness, and separate all iniquity from it, know that all your righteousness in its own nature doth but separate you from God; so far is it from prevailing with him.

Surely, will some say, the righteousness that is performed according to the will of God, pleases him, and moves and melts him, and prevails with him to do this and that good to his people.

I answer, Too many people in the world too much stint the will of God, so much spoken of when they speak of a righteousness according to it, or a righteousness to do it; what is it? It is true indeed, righteousness done according to the will of God, infinitely prevails with God; but shew me the man that can perform it, a mere man without Christ? Shew me a man that ever did, or ever can do this, acting righteousness according to the will of God? "Of myself," saith Paul, "I can do nothing:" "without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing;" nay, the apostle goes further, "How to perform that which is good, I find not," Rom. vii. 18, whilst men conceive that the will of God consists only in the materials of righteousness; peradventure they may think theirs is according to it; but alas the materials of righteousness, are but the least part of the will of God wherewith he is pleased: now to do an act partly with the will of God, and partly against it, is this to do an act according to it? To do something that God calls for at your hands in some things, and to walk directly contrary to him in others; is this to do his will? Suppose for the matter, the righteousness you do, be according to the will of God, that you do the thing that he calls for of you; as for instance, you fast, and pray, and the like; do you do these things according to the will of God, because the outward act is done? the will of God extends to the manner of doing, to the disposition of the person that is to do, as well as to the matter: as in Isaiah i. were not "New moons, and sabbaths, and solemn assembles," God's own ordinances? And was not the performance of them materially according to the will of God? Yet, nevertheless, God loathed this service of righteousness; he was weary of it, he could not bear it; there was sinfulness mixed with it; "Your hands are full of blood," saith the Lord; therefore, though the things were materially according to his will, yet his soul abhorred them, being done amiss.

Suppose men go further than simply doing things according to the will of God materially; they do not only the things, but do them spiritually, with enlargedness of heart and affection; you fast, and you fast with bitterness of spirit, you eat bitter herbs in fasting; you mourn, and you mourn bitterly for your transgressions; you pray, and pray zealously; in the heat and fervour of your spirits: now if all this be not done in faith, it is abominable; "without faith, it is impossible to please God; he that comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him:" he that hath

performed a duty, and expects from that performance, an answer according to his mind, he doth not do it in faith; for "we must do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith the apostle; and "when we have done all, must say, we are unprofitable servants;" and it must be Christ alone that must prevail with the Father for us: all our righteousness will prevail nothing at all with God, nor move him a jot, except it be to pull down wrath: there is not one act of righteousness that a person doth but when that is finished, there is more transgression belonging to him, than before he had performed it: and there is no composition, there is no buying out of evil by good doings; the doing of good doth not make a recompence for what sin doth; we pay but our debts in doing good; so that as there is a new righteousness performed, there is still a new reckoning added to the former; by acting of righteousness, you make up a greater number of sins (Rom. xiv. 23.) than before; so that it is only Christ from whom we must have the expectation of success, in whatsoever thing we desire.

In a word, let a man's righteousness be never so exact; yet that is not according to the will of God, which hath not God's ends, which he proposeth in the doing of righteousness: you shall find the general rule of Christ and his apostles, to be this, that what we do, we must not only do it in the name of Christ, but also to the Lord, and for the Lord: "Being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, let us serve him in holiness and righteousness;" it is not, let us serve ourselves in holiness and righteousness, but let us serve him; "You are bought with a price, therefore," saith the apostle, "glorify God in your bodies and spirits, for they are God's;" he doth not say, being bought with a price, let us now seek our own good, as if we were still our own men; as if we had now liberty to trade for our own selves; you are "not your own," and therefore not your own, because you are "bought with a price;" therefore "glorify God in your bodies and spirits." It is most certainly true, that God having provided through Christ all things appertaining to life and godliness for his people; thereby calls them off from all self-ends, and bye-respects in his services, to have only respect to him in them; he hath done all that may be done for yourselves.

But some may say, peradventure, this is a way to overthrow all righteousness at once: what, all that ever a man doth, though he doth

ever so spiritually, though ever so exactly, to no purpose, and in vain? Doth a man get nothing by all the righteousness he performs? Then we had as good sit still, and do nothing at all, will some say.

I answer, this is carnal reasoning indeed; look but into the ground of this argument, and it will discover nothing but the selfishness of the person that makes it: I dare be bold to say, that that man will do no righteousness, but simply for his own sake; who, if he should know beforehand, that his righteousness will get him nothing, would therefore sit still, and do nothing; I dare be bold to say, he had as good sit still indeed, and do nothing: he serves himself, not God, and though he performs righteousness ever so exactly, if he serves himself, God will never reckon that he serves him: when self is eyed, we can never serve God; when our commodity and advantage be not in the thing, we will sit still.

But, beloved, though the righteousness we are to perform be superfluous and vain, in respect of any power it hath with God; to move him to do us good, yet it is not altogether superfluous; it is most true, that all the righteousness of man cannot prevail with God to do us good; there is but one mover of God, the man Christ Jesus, who is the only and sole mediator. If you will have your own righteousness to be your mediator with God, to speak to God for you, to prevail with God for you; what is this, but to put it in the room and place of Christ's? What is the mediation of Christ else, but for him to come between God and man, and be the day's-man to lay his hand upon both, and at once to reconcile them? and shall your righteousness be the day's-man, and lay hands upon God and man; then farewell Christ and his mediatorship; for this is the peculiar office of Christ, to be man's mediator, and advocate with the Father, to prevail with him for any good for us; so far, therefore, as any person looks after his own righteousness, to bring glad tidings from God to him, so far a man establisheth it in the room and place of the righteousness of God; which proceeds from the ignorance of that righteousness, and will in the bud prove a stumbling-block to men, and a rock of offence to them.

All this while I desire not to be mistaken: some, it may be, will desire to know then to what use this righteousness of ours serves, seeing it is not of power to prevail with God. "My goodness extends not unto thee," saith David; not to God, but it may to men; "my

righteousness extends to the saints of the earth, and to such as excel in virtue." Psalm vi. 3. Our righteousness is appointed for excellent uses, if we could be contented with those God hath ordained it unto.

First, It serves as a real way to manifest our thankfulness to God, for what we have already received of him: in Psalm ciii. David is excellent, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name:" Why, what is the matter; David? "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies:" mark it well, I pray, all that is within us must be praise, and nothing but praise; and the ground is this, God pardons our sins~ heals our infirmities, and supplies all our wants; in consideration of this, all that is within us should continually express his praise.

Again, secondly, There is this usefulness in it, namely, that we may serve our generation; and the apostle gives this charge, that, "men study to obtain good works," because, saith he, "these things are profitable unto men;" as we may therefore do good to men, so according to our ability, and talent received, we must employ ourselves to the utmost for that end and purpose. The heathens could say, "They were not made for themselves, but for others:" therefore there is this usefulness in our righteousness, that others may receive benefit by it: "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven;" that men may be drawn on to glorify God, we must shine before men in a godly conversation.

Thirdly, It is useful, as it is rite ordinance of God, wherein the Lord hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good those things which before he hath promised. And this is the very end and ground of our fasting, praying, and mourning in our exigencies, and extremities: not that these duties do at all prevail with God, or at all move him; for, it God that moves even these services, and all the spiritualness in us in them; and therefore he moves them in us, because when we are moved by his Spirit, and according to his will come forth to meet him where he appoints, there he will pour out himself in grace and love, according to his promise, not according to our performances. Thus, I say, this great objection may be answered easily, why we fast, and pray, and mourn in adversity, if they do us

no good? I say, though they, do us no good, yet we fast and pray, in that the Lord saith, come to me, meet me in this and that ordinance, and I wilt come with my hands full; then, and there, I will pour out that which mine own freeness hath engaged me to do for you: is it not injustice not to meet him then? We confess our sins to him, but what is the ground of forgiveness? not our confession of sins, not our fastings, prayers, mourning, and tears; but "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, for mine own name sake, and will remember thy sins no more."

I will draw towards the conclusion. In a word, whoever he be that is selfish in his own righteousness, and goes about to establish it in the room of God's, labouring to procure some good unto himself thereby, and makes that righteousness do that for him, that God's righteousness should do, so making an idol of it;

First, He plays the most dishonest part with God that can be. Do you profess yourselves to be the servants of God? If you be, what dishonesty is there in you, that you professing to serve him, do, notwithstanding, by secret and by stealth, serve yourselves? If an apprentice should hide himself all day long, to 'earn and gain money the himself, might not his master justly tax him for a dishonest fellow? Why doth the master keep him, and find him, but that all he doth, he should do for him, and not for himself? Are you at God's finding, or are you at your own? Miserable are you, that are at your own: are you at God's finding then, and not at your own? What is it you seek for, and would get by the righteousness you seek so eagerly after? The truth is, there is nothing to be gotten that you have not already; if you have Christ, all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Are you one of Christ's? A man need not work for that which is his own already; why then do you work for that which is yours already? Are you in Christ, or are you not? Do you work to get into Christ? Alas! how long might men work out of Christ, and work themselves into hell at last? What can a man get of God by all his righteousness and works, if he hath not Christ to get it for him? Therefore all things are yours, because you are Christ's, or else you shall have nothing at all God gives nothing of gift, and of his dear love, but as men are in Christ, and for his sake; therefore you do but labour in vain, if you labour for that which is yet to be produced.

But to do good to others; "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren:" let these be the ends of your services; work because good is already made sure to you, and not to make it sure: when a father settles an inheritance upon his son, he makes the deed so, that the son shall not work for the father's means; because the father hath passed over all that he hath to his son, he serves out of love, for what he hath already received, not for what is hoped for.

And as there is a dishonesty in self-seeking; so, secondly, there is a foul blur cast upon God. Beloved, if you should see a servant go about the streets complaining thus, Sir, help me to a little work, I must starve except I can work for myself: what would you think of this man's master? Surely, you will say, he is a hard master, that his servant must starve, except he seek for himself, and purvey for himself: you that say in your hearts, you are undone, you must perish, you are lost, except your prayers and humbling of yourselves can get some supply; is not this a working for yourselves? Is not this plain saying, there is no trusting to God, and that we must work for ourselves, or else we shall perish.

I should come to consider the other particulars in this text; but time not permitting, We will wind up all in one word of application.

We now stand before the Lord, and, among other mercies, we expect this great mercy, salvation; not only salvation in heaven, but salvation from the sword: it is not, it must not be your good doings that must procure it; or your repentance, that must bring it: you must not rest upon your performances to get it; do all that God calls for when you are in his way; in this respect be doing; but as for your help look up unto the hills from whence it cometh; your help stands in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth; and, therefore, in the expectation of help; all your business must be in this, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

SERMON X.

ZEAL OF GOD PROVES NOT A MAN A CHILD OF GOD.

ROMANS x. 2, 3, 4.

FOR I BEAR THEM RECORD THAT THEY HAVE A ZEAL OF GOD, BUT NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE: FOR THEY BEING IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEMSELVES TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD: FOR CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

THE apostle, in the former chapter, more plainly and fully lays down the absolute freeness of the grace of God alone to peace, life, and salvation, than any where else; clearly shewing, that merely and only for his own good pleasure-sake, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; especially in that instance of Jacob and Esau, he tells us plainly, that God hath no regard in the world unto good and evil, that might be done by either of them but, before ever they could do any such thing, it is expressly written of them, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

And the reason, why God takes nothing into his consideration, either good or evil done by the creature as a motive to his love, the apostle gives there, is this, "That the purpose of God might stand, according to election; not of works, but of grace;" that is, that all the world may see that the first thoughts of God, in his election, had no eye in the world unto any thing that that the creature might do, which should have any prevalency with him, to sway him this way, or that way; it was not the consideration of Esau, as one that would be resolute and peremptory in a way of sinfulness, that was a motive

with God to reject him; nor was it the consideration of any propensity in the spirit of Jacob to yield unto calling, or of any inclination in Jacob to glorify him being called; I say, none of these considerations entered into the thoughts of God, when he established his love, even in election itself, upon Jacob; his thoughts were merely upon his own good pleasure within himself: as if he should see a whole heap of creatures together, and, as it were, (if I may so speak) blindfold of any good the creature could have to move him; he picked out this and that, and the other, without respect of any difference between them.

Then he comes into the closure of chap. ix. to shew how desperately his own brethren, after the flesh, the Jews did reject this revealed will and pleasure of God, concerning good to men; they would have something considerable in the creature, as of prevalence to move God to do good to such, rather than such a one: this very conceit, the apostle calls a stumbling-block, at which they fell.

Now, lest he should seem to speak all this out of spite, or prejudice, or through the injuries they had done to him; therefore, that he might not thus be understood, at the beginning of this chapter he confesses, "That his heart's desire, and prayer, was that they might be saved:" he bore no ill-will in the world to them; nay, he saith, "That he would be contented to be even cut off for his brethren's sake." And, after he had acquitted himself from sinister respects, he begins to declare the truth as it is in Jesus; and first he comes to tax them, and shew where their error lay, and grants it lay not in any defect of zeal of, or after God; "For (saith he) I bear them record, they have a zeal of God:" if this would have served their turns, to be zealous for God himself, there was no defect in that; the apostle will testify for them, that they were exceeding cordial and not in respect of themselves, but in respect of God himself; they had not a zeal simply for their own base ends, but had an eye to God himself; it was a zeal of God, whether you consider it as wrought by God, or as tending unto him; either way, their zeal was a zeal of God, a zeal after God. I know, that there may be a zeal wrought by God, in respect of common mercy, or in respect of peculiar mercy; this was a zeal of the common mercy of God.

Thus much in effect, I have spoken heretofore upon this text: upon which I made several enquiries: as, first, What righteousness of their

own this was, which they went about to establish. Secondly, What is it to establish a man's own righteousness. Which two, I have handled in my former discourse upon this text. Notwithstanding, I shall, at this time, speak something more largely concerning the second, and so, if the time will permit, proceed unto the rest of my enquiry; but, by the way, I shall speak something concerning the zeal here mentioned by the apostle.

Therefore, before I quit these words, give me leave to tell you, it is possible a person may have a zeal of God, and yet be far from being a believer; let that be the first observation: I ground it thus; of the Jews of whom Paul speaks, he himself "bears record, they had a zeal of God;" but, in the next words he says, "they established their own righteousness, and did not submit to the righteousness of God." A zeal of God is not ground or evidence enough that a person is a believer, or that he hath received, or submitted himself to Christ. First, Beloved, because this may seem to be harsh, I beseech you to consider seriously, how undeniable and clear the position I have laid down, is founded in the text itself: I say, there may be a zeal of God in an unbeliever; so the apostle bears record of these Jews; there was "a zeal of God, yet not according to knowledge;" even When they had it, "they established their own righteousness: they did not submit to the righteousness of God." I will not dwell upon this point: all that I shall say on it, is only that I may undeceive many that are very subject to deceive themselves; and that I may take them off from a sandy foundation: and so, if it be possible, reduce them to a rock, who are apt to build upon the sand.

I know, beloved, it is cried up much in the hearts of many poor wretches; I say, cried up much, that if they have but a zeal of God in their hearts, it is enough to serve them for ever; they are believers, members of Christ; and it is injurious unto the people of God, as they think, to tell them, Those that have a zeal of God in their hearts, yet, for all that, may "not submit to the righteousness of God;" but stumble at the stumbling-stone, and fall for ever.

All the "difficulty, I know, lies in this, What it is for persons to have "a zeal of God? Or whether there be not "a zeal of God?" in those that are believers, which is palpably discerned, from that in those that do "not submit to the righteousness of God?" I grant, there is a difference; but as this zeal of God hath reference to our

righteousness, or unto an obedience to the law, you will hardly find a difference. A zeal of God to set up God in Christ, to give Christ the pre-eminence in all, that nothing is to be done with him, but only by Jesus Christ; to throw down every thing in the world, that offers to come in with Christ, to deal with the Father; I say, "a zeal of God," in this kind, is not common to any person, that "submits not to the righteousness of God:" but to be zealous, that is to say, to be cordial, hearty, real, and that with fervency, and earnestness of spirit, towards obedience to the commandments of God, and to have an eye, in such obedience, to God himself, to seek him in it; this, I say, is "a zeal of God," that is common unto such as do" not submit to the righteousness of God," as well as to those that do submit to it; therefore, as there is a community in this zeal, so this is not possibly able sufficiently to clear up to persons, that because they are thus zealous, therefore they are the children of God, and have the righteousness of Christ,

These Jews, the apostle here speaks of, (mark it well, beloved) were exceeding vehement, even in setting up, and promoting obedience to the commandments of God, I say, with an earnestness of spirit; as when they offered to stone Christ himself, (the Pharisees I mean) it was merely out of the extremity of their zeal, and fervency of spirit, because they conceived he was a great blasphemer, and breaker of God's will, for making himself equal with God: how could they contain themselves, so long as Christ would, as they thought, usurp and presume so far, as to take the incommunicable privileges and immunities of God himself? The apostle saith of himself, and of the rest of the Jews, "If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and, (saith he,) though I persecuted the church of God, yet I did it ignorantly." All this results to thus much, that the mere encroaching upon God, as they understood, was that which put them on so hot, eager, and violent a revenge of God's quarrel; so that, I say, the eye may be upon God, and, for his sake, men may be exceeding zealous, earnest, and fervent for the vindication of him, for the doing of his will revealed in the law; and yet, for all this, there may not be a submitting to the righteousness that is in God.

I apply it thus, There are many people in the world, to whom the mind of God, in the law, is made known; we must not commit

adultery, &c. simply because God commands this thing, they refrain from the evil; they go through all the commandments of God zealously; they look upon it as the will of God revealed to them, and do it for God's sake, thus imparting his own mind; they abstain and refrain from the evil they do, and perform the good, because God requires it of them; yet all this is no argument of a person's being a real member of Christ; for all this, he may not submit to the righteousness of Christ.

Now I will add something, according as I proposed, to which hath been heretofore said unto the second enquiry, namely, how, and wherein our righteousness is established instead of the righteousness of God. First, then, observe, that these pharisees "went about to establish their own righteousness," saith the apostle; this righteousness they went about to establish, what was it? a righteousness according to the law of God; "Christ is the end of the law to every one that believes:" as if he had said, you, in the zeal of your spirits, think to come to the end of the law yourselves, but mistake not, if you have in your eye the expectation of comfort and peace, and rest in your spirits, from the largeness of your spirits in the performance of those duties this is enough to make you miscarry, though it be for the Lord's sake you do it. Let me tell you, that the Lord hath so established Christ, for the rest and life of men, that if they could yield angelic obedience, be perfect throughout in obedience to the whole law of God, and not fail in one point of it; if, I say, from such perfection of obedience they would gather up their own comfort, or conclude their own salvation; these persons should be damned, as well as those that sin ever so much: for God hath established Christ, and only his righteousness, to be the salvation of man; I say, "only the righteousness of Christ; that if a man were ever so perfect, and in respect of that perfection, would leave the righteousness of Christ, and lean to the perfection of his own, for his peace, and salvation; that man would miscarry, and be damned.

Beloved, all I aim at is this, that you build not upon foundations that will fail you, when you come to the trial: there is (as you shall hear by and by, if time and strength permit) absolutely perfection enough in the righteousness of Christ alone, for your rest and security, that you shall not need to trust; to any thing you do for peace or life; this is that which God calls you to, to go forth from your own

righteousness, to rest solely and only upon the righteousness of Christ, if ever you mean to have comfort in this world, and in the world to come.

You will say peradventure, this is the way to destroy all righteousness and obedience whatsoever; what, a man never jot the better, though he be ever so zealous for God, although his eye and aim be after God in his zeal: to what purpose serves all this then, will you say?

I answer, The world is grown to a miserable pass, that obedience, zeal, and seeking after God, must be of no use at all, except a man himself be a gainer by his obedience; it is now, as it was in the time of the Psalmist, Psal. iv. every one will be ready to cry out; "Who will show us any good?" This is the common out-cry in the world; if any thing in the world be proposed to men to be done, they answer, but what shall I get by it? That is the next word presently: am I put upon such, and such an employment, saith one; but what shall I gain by it? As in those offices of employment that carry about with them a great deal of labour and expense of time, and bring no profit in to the person in the office; every man will be ready to shun such an office, nay ready to buy out such employment; this is the case of the world, in things appertaining unto God: what doth the law call me out unto such duties and employments, such zeal and fervency, to be hot in these services and duties, and to have mine eye upon God in the performance of them, and all this do me no good? I had as good sit still and do nothing. But there are some good common-wealth's-men indeed, who you know have in respect of others' prosperity, put themselves to trouble and charge, and be so far from getting, that they shall be losers by their office; and yet for the common-wealth's good, they will willingly put themselves on, when they are called out to such, employments: and I must tell you, except you mind chiefly, that all the duties you perform, are for other ends and purposes, than your own preferment, and to benefit yourself thereby; namely, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free-grace, and the serving your generation in which you live, and the study of good works, because they are profitable to men; I say, except you will fall upon the performance of duties, for the common good and benefit, without having any such conceits as what shall accrue to you thereby; you are not persons yet come to have that common

spirit, and dead to the old spirit, as becomes Christians.

I must tell you, and that freely, there is not any duty you perform, when you have attained the highest pitch, that hath any prevalency, and availableness to produce any, though the least good to themselves*;

* The Doctor's meaning is not, that no good is enjoyed in a way of duty; for, in the former discourse on this text, he not only observes, that our righteousness is useful, to manifest our thankfulness to God, and by it we serve our generation; but it is the ordinance of God, wherein he hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good the things he has before promised; and accordingly he pours out himself in grace and love, according to his promise: but the sense is, that there is no virtue and efficacy in any duty performed to procure any good things for us or to entitle us to it; nor should we do any with this view, or expect any on such an account; but should perform duty without mercenary or selfish views, purely from a spirit of ingenuity, from a principle of love and gratitude; knowing that all good things, for time and eternity, are already provided in Christ, and are or will be bestowed on us, through him, and for his sake; and not on account of any duty of ours, which ought not to be put in the room of Christ, and made an idol of; which is the Doctor's view, in these and other expressions of the like nature. See Chauncy's *Neonomianism Unmasked*, part 2, p. 256, 290, 291, &c. a book worthy to be read by both the friends and foes of Dr. Crisp; being a vindication of these discourses of his throughout, from the falsehood, misrepresentations, calumnies, and objections of D. W. in his *Gospel Truth Stated*, &c.

I say it again, there is nothing you can do, from whence you ought to expect any gain unto yourselves by doing: you ought not to seek to find in what you do, nor to think to bring Christ to yourselves by doing; "You are not your own," saith the apostle, "you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits:" Christ hath redeemed us, "that we should not henceforth live to ourselves, but to him that died for us."

The scripture is marvelous plentiful in this, that no believer for whom Christ died, should have the least thought in his heart of promoting or advancing himself, or any end of his own by doing what he doth: and though, as people may think, here is a marvelous discouragement to persons, to do what God calls them to do, when they shall have nothing for it; I answer, when there is a spirit of ingenuity (as you know there is even in the world) they shall be industrious to glorify God, and do good to men, as if they did it for themselves; they shall do as much for good already bestowed, as if they were to procure it by their own doing

Secondly, I answer, There can be no discouragement at all unto the performance of any thing God calls for at your hands, though you get nothing in the world by what you do; I say, there is no discouragement, because you cannot propose or intend to yourselves any possible gain by duty; but that, whatever it is, that is a spur and encouragement unto it, is already freely and graciously provided for you to your hand; that all your industry could not compass and bring in, either so certainly or so plentifully as the very grace of God, before the performance of any duty, hath provided and established that good for you.

When you fall upon humiliation, fasting, prayer, weeping, and self-denial, what do you look for? In the diversity of judgment, saith one, I get this by it, prevention of many great evils hanging over my head; another saith, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance of the pardon of sin, and of reconciliation with God; these things would I get by attending upon ordinances, by serving God day and night, in that way he calls me out unto: I tell you plainly, there is none of all these things that you do that conduce a jot towards the obtaining of any of these ends you propose to yourselves; all you do gets not a jot; nay, doth not concur in it.

You will say, then, we had as good sit still, as good never whit as never the better: he that works all day, and gets nothing more than he had in the morning, had as good sit still, and do nothing.

I answer, Let me tell you, the prevention of evil, if there be reality of evil in it, and the obtaining of good, if there be a reality of good, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, pardon of sin, infallibility of miscarriage, the light of the countenance of God; all

these, I say, which you aim at, When you are encouraged to duty, are provided abundantly for you, and established firmly upon you, by the mere grace of God in before ever you perform any thing whatsoever: to what purpose do men propose ends to themselves, which ends are accomplished before their proposition? Hath God settled all things pertaining to life and godliness in his Son Jesus Christ upon you for his own sake, and settled them everlastingly and unchangeably upon you; that heaven and earth shall pass away, before a tittle of the grant of God, made freely for his own sake, shall pass? I say, hath he settled all things, so that there can come nothing to make them more secure, than the grant of God himself hath made them? To what purpose then do we propose to ourselves, the gaining of that to ourselves by our labour and industry, that is already become our own before we labour a jot? There are some children in the world, I know, that are very vigilant and very observing of their parents; and their end and aim is, that by such compliance their fathers may settle a good inheritance upon them; but suppose a child hath manifested to it, that his father had already passed over all his goods and land to him; and hath made a firm deed of conveyance, and cannot call it back or in; he hath passed over so much, and so firmly, he is not able to add to that, that is passed over before-hand; will such a child propose to himself, in his obedience and observance, the obtaining of that good his father hath already passed? He knows that it is passed already, and cannot be by any thing he doth firmer and stronger; he serves not now to get his father's lands, but he serves to honour his father that so freely hath settled his land upon him. So I say of believers, that have the temper of Christ's true bred children indeed; they, in the gospel of Christ, find all things that appertain to life and godliness; they find them all so passed over by God's goodness and free-grace to them, that the lions shall want, and suffer hunger, before they shall lack any thing that is good: must they now labour to gain these things as if they were in agitation, and as if they were yet referred to their good or evil walking; that as they shall walk, so they shall speed? This is to argue, that God is yet to determine within himself, how to dispose of the good things that he will bestow upon his people, and that he gives good things according to their good or evil carriage; (Ezek. xxxvi. 32.) and so the goodness of God to his people must depend upon their goodness to him; and that as men's works will prevail

with God, so God will pour out his bounty unto them.

But, without respect to good or evil, as I said before, the Lord hath everlastingly established all that ever he meant to do; and no more will he do to the end of the world to any people he hath chosen in his Son. The Lord in Christ from everlasting hath set down peremptorily what he will (Eccl. iii. 14, 15; Lam. i. 17) do for you; and there are no intervening acts and carriages of yours that make any alteration in him at all to cross out what he hath written, and to put in what he had left out; he doth nothing to his people upon conditions in them, as if he referred himself still to those conditions, and suspended what he meant to do to them, till he perceived how they would carry themselves to him.

All that I aim at is this, to let people know that it is not a vain thing to yield due obedience to any thing that God requires; though the Lord intend not, that by our obedience, we shall gain something, which in case of our failing, we shall miscarry of: I say, the Lord hath firmly established upon his own people every thing that concerns their peace, comfort, and good, simply and merely for his sake, without respect or regard to any thing they perform; that they are to do, they are not to do it with any eye to their own advantage, that being already perfectly completed to their hands before they do any thing: but simply with an eye to glorify God, and serve their generation, and therein to serve the Lord, and set forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath done so abundantly for them. Oh! that men were but so far enlightened, to behold how graciously the Lord hath provided for them; that he doth not now leave himself in a kind of suspence (Job xxiii. 13; Mal. iii. 6.) to deal well or ill with them, as they should carry themselves well or ill to him.

I know, the contrary to this rises in the hearts of men that have not yet received the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ; having this conceit, as if all the carriages of God to men were according to their carriage to him; but here is no such thing, this is but the establishing of man's own righteousness to expect the dealings of God to him, as he himself deals with God, and that, therefore, he will be righteous, that he may be happy. Oh! I beseech you, enter seriously into your own thoughts, and consider, whether or no this be not to bring back again the covenant of works, even to believers; namely, that it shall fare well or ill with them, as they obey, or

disobey, the Lord God. The apostle, in this chapter, verse 5, doth expressly tell us what the covenant of works was: "Moses describes the righteousness of the law thus, He that doth these things shall even live in them;" I pray mark it well, this is the righteousness of the law, that he himself, in the next verse, opposes to the righteousness of God, that he calls the righteousness of faith: "Moses describes the righteousness of the law thus, He that doth these things shall even live in them: but the righteousness of faith speaks on this wise; Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ from above; or, who will descend into the deep? This, to bring Christ up again from the dead; but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thine heart, and in thy mouth, this is the word of faith that we preach." I say, the covenant of works stands upon these terms, So much doing, so much life; on the other side (Gal. iii. 10): "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them." Here is the other branch of the covenant of works, so far as I fail in doing, so far must I be under the curse. Now you can look for no better than wrath and vengeance front heaven, so long as you run on in these principles, and make them the foundation of your good; so far you make yourselves liable to the covenant of works; no more good, comfort, peace, or rest, but as you can do this, and that. What is this else, but, "Do this and live?"

I beseech you to enter into your own hearts concerning this particular. When you yield obedience to God, you come to church, go to prayer, and fall to fasting, weeping, mourning, self-denial, keeping the sabbath, and dealing righteously, honestly, and justly with men; what is it you aim at in all this? That God may do you good, that he may be gracious and loving to you, that he may speak peace to your spirits; then, it necessarily follows, that life is that in your eye that puts you upon that which you do, and so you do, that you may live; this is the righteousness of the law, that righteousness which is opposed to the righteousness of faith. Now, know, that there is no submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an establishing of the righteousness of the law of Moses; namely, to do righteousness that you may live; to refrain from evil, to the end you may not be cursed: he that proposeth cursing or life, cursing if he do not do, or life if he do the will of God; he that proposeth this, is "under the law, and not under grace."

Christ, as you hear in the next verse; "is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believes." What is that? He is the end of the curse of the law; he is the end of the life of the law; there is no curse to be pronounced on a believer, when he breaks the law; there is no life to be expected by the believer upon his obedience to it; Christ is the end of the life, and curse of the law; "He himself being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Secondly, "Our life is hid with God in Christ:" he is the life, no life but in the Son: "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son, hath not life," saith the apostle. All this argues plainly, that all that life that is to be expected, whether it be life itself, or the conducing of things that appertain unto the comforts of it; all this is to be expected from the Son of God, and not from any obedience to the law. If thou, at any time, read a curse to thyself, upon any transgression of the law, and darest receive it against thyself, in respect of that transgression, Christ is not the end of the law to time; namely, thy soul takes not Christ as the full curse of the law, taking it all away, that otherwise the law would pronounce and execute upon thy person.

Beloved, I need not apologize; you know what the apostle speaks, (2 Car. v. 19.) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation;" upon which (saith the apostle) "we are the ambassadors for Christ, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God." I think I need not make an apology; he that is a minister of the gospel ought to declare and proclaim this reconciliation to you, by God's own Son Jesus Christ, peace through him, peace and atonement through his blood alone. Either we are the ministers and messengers of Christ, or the ministers of Moses; we are either the ministers of the covenant of works, or the messengers of the covenant of grace: so far as we urge upon you, as you do, you shall live, and as you do evil, you shall be accursed; so far we are the ministers of the covenant of works. But, when we come and say, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" that is, if we say that Christ bare the curse, and that you need not fear it, though you fall into sin; you may be sure that God hath reconciled you so in his Son, that your falls (being believers) shall not break peace between God and you; this peace is everlasting; it is unchangeable; God is not a friend to-day with his people, and falls

out with them to-morrow; "whom he loves, he loves to the end;" now this is our business to draw people unto Christ.

And we may do some good to let you see what advantage there is in Christ for you; for thereby you may be induced not to establish your own righteousness against him, and his. We shall sin every day; in many things we sin all; but the business we are to do, is this, to let you know, that though there be sins committed, yet there is no peace broken; because the breach of peace is satisfied in Christ; there is a reparation of the damage before the sin itself be committed: Christ had in his eye, and so had the Father too, all the damages that should fall out to the end of the world, by his own people; and he did not pay a price for some that were present only, but he paid the damages of all that should come after, from the time of his suffering, to the end of the world; he paid the uttermost farthing for every one at once: though, it may be, one sin is committed to-day, another is committed to-morrow, and the other the third day; God hath reconciled himself to you in Christ, for this sin committed today, and that which will be to-morrow, and so for all the rest to the end of your lives, they are paid for already; this is that which will make up the peace of a believer; "The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing." That is worth observation, beloved, the joy of a person can never be full, the peace of a man can never be complete, as long as there is suspicion; there will be quarrelling again. What saith the soul? I sin now, and shall to-morrow; and when I sin, God will fall out with me, be angry with me, and turn away from me; I say, as long as there is such suspicion, there will never be fulness of peace and joy. Hence it is, that persons, till they came to receive the gospel of Christ, were, through fear of death and wrath, subject to bondage all their life long; but, when they come to have this peace that Christ hath purchased, he having made an atonement, and given rest, in that he hath paid all the old scores at once; then they may perceive, though there be this sin committed, yet, notwithstanding, God will not now fall out again with them; for he had an eye upon all these sins, when Christ suffered, and took full satisfaction of his Son for this very sin; now though I sin to-day, God took full satisfaction of his Son for the sins of this day; nay, more, he hath acknowledged satisfaction for them all; "He beheld the travail of his sou], and was satisfied," for that which is to come, as well as that which, is past; God, in Christ, hath given a full

discharge.

Look upon the account, you shall find that Christ paid and reckoned not only for sins past and present, but for sins committed to the end of days. Therefore, in Dan. ix. 24, you shall find this excellent prophecy, "Yet seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city:" here, by seventy weeks he prophesies of the distance between the time in which he spake, and the time wherein Christ should suffer; and what should he suffer for? "For the finishing transgression, and for the putting an end to sin; and for the making reconciliation, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Mark, when these seventy weeks are ended, Christ is come, then there is a finishing of transgression: there is a great deal of weight in the very word, the "finishing of transgression:" when is a thing finished? When all is done, and nothing more needs to be done or added to it. This church was finished, when the lead was laid, and the windows glazed, and no workman had any thing more to do: now the time of Christ's suffering was the time of finishing transgression; as much as to say, Christ made an end of sin; that is, God had no more in the world to reckon with persons for sins, after Christ in that suffering of his, had paid the full price of every transgression. Beloved, if God come to reckon now with believers for sin, either he must ask something of them, or not; if not, why are they troubled? Why must they come under the rod, as it were, to make up that which is not yet paid? How doth Christ then perfect for ever them that are sanctified? And how are they saved to the uttermost, that come to God by him? When men are saved to the utmost, there needs no more to be done; if so, you must know, that God cannot bring, a new reckoning. There is not such dishonesty in any honest man in the world; he that hath taken all the debt of a surety, and given acquittance under his hand, will not come upon the principal again, a poor beggar, and tell him, "I must have something of you;" the poor man will answer him, "Sir, you have received sufficient satisfaction already of my surety;" he is not an honest man that will ask more. Christ is the surety of a better covenant; God took Christ's bond, and he paid it; and, as he took his pay, when he received it, he acknowledged he had received satisfaction, Isa. liii. 11, "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied:" the travail of Christ gave the Father such satisfaction, that he acknowledged he was satisfied in it; why, therefore, should he come upon you again?

And if God will not come upon you again, what need you fear? It is true, as sin is contrary to the nature of God, so we ought with all reverence to make use of the help of the Spirit to oppose all sin whatsoever; but for any hurt*

* By hurt is meant the hurt of punishment, penal evil, which Christ has bore and took away from his people; so that they shall never be affected with it, he having fully satisfied for their sins.

which such sins shall do us, it is not possible; for Christ hath made satisfaction; "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him:" did God wound Christ for sin? If he did, it was to some purpose, or to none; if it were to purpose, then it pleased the Father to wound him, that those that were to be wounded might not be wounded: and hath Christ saved his people from wounding, then what need we fear that we shall be wounded for our transgressions?

But if we commit sin, God will punish us.

I answer, This is to make the sufferings of Christ of none effect; for, if he had not suffered, you could but be wounded; but if he was wounded for you, why do you disparage his sufferings, by this false jealousy and suspicion of yours? and, besides, you will never rest in peace all the days of your life, till you go out of yourselves to the Lord Christ, and see fulness in him, and such fulness and perfection in him, that there needs no addition to what he hath done; "In him," saith the apostle, "dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and "we are complete in him;" and is it so? There is no fear, then, that God should look upon you as abominable, loathsome things, any longer: there is inconsistency between a lovely person, and an ugly loathsome one; you are complete in Christ; now, being complete in him, you are lovely in the sight of the Father: in Exek. vi. the prophet tells us, "And thy beauty became perfect through my comeliness that I put upon thee." Here is a person in blood, in a loathsome condition; but, for all this, as loathsome as he is in himself, and in his own nature; yet here is perfection of beauty, and that through the comeliness of Christ: now can the Lord abhor that which hath perfection of comeliness in it? Whosoever is in Christ, hath all the comeliness of Christ upon him; now as you look out of

yourselves, and your filthiness, and look upon yourselves as you are in him; so you shall have not only rest and peace; but joy, and joy unspeakable and glorious, as in Isa. xxxv. 10, an excellent place; "The ransomed of the Lord shall return to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Some interpret these words of the glory in heaven; but it is returning to Sion, and not returning to heaven; Sion is the church of God upon earth; they return to Sion, that is, they return to Christ in his church upon earth; they shall return with songs, and everlasting joy; and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This is not impossible, you will say; but you know many of the people of the Lord Jesus, that walk sadly and disconsolately, not having this joy and gladness.

I answer, There is nothing hinders the joy of God's people, but their sins; these, as they conceive, stand as a separation between God and them; oh! they stand as a cooling card in all their joys and mirth; but when they return to Sion, they shall rejoice in that they shall see, that the blood of Jesus Christ Son of God hath cleansed them from all sin; in that the lamb of God hath taken away all their sins; the scape-goat having carried them away into the land of forgetfulness; in that all their transgressions are blotted out as a cloud, and God will remember their sins no more; in that they are all fair, having no spot before the Lord in them: when they shall come, by the sight of the glory, of the gospel, and the light thereof, to behold this estate that Christ hath brought them into; then all matter of sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the bitterness of it shall be taken away; and then that which was the occasion of bitterness shall vanish too.

I do not say, that he is no believer that hath not this perfectly; far be it from me to say so; there are that are believers that are weak; and there are believers that are strong in faith. The more the light and glory of the gospel shines in the true intention of God to his people; the more shall they return to their rest, the more shall they have joy and gladness.

Why, then, may not a believer say as David did, "The Lord hath been very bountiful to me, that I may return to my rest;" God hath done every thing in Christ, and taken away all things that can disturb

my peace and comfort.

SERMON XI.

GOD REMEMBERS NOT OUR SINS.

ISAIAH xliiii. 25.

EVEN I, AM HE THAT BLOTTETH OUT THY
TRANSGRESSIONS, FOR MINE OWN SAKE, AND
WILL NOT REMEMBER THY SINS.

To have an evangelist, a day-star, to be visited in lightsome times, though it be a matter of great grace; yet is it not cause of so great admiration, as to have the sun shining in a dark night is matter of wonder; and yet there was a spiritual eye among the Jews, that was able to see (in their darkest days) a glorious sun in their firmament; this eye was this evangelist Isaiah. I rather call him an evangelist than a prophet, for his bringing glad tidings of good things, tidings of exceeding great joy. The apostle Paul himself, the great doctor of the Gentiles, and the main exalter of Christ and the grace of God in him, goes not beyond this evangelist; speaking so fully, clearly, and sweetly of the freeness of God's love, even while persons are in the lowest and worst of conditions.

Besides all other expressions of his, this very text that I have read unto you is enough to make him an evangelist indeed; for here he evangelizes, or preaches the gladdest tidings that ever could come to the sons of men; for herein he proclaims liberty to the captives, and binds up the broken-hearted. This very expression of his, is one of the greatest causes that "the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; and that they do obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fly away;" as the same prophet hath it in chap. xxxv. 10.

Now that we may see more fully, the sweetness of marrow, and of wine well refined on the lees, contained in this text; it will be of very great importance and concern, to understand clearly and fully to whom, or of whom, the Lord by this prophet speaks these words. It

is true, a pardon is a welcome thing to a condemned malefactor; but a pardon for this man, when another that goes to execution hath none, is so far from being a comfort to him that suffers, that it doth but augment his misery and torment.

If the Lord for his own sake blots out the iniquity of such and such, and not the iniquity of others, it is but the augmentation of the misery of that person that hath no share in it.

In verse 4, the Lord mentions Jacob indeed, but, in the sequel, he makes it appear, that he intends not Jacob according to the flesh, but after the spirit; for this Jacob and Israel are that company and assembly of people, that are brought together from the ends of the earth; from the east, west, north, and south, as we have it expressed in verse 5, 6. But, beloved, that you may see plainly who this Jacob and Israel are, observe but one expression in verse 7. "Thou that are called by my name," saith the Lord; these are the persons whose iniquities the Lord blots out; what name is that? The name of "The Lord thy Saviour," verse 11. Now there is no people in the world, nor the Jews themselves; that had so plain a name of their Saviour upon them, as we have that are Gentiles, that are Christians; we have the true name of Christ a Saviour upon us, Christians from Christ.

And least people should think, that when the Lord proclaims this grace in the text, of blotting out iniquity and transgression, he looks for some qualifications and dispositions, that may be amiable to win so much grace from him; do but observe, I pray, (and it is very observable indeed) the two or three verses before my text; you shall see plainly how careful the Lord is to take off all such conceits from men, all imagination of any such expectation. There must be first graciousness, they must be first well qualified, and then their iniquities shall be blotted out, so might some think; mark how the Lord takes it off; for in these two verses, he draws to the very life the qualifications and conditions of those, whose iniquities he blots out; mark them well, "Thou hast not called upon me; thou hast been weary of me; thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; thou hast made me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities:" and then upon, these words follows the text; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my own sake; and will not remember thy sins." Mark, the words [thy transgressions] have

reference to the persons spoken of before, "that hast not called upon me; thy transgressions, that hast been weary of me; thy transgressions that hast wearied me; and thy transgressions, that hast made me to serve with thy sins."

So that the point from hence is this; "That the Lord, for his own sake, blots out the transgressions, and remembers not the sins, even of those that have not called upon him, that have been weary of him, and wearied him, and made him serve with their transgressions.

I make no question, but that this doctrine, I have laid down, will be received of all that will but receive clear scripture; I have not added one tittle in it more than is expressed in the words themselves; and therefore I shall be the more bold to build upon such a rock as this is.

That we may the better come to the words, or rather to our comfort in them, we have these particulars very observable.

First, The grace held out to these persons; and that is expressed by two phrases. First, The "Lord blots out thy transgressions." Secondly, "will not remember thy sins."

Secondly, Besides the grace held forth, let us consider the original or fountain from whence it springs; it is "I even I (saith the Lord) the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, thy Saviour; for so you have it expressed all along the chapter.

Thirdly, You may consider here the motive that prevails with God, to extend this grace that he shews to his people, and that is a remarkable passage; the motive is not in, nor from the creature; it hath its spring and rise immediately from himself alone; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions; for mine own sake I do it."

Finally, you may consider to whom this grace is extended; that blotteth out thy transgressions, saith the text, and will not remember thy sins; that is, to those persons mentioned before, of which I have spoken, that have wearied him with their sins; of these briefly.

First, Concerning the grace that the Lord is pleased to hold forth to his people here, namely, "The blotting out their transgressions and not remembering their sins." First, let us consider what it is for the Lord to blot out transgressions; it is an usual phrase in the scripture,

and imports much comfort in it; it is an allusion, or an allegorical expression; wherein the Lord is pleased to hold forth his love to man, after the manner of men; to set forth his carriage to men, according to theirs one to another. It is a phrase borrowed from the practice of men, that keep their debt-books, wherein they enter, and record the several debts men owe them; that so, for the better helping of their memory, they may find what is due, and know what to demand and call for; I say, the Lord here speaking of "blotting out of transgressions," hath reference to such debt-books, wherein he hath recorded the several debts, or sins, which he enters as men commit them; now the blotting out is nothing else, but that, whereas there were such and such transgressions in the record of God, he draws a blot over them. And that he here hath reference to such kind of dealing, in blotting out transgressions, you may see clearly manifested unto you, in Col. ii. 14, where this phrase of blotting out, is explained: "You being dead in your sins, hath he quickened, together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses; now, mark what follows: "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, and was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" what "the hand-writing of ordinances" there is, you may plainly perceive by the words going before, namely, "All our trespasses, and all our sins. Now the taking away of sin, is called a "blotting it out," and expressed thus;" The blotting out of the hand-writing that was against us," because they were, as it were, written down; but the Lord hath razed and blotted them out. You are not to conceive that there are really such things with God, that he did indeed keep a book, and enter down in it all the several actions of men, and so calling men to account, will open it, and will read out the several things there written; but the phrase is only an allusion spoken for our better capacity.

And, for this cause, you shall find the scripture frequently makes mention of such books God hath. When the seventy disciples came to Christ, rejoicing that the devils were made subject unto them, he replies, "Rejoice not that the devils are made subject unto you, but rejoice, rather, that your names are written in the book of life." Here is a book, and the names of the disciples written in it; but, if you will mark Rev. xx. 12, you will find, there is not only the book of life, but other books besides, out of which the dead, both small and great, were judged, according to their works that they had done; as if he

had said, besides the book of life, there is the book of works, wherein the several actions of men are recorded, by which, at the great day, men are to be judged as they are found in them; according to the several debts that are therein, they are to receive their sentence. Mark, now, for the better apprehension of our weak capacity, the Lord hath taken up such a kind of illustration of his dealing with men; namely, by recording our debts in books; yet, he tells us for our comfort, that, though there be such books, we need not fear; though they shall be opened, yet whatsoever was written in them, in reference to us, is all crossed and blotted out; and, when we come to account, there shall be nothing reckoned unto us, as a fault*. (Jude 24.)

For the better illustration of this, that what comes after may be the clearer, you must understand, that, though it be true in the succession of ages, the several members of Christ do severally day after day commit now some, then more, and afterwards more transgressions; though this be actually done in succession of thee, yet the all-seeing eye of the Lord looks over (Psalm cxlvii. 5; John xxi. 17.) all, that ever should be done, from all eternity; and then, as it were with himself, writes down the several actions and transgressions of men, that afterwards should be committed; he registers them at first with himself, and this is all the book that God keeps, and all the entries of action's with him. Now, whereas the Lord in his eternal foresight took notice of every action that you and I have done, do, or shall do hereafter; he also took notice of the nature and quality of such actions; yet, when he had done, he drew a cross over them all: for though he saw these things thus done, yet he took a course that he would be another way satisfied for every thing that he could demand in respect of them; and so they should remain no longer upon the heads of those persons. As for example, Suppose a man owes, upon a bill of parcels, an hundred pounds; all these parcels are written in a book under his name upon his head; after a time a surety comes and takes all this debt, and enters it upon his own head, under his own name, he being an able man: upon this the creditor is pleased to take him for his debtor, and so transcribes every parcel of the debt, from the head of the principal debtor, unto the head of this surety. Now, after all these parcels are entered to the head of the surety, by-and-by a cross is drawn over the first head, whose debt it was before, until it was brought over unto the surety:

this is the "blotting out of transgression" which the Lord here speaks of: and the sense of it is no more but this; though it is true, I know it well enough what thou hast done, and all thou hast done against me, how many and how great transgressions thou hast committed, and hereafter shall commit, though they be all open before me, though thou art the doer of all these, and I know it, yet, saith the Lord, "I will blot out all:" that is, there is not any one of all these to be reckoned for upon thy head; but I have passed them all upon another's, and he hath made to me, and I have acknowledged, full satisfaction: I have no more to say to thee.

Here, then, is the sum of this grant of the free grace of God; "the blotting out of transgression." You, know, beloved, the use of writing debts in a book, namely, that a creditor may turn ~over at pleasure or leisure to them; and so, when he looks there, he may find what every person owes, and, at discretion, may take the ground-work of his action that he lays against a person; and upon this action arrest him, and lay him up in prison, till he pays the debt. And, likewise, you know what the end of this "blotting out" too, is; namely, that when men come to look over their books they may skip over what was written; and, when the book is looked over, no notice shall be taken of such a man's name, who, though he was entered in it, yet all is blotted out again; and imports to us thus much to the thing in hand, that though the Lord, according to the usual manner of taking, notice of actions against men, hath his time when he will take notice of these debts, when he enters the debtor, when he will arrest and clap him up for them; yet, when he shall look over his book, he shall take no notice of such persons whose parcels are crossed out. Therefore, in Jer. 1.20, see how the prophet alludes to this expression, and how he explains the words, "blotting out of transgression:" "In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, shall the iniquities of Israel be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here he seems to represent the Lord as one that begins to look over his books, to see what debts are owing unto him; as if he were making a search. Well, saith the Holy Ghost, though at such a time the sins of the people be sought for, yet there shall be none; it is true, they were all entered into the knowledge of God from all eternity, yet there shall be none; that is, though they were entered, they are blotted out again; therefore, as it is in a debt-book,

though there be never so many parcels entered, entered ever so truly there, yet, when once that which was entered is blotted out, there is no more debt than if there had never been any; for all that was ever in, is blotted out. So, though the Lord be privy to what they do, and hath recorded them in his own thoughts; yet he himself draws a blot upon them, and makes them to be nothing: whereas, before, till the blot was drawn over them, they were real debts.

And this he doth not simply in respect of forgiveness. In regard of us, it is true, it is a forgiveness, yet, in respect of him, it is not merely forgiveness; for the reason and ground of blotting out of iniquity, is, there is a second head to which these debts are translated from us, that shall pay them better than those whose first they were; so that the debt being paid, God loseth nothing, forasmuch as that another hath paid all.

This is one of the most admirable pieces of grace that thirsting souls can desire, if they had all they could wish themselves. Do but think seriously upon it. Suppose a man is privy to himself of murder, felony, and treason, or what else you will: suppose he knows that it is known, and that there are many witnesses to test it; nay, suppose he knew that it were done in the eye and face of the judge himself; that he saw with his own eyes what was done, and that, when all this is done he should be drawn to his trial; alas! in what perplexity of heart would this man be? How would he quake and tremble, and be even at his wit's end? He knows it was publicly done; there is no smothering of it, but that he must justly lie under condemnation for it; the witnesses come in and swear point blank against him; and, yet, suppose, after all pleadings, and bitter expectation of the sentence, the judge himself should stand up, and say, I have made search, and there is not one bill of indictment found against this man;: there is not one action that may justly be laid against him, and I have nothing to say to him or against him. How will this make the heart of such a prisoner leap for joy, being so acquitted and dismissed, and having no bill found against, him! Just so is our case; we have committed murder, felony, treason, rebellion, and enmity, all that can be against the Lord: we did it in the face of God, that he knows it is done: but, when we come to trial, God himself brings an *ignoramus*; he himself, saith, Here is not one bill of indictment against him; there is nothing but what is blotted out; and the reason

is, as I said, because he acknowledgeth that he hath received a satisfaction from his Son; "Deliver him, for I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. So much for that phrase, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions:" it followeth, "and will not remember thy sins:" here is the *ignoramus* that God himself makes; though the foreman of the grand jury bring in an indictment, yet, saith God, I remember no such matter. Here is a plea against this and that man; (members of Christ, you must suppose them all this while) they are accounted for such and such sinners and transgressors, but I remember no such matter, saith the Lord.

But what is it for God not to remember the transgressions of men in this kind, will some say?

I answer, beloved, Here the Lord speaks after the manner of men, as he did before; books, you know, are the registers of memory or records for the help of memory rather: when a man comes to his book, to his bills and bonds, and there reads what such and such a man owes, he thereby remembers what debts are due unto him, and from whom; but if he comes to his book, and there can read nothing owing unto him from such a person; he is said not to remember it, so that memory itself fails; can this man now remember his debts that cannot find that he hath any such, that cannot read them? If a man look over his debt-book, and finds there, that though such debts were written, yet now they are so obliterated that no man can read them, and that this blotting was made not casually, but upon consideration of a sufficient satisfaction; how then, can he remember these now as debts? Thus the Lord represents himself to us, he remembers not our sins: that is the transgressions of the members of Christ come not into the thoughts of God, so as now to think that such and such a man stands guilty before him of such a transgression; say, the Lord hath not in his thought any such thing concerning any member of Christ. Beloved, you shall find it a frequent expression of the Holy Ghost, manifesting the grace of God to his own people; namely, "God doth not remember their sins:" David, in Psal. xxv. 9, prays thus, "Lord, remember not the sins of my youth:" but look into the covenant of grace, wherein God engages himself to be the God of his people; this is the closure and shutting up of it, in Jer. xxxi. 31, and so on; "In these days, and at that time, will I make a covenant with the house of Israel, not

according to the covenant that I made with their fathers; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with them," &c. And then the shutting up of the new covenant is in these words, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

So the apostle, Heb. viii. 12, repeats the self-same thing, repealing the covenant word for word, and ends it with the same closure, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." And in Heb. x. 16, 17, though the apostle abridges the covenant, and leaves out many branches of it, yet he forgets not the last clause of it, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more?"

So it stands for a truth, the people of God are so received into the grace and favour of God, that God doth not, nay he will not remember their sins any more from the time that they are become members of Christ, and actually in covenant with him; from that time for ever more, there is not once a bringing to remembrance with God any one of their transgressions.

But some will say, This seems to be strange; what, God not remember the sins of believers? Suppose he forgives them, yet he must remember them, seeing they are committed every day so clearly and conspicuously in his sight: how is it possible he should not remember them?

I answer, beloved, Let flesh and blood reason and say what it will, I ask you this question, is it the Lord himself that says, he doth not remember the sins of his people? If he himself speaks it, who art thou, O man, that darest question whether he remembers them, or no? Shalt thou say, he remembers their sins, when he himself saith, he will not remember them? The apostle Paul tells us, "No man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God:" doth not the Spirit of God tell us this, that "he doth not remember their sins?" And can any man know the things of God better than the Spirit? Thou sayest that God remembers them, when he saith, he doth not remember them.

But some will be ready to say further, How can this possibly be, that God should know every sin that the believer commits, and the believer himself knows the sins he commits, and yet God should not remember them?

I answer, First, Suppose I could not untie this knot, or resolve this

riddle to you; you must know, beloved, there are deep things of God, that none but he himself can dive into, that none but he is able to resolve; yet, though it could not be resolved, let God be true, and all the world be liars; let not the world's saying, God remembers the sins of his people, prevail against his saying, "I will not remember their sins:" let sense argument, reason, and all stoop a faith, even for the testimony of God's sake alone, though none will speak the same thing, but merely the voice God himself.

But, Secondly, Let us see whether we can untie this knot or no: how is it possible that the Lord should not remember their sins, seeing they are so plain to him every moment? There one word in the text, that is not much heeded, and it is that which must resolve this great and difficult question; and that is this, "I will not remember *your* sins," I will not remember them as *your* sins, putting the emphasis upon the word *your*; and will not remember *thy* sins, or *your* sins. It is most certainly true, God remembers all the actions that ever men have done, do, or shall do; he remembers the nature and quality of all actions they are; he remembers such actions, as done at such times; and he knows they are thus and thus in the nature of them; and yet so it is, that "he remembers not *thy* transgressions;" that is, though he remembers the things thou hast done, yet he doth not remember them as they are thine; he remembers the things, it is true, but not that they are thine; for he remembers perfectly that they are none of thine; he remembers whose they are, he himself hath passed them over, he decreed that they should become the sins of Christ; and when he passed them over to him, they ceased to be thine any longer.

You know that text in Isa. liii, 6, "He hath laid on him the iniquities of us all; and you know that place in 2 Car. v. 21, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now I ask this question, Whose are the sins that believers commit? When Christ became their sin, are they not his? and if they are his, are they any longer theirs, that did commit them? 2 Car. v. 19, shews plainly, that the Lord reckons them no longer theirs, when he hath made them once to be Christ's; God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as much as to say, I will never reckon them thine any more; I will never impute them to thee; all that I look for

in respect of thy sins, I look for at the hands of Christ; "for he was made sin for us," saith the text.

And whereas people think it strange, for as much as believers themselves do remember their sins, that God should not remember them; I answer, if any believers or members of Christ remember their sins any otherwise than God remembers them, their memory fails them, and they are mistaken in their remembrance; if when believers have sinned, they have a conceit that their sins shall be charged upon them; the truth is, they have other conceits of themselves than God hath of them; but if they will remember their sins, as he remembers them, they must remember them, and know them by the light of God's Spirit, that shall lead them into all truth. The Spirit of God will remember them of them indeed, and lay before them such and such actions, and tell them, that they have these pollutions in them, and will convince them of the abhorrency of them; but the same Spirit will remember them withal, that the "Lamb of God hath taken away all these sins of theirs;" and that the scape-goat hath carried them away into a land of forgetfulness; thus, I say, the Holy Ghost, as it brings their sins to their remembrance, so it will suggest to them also, to whom their sins are sent.

Beloved, it is a matter of admirable grace, full of wonder, yea, even of amazing consolation, that a poor condemned soul by Satan, nay, it may be, by his own conscience, should at last hear the Lord speak, and the last words of God himself to be this, "I remember no such thing." Now, if God himself doth not remember your transgressions, you that are the members of Christ, it is no matter who remembers them; and, therefore, as the apostle saith in another case, so you may say with comfort in your own spirits, "To me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment," 1 Cor. iv. 3. Beloved, he that said it, will stand to it, he will never remember your sins any more; though they be never so many and never so great, he will never call one of them to remembrance. It may be, in affliction, and when the rod of God is fallen upon thee, thy heart will be ready to raise such thoughts as these in thee; "Now God will be even with me; now shall I smart for my transgressions;" but know this, that at that instant when God brings affliction upon thee, he doth not remember any sin of thine; they are not in his thoughts; for the text saith not only of the present instant, that God doth not remember

them, but of the future also, nay, of the everlasting future; "Your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more."

I beseech you, consider this one thing, you that think that God plagues and punishes you, being believers, for such and such sins of yours, and say, doth he not now remember these sins of mine? Doth he punish such and such sins in others, and take vengeance for them, and doth he not remember them? Doth he use to do things hand over head? Doth he lay his rod and his scourge upon them, and never think of the cause of it? And if these afflictions be the judgment of God for these sins, certainly God must remember them, and so know them as motives and provocations, to inflict such vengeance upon them; and if he punishes them for them, certainly he now remembers them: and what of all this? Is it a truth that God hath spoken, "Your iniquities and your sins will I remember no more?" Then, surely, whatsoever things befall the children of God, are not punishments for sin, nor remembrances of sin; the Lord must be true and faithful in his covenant; and therefore, if men shall cavil against this free-grace of God, yet let me request this of you, let the evidence of the Holy Ghost so prevail with your spirits, that if any creature in heaven or earth, men or angels, shall endeavour to contradict this, let them be accounted as they deserve; let all give way to this truth; if any thing in the world can make it appear to the contrary, then let it go away with it; but, if the spirit of God speaks it so clearly, that nothing can be objected against it; let not any thing cause thee to live in so much darkness and uncomfortableness, as thou must do, till thou receive this grace of the Lord.

And so, beloved, I have done with the *second* thing. There is one thing more very considerable, and that is what the motive is, that prevails with God, that thy sins and iniquities should be blotted out, and that he should not remember them; what is it that moves him to do this? I find that the channel of men's hearts runs usually this way: Oh! When God beholds my mourning, weeping, and reformings, and knows I am returned unto him by true repentance, and seeth what moan I make, and what a pitiful wretch I am, when he beholds my groanings and my meltings; oh! this cannot but move him to pity me, and to pardon my sins! Oh beloved! know the Lord hath other manner of motives to prevail with him, than all the rhetorick of misery in the creature can possibly be to persuade him to this grace;

I say peremptorily, it is not all the sighings, groanings, mournings, fastings, prayers, and self-denial; nor all the righteousness that men can return to God, that can prevail with him, to blot out their sins and to remember them no more; but the motive is this, "I, even I, for mine own sake do this;" and the Holy Ghost frequently expresses it in such terms, as this, Ezek. xxxvi. 32, after he had laid down the covenant of grace, he concludes with this caution; "Be it known unto you, not for your sakes do I this to you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel:" mark it, there is nothing in the creature moves God to shew compassion upon him; but merely for his own sake doth he this to his people.

But, how is it, for his own name sake to do it? I answer, It imports two things; first, The Lord doth it for his own sake, that is, he is solely moved to it, by and from himself; and there is no creature in the world doth so much as move him to it; I say, the Lord, when he blots out the transgressions of his people, he is not so much as moved to it, and sought unto for it; there is nothing in the creature to move God to it; but simply of his own mere motion he does it; and this the apostle expresses in abundant fulness, Eph. i. 9, where, (speaking of redemption) he tells expressly, that the Lord did all according to his own "good purpose that he had in himself."

But some will say, You will grant this, that Christ moved God to blot out transgressions.

To this I answer, That though Christ moved God to blot them out, yet this stands firm still, that we do not move him to do it.

Secondly, I answer, when we say, that Christ moves God to blot out transgression, I do not separate him from Christ; God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" what he doth in grace to the poor creature, he doth in Christ; and he doth nothing of grace to sinners, absolutely considered in himself, abstractedly from Christ, but as in him.

But, Thirdly, take Christ for mediator, and as he is distinguished from the Father, and then, I say, that he, as mediator, did not first move God to blot out transgressions; but the motion within himself, from eternity, was the root and fountain of all; yea, even of Christ himself as mediator; and from this fountain was he raised up to accomplish these things that first were in his breast; for Christ is the

mediator; that is, he is the mean between God and us, to compose this great thing of blotting out our transgression. Now, know, that the means are raised up for the bringing about the thing intended; and in nature are after the thing intended as the end; the school-men have a speech, "The end of things is always the first in intention, though it be last in execution;" if a man builds a house, he first proposeth to himself to what purpose it is; it is to dwell in: the habitation is first in his thoughts, and then the structure as a means is raised afterwards to that end; so the Lord sits down, and consults with himself, how he may shew himself in grace to the creature thus; The creature will sin, "and I will blot out their transgressions;" but how shall it be done? Well, saith God, I will send Christ into the world; he shall be born of a woman, and die for their sins, having them laid upon him, and shall purchase their redemption: now Christ is the means, he is made a mediator; but God's determination, concerning the blotting out of transgression, was of his own motion, before there was such a thing as Christ, I mean in both his natures; and Christ, therefore, came, because God had determined in his own thoughts, that such a thing should be done by him.

Secondly, God doth this for his own sake, not only of his own mere motion, but for his own end too, for himself. We are apt to think that he blots out our transgressions, that he might do good to us, that we might be made happy by it: it is true, the Lord blotted out transgressions that we might be happy, but yet this is but the subordinate end to him, and stands in subordination to a supreme and higher end; God aims at his own glory principally; he did not therefore blot out transgressions that we might be the better for it principally; but that he might attain the thing that concerned himself in it.

And therefore, whereas the Holy Ghost speaks in the text of "blotting out transgressions for his own name sake," he adds these words to it, (fore-shewing that God aimed at himself more than any thing concerning the good of his creatures, 1 Sam. xii. 22,) "The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name sake. Josh. vii. 9, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name," if thy people should sin? he speaking of it then in that business of the men of Israel's falling before the men of Ai. The great argument of Joshua, to prevail with God, was the great name of God. Psal, lxxix. 9, "Help us, O Lord,

for the glory of thy name, and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name sake: the meaning is this; the Lord blots out transgressions for his own sake, that is, he therefore blots them out that his own name and glory might be the more magnified and exalted in the world; so that for his own praise sake, he doth the great things he doth. Therefore the apostle, in Ephes. i. 6, speaking of redemption, tells us, what the great end of it was, namely, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Now you see what it is for God to blot out transgressions for his own sake; namely, that he might have the praise of the glory of his own grace in doing such marvellous things as he doth; so that you run in a vain course to think that you move God by your importunity and humbling yourselves before him; for he will not be moved with all these to blot out your transgressions; if ever, therefore, you would find a motive whereon to rest indeed satisfied that God will and doth blot them out, run to this, the free thoughts of God, and the bowels in God himself (without regard to what is in you, or done by you, to move him to do it, or to provoke him not to do it) have put him upon this great work for you.

Look into Rom. ix. you shall there see, that in this business of love, and blotting out sin, the Lord will there manifest himself in grace, while Jacob is in the womb, before ever he could sigh and groan to him; he did it then, that it might appear "not according to works, but according to the purpose of election," that it might stand "not of works, but of grace: and so, when souls partake of this grace of the blotting out of iniquity, they may cry out, as the Psalmist did in another case," Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise and glory." And it is certain, that the apostle tells us, "We are justified by the grace of God, not of works, lest any man should boast;" and, therefore, the Lord will have all the ordering of the work of grace, that the creature shall have no stroke; that when that grace is manifested, and he partakes of it, (the creature having no hand in it) he that glorieth, may glory in him.

SERMON XII.

THE GREAT GIVER, AND HIS FREE GIFTS.

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 12.

NOW WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD; THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD.

AFTER a wonted tender-hearted salutation and congratulation to this church of Corinth, from chap. i. 1, to verse 10, the apostle Paul falls upon a seasonable exhortation to unanimity and concord of spirit among them, relating at large the occasion of this exhortation to them, to wit, the notice he had received of a dangerous strife and contention fallen out among them, in respect of their partiality to persons; this he continues to the 17th or 18th verses of that chapter; and from thence, to the closure of the chapter, he declares both the scope of his ministry in general, and the diversity of success this ministry of his found, both among Jews and Gentiles.

Now, in the beginning of this chapter, the apostle returns back to this church of Corinth in special; and, whereas, the strife was, "one was of Paul, and another was of Apollos, and another of Cephas," he acquits himself from any thing that might, in respect to himself, tend to, or occasion such strife and quarrel: therefore, in verse 1, he wholly disclaims all of man which might tend to exalt man among them: "He came not in the excellency of speech, or in words of man's wisdom to them;" his ministry was exercised in a low plain-dealing way, without either human rhetoric or wisdom of man. This he amplifies in verse 4; for his part, he used no manner of enticing words to inveigle or beguile them.

Secondly, He goes on to declare to them the main subject of his ministry, which he drove at, which he commends both to ministers and people, as the great thing they were to mind concerning divinity;

a rule and pattern well worth imitation of all, verse 2, "I desire," saith he, "to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" he did not care that the people should know any thing else in the world, so that he might impart Jesus Christ, and him crucified, unto them.

Thirdly, He declares to them the reason why he came with such plainness and simplicity, without dress, in the exercise of his ministry, in verse 5, namely, "That their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;" as if he should say, They that are wrought upon by human rhetoric, and fineness of language and are taken with respect of any fluency of words, these men's faith is built upon human wisdom. They that taken with the simplicity of the gospel, as it is in Jesus, simply preached, their faith is built upon the rock itself.

Now, lest the apostle's ministry of the gospel might grow into contempt, because he waived that which was human in it; therefore, in the latter end of verse 4, he vindicates the power and life of his ministry, even while it was so plain, and without man's wisdom. Though Paul came not in excellency of speech and man's wisdom, yet he came in "the demonstration of the spirit, and with power." So, though he condescends to the weakness of this church, being but babes in Christ, as he speaks of them; yet he would have them know, though he did, by exercising his ministry in so low and plain a style for their sakes; nevertheless, when he deals with those that are perfect, that is, higher grown, he can rise in a higher flight, and deal in more grown and deeper mysteries than he did with them. And, in verses 7, 8, he illustrates what depths there were in those mysteries that he preached to those that were capable of seeing them; and that is quoted out of Isaiah lxiv. 4, "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

Now, whereas some might be ready to object, as the false prophets did to Michaiah, "Which way went the Spirit of God from us to thee? If wisdom, and prudence could not dive into those mysteries Paul spake of, how could he come by them? He was of no more learning than they; they were as much insighted in the law as he; if they could not, how could he?"

He answers in the words following, "Though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive them: yet, God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." Let me tell you, there are secrets of God that all the learning in the world shall never attain unto; only the teaching of the Spirit of God acquaints people with them; therefore, it is a branch of the new covenant of God to those in it;" They shall be all taught of God;" and they shall no more need to say to their neighbour, "Know the Lord, for they shall all know the Lord;" that is, by his own teaching, "they shall all be taught of God." It is true, in the ministry of the gospel, this knowledge comes usually to the people; but it is not the wisdom of man that either doth or can impart the secrets of God to this people; and these are the mysteries; the apostle saith, he preacheth unto those that are more grown and perfect; there is strong meat for those that are old, as well as milk for babes.

Now the apostle proceeds on, namely, to shew how it comes to pass that the Spirit of God, and only the Spirit of God, should impart and communicate these mysteries, when the wisdom of the world cannot possibly bolt them out; saith he, "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." But some may say, the knowledge of these mysteries may come some other way: to take off that, in the following words, verse 11, he shews expressly, that the mystery of the gospel can come no other way but by the Spirit of God only, as he will use instruments to himself: I say, the original of discovering the mysteries of the gospel is not demonstration by way of argument or discourse, but the demonstration is by the Spirit of God. And the apostle illustrates it by way of comparison, that the Spirit only is the original of the discovery of the mysteries of God; "As no man knows the things of a man, save the spirit that is in man;" so no man knows "the things of God, save the Spirit of God:" his meaning in this place is this, you have a thought in your hearts, and if you give no hint of it by external expressions, no man can conceive what you are thinking, till you shall some way evidence yourselves: now, as it is impossible for any man to dive into such a thought, so it is as impossible for all the creatures in the world to dive into the mysteries of God; but the Spirit that is of God only reveals them.

Now, in the words of my text, the apostle begins to draw to a

conclusion of this discourse, and to sum it up to a head; for, having given this description in general, concerning the Spirit's revealing things that could not otherwise be seen or known, he concludes that it was his, and the case of others;" Now we have not received," &c.

Beloved, let me tell you, by the way, it is a matter of great consequence and establishment to know the scope and intention of the Holy Ghost in the several portions of scripture, especially building places that contain life, peace, and joy; and, therefore, I have the more insisted upon the opening of the text; for if you take a portion of scripture, and cut it off from the dependance, you may miss the intention of the Spirit therein; for the words may sound to another sense than the drift is, except the coherence be seen and observed; this, I say, that in reading and preaching, there must be great regard had to what the Holy Ghost principally aims at in Scripture. Thus much by the bye.

In the text there are three things considerable. First, What the apostle aims at here, or the subject matter he is upon, namely, the manifestation of the things freely given of God; or to impart to us this, that there are things freely given of God to men.

Secondly, He speaks of them as they may be known; "That we may know," &c.

Thirdly, He shews how the knowledge of these things that are freely given of God is attained; and that he sets out, first, negatively, "Not by the spirit of the world; secondly, affirmatively, "by the Spirit that is of God."

The proposition is this, "That the things freely given us of God, come to be known, not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God being received.

I am confident, none here will stumble at the proposition, being so naturally raised from the words of the text; I will not therefore spend time about that. There are these particulars in it worth consideration: and that you may suck and be satisfied at the breasts of consolation, consider, First, what these things are the apostle speaks of, that are freely given of God.

Secondly, What it is for these things to be given.

Thirdly, What it is for them to be given freely.

Fourthly, What it is to know these things that are thus freely given.

Fifthly, How they are made known to us by the Spirit which is of God.

First, What these things are that are freely given us of God, for the illustration of which know first, that it is most certainly true indeed, all things whatsoever are the free gift of God to men: "He causeth the sun to shine upon the just, and upon the unjust;" and it is the gift of God that he doth it: I will only touch one thing by the way, and be brief in it; know this, if Adam, and his posterity, had stood in their innocency, had continued in the royal law, and never offended, that very life that was annexed unto obedience, I say, that very life had been a free gift; and, therefore, if you speak of merit properly, as requiring a reward proportionable, and having equal power to the work, there could not be merit in a state of innocency; but that very life, had it come from the performance of perfect obedience, had been a gift of God. I will give you one illustration, that will satisfy you fully in it; look upon all the creatures, as for instance, upon the sun, that rejoiceth as a giant to run his race; it had its law, as we had, set before it, a kind of duty the very creature performs to the Creator; if God should be bound to reward according to proportion, and so by way of merit, man's obedience with life, why not the obedience of the sun in the firmament as well as man; the sun is a creature, as man is; as a creature, man hath the same dependance upon the Creator as the sun hath; what hinders but that the sun in the firmament should merit as well as man; seeing it performs as complete obedience in its way as man could do? Beloved, carry this for a principle everlastingly along with you, all that ever the creature partakes of, it hath from God; and so God oweth nothing to it, for that he partakes of, save that he oweth by free grant; had not God freely without motive put himself upon this, that man should have life upon his obedience, he could challenge life no more than any other creature could.

But I will not follow this, these things, in general, not being the things the apostle principally aims at here; for though it be true, all things in general are the free gifts of God, yet here he speaks of things in a restrained way, of some special things peculiar to the beloved of the Lord; such as the Psalmist speaks of, in Psal. xxv. 14, "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him;" or such things

as Christ speaks of, in Matt. xi. 25, 26. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, O Father, because it pleased thee." The things freely given of God, are the things the wise of the world cannot reach; they are hid from them: they are revealed and communicated unto babes. What are those things, you will say? I can give you but a touch; for if I dive into the depth of the things, there will be no end, I should never come to the bottom.

First of all, God gives himself, and this is such a gift as is mystery, the world doth not reach, they know not what it is; it is the greatest gift that ever God could give his people to give over himself; it contains in it the most inestimable and invaluable treasure that is in heaven or earth: for God to pass over himself in such a way of propriety, as that he hath no more command over himself, than the creature can have power over him, for that which is good for him; this, I say, is the strangest thing ever was; and yet God gives himself to his people, that is, he gives man as true a propriety in himself, as he himself hath in himself. You know, the Lord, speaking of giving himself, expresses it thus, "I have married thee to myself in truth and righteousness;" mark what the drift of it is, a husband marrying a wife, by God's own appointment, gives himself up to the wife; see how the apostle expresseth it, "The husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife; as the wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband;" as much as to say, God being married to a person, he hath not that power over himself, as to deny himself, or the use of himself, to those to whom he hath given himself; the believer hath power with God, so far as God can be useful unto the person to whom he gives himself. There is as much propriety in a believer to God, as there is in a wife to her husband; this giving of himself by a deed of gift is frequently mentioned unto you in scripture, but especially in the covenant of grace; wherever this covenant is repeated, this is the burthen of the song, as I may say; this is the great business, "I will be their God, (saith he,) and they shall be my people;" here is the passing of himself over to them; and this is, I say, one of the hidden things and mysteries that are freely given, God passeth over himself freely to us.

Secondly, God gives his son Christ, as well as he gives himself; that

is a second deed of gift, giving of his Son to men: this is frequently repeated; "To us a child is born," saith the prophet, Isa. ix. 6. "To us a Son is given," so Isa. xlii. 6.—The same prophet tells us what the Lord speaks of Christ; "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes." Here is a giving of Christ, you see; we are the gift of the Father to Christ, so he is the gift of the Father to us.

Now in the giving of Christ there is to be considered, first, The gift of his person; secondly, The gift of all the fruits that redound from the participating of his person. First, God gives the person of Christ to men; as much as to say, God gives him to stand in the room of men, and men stand in his room. So that in the giving of Christ, God is pleased, as it were, to make a change*,

* This change of persons is condemned as an error, by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. p. 37, 38, but is a most glorious truth of the gospel; and without which, it would be no gospel, no glad tidings. It is fully expressed in 2 Car. v. 21, as well as in other places, and is the ground of our redemption by Christ, of his satisfaction for us, and the atonement of our sins, and the justification of our persons, and indeed of our whole salvation; so that we have reason to break out in the same exclamation as Justin Martyr did upon it, in his epistle to Diognetus, p. 500, O sweet change! A work unsearchable! Benefits unexpected! that the transgression of many should be hid by one righteous person, and the righteousness of one justify many transgressors.

Christ represents our persons to the Father; we represent the person of Christ to him; all the loveliness the person of Christ hath, that is put upon us; and we are lovely with the Father, even as the Son (John xvii. 23.) himself. On the other part, all that hateful and loathsomeness in our nature is put upon Christ: he stands, as it were, the abhorred of the Father for the time*,

* That is, while he bore the sins of his people, sustained the wrath of God, and was made a curse for them; nor should this seem harsh to any, especially as the Doctor has qualified it; for he does not say he stands the abhorred, but, as it were, the abhorred of the Father; though, had he said he was

abhorred for a time, it is no more than the scripture says; Psal, lxxxix. 38, "Thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed," or with thy Messiah; which words are understood of Christ, by several interpreters, ancient and modern; Christ indeed, as the Son of God, was always the object of his Father's love; and so he was in his state of humiliation, and even under his sufferings and death; John x. 17, as the celebrated Witsius observes, "Christ was represented not only under the emblem of a lamb, a foolish beast, and prone to go astray; but of a goat, lascivious, wanton, and of an ill smell; yea, of a cursed serpent, and on that account execrable, and cursed of God; not for the taking of our sins upon him, which was an holy action, and most grateful to God; hut for the sins which he took upon him, and for the persons of the sinners which he sustained."—*Animadv. Irenic. c. 3, f. 5, p. 43.*

even the forsaken of the Father, as he represented our persons, bare our blame, sustained our wrath, and drank the dregs of our cup. Here is the gift of the person; that which is Christ's, is ours; that which is ours, is his. There is an admirable expression, in 2 Car. v. 21, "He was made sin for us, that knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is plainly manifested, that which we were, Christ became "sin for us;" then that which Christ was, we became, that is, "the righteousness of God; for we are made the righteousness of God in him."

Secondly, With Christ there is the gift of the fruit of him; she that hath an husband, hath all that is his. I have read an ancient deed of gift, made by one of the first kings of England, giving all from the heavens to the centre of the earth: so that if there be minerals in the bowels of the earth, they are comprehended in the gift; so it is with Christ; God, in his Son, and with him, giveth all that he hath and is. All the mines in the bowels of Christ are ours; "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's:" so that, whatever is Christ's, by the gift of him, becomes the person's to whom he is given. Consider what you can imagine Christ hath as a fruit growing from him as he is Christ, with him that fruit is given to man, namely, to his own people; as free justification from all sin; free reconciliation, with the Father; free adoption to all the glory and liberty of the sons

of God; firm peace and agreement, without any more quarrelling between God and his people; a free use of all things in a sanctified way.(1 Tim. iv. 5.)

Finally, (we cannot run upon these particulars at large) The third thing given of God, is the Spirit of God; "He will give his Spirit to them that ask him;" Luke xi. 18. There is a deed of gift of the Spirit; "I will send you another comforter," saith Christ, "and he shall lead you into all truth."

And, as the Spirit of God is the gift of God, so the knowledge of those free gifts that are only known by the Spirit itself, is the gift of God. With this Spirit, wisdom and understanding are given, and the knowledge of the mystery of the gospel; that you shall not only have these things (spoken of before) given you, but the knowledge of them all; the sound knowledge of them is as much the gift of God as the things themselves; this is by the Spirit of God. Comfort is given by him; you shall never have rest in your spirits, but as he rocks you asleep, and gives you rest. In brief, as all things are, given in Christ by his own purchase*,

*Our English divines, (for I don't remember to have met with it among others) especially of the last age, and many in this, have used the word purchase, concerning the blessings of grace and glory, and other things. They, indeed, come to us through the blood of the covenant, that so we may enjoy them consistent with the holiness and righteousness of God; but, strictly and properly speaking, nothing was purchased by Christ but his church; nor is any other in scripture ever said to be so; the only passage that looks like it, Eph. i. 14, respects the people of God, the portion and possession of Christ, purchased and redeemed by him; the reason of which is, the people of God, though given to Christ, were captives in other hands, and therefore must be redeemed or brought out; whereas, the blessings of grace and glory never were. It would be better, I think, if the word was disused.

so all things are given in him by the Spirit, by way of application and possession in particular.

Let us, therefore, now consider (for I must now redeem the time) what it is for these (I might have mentioned other particulars that are

given) to be given of God.

A deed of gift, is opposed to two things; first, to sale; secondly, to loan. These things, therefore, are communicated by God. First, not by sale or bargain; he doth not play the merchant; here are my wares, give me the price, and take the commodity. I beseech you take heed of such principles as these are; the covenant of Christ, as some may imagine, runs upon this strain, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" that is, I will tell you upon what terms I will be yours: come, bring this price, deliver up yourselves to me, and then I will be yours; give me the price and take it; God is no such huckster; he drives no such bargains in giving himself, and in giving Christ, and his Spirit; he makes no sale at all, for sale and deed of gift are opposite. If I buy such a thing of a man, he doth not give it me. Beloved, you must not think to bring a price to God for those things you would have of him: take heed of such conceits, that your assurance, peace, mid comfort must cost you dear before you have them; for God will take no cost or price at your hands. Observe that admirable expression in Isaiah Iv. 1, 2, 3, by this you shall plainly perceive God is no huckster, he doth not keep shop, he doth not shew you wares, and ask a price of you before you have them: "Ho every one that thirsteth (that is, that have a mind) come to the waters, come buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money and without price." Why money and price? there is a difference between money and price, namely, as there is a difference between money, and monies-worth: your poor men, their day's labour is monies-worth, and their day's labour is a price; therefore, there is equality between the labour and the wages, as there is equivalence between the money and the thing bought. Now the meaning of the Holy Ghost here is, God doth not look for money, nor price, nor labour; he doth not look that men should earn their gifts before they have them; he looks not for the penny, nor for the penny's-worth; therefore, be not deceived, though in respect of Christ, God made a sale, and made him pay according to the bargain; in which regard, the apostle saith, "We are bought with a price;" yet, in respect of us, I say, there is no sale at all. Let me tell you, there are more Simonical persons in the world than men are aware of. In Acts viii. the great sin of Simon Magus was, "That he thought the gift of the Holy Ghost might be bought with money;" the apostle in that chapter thunders out an execration upon him, for offering to think or

speak this, "That the gift of the Holy Ghost might be bought with money;" and therefore he tells him plainly, "That he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, and that he had no part nor portion in the matter." How near they follow to the heels and steps of Simon Magus, that will bring their price in their hands to God, to partake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, I leave it to the wise to judge. Therefore, you that would have you, part and portion in this matter, of the gift of God, know that it must cost you nothing; this derogateth not from your obedience; there is employment enough for you, and there are ends sufficient for it, though this obedience be not the price you are to bring, from whence you are to expect the gifts of God: God requires your obedience to glorify him; to be the manifestation of your thankfulness; for the good of your brethren; for the manifesting and accomplishing his gifts in the use of ordinances but that these should be a price, is a gross mistake. Do not dream that your conscionable walking before God here, is the thing that must commend you to him hereafter; nothing but Jesus Christ, sent out of the love and bowels of the Father, can possibly commend you to God, Do not think this, or that, you do, is that price from whence you are to expect the things of God but, know, that these are given of him. I shall run over some heads very briefly, for I see I am much prevented.

Secondly, Therefore, besides sale, God's gifts are not a loan neither; this is a great consideration. The things that we have of God, as they are a gift, so they are not a loan; what we receive of him, are not lent. There is a difference between lending, and giving; he that lends money, looks it should be paid again; he that gives it, gives it for ever, without ever looking for it again. The things of God, as they are given, so he doth not look for them again. You know, it is a ridiculous thing to give a thing, and take it again; We count this children's play. How many of God's children, in temptation, look upon the things that God hath given them, and yet suspect he will take them again? What is lent, men may challenge again; but, when a man gives a thing, it is injustice for him to challenge it any more; there is the difference between lending and giving. If God gives things to men, and takes them again, he relinquisheth and frustrateth his own act; for if he takes them away, they were not given. A deed of gift, and title of land by deed of gift, are as firm as a title by purchase; what God hath given, he cannot call in again. I speak this

to the consolation of trembling spirits; they look upon God bestowing himself, Christ, and his Spirit, and they receive what God hath given; yet their spirits tremble, and they are afraid he will take these away again from them: they commit such and such sins; therefore, surely, say they; I shall lose that I have; remember the nature of a gift, and remember this too, that whatever God hath given, he calls it not in again. Suppose a father should deliver up and give all his lands and goods to his son, and make a real deed of gift in law, passing it over to him, as firm as law can make it this son, peradventure, commits some fault afterwards; can the Father call in this deed of gift, in respect of the fault committed? Thou art a son of God, and a darling of his; it may be thou hast committed many sins; for "in many things we sin all;" doth God call in his deed? Is not this deed of gift enrolled in the word of grace, and upon record? This very enrolling is sufficient security to thee; thou canst not be dispossessed of it.

There are many think that such preaching gives way to licentiousness; I answered it fully the last time I was among you; "I beseech you by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God." The consideration of the unchangeableness of the grace of God and his love; there is no other means in the world to keep men from sin, but this stands firm for ever. As things are the gift of God, so they are unchangeable to them, to whom they are given; and the Lord give you wisdom, and understanding, and his Spirit, to hold fast a truth of such infinite concern to the joy and peace of your spirits; and till you receive such unchangeable principles, whereupon the stability of your peace is founded, you will be like waves of the sea tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation; you will have every little thing raise suspicions and jealousies in your spirits. But, beloved, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent: shall he say, and shall it not come to pass?" Numb. xxiii. 19. Shall God assent to a thing, and how much more shall not he make good that word that he assents to? Certainly, when men give a thing, they will not take it away, seeing the thing is given; I say, the things of God are given, and he cannot take them away: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against you."

There are many things of useful consideration, if time would give

me leave to open them to you.

Thirdly, The things of God are not only given, but they are freely given.

I must not touch upon the heads; there are these five things considerable in a free gift; I will but name them.

First, A free gift is, when a thing is given without compulsion; a man doth not properly give his purse upon the highway, when thieves force him to it; things freely given are not compulsory, but voluntary.

Secondly, Things may be given, but grudgingly; they may be given with a heart relucting against it; as many men give to the poor, to serve the necessity of the times; but it goes to their hearts to part with it; here is a gift, but it is not a free gift, because the heart is not enlarged, here is not a ready heart; but God doth not give grudgingly, he loves a cheerful giver, and doth so himself, for "He waits that he may be gracious," Isa. xxx. 18.

Thirdly, A gift is free, and free indeed, when a thing is given only out of the motion in, and from a man's own spirit, without any external incentive and provocation to put him upon such a gift. It is commendable, I confess, for a man to be persuaded by others to do good; but the glory of free gifts stands in the freeness of a man's own spirit without provocation. Know thus much in general, all the things we receive from God, there is no incentive, no provocation, no motive, as the original, to stir or provoke him to give them. Let me tell you this, Christ himself is not the original motive of the gift of God; he is the instrument, or, as the scripture saith, the mediator of our partaking of the gifts of God; the love of God in himself is the first fountain of all the gifts of God to us; nay, the very fountain of Christ himself, to compass the fruition and enjoyment of gifts, that the love of God himself had first framed, composed, and ordained for us; much less then, can any creature in the world have prevalency with God to stir up bowels in him, as if he needed to be stirred up to do the good he doth; that which he doth, cometh from the motion of his own thoughts rising in himself, not being raised up by any thing without himself.

Fourthly, A gift is free, when it is bountiful; such a man is free house-keeper; that is, he keeps a bountiful house: so the gifts of God

are free in respect of his bounty; God doth not sow sparingly, but liberally; he giveth us freely to enjoy all things; There is plenteous redemption with him," Psal. cxxx. 7. There is abundance of satiety; "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, they shall drink of the river of thy pleasure," Psal. xxxvi. 8. Here is a free God; here is freeness indeed, in that he is a bountiful God, in all that he bestows upon the sons of men; he fills the cup to the brim, pressed down, heaped up, and running over; in this manner is the bounty of God expressed; "He saves to the uttermost all them that come to God by him," Heb. vii. 25.

Fifthly and Lastly, A free gift is a gift that is unconditional; God doth not propose conditions before-hand, but gives his gifts without respect to any condition. Beloved, do not mistake; our faith, and obedience, are not the condition of God's gifts. That in the song of Zachariah is observable, "That he would grant us, that 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 lives;" observe, this service "without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives," is not the condition of deliverance, that we might partake of it; but here is first deliverance, and then service is the fruit of it; not deliverance the fruit of service; God delivers, and then we serve; and the tenor of the gospel in this, is contrary to the tenor of the law; the tenor of the law runs thus, "First do, then live;" the gospel saith, "First live, then do;" "When thou wast in thy blood, said unto thee, Live; then washed I thee with water, then put on ornaments upon thee:" Thus, when you consider, the frame of the gospel runs, that there is nothing comes to men, but as a free gift of God, even Christ himself is so given; do not think that God gives Christ upon condition.

Fourthly, What it is for men to know this gift of God; there is a two-fold knowledge; in general, First, A knowledge of the thing; Secondly, A knowledge of propriety in the thing; so there is a two-fold knowledge of these things given; First, The knowledge of the things given; Secondly, The knowledge of propriety in them: the knowledge of the thing itself given is two-fold; First, intellectual; Secondly, Practical. The intellectual knowledge is the natural understanding of the thing in practical knowledge is a sensible knowledge. You may distinguish them thus, as the knowledge man

has of the sweetness of sugar in his understanding, and the knowledge of the sweetness of it in the taste. There is a great deal of difference between these two; for the things of God that are given, may be known intellectually in a common way, not only by the elect, but reprobate; but the people of God only know them practically, that is, they receive by degrees the sweetness of them, and God gives the taste of them more and more to them.

Secondly, There is beside the knowledge of the thing, the knowledge of propriety, which is this, when men know the things of God, and know them as their own. It is one thing for a person to know such a woman is wise, beautiful, and rich; and it another thing to know this wise, beautiful, and rich woman is my wife; that I have a propriety in all she is, and hath: and so, likewise, it is one thing for a woman to know that a man is a man of parts, of wealth, and honour; to know him that he is so, is one thing, and to know him that is thus wise, rich, and honourable, to be her husband, is another thing: so it is likewise in the knowledge of spiritual things; it is one thing to know God and spiritual things, another thing to know him by way of propriety, to know that he gives himself to me as mine; and so, likewise, of all the rest of the particulars that are given; as Christ and the Spirit: now all this comes not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit that is of God. This I should bare shewed more at large; but of this hereafter; because I fear I have already trespassed upon your patience.

SERMON XIII.

RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST ALONE.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 19.

TO WIT, THAT GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM.

This great apostle of the Gentiles, Saint Paul I mean, though he did not first break the ice, nor lay the first hand upon the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, to pull it down, that they might become both one in one Christ; (for Peter went before him, and was indeed the first in this business, though with great bitterness of spirit even from the rest of the apostles themselves; who supposed that the glorious privileges of Christ, were to be confined only to the nation of the Jews, as you may perceive in Acts chap. viii. and ix.; though Paul I say, was not the first) yet, as he himself speaks in this business of publishing the grace of God in Christ to the Gentiles, he laboured more abundantly than they all; of which labour of his, this chapter gives abundant testimony, especially in the beginning of verse 14, where he gives the great occasion, or motive, why he did preach Christ so clearly and freely to the Gentiles; "The love of Christ, (saith he) constrains me:" as if he should say, seeing that the glory of the grace of God, hath so far extended itself, as that not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles, may have a portion in him, it is a pity that so much abundant grace which serves to the magnifying of Christ so exceedingly should be concealed; Christ hath done so much for me, thinks Paul, that it were an unworthy part in me to conceal that which should make so much unto his glory; the love wherewith he hath loved me, constrains me to do the utmost (that he might have all his praise) to manifest his glory.

Therefore, having thus laid down the great motive that set him on work to publish the gospel, he takes up this resolution to do it, let it

cost him what it will; (as it is like to do all that will be so exact in publishing the gospel as he was) yet the love of Christ did so constrain him, that he cannot keep it in; he must speak out this love of his. Thus he comes to the business in the latter end of verse 14, "If one die for all"

*The sense of the passage is not that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom he died; and the meaning is, that if Christ died for all, then all *those* were dead for whom he died.

Wherefore this text does not make for the doctrine of general redemption; for it should be observed, that it does not say that Christ died for *all men*, but for all; and so, agreeable to the Scriptures, may be understood of all the persons mentioned.

then were all dead," his meaning is this, he puts the emphasis upon the word *all*; and that emphasis is not spoken simply, but relatively and comparatively; as much as to say, It is not only the Jews have part in the death of Christ, but *all* have a part in it; If Christ had an eye not only on the Jews, but on the Gentiles too, in his death;(Rev. v. 9.) then, saith he, "all were dead," that is, all his people have a part in that death.

Now, that the apostle here mainly intends the setting forth of the largeness of God's grace in Christ, extending not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, verse 16, makes clear; for, saith he there, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh; yet henceforth know we him so no more." Give me leave to open the meaning of it; for I must tell you there is a great deal of mistake concerning the scope of the apostle in these words, which makes the sense of them so obscure in the reading of them. The apostle was once of the same mind with James, and the rest; that Christ, as he came of the flesh of Abraham, and so, according to the flesh, was of the kindred of all the Jews; they verily thought that the virtue of Christ, and redemption by him, had extended no further than to the flesh, that is, to the same flesh of which he came; they of the circumcision chide Peter, that he should offer to go without the bounds of the Jews, to preach the gospel to them, which they thought had no part in it; the apostle was of this

mind once; but "Henceforth (saith he) know I no man after the flesh;" that is, I will never preach Christ after the flesh, as if none had share in him but those that are of the kindred of which he came; nay, saith he, "Though I have known Christ thus after the flesh, henceforth I know him so no more;" where he expounds what he spake before; as if he should say, I thought Christ had had a mind to save none but the kindred of which he came; I will know him thus no longer; I will preach the gospel so no more; I will preach it no more to the Jews than to the Gentiles; they that are not of the flesh of Christ, have as great a portion in him as those that are of his flesh.

Hence he begins to gather up his main doctrine which he would preach to the Gentiles, and that he brings in verse 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" where the emphasis lies upon *any man*; If *any man* be in Christ, he is a new creature; as if he should say, This is the new doctrine I will now preach to the world; not if the Jew be in Christ; but if *any man* in the world be in him, he is a new creature; every man in the world hath this privilege, as well as the Jews; if any man be in Christ, he shall be a new creature, as well as the Jews: and because of some obscurity in this phrase, therefore, in verse 18, the apostle expounds his own meaning, what he intends by a new creature. Give me leave to open this place to you; for I must tell you there are some great mistakes in this point. Most men think that this phrase, *new creature*, is a renewed, sanctified man, so as he becomes new in his own conversation, when his life is changed; I do not deny the truth of the thing, all that are in Christ, he renews them, sanctifies them, and subdues iniquity in them; but, under favour, let me tell you, the apostle's meaning here by *new creature* is, not that they are sanctified; but that they are *new creatures*, that is, they are reconciled unto God; this is his meaning; "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*; that is, he is brought into a new condition that he was not in before; and this new condition is, he is now reconciled unto God; whereas, before, he was an alien and stranger to him.

But, you will say, How will it appear that the apostle's *new creature* is a person reconciled, and considered as reconciled, and not as sanctified?

I answer, This is clear by verse 18, "For, all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath, committed

unto us the word of reconciliation" Mark well; the main thing he drives at here is, to let the Corinthians know, and us with them, what the main ministry was which Christ had committed unto them; which was this, to publish, that "If God, from whom all things are, hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" this was the ministry which was committed unto them.

Now, if the apostle had spoken here of sanctification, he would have said, that the ministry committed unto him, with the rest, was a ministry of sanctification, as well as reconciliation; but the ministry God committed to him here was this, God reconciling men to himself by Jesus Christ; so that the being a new creature here, which was the ministry committed to the apostle, is reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ. Now in verse 19, the text that I have read unto you, he begins anew to explain more particularly, what this ministry is that the Lord hath committed unto him; "To wit, (saith he) that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." And, therefore, in the next verse you shall find, he makes this so essential a business to the ministry of the gospel, that he calls himself, and the rest, ambassadors, and ambassadors for this very purpose, namely, in Christ's stead, to beseech people that they would be reconciled unto God; and then, in the closure of the chapter, he tells them what the fruits of this reconciliation are, and by what means we come to partake of it: "He was made sin for us, that knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "From which words I might observe to you, as they have reference to the coherence.

First, What the great and main business of us that profess ourselves to be the ministers of Christ, ought to be in the world with men. It is to be lamented, I confess, and I would to God there were no occasion to speak of it, whilst we profess ourselves to be the ambassadors of Christ, to dispatch this great business, to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God; we are too much the ministers of Moses, pressing and thundering the wrath of God from heaven; publishing unto men the working out their own salvation by their own works, according to the law; putting on them the performance of duties in every particular, that

they may have peace and joy of spirit from it; telling them, that they must make their peace with God, by fasting, and prayer, and mourning: is this to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God by Christ alone? This is the embassy of the ministers of the gospel; and whoever he be that forsakes this message, he goes, and is not sent; he takes upon him to manage a business out of his commission; for the commission is, that we in Christ's stead should beseech men to be reconciled unto God, and that by the blood of Christ alone.

Secondly, I might note a thing, which, peradventure, puzzles the heads of many people, how you may understand those many texts of scripture that speak so largely of the extent of the death of Christ," He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world:" and so, verse 14, "If one died for all, then were all dead." From whence many collect the universality of redemption unto all particular persons in the world*;

*The learned Hoornbeeck asserts, that the Doctor from this passage, and 1 John ii. 2, after quoted, "Collects the universality of the redemption of all particular persons in the world, though all are not partakers of that reconciliation;" in which this learned man appears to be mistaken; for the Doctor does not collect this himself, only says, *Many collect it from hence*; and he himself seems to be of a different mind by the adversative BUT *from this coherence*, &c. and expressly says, the apostle does not speak of every particular person, but in opposition to the Jews; and so, on the other text, 1 John ii. 2, he observes, that the apostle does not oppose the world unto the elect, *but the world of the elect to the Jews*; and suggests that there are some in all the world, and in every corner of it, that have a part in Christ, and are his portion; which is very far from the doctrine of general redemption: and though the Doctor sometimes uses some general phrases, when off his guard, yet I cannot think he held the doctrine of universal

redemption; and this learned Professor himself, who is the only one I ever met with that charged the Doctor with it, seems to have some hesitation himself about it; for he says, (of the Doctor and those in his time called Antinomians) "*Redemptionem docent aliquam universalem*, they teach some sort of universal redemption, or universal redemption in some sense." — Vide Hoornbeeck's *Summ. Controvers.* 1. 10, p. 702, 703.

but from this coherence you may plainly perceive, that the apostle's main drift is not that every particular person partakes of reconciliation by Christ; he doth not speak of every particular, but in opposition to the Jews; as if he should say, you mistake yourselves, you that are of the Jews, that boast of Christ, as if there were no Christ but in yourselves; no, saith he, you are mistaken, he goes beyond you, he goes over all the world. And when St. John saith, (1 John ii. 2) "And not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world," he doth not say *ours*, in reference to believers, but he saith *ours*, as he was naturally of the stock of Abraham; when he saith, "Not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world," he doth not oppose the world unto the elect, but the WORLD of the ELECT unto the Jews; and his meaning is, all the world hath a part in Christ, and in every corner of it there is a portion of Christ, as well as there is in us, who are of the seed of Abraham; and, therefore, the apostle (Rom. iv. 13,) saith, expressly, "That the promise is not made to Abraham, and to his seed after the flesh," but to his seed after the Spirit, "that walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham." By this you may be able to resolve those manifold difficulties that arise from the universality of the tender of grace by Christ unto the world; the world, I say, is opposed only unto the narrow confines of the Jews, and includes not particular persons; but this is not that I mainly drive at for the present.

I come to the text itself. The substance of the main ministry of the apostle stands in this, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In which you

may observe with me,

First, The great grace, that living, lively, and heart-reviving grace the apostle brings to light, and commends, to the comforting of the hearts of God's people, and that is reconciliation with God.

Secondly, Note here, the original author or efficient of this reconciliation and grace, that is, God himself.

Thirdly, Note here, the main means by which this reconciliation is effected, and that is Christ himself alone; "God was in Christ."

Fourthly, Note this, the time when this reconciliation was made between God and persons in particular. The apostle himself, though he lived so many years before us, speaks of it as a thing already past; he doth not say God *is*, or *will* be, but he speaks in the preter-perfect tense, "God *was* in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" it is a thing long before finished perfectly to our hands; that we may, when God hath given us eyes to behold it, see it as a thing already done, and perfected before, and not now perfecting, much less now to be begun.

Fifthly, We may note the persons with whom God in Christ is reconciled, and that is the world; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

The principal thing I mean to drive at, is the consideration of the great grace that the apostle brings here to light; and that is, reconciliation with God; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

What is it (will you say) for God to be reconciled to persons?

For the clearing of this, First, note, something is to be premised as a necessary antecedent to reconciliation itself. Unto reconciliation, of necessity there must be supposed something to be done by us, occasioning a breach between God and us; administering such just cause of distaste, and of offence, as not only caused God to separate himself afar off from men, but also to prepare wrath and vengeance. Wherever there is reconciliation, it is supposed there was a breach made; and, upon the breach made, reconciliation is the bringing

persons, thus at distance and difference by a breach, to become one again; and, therefore, you must know, there is no man under heaven reconciled unto God, but as he is, or was considered as walking contrary unto God; and that this contrary walking unto him hath occasioned a breach between God and him. And, therefore, you shall find, when the apostle speaks of our being reconciled unto God, he brings still in this clause, that there were estrangement and distance, before such union and reconciliation: as in Eph. ii. 13, you shall find how he brings in the previous consideration; "You, (saith he) who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ;" this making nigh, or bringing together, is the reconciliation that is made with God; and the persons, that are thus made nigh, before their bringing nigh, are said to be afar off; as much as to say, there is that contrariety between God and man naturally, that puts him afar off from God, and makes him remote. "He beholds the wicked afar off," (saith the Psalmist) Psal. cxxxviii. 6. God keeps at a distance with men, when they walk in a way giving distaste and offence unto him; and it is the business of Christ to bring them nigh again, those that were thus sometimes afar off. But the apostle speaks more plainly in Col. i. 21, 22. "You, (saith he,) that were sometimes alienated (or estranged, that is to say, from God) and enemies in your minds through wicked works, hath he now reconciled." Where he not only shews there is a remote distance, and a kind of estrangement between God and men, before reconciliation; but he delivers the true proper ground from whence this alienation proceeds; "who were alienated in your minds by reason of your wicked works:" our wicked works are they that cause alienation and estrangement from God; "And," saith he, "you who were thus sometimes alienated, are reconciled by Christ." And, therefore, know, this must be laid down as a certain position, and be received of men, that in respect of themselves they are alienated and estranged persons, and the wickedness of their ways is that which causeth this alienation, and estrangement, and separation, from God.

But some (it may be) will object; Was there ever a time that God was alienated and estranged as an enemy to those people of his, with whom he is now reconciled? Some will say, God loves his people with an everlasting love, and he never looks upon his people but with a look of love, and with a look of union.

For answer to this, give me leave to clear a mystery unto you; this seems to be a kind of paradox, that God should, from all eternity, look with eyes of love upon his people, and yet there should be a time in which there should be an alienation or enmity between God and them. For the reconciliation of this difference, you must know, it is one thing for God to recollect all future things that shall come in all the several times of the world, into one thought of his own; and it is another thing for these things to come to pass in their several times, according to their own nature. You must know, it is true, that in God's eternal thoughts, according to the infinite vastness of his own comprehension, he did sum up, from first to last, all the occurrences and passages which in succession of time should come to pass. As for example: — he had at once in his eye man in his innocency, in his fall, and in his restoration by Christ; he had in his eye man committing sin against him from time to time; and, at the same instant, had in his eye Christ dying for these sins of men, and so satisfying his own justice for their transgressions. Now, because God had all things at once in his eye, which, in respect of their actual being, are in succession of time; therefore, it comes to pass, that God, from all eternity, had everlasting love unto his own people, though in time they do those actions which, in their own nature, are enmity against God. For example; you and I are, it may be, this moment committing some sin, which is enmity to the nature of God; that sin, simply considered in its own nature, hath an estrangement in it, to separate between us and God; but though it is true, that sin committed hath, in its own nature, a power of separating; yet, as God from all eternity had the present sins we now commit, in his eye, and at the same moment had the satisfaction in his eye; from hence it comes to pass, there was not a time in which God actually stood at enmity with our persons: but, in respect of the nature of things coming successively to pass, man's condition may be considered as a condition of enmity; and again, it may be considered as a condition of reconciliation to God. That you and I were born in sin is true, and that this our being born in sin was a state of enmity against God, is as true; that in the fulness of time Christ came into the world, and then actually did bear our sins, by which God became reconciled unto us again, is also most certainly true. There is a great distance of time between sin committed, and that satisfaction actually made; but in respect of God's eye looking

upon all things at once, there is no distance of time between that enmity which sin did produce, and that reconciliation which the blood of Christ hath wrought, to take away this enmity. I hope, though this be a high mystery, yet it will be clear to such that will but take into consideration that difference between God's own simple act of comprising all the sins of the world at once (I mean that infinite act of God in that infinite comprehension of his), and the succession of things in their own time and nature; this being supposed, that persons actually do that which is enmity, and that which makes a difference and separation.

Reconciliation itself briefly stands in this, namely, that whatever breach there was, or was occasioned by any act of man in it, all these breaches are quite made up, and taken away: when God is reconciled to persons, he hath no more quarrel with, nor controversy against them with whom he is reconciled; though this day, yesterday, to-morrow, and the next day, thou dost commit a sin, which, in its own nature, is enmity, and may occasion a breach between God and thee; yet, I say, if God be once reconciled, all whatever administers any quarrel or controversy between God and thee, is absolutely taken up; he hath no more to object against thee, or to hit thee in the teeth withal. Understand, I beseech you, the nature of reconciliation, and you shall find there is more in it than usually is apprehended: you know as long as men stomach one another, and, as often as they have occasion, are quarrelling one with another; all this while these persons are not reconciled indeed, though peradventure there may be some complimentary shaking of hands; if still there be snarling one at another, and stomaching one another, they are not reconciled: so I say, is God quarrelling with thy spirit? is he still hitting thee in the teeth with such and such sins, thou committest against him? is the bitterness of God poured upon thee? is his wrath revealed against thee? I say, if there be this wrath of God at any time truly revealed against thee, there is not yet a reconciliation of God towards thee. In reconciliation there are no old grudgings, quarrellings, and controversies; there is no hearing of them any more; in that there are forging and forgetting, as you use to say; and all this, whatever it is with men, it is thus with God; wherever God is reconciled, he forgives and forgets for ever.

Therefore you shall find when the Lord speaks of reconciliation in

the covenant, he saith, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" here is the drawing and making a person one with himself; "And your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," follows it. I beseech you, observe it well, there is a great deal of matter in this expression, and this will give you rest if ever you have it. Either you must deny God is reconciled, or you must conclude he hath forgiven your transgressions, and he will remember your sins no more.

It may be you feel much corruption venting itself; though you act this and that transgression at this time, if God be reconciled to you, he doth not remember your sins you now commit; "Your sins," mark it well, because I know it is harsh to men, and contrary to sense and reason, yet it must be true, because the Lord hath spoken it; "Your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more." You will say, when? I answer, when God is entered into covenant with a people; "And this shall be the covenant I will make in those days," saith the Lord, "I will sprinkle you with clean water, and your sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

How can this be, you will say, is God grown so forgetful, that he takes no notice, that at this instant I sin, and cannot he remember I sin? This seems to be a mighty strange argument.

Now suppose I could not answer this; is this a truth that God saith, or no, "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more?" If this be not a truth, then the word of God is untrue, and then farewell all the ground upon which a person ought to build; but let God be true, and every man a liar; therefore, to clear it, I say, God remembers, and knows well enough that we act this: his meaning then is, I will remember them no more, to hit you in the teeth with them; I will have no more to say to you for these transgressions you now commit; for all that he has to say against iniquity, against this present iniquity committed; he hath said it over to Christ already, when he was upon the cross; and this sin now committed was then in the remembrance of God; he took the full payment for it, and for that sin that shall be committed to-morrow, unto the end of the world, he took all the payment of Christ; therefore he will never repeat them over to you; this is God's way, not to hit his people in covenant in the teeth, nor upbraid them with any sin they commit; this is plain in the latter end of the text, "Not imputing their

trespasses unto them:" as if he had said, I will never call you to an account for the sins you commit; I will never tax you for them; you shall be in mine eyes as if you did not sin; all that I mean to ask, I have it already, at the hands of my Son; "I have beheld the travail of his soul, (Isa. liii. 11,) and am satisfied" with the beholding of it. In Isa. xxvii. 4, you have a notable expression, "Fury is not in me," saith God. You will say, how can that be; is not God angry? Doth he not pour out his wrath and vengeance? Doth not his fury burn against sin? The prophet speaks in the name of God in that place; "Fury is not in me:" but if you will read the passage well, observe it, and you shall find of what time the Lord speaks this; he speaks not of the present, but of a certain time that he prophesieth of. The Lord hath a vineyard, he watcheth over it, and waters it night and day: and this vineyard shall enlarge its borders, and shall spread itself over all the world; the meaning then is this; there is a time to come, wherein the people of the Lord, the vine of the Lord shall spread itself, not in the garden of Israel only, but all the world over; that is, the Gentiles shall be received into fellowship with God, as well as the Jews; Christ shall come, and pull down the wall of partition; and the gospel of Christ shall be preached all the world over; then "Fury shall not be in me;" when Christ hath offered up himself, and perfected forever them that are sanctified, then the Lord hath no more fury to pour out upon such as are in him: when your reconciliation is made with God; know from the first time of it till your last breath, there shall not be the least fury in God to you; for that is poured out upon Christ already, and there is not one drop of that poison to be poured out upon you. Isa. liv. 9, is a most admirable place; "As I have sworn (saith the Lord) that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." What not God be wroth with, nor so much as rebuke persons? Yea, so saith the Lord, "I will not be wroth I have sworn unto thee, that as the waters of Noah," &c. You know the Lord made a covenant, that there should never come a flood to drown the world any more; this covenant is firm, so as that the water shall drown all the world again, before God will be wroth with his people any more; when is this? Look into the beginning of the chapter, and you shall see; when the Jews shall inherit the Gentiles, then it shall be.

But you will say, the Lord in that chapter saith, "For a little moment

have I hid my face; in a little wrath I hid it," verse 8, and therefore it seems God was wroth and angry, then, when he said he would not be wroth, and with the same people.

But mark it well, there is a great mistake, as if the Lord spake all in that chapter to the same people; he distinguisheth between his present dealing with them, and with his people afterwards, when the Gentiles shall come into his fold; indeed it is true, he saith, he forsook this church as the wife of his youth, "But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee," saith he: there was a time in which the Lord was wroth, and hid his face; but there is a time when he will not only be kind, but will have mercy with everlasting kindness; that is, a kindness that hath no intervenings of wrath mixed, but that holds out, an everlasting love; and this mercy without any wrath between, should be when the people of the Jews should inherit the Gentiles; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, by Christ's taking away the wall of partition.

In brief, know this as a certain truth, God once reconciled is so for ever; God is not such a changeling as to be reconciled today, and fall out to-morrow again; God when he is once become friends with a man, he is so for ever; nothing shall break (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) squares between God and him.

Again, Consider by what means this reconciliation is wrought, and then it will be manifest unto you that God cannot be angry, it is by Christ; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." I ask this question, did Christ fully satisfy the indignation of God, or did he satisfy it only in part, leaving some remainders of it for the creature to come after and bear? If Christ did not fully satisfy indignation, he is but a piece, of a Saviour; he did not save to the uttermost; he should be no perfect Saviour, if he did not satisfy the wrath of God to the uttermost; but if he did fully satisfy, as God himself "beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied;" then all indignation is past. Look as it is with men that are to make accounts; suppose a man should account for a hundred several sums, these accounts are not satisfied, except he satisfy and pay every sum; if he pay ninety-nine sums, and leaves but one unpaid, the creditor is not satisfied. Either Christ hath paid all, or some must come after to pay the rest; certainly indignation never ceases till there be satisfaction. Either God hath satisfaction perfectly in Christ, or a believer must

pay the remainder; either he hath the full of Christ, or a believer himself must satisfy. Suppose that Christ had satisfied God's indignation for all sins but one, and a believer must satisfy that one; that one is enough to damn him for ever; for he cannot give satisfaction for one sin.

If Christ had satisfied for all, and had taken away the whole indignation, how can God come and pour out new indignation?

And (to conclude) know this, that this perfect reconciliation, this peace with God, is not a thing now to be agitated, and controverted in heaven; as if there were an act of parliament now in hand, in hope it will pass, which must have some fear with it, lest it should miscarry; but God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Let me tell you, whoever you are that can claim a part in Christ, your reconciliation is finished to your hands; Christ is now making reconciliation in heaven for you; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself: he is not now reconciling; the thing is finished; your reconciliation is complete. God hath past it not only by vote and consent in heaven, but he hath past it upon record under his hand, in the ministry of the Gospel; we hold out to you reconciliation done: we do not hold it forth as doing, or to be done with him; but it is done with him; if you do but close with it, the thing is finished for you.

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST'S FREE WELCOME TO ALL COMERS.

JOHN vi. 37.

AND HIM THAT COMETH TO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE
CAST OUT (OR CAST OFF)

THESE are the words of our Saviour; the occasion was this, he having not only a natural sympathy and compassion, but also being a spiritual physician, disperses abroad common mercies in an extraordinary manner. In the former chapter, he is plentiful in healing the sick, and curing many diseases; natural men, being sensible of such kindnesses, flocked mightily after him. And though Christ knew well enough what they were, as you shall see by and by, yet he shuts not the bowels of compassion from them in extremity: there were many ready to faint; now, rather than they should want supply, he would work another miracle, and, with a few loaves and fishes, satisfy thousands of them, and so he doth. This people finding good cheer, they are like dogs, can scarce leave the house — (bear with the expression, for they were no better, for all their flocking to Christ) — I say, they were so eager to follow him, no ground should hold them. Christ takes ship, and goes over sea to Capernaum; no country is too cold for them; nay, the sea itself shall not part Christ and them; after him they will go.

Well, they come to him; and, because he had been so kind to feed them, they think they may be familiar with him; and, therefore, after their carnal fashion, begin to put questions unto him, I say, in a fleshly way: in a low fashion, they begin to argue with him, "How came he there?" such poor silly stuff they object to him. Well, though Christ had natural compassion, yet he will not soothe them in their folly and simplicity, but deals roundly with them, and tells them plainly, they were mistaken in him, if they thought his excellency did stand in working miracles for food, for bread; he

came on a higher errand, and a business of greater consequence; and, therefore, tells them plainly, it was another business he came about; their thoughts must rise higher than the loaves; "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." He comes about eternal life, he brings that which might produce that unto them, and therefore counsels them to look after it. Well, because they are in talk, they hold it on, though to little purpose, and put another question to Christ, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Naturally, men are upon doing to get; when we talk upon matters of religion, it is doing gets every thing; therefore, they will be doing, that they may have something: now, though Christ doth not answer the question they made, being a silly one, yet he gives them another answer that was to the purpose; "This is the work of God, to believe in him whom he hath sent." Never look to get it by doing; look to get it from him, and not from yourselves, and your own doings.

When Christ had made that answer, they began to be a little angry with him, and to put a cavilling question, or a question by way of exception against him; "What sign shewest thou, (say they) that we may see and believe? Moses gave us this bread from heaven;" (speaking of manna.) What doth Christ tell them of life that he brings? — What, is he better than Moses? — Will he give better bread than manna was? Well, (for all their heat, passion, and peevishnes" and again, "Your fathers did eat manna and are dead:" here he takes them off from their great Rabbi, whom they mentioned as if he was their Christ; and also from their objection; saying, that the manna they did eat was but satisfactory for a time, there was not life in it; they that did eat it are dead; and, therefore, he comes to make application, and to shew wherein he excelled Moses, and wherein that bread he brings exceeds manna, verse 35, "He that comes to me, shall not thirst;" they eat manna, and yet were empty for all that; they drank of the rock Moses smote, and yet they were athirst again; "But he that comes to me, shall not hunger;" I have so much as shall satisfy, there shall be no lack at all.

After Christ had made this discourse, he begins to deal plainly with them indeed, and tells them, "Though they had seen, yet they believed not. "It may be some discouragement to men, that labour in the vineyard of the Lord, to see small fruit of their labours; but here,

you see, Christ himself took a great deal of pains with these men, and all to little purpose, or rather to no purpose at all; therefore, in verse 37, Christ comforts himself against that common discomfort which was "Though these men believe not, yet, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me;" I shall have all that I expect; I never look for more than the Father gives me; and of those that he gives, I shall lose none: and then, afterwards, in the words of the text, he comforts those that do come; these, that would not come, he leaves, and falls to consolation for his people that do come; "He that comes to me, I will in no wise cast him out."

The doctrine the words afford, will be natural, it shall not vary a jot from the very words of the Holy Ghost; "He that comes to Christ, he will in no wise cast him out:" mark it well beloved, there is abundance of limb in it, to those whose eyes the Lord will be pleased to open, to behold the fulness in it; I say, he that comes to Christ, it is no matter who nor what he be, there is nothing in the world can be considered as an hinderance to his coming; if he do but come, he may be certain of this, "he shall in no wise be cast out;" there is no man under heaven, be he as vile as can possibly be imagined, if he do but come to Christ, even while he is so, shall be rejected of him, or have a repulse. Beloved, I desire the doctrine itself may be printed and stamped in your spirits.

Give me leave to speak a few words in general, before I come to particulars: I know, I may speak that which will be offence to some, but I must speak the truth of the Lord, whatever men say. I say, whatever thou art in this congregation, suppose a drunkard, a whoremaster, a swearer, a blasphemer and persecutor, a madman in iniquity, couldst thou but come to Jesus Christ; I say, come, only come, it is no matter though there be no alteration in the world in thee*,

*That is, no alteration visible to him, or others; none in his heart that he can observe, or take any encouragement from; nor any in his life and conversation observable to men; otherwise, there must be an alteration in him, or it is impossible for him to come to Christ, that is, believe in him: he must have grace given him to draw him, or he will never come, he cannot, John vi. 44~65. The desires of the soul must be towards Christ; there must be a sight of him, and of

both the want and worth of him: but the sense is, that a man that has been ever so vile, even to the very instant that he is called, and directed to Christ, and while he can see nothing else but sin in him, he should not stay for any preparations and qualifications in him fitting him for Christ: that is 'till his heart is cleansed, and his life reformed, but as vile a sinner as he is, and in the view of all the notorious sins he has lived in, should go to Christ, and venture his soul on him. — The design of these expressions, however offensive they may be to some, is not to encourage men in sin; nor do they suppose, that men, on coming to Christ, may, or will continue such as they have been before; for an alteration in heart and life, follows at once upon coming to Christ; by faith the heart is purified; that works by love, and is attended by the fruits of righteousness; but to shew that nothing should hinder or discourage sensible sinners, though ever so vile, from immediate coming to Christ, and that nothing will hinder him from receiving such, and that such should not wait for any qualifications to fit them for him; and if they had them, should not bring them to him for that purpose; but should come as sinners, and commit their souls unto him, believing in him unto salvation. Thus Saul, in the height of his rebellion, when his heart and mouth were filled with blasphemy against Christ, and bitterness against his people, and in the full pursuit of these lusts, the Lord called him by his grace, and revealed his Son in him; Christ appeared to him; light shone around him; grace reached his heart, and brought him at once to the feet of Jesus; hence he says, "I, who was before a blasphemmer, a persecutor, and injurious person, I obtained mercy;" on which Beza has these words, "*Haec sunt opera preparatoria, (or, as in his Major Annotations, "en merita preparationis,") these are the preparatory works* the apostle sets himself off with; for nothing intervenes between his having been all this, and his obtaining mercy, as the cause of it, or as fitting him for it; and had he been guilty of adultery, drunkenness, and swearing, (crimes not greater than what he had been guilty of) he could, and no doubt would have said, I Paul, the adulterer, the drunkard, the swearer, I obtained mercy.

in that instant when thou dost come; I say, at that instant, though thou be thus vile as can be imagined, come to Christ; he is untrue if he put thee out; "In no wise, (saith he) will I cast thee out."

There are two sorts of people in the world that are given by the Father to Christ, who yet, for the present, do not actually come to him.

First, There are a sort of men in the world, elected indeed, but, for the present, are wild asses upon the mountains, snuffing up the wind, and as desperate in iniquity as the veriest reprobate under heaven; and yet there shall not be rejection of these persons when they come; I say, whensoever they come, though as sinful as their skins can hold; yet when they come to Christ, they shall not be cast out; for the present indeed, they despise their birthright, they scorn the grace of God, and cast it at their heels.

But there are a second sort of people given by God to Christ that have not received him, and are not actually come to him; and yet for the present are wrought upon to be a willing people in some sort; that is, the Lord hath dealt thus far with them, fain they would close with Christ, fain they would conclude an interest and portion in him; Oh! it would be welcome to them; it would be life to them, to be certainly satisfied that his blood is their ransom, and that their sins are blotted out thereby; I say, fain they would, but they dare not yet close with Christ for their lives; they dare not set up their rest here; they dare not sit down with any such conclusion; but still there is something or other, that remains, that must be removed out of the way, before they can make this certain conclusion, Christ is theirs: — now, my principal errand is, at this time, to this latter sort of people; a people, I say, whose hearts tell them, if it could appear clearly, that, without danger to them, they may say, Christ is their salvation, and sit down with this; if they could be satisfied with it, rather than their lives they would have Jesus Christ, but they dare not: something or other is wanting, they dare not lay hold upon him, and it is presumption for them to sit down satisfied, Christ is theirs; this is the generation I am at present to deal with, and to declare, by the power of Jesus Christ, his clear mind to them, and by that power to pluck them out of the mire wherein for the present they stick fast.

And that I may the better come upon the spirits of such leaden

persons, let us consider these three things:

First, What this coming to Christ is, that is here spoken of.

Secondly, What his purpose is in proposing this coming to him.

Thirdly, What he means by this expression of his, "I will in no wise cast him out."

I shall speak briefly of the two former, because the life of Christ's purpose lies in the last of these particulars.

First, What doth Christ mean by coming unto him? In verse 35, he will give you his mind himself, "He that comes unto me shall not hunger, and he that believes in me shall not thirst;" mark it well, he makes coming and believing, in sense, all one; for if you observe it, such as Christ deals withal they are unsatisfied and empty ones; now he satisfies the empty; and whose emptiness will he fill? even of those that believe in him, that come to him: believing and coming therefore are all one, so that to come to Christ, is to believe in him. But we are as far to seek as we were, you will say, what is that believing on Christ? In John i. 12, you shall see what it is to believe on him;" As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Here he makes receiving and believing all one, as before he made coming and believing. The sum, in brief, is this — the coming to Christ is no more but the receiving of him for shelter and succour. A man is said to come to a strong-hold, when he enters into it for his security and safety; he doth not stand hacking and hammering, shall I, or shall I not? but danger forces him, and in he gets, the door being open, and comes to his strong-hold: so a person comes to Christ; Christ opening, he slips in, and ventures himself with him, and casts himself into his arms, and he will sink or swim with him.

Beloved, whoever you are that can but come to him, be you what you will, or may be, I say, if you come to him, to venture yourselves upon the rock Christ, to sink or swim, as he will support or sink under you, counting him a refuge, to have him for your succour; "In no wise will he cast you out."

But, Secondly, to what purpose doth Christ propose coming here, will some say? Beloved, I propound this the rather, because I

conceive men mistake the mind of Christ, concerning this coming. You must not imagine, that our motion of coming is the *premium mobil* that gives motion to Christ to open and entertain; as if our coming did stir him up to set open, and give entrance: Christ hath not any such thought in him that we must come, and therefore will own us for his own; for it is certainly true, the very motion of our coming to Christ, is from himself, and from his coming to us, before we do so much as move. It is a common principle known to all divines, and most people; we are first acted, and then we act, *acti agimus*. First, Christ gives to us to come, and then, by his gift, we come to him; we must not imagine, by coming to Christ, he is moved and invited towards us, and is stirred up to open to us, and give entertainment to us; but his first coming to us, and living in us, stirs us up to motion: "You that were dead in sins and trespasses, (Ephes. ii. 1.) hath he quickened." Beloved, is there death till Christ quickens? Where then can there be this motion of ours, before he himself be come with his life? Where there is no life, you know there is no motion; and fill the fountain of life communicates it, there can be none; therefore it is Christ that gives this coming unto men, and be having given it, they come to him.

But what is the purpose of Christ then, in speaking of coming here, as if this were a preparation, or a previous condition, that there is no portion in Christ, till there be first coming?

I answer, Mark the scope well, you shall find Christ doth not intend a necessary condition, but the removal of all objections; he doth not intend to put us on doing to get him, but to take away all obstacles that may hinder us from coming to him: and the emphasis of the text doth not lie upon coming, but upon this, "In no wise will I cast them off:" as if he had said, you are poor wretches; you think I am so hard-hearted, I will cast you off, you are so sinful: but let not this trouble you; whatever sinfulness you have, that, in common apprehension, may hinder me from receiving you coming to me, for all this I will not cast you out when you come. As when a man says to a poor man, Come to my house, I will give you something; he proposeth no conditions but grace to him; you shall have something, I will give you this and that.

But, I will come to the Third, the main thing I intend at this time, namely, what Christ intends when he saith, "I will in no wise cast

you out.." Oh !the depth and unsearchable grace that is comprehended in these few words! If it might shine with its own brightness to your spirits, how would you go away leaping and rejoicing, with joy unspeakable and glorious! Why, the Lord is able to communicate to you, above all we are able to ask or think. "I will in no wise cast you out;" do but come, and nothing, I say, nothing shall stand between you and me, to put a bar to hinder an entrance to me.

There are two estates whereto this grace mentioned may belong; either that estate wherein is the breaking forth of the first light to the soul; or that estate wherein, after light is broken forth, darkness seems to come again in the place of it; and this passage of Christ hath reference to both these estates.

First, The First estate wherein light begins first to break out, the first dawning of the light of Christ. To give you an instance, and so bring the business close: suppose a person, as the apostle does, Eph. ii. 2, "You, who were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened; wherein in times past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that now rules in the children of disobedience:" I say, suppose a person to be in the worst condition you can imagine; single out the vilest man in the world, the notablest drunkard that ever breathed, the greatest whore-master, and the lewdest person that can be imagined; such a person as this, and continuing to this very instant, now before the Lord, as he was before, without any change and alteration in the world until this time; suppose such a person; by this text it appears so manifest, that if the Lord do but grant, and hath but put a willingness and readiness of spirit into this man *,

* Here you see clearly, the Doctor supposes willingness and readiness of spirit to come to Christ, put into such a sinner; which is owing to power and grace thus making willing, and such a soul will never be rejected let him be ever so vile.

that Christ he would have, if it might appear he might have him; if his heart do but say, I would have him, all that sinfulness, though to this instant continued in, is no bar in the world, but this man may claim his portion in Christ, and have as certain security that his portion is there, as any other man may have. Mark well, I say, this

passage, "I will in no wise cast him out:" our Saviour plainly imports, that there neither is, nor can be devised, no not by God himself, any one consideration whatsoever, which might occasion him to put off; or say nay, to any one that comes: no condition, could he make it as bad as the devils themselves; yet, if there be but a coming to Christ, there can be no consideration in the highest pitch of sinfulness for him to reject, or put by a person coming to him; for, you must know, Christ is well acquainted with all the objections the heart of man (nay the devil) can make against the freeness of his grace, and life by him; to save labour, therefore, in this one passage, "I will in no wise cast out," Christ at once answers all the objections that could be made. And I dare be bold to maintain, in his name and stead; let a man but say, and lay down this for granted, come he would, Christ he would have rather than his life; let this be granted for a truth, I will be bold with Christ out of this passage to answer ten thousand objections, even fully to the silencing of every one that can be made: "I will in no wise cast him out;" that is, I will upon no consideration that can be imagined and conceived. I know the objections are many, and they seem to be very strong, in respect of such a person to whom the Lord hath given a willingness and desire of spirit, to close with Christ, and yet, dare not do the thing; I say, they are many, and very strong; but, let them be what they will, you shall see by-and-by they come to no value in the world, there is no strength in them. Let me tell you, the Lord hath sent me, at this time, "to proclaim liberty to such captives," that are in this sad, bitter, and (to their thinking) desperate condition; liberty God hath given thee, if thou wilt come freely; nothing in the world shall hinder thee.

But let us consider the objections that may be made, and therein see what ground poor sinners may have to forsake their own mercy, and so become their own tormentors.

I dare not close with Christ, (saith many a poor soul) if I sit down and close with him, being satisfied with this argument, Christ offers himself to sinners, this is presumption; why so? I am the filthiest creature that ever breathed; I should stink above ground with my sins, if you knew what a creature I am, and what an ungodly sinner I am; I am a blasphemer; I do nothing but blaspheme the God of heaven; and I blaspheme his word to persecution: my spirit is mad against the gospel itself.

I answer, in a word, reckon up all you can imagine, suppose the worst you can conceive, the truth of the worst, that you have not belied yourselves a jot, in proposing the abominable filthiness and loathsome baseness of your filthy condition; suppose this be imagined; what of this? Surely, as long as I am in this case, Christ cannot belong to me, there is no coming to him for me. If this be truth that you say, that such and such filthiness stands between Christ and you, that though you come, there could be no entertainment with him for you; supposing this to be true, this that Christ speaks is most certainly false; for, saith he, "I will in no wise cast you off;" that is, upon no consideration will I cast you off. You say, upon this consideration, I am so abominably vile, there will be casting off; if this you say be true, that which Christ saith, must be false; there is a point-blank contradiction between these two; and, therefore, either Christ must call in these words again, thus generally delivered, and he must put in this exception that you put in, or else his word and yours cannot agree.

You say, upon such considerations, there is no admittance; and upon such and such there is admittance; Christ saith, "I will in no wise cast you out;" notwithstanding this consideration, I will receive you, be you what you will, do but come, and for all that, you shall be welcome

But, some will say, men must be fitted for Christ, before he will ever own them.

I answer again, is there this exception put into the grant of Christ, except you be fitted for me, I will cast you out? Then you may say indeed, except you be fitted for him he will cast you out; but then, I say, how can this be true, "I will in no wise cast him out?" The words, must run thus, "Him that comes to me, (if he be fitted and prepared) I will in no wise cast out;" but if he be not fitted and prepared, I will cast him out; but do they run so? Christ looks not for fitness, but people may be capable of communion with him without fitness; he takes them into communion with himself, and afterwards fits them for it, as he would have them; but, beforehand, there is no fitness; suppose what fitness you will, in expecting the grant, I say, in expecting the grant of Christ, fitness or not fitness is all one; "Come to me, I will in no wise cast you out."

Peradventure, though the text seems to be so clear, yet you will say, surely the grace of God is not so large as you seem to express it? There must be something expected and considered in the person coming, or there will be no receiving and entertaining by Christ.

I answer, it were an easy thing, (if time would give leave) to shew, that through the whole scripture, the Lord Christ hath such a purpose to set forth the glory of the grace of his Father, as that he will have men know, that all the fitness of persons, to communicate or participate of Christ, is their desperate sinfulness; I say, nothing but sinfulness is that which is the fitness that Christ looks for in men *.

*Not what makes a soul lovely to Christ, but what makes Christ necessary and suitable to that.

I beseech you, peruse that passage, never to be forgotten (Ezek. vi.), where the Holy Ghost, in the beginning of the chapter, first states the case concerning the condition of persons; then makes the conclusion, the state being granted. Suppose your condition of sinfulness rise up to the height of the illustration there mentioned, of a child polluted in its blood; which kind of expression the Holy Ghost useth, as that which doth, of all other things in the world, most set out the loathsome nastiness, and intolerable filthiness of sin in men; "Thy father was an Amorite, thy mother was an Hittite; in the day of thy nativity thy naval was not cut, thou wast polluted in thy blood, neither wast thou washed with water to supple thee, thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all; and no eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee; but thou wast cast out, to the loathing of thy person." Here is the nature of the sinfulness of persons polluted in blood. There was such a filthy loathsomeness in this pollution, that it was beyond the pity of any creature; it was so abominably filthy, that there was no place for pity; nay, more, such pollution of blood there was, that did occasion casting out, as if the abiding of that person in the room any longer, would poison all the rest; and, therefore, because there could not be an enduring of that loathsomeness any longer, there must be flinging out upon the dunghill.

Suppose your sins rise to this very height, and there is such a stench of filthiness in them, that all the world should even vomit to think of that sinfulness that you have acted and committed; — what of all

this? Surely, you will say, there is no portion in Christ for me, as long as my case is such a case as this. Observe the strange expression of the Holy Ghost, "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live;" there is a great deal of difference between saying, *Live*, and *casting out* of such persons; when no eye pitied thee, that time which was the time of thy blood, "that time was the time of love." This is strange indeed, that all the creatures in the world should turn against such a person, as should be so abominable, that men should abhor him; and yet the time of his pollution, should be Christ's time of love. Well, but you will say, Surely, before Christ will communicate himself, and give up himself to such men, for all this, the case must be altered with them; you shall see it is no such matter, but directly the contrary; "Thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swear unto thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. — What strange expressions are here! Methinks your hearts cannot but be wrapped up into heaven, in admiration of them: these the Lord aggravates to the highest terms that can be imagined; setting forth the most horrible loathsomeness of the sinfulness of men; and yet that time of sinfulness, was the time of God's love; and not only so, but a time wherein God swore to, and entered into covenant with this person, and became his.

But, you will say, there was some cleansing before. You shall see the Holy Ghost in the next words makes it appear it is not so; mark the words well, "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood:" then, when I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Here was not first a washing, and then swearing, and entering into a covenant; but there was first swearing and entering into covenant, and then washing with water afterwards: here is a coming and closing with Jesus Christ, even while the state of a person is the filthiest, in the world; and I tell you, beloved, either you must close with Christ for your comfort, unworthy as you are, or you must never receive him while you live. "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You that will bring righteousness with you to be received of Christ; I tell you, he came not to save such persons; "Christ came to save that which was lost: he died for the ungodly," Rom. v. 6.

But, you will say, for all this high aggravation of loathsomeness of

sinfulness, my case is worse than all this that you speak of; therefore there is something in my condition, that if I come to Christ he must cast me off; here is nothing but positive filthiness: it is true, indeed, this condition is very bad, but my case rises higher; besides a positive loathsomeness in myself, I am a rebel, a sturdy enemy, I fight against God, I quarrel with him, and take up arms against him. Imagine your condition a condition of as great enmity and madness against God, as your hearts can possibly devise; what then? Sure you will say, if I be such an enemy, I must lay down arms before Christ will have to do with me, or admit me to come to him. Will a king let a cut-throat traitor, while he hath thoughts in his heart to murder him, will he let him come with a naked knife into his presence, and graciously embrace him in his arms?

For answer, Still see the close of the text, observe that if this be true, that in respect of this rebelliousness in thy spirit against God, thou sayest, if I come, Christ will cast me off; these words "*in no wise*" cannot be true; for here is a consideration, as before, that makes, an exception, and so frustrates thy entrance to Christ, though there be coming.

Beloved, do you think it was out of the thoughts of Christ, to wit, your enmity, and rebellion? — And if he thought of it, do you think he would not have put it in? Surely he was wise enough, and knew what he said, and certainly had rebelliousness itself in his thoughts when he spoke the words, *in no wise*; and certainly this shall not prejudice you, but if you come to Christ, he is as much yours as if you never took up arms against him.

But to clear up this truth to you more fully, look into Psal. lxxviii. 18, "Thou hast ascended up on high, and hast led captivity captive, and thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Mark it well; you say there is no dwelling for Christ with rebels, that is your position; I am a rebel, there can be no entertainment with him for me; but, saith the text (note it I pray) "He received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." If that be not clear enough, look into Rom. v. 6, 7, 8, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved;" mark the expression, it is a strange one; you must directly deny the truth of what the apostle says, if you will stand to this

principle, that as long as you are enemies there is no admittance unto Christ for you; for, saith the text, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled;" not that Christ provided reconciliation for enemies, that when they be amended, they shall be saved, but during enmity itself they receive reconciliation.

I do not speak this to the intent that any should conceive that God leaves persons rebellious, vile, and loathsome, as he finds them*,*

* And it should be observed, that all before spoken, is said to such who are deemed sensible of their rebellion and vileness; and also under some temptations that Christ will not receive them, being so very sinful.

when he closeth with them; but, I say, at that time, when the Lord closeth with persons, he closeth with them in such a state of rebellion; and if thou comest to Christ in this condition, it manifestly shall appear to thee, that he will open his bosom (John xiii. 25; Cant. viii. 5.) for thy head to rest upon, as well as for the most righteous person in the world, and his breast for thy mouth to suck.(Isa. lxvi. 11, 12.)

He shuts the door to none that comes; "Ho! every one that thirsteth, let him come and drink of the water of life freely." Let *every one*; there is not one exempted; Yet, *not I*, saith one, *not I*, saith another; but the Holy Ghost saith,"let every one come." No man under heaven that hath a heart to come, and suck of the breasts of Christ, but the way is free for him; the fountain is set open for all sin and uncleanness: at the pool of Bethesda every impotent person might step in; at the bath the poorest man in the world may go, if he will, and step in; neither is the loathsomest person in the world excluded; now Christ is that bath opened for all comers; there is no comer shall ever be cast off; I dare be bold to say, there never did miscarry any person in the world that did indeed come to him; if there did any miscarry, there is no credit to be given to the words of Christ himself.

But I see I must hasten: I come to consider the power of this expression to persons that had the light risen to them, but think now darkness is come over them again; I mean those that have received Christ, and have believed, but something or other hath happened, that even they suspect, that if they should come to him, he would

cast them off. But if the first proposition be granted, that is discussed, then much more this: "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life," Rom. v. 10. If while we are without strength, Christ in due time died for the ungodly; if while we were sinners he died for us, how much more shall we be saved from wrath being reconciled ! All this is to shew, that if Christ did not shut out persons in the worst condition, when they had no acquaintance at all with him, much less will he cast out those that he had familiarity with in former times; there is no condition in the world a believer is subject to, that may occasion the least suspicion that Christ will cast him out, if he come.

But you will say, Suppose a believer falls into some scandalous sins, and notorious sins, it may be to commit murder and adultery together, as David did; surely now there is some cause of suspicion, that if he come presently to Christ after he commits these things, he will send him packing. I answer, If this be true, there must be a putting in of this exception into the text, If thou art a believer commit such and such a sin, though thou comes, to me, I will cast thee out; and if it be so, Christ must cut off that large expression of his, "I will in no wise cast thee out."

You will say, this is strange doctrine: suppose a believer commit adultery and murder, may he presently look upon Christ, and in him see a discharge of his sins, and reconciliation by him, and part in him, at that very time he commits them? Surely there must be large humiliation, and confession of these sins; and there must be a long continuance in this too; he must not apply comfort presently; there must be more brokenness of heart yet, and more yet, and more yet: this is the objection of the world.

I answer, I confess the crime is great in its kind, and, for the present, it may silence the voice of truth itself; but whatever becomes of it, that Christ may have the glory of his grace, and the glory of that fulness of redemption wrought all at once; let me tell you, believers cannot commit those sins that may give just occasion of suspicion to them, that if they come to Christ he would cast them out: let me not be mistaken in that I say; I know the enemies of the gospel will

make an evil construction of it; yet a believer, I say, cannot commit those sins that can give occasion to him to suspect, that if he come presently to Christ, he would cast him off.

But must not he confess first, and be afflicted in his soul, before he can think he shall be received if he come?

For answer to it; I deny not, but acknowledge, when a believer sins, he must confess these sins; and the greatest end and ground of this confession is that which Joshua speaks concerning Achau, Josh. vii. 19. "My son, confess thy faults, and give glory to God." A believer in confession of sin gives glory to the great God of heaven and earth; and that must be the glorious end of the confession of his sin, that God may be owned, as the sole and only Saviour: except we acknowledge sin, we cannot acknowledge salvation: we cannot acknowledge any virtue in the works and sufferings of Christ; he might have saved his labour, and never come into the world; all that he did could not be acknowledged to be of worth to us, if there had not been sin from which he should save us: he that indeed confesses his sin, confesses he had perished if Christ had not died for him; nay, he confesseth, that nothing in the world, but Christ, could save him.

Secondly, I grant, a believer should be sensible of sin, that is, of the nature of it; but this is that I mainly desire to imprint upon your spirits, that he may certainly conclude, even before confession of sin, the reconciliation that is made between God and him, the interest he hath in Christ, and the love of Christ embracing him: in a word, before a believer confesses his sin, he may be as certain of the pardon of it, as after confession*.

* Not that confession of sin is a needless thing; the Doctor has before observed, that when a believer sins, he must confess his sins, and points out the ends for which confession is to be made; but then he is not to consider this as the ground or cause of the forgiveness of sin; but being under a sense of sin committed, is at once to look to Christ, and deal with his blood for the pardon of it; and not stay until a solemn, formal confession, is made, as if his pardon depended on that: we are to confess sin, as Aaron confessed the sins of Israel, over the scape-goat; and we should confess

ours over a sin-bearing Saviour, with a view to their being laid on him, and satisfied for, by him; and never does a soul more ingenuously confess sin, or more kindly mourn for it, than when he has the clearest view of the free, and full forgiveness of it, by the blood of Christ.

I say, there is as much ground to be confident of the pardon of sin to a believer, as soon as ever he hath committed it, though he hath not made a solemn act of confession, as to believe it after he hath performed all the humiliation in the world. What is the ground of the pardon of sin? "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake: "here is pardon, and the fountain of it is in God himself. What is it that discharges a believer? the rise of it is God's own sake: if this be the ground of pardon, then this being held out, a believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, and may close with it. Pardon of sin depends upon the unchangeableness of God, and not on the stability of the creature: all the pardon in the world that any person shall enjoy, is revealed in this word of grace: and it is the most absurd thing in the world to think that the soul may fetch out a pardon any where, but in the word of grace. Is pardon held out in it, and held out to sinners, as they are sinners? And doth God hold out his love to persons before good or evil be done by them, that the purpose of God may stand according to election, not of works, but of grace? And doth a believer find it thus in the word of grace, and may not he rest upon it when he finds it? I beseech you consider; either Christ did not reckon with the Father for all the sins of his people one with another, when he did offer up himself, or he did; if he left out such and such a scandalous sin when he reckoned with him, then Christ did not save to the utmost all them that come to God by him; then there must come another Saviour, to reckon for that which he left out.

Well, you will say, Christ did reckon for all sin with his Father; if he did reckon with him for all, then did he pay him the full price for every one, when he died upon the cross. Then the Father being paid, satisfaction was acknowledged from his hand; he hath beheld the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied; "And the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7. Well, doth God acknowledge full satisfaction for all sin under hand and seal? If it be so, what

ground is there of suspicion that Christ will not receive you, but cast you off for such and such transgressions, rather than for such and such? If the reckoning were for all, wherefore do you make such a distinction, where God makes none? If it be made for all, one with another, and the price be paid for all, wherein comes the ground of suspicion? Hath God taken pay for all, and doth that sin, being committed, appear before him still? And must he have more than Christ hath paid? Do not entertain such base thoughts of him. There is not a sin committed this day, but it was as clear before God from all eternity, with all the aggravation, as it is now; and, when God reckoned with Christ for the sins of believers, he took into his consideration the utmost extent of every sin, what it would rise unto, and took a price answerable to the nature and quality of them, of his Son; be they small or great, be they what they will, the price was raised by the Father upon the back and score of Christ, answerable to the transgression.

Now, hath Christ paid all to the utmost farthing? how comes God then to put in this as an exception, as if now there were something done that requires something more than what Christ hath done, before God and you can be friends?

You will say peradventure, In all this will we directly strike at all manner of meeting with God in humiliation and prayer, and fasting and confession of sins.

I answer, with the apostle, "Do we herein make void the law? God forbid! yea, rather, we establish it." May not a person come and acknowledge his fault to his prince, after he hath received his pardon under his hand, when he is brought from the place of execution? Nay, may not he acknowledge it with melting and extreme bitterness of spirit, because he knoweth he hath a pardon? It is but a sordid and gross conceit in the heart of men to think, that there can be no humiliation for sin, except they be in despair; I say, that when Christ reveals himself to your spirits, you shall find your hearts more wrought upon, with sweet meltings, relentings, and breakings of spirit, when you see your sins pardoned, than in the most despairing condition you can be in. It hath been often taken notice of, of many malefactors, that though when they have come to the place of execution their hearts have been so hard that they could not shed a tear; yet, when they have heard their pardon read, and seen

themselves out of danger, their hearts, that were so hard before, have melted into floods of tears: and so, I say, that heart that could not relent to see the filthy loathsomeness of sin, while he did not see his pardon, yet, after the knowledge of that, melts into tears; and hath such relenting that none in the world can have, but he that knoweth it: I say," The grace of God, which brings salvation, having appeared unto men, doth more teach them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," than all the arguments besides can persuade men, even for the glory of their God, the manifestation of their thankfulness to him, and the being fruitful unto others. We are to walk in every way that God hath chalked out unto us; but if we think our righteousness, deep humiliation, large relents of spirits, sorrow for sin, and our confession thereof, must make our way to the bowels of Christ, take heed lest you set up a false Christ. When you bring any thing to Christ, you deprive him of that which is his greatest prerogative, and give it to your fasting and humiliations; it is the prerogative of Christ alone to bring you to himself. But, you will say, all the promises of pardon run with this proviso, in case men humble themselves, and do this and that, then pardon is theirs; but otherwise it is none of theirs; take heed of such doctrine. We have had Arminianism exceedingly exploded among us hitherto, and there hath been much complaint against it; but if we conceive that God, in pardoning sin, hath an eye to confession of it, here is the doing of works for pardon of sin; and how far short this comes of Arminianism, let all the world judge.

Beloved, consider I beseech you, doth God give grace upon obedience? What power shall work such a disposition? supposing a branch be a branch of the wild vine that is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah, such a branch as there is death in it, what shall alter the nature of that deadness in it? Must not there be an ingrafting of it into the true vine? must not the wild olive be put into the sweet olive, before it cease to be wild, and become a good branch? You must know, that we are all wild vines, bringing forth fruit unto death; how shall our qualities be changed? Must we be changed first, and then being changed, come to Christ? Is not Christ, the vine, who by virtue of our union to himself, doth change our corrupt and bad natures? Do you think, that a branch of the wild olive, must become a branch of the true olive before it can be put into it, and then, in regard of that, be put into it? Oh! that the order of Christ

may be established with you; namely, his beginning to close with men in blood, and the power of Christ thus beginning with them, framing their spirits to himself, in such a manner, that neither men, nor angels, nor any other creature, can frame any spirit for him, till he come himself. It is certain, *without him you can do nothing*; as he saith of himself, John xv. 5, and as the apostle confesseth of him, Rom. vii. 18. How will you, therefore, have gracious or previous dispositions and qualifications, as you call them, before Christ can own you; when as it must be Christ, and he given, that must frame these dispositions in you? You must, you say, have eyes to see your folly and misery, and be humbled in the sense thereof, and hearts to close with Christ, and then he will become yours. How contrary is this, to the Lord, by his prophet, Isa. xlii. "I give thee for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes?" Who opens these blind eyes, but Christ, as he is given for a covenant to open them? Can men see either their own folly, or behold their need of him, or conceive the sweetness of him, while they are stark blind? They are stark blind, till Christ, after he is given for a covenant, opens the eyes of men. To think that men have their eyes opened before they come to Christ, whereas when they come to him, he opens them, is to say, we see when we are blind.

You shall see, in scripture, that Christ is given so freely to men, that all considerations are taken away from them, that all discouragements may be taken from a sinner, that if he come to him, and close with him, if he have a heart, he may come without bar.

To conclude: If there be any willingness in thee to close with Christ, so that fain thou wouldest close with him if thou mightest; I say, thou may'st receive all the embraces of Christ into thy arms, and receive his kisses *

* Kisses, as they are indications of, so they are incentives to love. When the truths of the gospel come with power upon a sinner's heart, they let in, not only a great deal of light, but also a large measure of love; faith comes hereby, and that works by love, both to Christ and to his gospel.

upon thy mouth, with as much boldness, and confidence, as any believer in the world; for it is not for their sakes, for their amendments and reformation, their righteousness or holiness, that

Christ hath mercy on them; but for his own sake it is that he embraces them, and manifests his love unto them.

SERMON XV.

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS LOSS AND DUNG.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8, 9.

YEA, DOUBTLESS, AND I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS, FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND COUNT THEM BUT DUNG, THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST. AND BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH.

THE main drift of this apostle in the whole course of his ministry, is not only to set out Christ, but also to set him alone; stripping man, and all things else, stark naked; leaving not a rag to cover, or a plaister to case or heal any jot of that universal leprosy overspreading man; that Christ alone may be all in all: which, through Christ's assistance, we will endeavour to unriddle unto you; (being a riddle indeed unto too many, who think they see all in it with a glance) ploughing with this heifer of the apostle, I mean the text I have read unto you. Now, that you may the more clearly see the whole scope he aims at here, you must well mark the coherence, how the foregoing discourse leads him unto what he here asserts: in verse 2, he gives warning to take heed of dogs, evil workers, and the concision. In verse 3, he intimates in what regard we should beware of them, namely, in not entertaining their principles, which lead to a confidence in the flesh: and for the better establishing or settling them and us in this his useful advice, he shews the vanity and simplicity of such confidence, by comparing himself with the exactest of them, verse 4, where he clears what he means by the flesh, in which we ought not to have confidence, reducing it unto two heads; 1. External church privileges; 2. An answerable

conformity of life according to the law; in both which, he dares challenge any of them to come near him, especially in the latter branch of the flesh; where note, that he as well calls his zeal and blamelessness touching the righteousness which is in the law, the flesh, as the other, wherein if there were any cause of confiding, he had more than any of them, verse 4. I say, as well that as his being a circumcised Jew, and a Pharisee. Now in verse 7, he intimates indeed that he was once of their mind; to account those things (which he now finds to be but flesh) gain; but for his part, whatever they were in his eye before, he sees and so counts them but loss for Christ. In the words of my text he handles this his last assertion more fully, wherein he proposes his own happy discovery and invaluable success, as a pattern and encouragement for us to follow him.—First, He demolishes and throws away all the glittering, but yet rotten materials, wherewith he had, and others still do erect a fortress of security, and palace of delight; then he declares the end of rejecting those materials, so much hissed at, not only by the world, but even by many devout ones also; namely, that ho might lay a sure foundation, and build an impregnable tower that cannot be shaken; like a wise master-builder, who finding that he hath built upon the sand, with hay and stubble, pulls down all, and casts it on the dunghill, and then finds a rock, and rears a structure with tried stones from it, which will not moulder with weather-beating; so that he doth not only exhibit Christ with his righteousness, as the securest city of refuge, but also shews plainly, that all must down to the ground and be lost, and then begin anew with him only; one old rotten post left, will cause all the new building to sink.

Concerning the first business of pulling down the old house, observe, 1. What materials are they which he ruins; the apostle expreseth this in these general terms, [*all things*] now these things have a reference to those materials mentioned before, namely, his church privileges and legal blamelessness; but yet he speaks more largely here, than only of those; his meaning is, that he did not only cast away as dung, what he was or could do before he received Christ, but even all things whatever also he hath been able to do since he received him, though assisted thereunto by his Spirit, as Beza well observes on this place. 2. Note, what he doth with these materials; he doth not glaze them, and let them stand, nor pull them down and polish them, and then patch up a new building with old

materials; no, nor yet cull out the choicest of those his glittering works, to mingle them with Christ's, but throws all, even every jot away; he sees no worth in any, no not the best; nay, more; he sees the very best so far from service, or profit, that indeed he confesses all is loss to him; he means more than that he must lose all his cost and labour thereabout; but must also be a great loser himself thereby: nay, he goes further, and tells us, that all his works are no better materials for his spiritual building, than as if a man should build a house, and use no other materials, than the filth of a jakes or dung, though his works be blameless; for thus he saith, I count them but dung, and so he casts them all on a dunghill: that he means his own blameless works, which he thus looks on as loss and dung, is most plain by that other expression of his, "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law."

As concerning the apostle's end of thus stripping himself naked, and casting away his own, though specious works, in general, it is to be clothed with white robes, even the garments of salvation; but more especially he declares his ends to be,

1. The excellency of the knowledge, or the knowledge of the excellency of Christ; (for the knowledge itself bath no excellency but in reference to him known) as if he should say, I could never come to know how excellent Christ Jesus the Lord is, till all I was and am, plainly appear to be loss and dung; my own righteousness was a thick film over my eyes, that I could not see Christ's worth.
2. Another end was something more, namely, a gaining or winning of Christ, importing, that as long as his obedience was in request with him, and seemed any thing better than dung in his eye, he could never get Christ.
3. An end yet a little higher; the latter aimed at the present, this last at the future; namely, that he might be found (that is, at the great day of appearance) in him; as if he should say, My works being but dung, will give an ill savour at the last, and therefore I must cast them away, that I may be found in Christ, who is all and only sweetness; if my obedience come near, it will change the scent, and mar all: that this is the meaning is plain, by his own expounding of himself in the following words, ("Not having mine own righteousness,") from all which, observe we,

I. That all things, yea even the most blameless walking according to God's law, not only before, but after conversion, or receiving Christ, are truly counted loss and dung in a Paul's eye, and such a one will be willing to suffer the loss thereof, as of dung.

II. Then, and not till then, a person attains to the knowledge of the excellency of Christ Jesus the Lord, gains him, is "found in him, (or so minded as is expressed in the former doctrine) not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ."

I begin with the first; and, because, at first sight, peradventure, to some, it may possibly seem harsh, pray mark how clearly and fully every tittle of it is founded on the text. First, Observe how the apostle saith expressly, that he therefore "counts all loss and dung," that he may attain those excellencies mentioned; what need that, if he might attain these without such an estimation? Again, observe the generality of this expression, "All things," which is more than the particulars mentioned; and further, note the time when he spake this, it was certainly after his conversion to Christ, Phil. i. 13, for he had been in bonds for him before this; now, that which he here speaks of their loss and filthiness, is in the, present tense; he delivers his mind of them as viewed at that instant; and, in special, mentions his own righteousness as part of that dung he would not be found in; and, whereas it might be objected, that he had not now received Christ as yet, because this he did to gain him; it is most plain he was in him already, by what he said before; besides, nothing is clearer than that he was converted immediately before he received and entered into his apostleship, as is plain, in Acts ix. 2, 8, his meaning here must needs be of fuller degrees of participation of Christ. The prophet Isaiah, such another evangelic man as Paul, comes nothing short of him in speaking of his own righteousness, and other servants of God, saying, "But we are all as an unclean thing, (he means a jakes) all our righteousness are as filthy rags, or as a menstruous cloth," Isa. lxiv. 6, he makes himself one of this number.—Our blessed Saviour, who well knew what was in man, bids us, when we have done all things which are commanded us, say, "We are unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10.

For the better clearing of this truth, let us consider,

1. What it is to count all things as loss and dung.
2. What it is to suffer the loss of all things.
3. How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, are but loss and dung in a renewed estate, and in what respect they are so.

1. This word *count* hath two different significations; sometimes an opinion falsely grounded, as in that saying of the apostle, "We are counted the offscouring of the world;" sometimes (as here) a certain determination infallibly grounded; thus doth a Paul's eye determine, (I mean a person like-minded with him, and right-sighted as he.) Now this determination, or estimation of things as loss and dung, is not of some only, but of all. Many will not stick to count those things, that are directly against any precept, to be loss and dung; but this sentence must pass further, even to all civility, morality, yea, and the most exact obedience to any or all the precepts of the law; (if it be possible) when such obedience hath had the most assistance of the Spirit, the best aim at the right end, done after the most enlarged manner, with all other good circumstances, to the utmost height a creature can mount unto; all these things, or whatever else, the purest sanctified searcher upon earth (being mere man) can bolt forth from his heart, must be counted but as "loss and dung ;" otherwise a Paul cannot say, I count all things so, if any one thing may be excepted.

But let me not be mistaken here, I do not say, that the motions themselves of the Spirit, or the enlargement of the heart as his, or the ends aimed at as prescribed, must be thus counted; but the whole work as, and when, done by a sanctified person, though so assisted by the Spirit; when such a man looks on the works so done by him, he must see nothing but mere "loss and dung." I hope your patience will stay your thoughts and reasonings, till I can come to shew for what respects it must be so.

In the mean time let us consider, what it is to count them "loss and dung." It is worth your observation, that the apostle does not say loss only; for, then, a man were in no worse case but to have his labour for his pains, (as the proverb is) that is, he should lose only his pains, or the work he is about; but he saith loss, that is, by the best work that ever a mere man did, he himself is a great loser; I mean,

that he forfeits life and bliss thereby on earth, and in heaven also; there is sin enough in it, (if God had nothing else but what he can pick out of the best work) to lay to his charge, to forfeit all and more, even to cast him into utter darkness; I speak in regard of the desert of such a work in itself considered; under the notion of such loss must we look on, and account all things; and not only as loss, but as dung also, which comprehends the casuality of this loss in such works. Dung, you know, is one of the filthiest and loathsomest things in the world, causing offence to those especially in whose face it is cast. All things of ours, even the best, are of this nature, nay infinitely worse, (for no created natural filth can sufficiently symbolize with spiritual;) I say, therefore, that all our righteousness, at best, is such a menstruous cloth in God's eye, and so certainly in itself; there is dung cast in his face, even in *new moons, and sabbaths, and solemn assemblies*; (Isa. i. 13) so that his soul hates them, they are a burthen to him, he cannot away with them; they send up an ill savour in his nostrils, smelling rankly of the flesh when they proceed from the purest heart; there being some flesh lusting against the Spirit still; as, namely, some spiritual, or rather carnal pride, and self-streaking, when a man hath done very well as he thinks; which dung is the promoter of the loss before-mentioned, accompanying all things of ours, even the best, which is the infallible ground-work for counting them such.

2. Let us now consider, what it is to suffer the loss of all things. For clearing hereof note, that there is a double suffering loss of a thing. 1. Passive. 2. Active. Or, 1. Violent. 2. Voluntary. A passive suffering of the loss of any thing, is, when one is violently bereft of it through an overmatch; as when a man suffers the loss of his goods by thieves breaking in upon him, and overcoming him: thus shall all unbelievers suffer the loss of all things, even their good deeds as they call them, prayers, alms, &c. They shall indeed come to Christ, and say, "Lord have we not done this, and this, in thy name," Matt. vii. 22,23. But their lamb-skins in which they walked shall be pulled over their ears, and Christ shall say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." But this is not the apostle's suffering loss, it is an active or voluntary suffering; bear with the terms, though they seem contradictory: our Saviour speaks to this effect to John the Baptist, over modestly refusing to baptize him; "Suffer it to be so now;" that is, give way to it; so here the apostle's suffering loss was

a contented giving way to the loss of all he was and did. Loss, here, hath not so much reference to his person, as the things he did; though in some respect it may be understood of his person; thus, that he was contented to take shame, and even confusion of face, to himself, for his best actions, and account himself worthy to be destroyed, and be his own judge, to pass not only the sentence of confiscation of all that he hath, but also of condemnation on his person, crying out, "Oh wretched man that I am!" And, besides this voluntary suffering such personal loss, he is willing to be stripped naked of all things, and all pleas they can afford him; so as not to have a word to speak for himself, except it be in imploding all that ever he had done, as making far more against, than for him. Such, I take it, is suffering the loss of all things.

3. I come to the next thing proposed, How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, and that after renovation, are but loss and dung, and in what respect they are so. Unto ingenuous spirits, a man would think that the text, and other, scriptures mentioned, might be sufficiently satisfactory; but, for better illustration sake, you must first distinguish (as I touched before) between that which is the Spirit's in works after renovation, and the whole work after we have done it; and know that though the motions and assistance of the Spirit be pure, holy, and without scum in the spring, to wit, itself; yet, by that time these motions and assistance have passed through the channels of our hearts, and been mixed with our manifold corruptions in doing, even the whole work thereby becomes polluted and filthy *;

* This is a passage excepted to by D. W. in his Gospel-Truth Stated, &c. p. 196; it is sadly perverted by him, on which he charges the Doctor with saying, "That the greatest holiness in believers, though wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, is mere dung, rottenness, and filthiness, as in them:" whereas the Doctor is not speaking of internal sanctification of the Spirit on the heart, which is a pure work, and *is all glorious within*; nor can it be mixed with, or be defiled by, our corruptions; but of works done after regeneration, even at the motion, and by the assistance, of the Spirit of God; which motions passing through the channel of our corrupt hearts, cease to be the Spirit's, and become ours, and mingled with

our corruptions are polluted; and so the works performed are as dung, and so to be accounted, and not to be gloried or trusted in; and yet, notwithstanding all this, the Doctor observes, they ought to be carefully maintained, being profitable to men: yea, that through faith in Christ the dung is extracted, and being purged by him become acceptable unto God, though not till they are renounced by us, and counted loss and dung;—nay, he affirms, that the motions of the Spirit themselves, the enlargement of the heart, and right aims in working, are not to be so accounted, but the works themselves.

our filthiness alters the property of the pure motions of Christ's spirit: let not this sound harsh, for it is no paradox that a man should defile holy things; you may know that received principle, that one circumstance amiss, mars good action, and makes it all naught. St. James tells us, "that whosoever fulfils (or whosoever shall keep) the whole law of God, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;" his meaning, I take it, is this, that the least drop of our poison, in the least failing, hath such a diffusive venom, that it poisons all the good, and overspreads its filth through the whole, even as one drop of poison injected, into the rarest cordial, makes the whole, and every drop of it, mortal; so, that except the best of all our works can pass through us without the least mixture of any defect or pollution of ours, it cannot but be dung. Pour the cleanest water that is into a dunghill, and let it but run through it, and when passed through, what is it but dung itself? The Lord requiring sacrifices of the Jews, enjoins a male without blemish; though a male, yet with one blemish, the whole sacrifice was abominable, and not that one blemish only. And, whereas, it may seem harsh, that even what is the Spirit's must be involved in a man's own, under the general notion of dung; know, that it once being mixed with our filth, ceaseth to be his, and becomes ours; it was his when injected, but our flesh, being like the viper's stomach, that turns the wholesomest food into poison; or like an ulcerous turnout, that turns the soundest flesh drawn thereto into rottenness; and some of this ulcerous flesh still remains in the best saints on earth, and mingles itself in the best service, and so turns the whole into its own nature; for (*omne generans sibi simile generat*) that being dung, all that it diffuseth itself into must needs be like it; even as the gourds gathered from the

wild vine, being mortal themselves, and put into the pot, set on for the sons of the prophets, made the whole pottage deadly, 2 Kings iv, 39, 40. The apostle Paul complains, that even when he would do good, evil was present with him, through the law in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, which makes him cry out of himself bitterly against all he did, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 21, 23, 24. By which he must needs mean all together, because he doth not fly to good works as a refuge against the evil, but to Christ alone as a refuge against all: "I thank God (saith he) through Jesus Christ our Lord," verse 25. So then, in respect of the inseparable communicative poison of the ingredients of our corruptions, mingling themselves with the best righteousness of the best men, both they and that are but loss and dung, and filthy rags, and must be so accounted.

Some then may object, if it be so, we ought to refrain from doing righteousness, as from dung.

I answer, It follows not; but that we must refrain from glorying in, or streaking ourselves for our righteous doings, and rather take shame to ourselves when we have done, and so glory only in the Lord. Though good works done by us are but dung in themselves, and in God's eye; yet must we be careful to maintain them, since they are profitable to men, Tit, iii. 8. David (Psal. vi. 2, 3,) confesseth, that his goodness extendeth not to God; yet for all this he refrains not, because it could extend to the Saints upon earth, and to the excellent in whom was his delight; it is no good plea, that because a man cannot be wholly clean, therefore, he will be more filthy than needs: you will not like it, that because your children cannot come from school without some dirt, in the cleanest way, that therefore they shall wallow like swine over head and ears in it.

Others will say, That God often shews his approbation of good works, which he would not do if they were all dung.

I answer, That whatsoever is not of faith is sin; but as to the believer, all things are clean, so through this faith in Christ, the whole filth of our works is extracted by him; and he presenting the same purged by himself alone, they become accepted with God, Rev. viii. 3, 4, but simply the works themselves as done, though

never so well, are abhorred of God; and Christ never takes them to purge them, till we ourselves wholly renounce them by counting them loss and dung; and that acceptance procured by him, imports only a liking God takes to them, no efficacy at all they have with him. So you have the doctrine sufficiently cleared to you, I hope.

Now, If it be as you have heard, then (keeping within the bounds of Paul to Timothy, "Not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father:") let me have leave, who also am an elder, though unworthy, to beseech the elders with all possible meekness, that they will not magnify man's righteousness, no not when he is in Christ, above what is meet; let me obtain the favour to declare my judgment, when such righteousness of man is so exalted, and the issue of it: it is exalted above what is meet, when high things are spoken of it in its own name, and even in reference to Christ's assistance, and a man's being in him. 1. When it is cried up with rhetorical commendation, ascribing virtue and efficacy to it in its own name: give me leave, I beseech you, whilst I open myself in this particular; man's works are thus cried up and magnified, when (for instance) his prayer, repentance, self-denial, and exact blameless walking, have the high titles of a kind of omnipotency to effect wonders, and are commended as most precious and incomparably excellent, not only in the eye of men, but God; as the things wherein he takes infinite pleasure, proceeding from a sanctified heart; and this whilst there is no name mentioned, but only of these righteous actions in such high praises, as if they carried such a lustre, beauty, and energetical virtue in their own astute; you know the poet's complaint, *Hos eeo versiculos feci, tulit alter honores; sic yes non vobis**:

* I have made these verses, another gets the honors; so you have done, but not for yourselves.

may not Christ justly take up such a complaint? All the comeliness of man's righteousness, is no more but what he puts upon it, and yet the righteousness must go, he not so much as mentioned or hinted in such praise; there is verily a fault among us in this respect; if any say, that Christ is always to be supposed as principal; I answer, he should be supposed not only as the principal in these praises, but as solely deserving; for all that is praise-worthy is his alone; but why only supposed? Why deserves not he to be named, as well as the righteousness? Certainly it is no good manners (to say no worse) to

forget him, whilst his poorest instruments are so highly remembered; besides, how can people suppose that which they hear not of? They must go away with things as they are delivered to them; when servants bring presents from their masters to any, they do not say, I bestow such or such a thing on you, but, my master sends it you; if he should take it on himself, he would go for an arrogant fellow; it will not salve the matter, when he is taxed for such arrogancy, to say, My master should have been supposed, when he gave no hint of him.— Such kind of extolling man's righteousness is far from counting it loss and dung, as Paul doth in my text; methinks, therefore, it were comely in all extolling of it, explicitly to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of Christ.

2. Man's righteousness is exalted above what is meet, when too high things are spoken of it, being accompanied with Christ's assistance by his Spirit, and in reference to a man's being in him, when he doth such righteousness.

May I be bold once more to clear my mind in this also; it is true indeed, whilst a believer's heart is overcast with gross vapours, and is more than ordinarily dull in hearing, is low and slow in praying, and is somewhat stiff in fasting above measure; such righteousness goes usually for loss and dung, and such it is; but if a soul gets under full sail, filled with a gale of the Spirit of Christ, when floods of meltings flow from it; if he can cry mightily, be swift to hear, greedy in sucking in divine truths, and somewhat exact in observing practical righteous means, to mourn and pray lustily, being helped by the Spirit herein; then such prayers, mournings, and other divine exercises will do wonders; hereby men shall get pardon, settle spiritual, civil, and natural healings, with national: such courses some think will turn away God's wrath, and reconcile him to men; but, under favour, the attributing such efficacy to righteousness, though thus assisted by Christ's Spirit, is more than is meet, though Christ be explicitly owned as the author of such assistance; the righteousness so assisted, hath no efficacy at all to obtain any thing of the Lord, but rather to hasten and multiply wrath, in that it multiplies sin*.

* That is, when it is overvalued, and not renounced, as it should; but such efficacy ascribed to it, as is not in it, as to turn away the wrath of God, and obtain favour of him, to the

great neglect of the righteousness of Christ; otherwise the Doctor owns it instrumentally obtains good things from and through Christ the fountain, and as it has relation to him.

How can sin have efficacy towards expiation of sin, and pacifying a just incensed God for it?—certainly in no respect: suppose a traitor brought in to the prince by a favourite, and taught by him what to say, and how to deport himself; but the traitor mars his tale, and as he delivers it, it proves new treason; can the favourite's assistance be any ground to hope that this, his new traitorous carriage, shall pacify the king, and obtain his pardon? The case is like ours in hand: when we come to God, the Spirit perhaps puts a good tale into our mouth, but through our ill-managing of it, we make but new treason of it; the righteousness with which we come to God, though we bring with it the clean water of the Spirit of Christ, to wash away our old dung; yet there is such filth in the vessel of our present righteous actions, that they do but add dung to dung, instead of washing it away.

If any shall grant, that originally, or *per se*, the best righteousness obtains nothing, but rather charges man with a new account; but yet instrumentally, it obtains what is desired, being well qualified as before is mentioned.

I answer, If it be no more, then I heartily desire that we should always express it, that the people may clearly understand and remember, and be guided explicitly to the fountain itself, Christ alone: for certainly whilst he is suppressed, and these instruments are reached out without relation to him, who only fills them with all float runs through them, they are but mere empty pits, and dry channels, though never so curiously cut out.

The issue of such over-exalting sanctified righteousness, is, 1. That by such doating on the efficacy of it, Christ himself is shamefully neglected, and grows too much out of request: here may I a little alter the saying, which historians tell us was heard in heaven, after the church grew into credit; *Religio peperit divitias, et filia devoravit matrem*; I may as truly say, *Christus peperit juslitiam, et filia devoravit matrem*; Christ begets righteousness in men, and this exalted as much as in such lies that overexalt it, is made to devour Christ himself: just as if a king should promote a favourite, and then he should be so applauded for his usefulness to the subjects, that the

king must be dethroned, and he crowned in his place. I beseech you, do but mark how our righteousness, so exalted, creeps up, by degrees, into Christ's throne, even to the dethroning of him.

In all exigencies and extremities, how naked is the throne of grace (understanding grace properly) left without suitors! how few followers hath Christ himself! how rarely are men sent to shelter themselves under the shadow of his wings, whilst the seat of righteousness is thronged! what earnest outcries for prayers, mournings, fastings, and such like, to help men at a dead lift! what posting to them in extremities, as if they kept a court by themselves! for Christ is seldom heard of, at least not set up on high as to do all; and yet this righteousness is but merely his ministering servant :— what the apostle said of himself, (1 Cot. iii. 5,) I may as truly say of the best righteousness best assisted; what is prayer, mourning, fasting, hearing, or the like, but ministers by whom ye believed and received mercy? and if but ministers at best, shall they be greater than the Lord?—Let me not be mistaken, I intend no derogation to righteousness, but to bring it into its own place; namely, to be used as that, where, according to Christ's direction, we may meet with him; from whose hands alone, we are there to expect whatever we pant after according to his will; reserving a submission to be disposed of otherwise, if he see fit.

2. Another issue of such exalting man's sanctified righteousness above what is meet, is Christ's leaving persons to that little or no succour, which this can yield, being made the refuge of men.

I remember what the Lord said to his people, the Israelites, bowed down under the hands of the Philistines; "Go, and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your trouble," Judges x. 24. What is it but to make God of our righteousness, when we choose it to be our refuge in time of need, and then exclude, or take no notice of Christ "We ask and receive not, because we ask amiss;" building on fervency in prayer to obtain of God, when we should rest only on Christ, without regard to that: doubtless all this fasting, mourning, and praying in these times, which I believe no former age could parallel, prosper not so well as is expected, because the principal verb is wanting, which can only make good sense of all we say or do, Christ I mean. Were all seasoned with that salt, doubtless it would be more savoury, that is,

cordially and dependingly second with it: "Except you believe, (saith the prophet) you shall not be established." Wherefore are we called Christians? Is not that a true axiom, *Denominatio est a principaliore*? The name imports that all in us should mainly savour of Christ; and that no receipt should be made or given, but Christ must be predominant in it: sure I am, Paul was of this mind, when he said, "I desire to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." How can that physic work according to expectation, which by the apothecary's heedlessness is destitute of that ingredient which was prescribed to do all in all? It is as if hellebore should be left out of a purge, and nothing should be administered but what was prescribed for the taking of it down: Christ only is the hellebore that purgeth; prayers are but the liquor to let him down; leave Christ out, and what will all the rest do? Nay, the truth is, as in every strong purge there are some degrees of poison, which are quelled by a predominant cordial injected for that purpose; so our mournings, fastings, and self-denials, have poison in them, sufficient to suffocate a soul that takes them, and Christ alone is the cordial that quells such poison; let him then be left out, and judge I pray you what will be the issue. (Isaiah l. 2.) O, then, whatever else we forget in prescribing and applying receipts for our spiritual recoveries, let us be sure not to forget to put Christ into them, lest we kill instead of healing, or poison men instead of recovering them.

And for the generality of God's people, my advice to them is briefly this; when Christ is prescribed in greatest quantity, and for sole efficacy, let them beware, lest they forget or neglect to put him into their receipts; the portion is desperate when he is not predominant: and if at any time a spiritual physician prescribe any receipt, and forgets Christ therein, let them be sure to supply him themselves before they take it, though the ingredient prescribed seem never so rich and sovereign; and resolve that these of themselves have too much poison in them to be ventured on alone, and therefore will produce but loss, being dung.

The premises considered, I beseech you all, suffer a word of exhortation, take some good course to get a Paul's eye, clearly to see loss and dung in your best righteousness, even when your sails are fullest, and your flight swiftest. What course must we take (will you say) to get such an eye to see all things thus? 1. Take heed you use

not false spectacles whilst you look on your righteousness; look not through men's estimation or applause of it, who use to be something over-rhetorical in their praises. 2. Look not through your own deceitful hearts, which are apt to judge their own brood very fair. 3. Nor through other men's righteousness, comparing your own with theirs, whose copies, at the best, are imperfect, and, therefore, cannot fully represent righteousness in its complete form; but weigh it impartially in the balance of the sanctuary; try it by the authentic standard; in brief, lay it to the pattern given in the mount. Paul saith of himself, "I was alive without the law once, (that is, I taught all was right and well, till I came to the law)—but when commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9; that is, this commandment shewed me a world of filth I dreamed not of, by which I saw I was a dead man. But, beloved, I confess in all this I have but set a clear crystal glass before a blind eye; the law is but materially the discoverer of loss and dung in our best righteousness, containing in it the rules of it, and the aberrations from it, which is a book sealed up and illegible in respect of the spiritualness of it; and, therefore, the sole efficient of discerning loss and dung in our righteousness, is only "Lamb who only was found worthy to open the book and unseal it," Rev. v. 5-9. Christ alone can make a person see it; and therefore the Lord saith, (in Isa. lxii. 6,) "I will give time for a covenant to the people, to open their blind eyes." Christ represents our best righteousness as loss and dung, two ways:

1. Directly, thus; not only shewing us plainly the particulars wherein the filth consists which he doth by the law; but also by giving a right hint of it therein, whereby sin appears clearly to be out of measure sinful; this he doth by the touch of his onnipotency; this sight of failings in our righteousness, not only as failings, but also under the notion of dung, indeed is the sole work of Christ; not all the means in the world can do it; he, indeed, in the ministry of the gospel, doth it hero and there therefore the apostle Paul, (speaking of turning men from darkness to light by the preaching of the gospel) adds, that Christ had sent him to do it. And, therefore, as Peter and John after they had healed the lame man, seeing the people begin to gaze on them, tell them that they were mistaken, "It was Christ's name, through faith in him, that made him whole," Acts iii. 12-16. So should all ministers and people, when they attain to a clear sight and sense of dung in the best actions, confess that it is only his name that

did it, by a sole absolute power he hath over the hearts of men.

2. Christ gives such clear sight reflexly; I mean comparatively, thus, by shewing that the sole all-fullness is in himself; from whence he makes a man argue thus, If all purity be in Christ, then is there none elsewhere in the creature.

SERMON XVI.

THE TWO COVENANTS OF GRACE.

HEBREWS viii. 6.

BUT NOW HATH HE OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY, BY HOW MUCH HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED UPON BETTER PROMISES.

This epistle to the Hebrews, as it notably illustrates and invincibly maintains the transcendent excellences of Christ; so the apostle, (that he might the more prevalently win the Jews) carries the whole discourse or Christ in the way they were best acquainted with; comparing him, all along, to such things as were usual among them, and were in greatest request and of highest esteem with them; as first he compares him to angels, then to Moses, and so goes along. Now, because he knew that the priesthood among the Jews, and the privileges belonging to it were their oracle and chiefest refuge in cases of greatest moment and consequence; he mainly sets himself about this, to shew the incomparable excellency of Christ's personal priesthood above the most glorious excellences the priesthood of the Jews had.

It is very true, as it shall appear by-and-by; that the things of greatest moment were wrapt up in the privileges of their priesthood; there they had their remission of sins, their peace of conscience, their immunities and security from danger, such as it was; so that if the apostle could but make it good, that there was more excellency to be found in Christ, than in their greatest privileges, there was great hope that he might be a minister of reconciliation to them; and for this cause, you shall find, beloved, that he spends four whole chapters about nothing else but to shew what transcendent excellencies were to be had from Christ himself, above the greatest privileges this most glorious ordinance of theirs could bring unto

them. The 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of this epistle contain a comparison between Christ and the privileges his priestly office brings, with those priests, and the privileges their offices brought; and, in the comparison, most clearly shew an unsearchable difference between the best of theirs, and those Christ brings, which were not before in the administration of their priesthood.

And, however, for the present, a discourse on this subject may seem impertinent, I doubt not, beloved, but, before I have done, I shall make it appear, that it is of as great consequence to the true members of Christ as any that can be delivered, I shall endeavour, all the way as I go along, to make sure work, that I may not leave occasion of dispute or contradiction.

In chap. vii. the apostle begins with the order of Christ's priesthood, to shew the excellencies of that above the order of their priesthood; he was a priest after the order of Melchizedeck, they after the order of Aaron. In chap. viii. ix. and x. he passeth from the order, and comes to the business whereabout their several offices were employed; and, concerning their several employments, he finds so large a difference, that although it be true, there was some remission of sins, some peace of conscience in the administration of their priestly office; yet, so far the glory of Christ's office goes beyond theirs, that he sticks not to call their service and administration, when it was at the best, but the very shadow of Christ's; that tie doth in the words before my text, and also in chap. x. 1. Nay, he goes further, he finds so great a difference between them, that he doth not stick to make the business of those priests, and of Christ, two distinct covenants, one to succeed in the room of the other. Though Christ be the subject matter, in general, of both, and remission of sins the fruit of both, yet, such a vast difference is between them, that he makes them two several covenants; and the consequence of this truth is of so lurch moment, that, until there be a right understanding of it, there never will be any absolute settlement of peace of conscience; but there will still arise some objections to charge sin upon the soul, which it shall never be able to answer.

To come to the words of my text, they are the sum of the whole discourse through all those four chapters; here the apostle begins to make his application of the comparison. Before he had shewed what was the employment of those priests of the old law; now he comes

to shew wherein Christ excels them; "But now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry," &c.

There are three things considerable in the words:

I. The apostle's main conclusion.

II. His application and illustration of it; and

III. His confirmation of the truth of it.

1. The main conclusion, in these words; "But now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry;" wherein there are these particulars very considerable: 1. the apostle limits the office of Christ, what it is, he calls it a ministry. 2. He shews the quality of this office; for, though the term of ministry may seem to be somewhat coarse and low for such a one as Christ, yet, he shews, it is not sordid or mean, but an excellent ministry. 3. He proceeds to the degree of excellency of it, and that by comparing it with the ministry of the priests of the old law; it is "a more excellent ministry," that is, than theirs. 4. He shews how Christ comes by this ministry; "He hath obtained it;" and, chap. vii. it is more fully expressed; he was made a priest by an oath; he was called thereunto by God. 5. Finally, he sets out the time of Christ's exercising this ministry of his, when it began to be on foot: "But now hath he obtained;" intimating, that it is such a one as comes in the place of the other, and begins when that ends.

2. The illustration of this conclusion is in the next words: "By how much he is the mediator of a better covenant;" where you shall find the apostle explaining and opening his conclusion in these particular branches. 1. He explains what the ministry is he speaks of he calls it a mediatorship; he is a minister, that is, he is a mediator. 2. He further explains this ministry, by setting forth the subject-matter about which he is employed, he is the mediator of a covenant. 3. He explains wherein this mediatorship of Christ excels that of the old priests; for he said before only, it is more excellent; here he shews wherein it is, namely, "By how much he is the mediator of a better covenant." 4~ He intimates to us, that there is a distinct covenant, whereof Christ is the mediator, differing from that whereof the priest was the mediator: he doth not say, he is the mediator of better things in the same covenant, but of a better covenant: a better and a worse covenant must be two several covenants; better and worse qualities may be in one and the same; but for the covenant itself to be called

better than another, is a manifest argument of a double covenant; but of this more anon.

3. The apostle's confirmation of this conclusion is in the last words of the text, "Which was established upon better promises:" where you may note, 1. That these covenants he speaks of, have promises for their foundation: better promises in the second, argue good in the first; for the word better is comparative, *ami* comparative unto a positive, which signifies good: promises then are the foundation of both these covenants; and this is worth the observation, when we shall come to consider what they are. 2. He proves that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, by two arguments. 1. Though both are founded upon promises, yet that which Christ is mediator-of, is founded upon better, and therefore must be a better covenant. 2. Though their covenant was founded upon promises, yet was it not established upon them, much less upon better promises; but, saith the apostle, here the covenant that Christ mediated was better, in that it was established upon better promises. They were sweet promises whereupon their covenant was confirmed, but they were not so durable; but that the-covenant itself was to sink, and did sink to the ground; that was not established, it was not firm and unchangeable; but the covenant that Christ mediated is better; it is an established one, a covenant that never shall be changed or altered, as theirs was. Here are heads enough, I confess, to take up a great deal more time than is fit to trouble your patience with; I shall not presume so far upon you.

But, that I may, as near as may be, confine myself within some limits, I shall reduce the main principles of all these heads unto two things, and confine my discourse to them.

I. What those covenants are, namely, that whereof Christ himself is said to be mediator, and that other which is opposed unto it.

II. Wherein the covenant whereof Christ himself is mediator, is better than that which those priests did administer.

It may be you may see some things in the resolution of these, that may be some satisfaction to your spirits.

I. What these covenants are, and how distinct. I will not meddle with particular covenants, which God made with some special persons that came not within this compass: there are certain general

covenants that God made with men; usually they are reduced to two heads; the first is commonly called the covenant of works, first made in innocency; the terms thereof are of a double nature, "Do this and live;" and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" life upon doing, a curse upon not doing; in sum, the covenant of works stands upon these terms, that in perfect obedience there should be life; at the first failing therein, no remedy, no admittance of remission of sins upon any terms in the world; Christ cannot come in, nor be heard upon the terms of the covenant of works. There is a second general covenant, and that is usually called, a new covenant, or a covenant of grace; and this, in opposition to the other, stands only in matter of grace without works through Christ: This, as far as I can find, is generally received to be the right distribution of the covenants of God; the covenant of grace being most commonly taken for one entire covenant from first to last; now to draw it to our purpose; if this distribution be good, the issue at length must be this; seeing there are two covenants spoken of here by the apostle, which we shall make good by-and-by, they must needs be referred to that distribution of those two heads, and so the sum must be this; the covenant of grace being better than the covenant of works, Christ must be the mediator of it; and then there remains no other, whereof those priests were mediators, but that of works.

For my own part, beloved, I shall not take upon me to censure any man's judgment; only I shall desire to propose something to the consideration of the wise, who, upon deliberate advice, may see something worth their meditation: to me it seems most plain, that the opposition the apostle here makes, is not between the covenant of works and that of grace; and that he, in all this discourse, hath not the least glance upon the covenant of works at all, nor doth he meddle with it: You know, beloved, that the articles of that covenant, are drawn up in the decalogue of the moral law; and in all this discourse, from chap. vii. 1, .to the end of chap. x. the apostle doth not so much as take notice of the moral law, nor hath he to do one jot with any clause of it; all the opposition here is 'not between Christ and Moses, but between priest and priest, office and office; Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedeck, they priests after the order of Aaron; Christ is the minister of a perfect covenant, they of an imperfect one: now, if it were between the covenant of works

and the covenant of grace, then he should have gone on with the covenant of works, and the articles of that, and set them in opposition unto Christ, which he doth not.

But it may be, some will say, if there be a distinct difference between covenants, surely then they can be no other but those two of grace and works, and therefore the opposition must needs be between them.

Beloved, give me leave to answer freely, the whole administration of that covenant, which the priests had to manage, was wholly and only matter of grace; and though it were a covenant of grace, yet it is opposed to that which Christ in his own person mediated; therefore the opposition which stands here, is not between the covenant of works, and of grace; but it is between the covenant of grace weak, imperfect, unprofitable, disannulled; and another covenant of grace that is perfect, established, and makes the comers thereunto perfect.

So that indeed, though Christ be the subject-matter of the covenant of grace, whether old or new, and though there be remission of sins in both; (for I call the priests' covenant now the old, and that I will make good presently,) yet, I say, there is such a difference between these two, that they are two distinct covenants one from the other.

That it may appeal to you, that they are both covenants of grace, and yet two distinct ones also, consider briefly these particulars.

1. It is granted to all men, that in the covenant of works, there is no remission of sin, no notice of Christ; but the whole employment of the priests of the old law, was altogether about remission of sins, and the exhibiting Christ in their fashion unto the people. In Numb. xv. 28, (I will give you but one instance,) you shall plainly see that the administration of the priestly office had remission of sins as the main end of it. "If a soul sin through ignorance, he shall bring a she-goat unto the priest, and he shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly; and it shall be forgiven him:" see, the main end is administering forgiveness of sins.

And that Christ was the main subject of their ministry is plain, because the apostle saith in the verse before my text, that all that administration was but a shadow of him, and a figure for the present to represent him, as he expresses it in chap. ix; and the truth is, the usual gospel that all the Jews had, was in their sacrifices and priestly

observations; it is true, the prophets prophesied of a glorious gospel, but mostly you shall find that the most excellent gospel they preached, was always preached with reference to the future. The prophet Jeremiah hath an excellent passage in chap. 1. 20, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none:" lint mark it, it is in those days, and at that time, it shall be sought for, and not found; he doth not speak this of the present, but of future times; therefore St. Peter observes, that when they prophesied concerning the fulness of grace, they did not prophesy unto themselves but unto us, 1 Pet. i. 12, the main gospel they had was to be fetched out of those trivial observations, ceremonies, sacrifices, and gifts which they were to attend upon, whence they were to fetch their pardon through Christ.

So that it is plain, the administration of their covenant was an administration of grace, absolutely distinct from that of the covenant of works. That Christ's covenant was a covenant of grace, I will not stand to prove; I know no man questions it that professes himself a Christian; but now though these two as it appears plainly, are covenants of grace; so it shall appear as fully to you that they are two distinct covenants of grace; they are not one and the same covenant diversely administered, but they are two distinct covenants*.

* Notwithstanding all the worthy Doctor has said, these don't appear to be two covenants essentially distinct; since he himself owns, that Christ is the subject-matter both, and remission of sins is in them both; and though called *first* and *second*, and the latter coming in the place of the former, this may be said of one form of administration of the covenant succeeding another. Mr. Lancaster, *Vindication of the Gospel*, p. 199, thinks the controversy may be compromised by distinguishing the *old covenant* into the *promise veiled*, the same in substance with that in the new testament, and the *veil itself* done away; which is giving up the point, since that is no other than the ceremonial law, the outward form of administering the covenant of grace under the former dispensation, and was a shadow of good things to come by Christ, clearly revealed under the present administration: however, this is a matter of no very great importance; and

the Doctor has excellently shewn the difference between these two, be they called what they will; and indeed, properly speaking, the covenant of grace, as made, was before them both, even from eternity.

To make it good, because I know some may think much of this that I deliver, I shall desire you to receive nothing, but as the plain scripture will make it evident unto you: for this purpose first consult chap. viii. 7. There are, if I mistake not, three arguments in those few words, to prove that they are two divers covenants. "If the first had been faultless, then should no place have been found for the second;" where observe, that having spoken before in the text of a better covenant, whereof Christ is the minister and mediator; he saith in opposition to this, "If the first had been faultless."

Again, here you see the apostle expressly calls these the first and the second; "If the first had been faultless, there should have been no place for the second." Now that it should be affirmed of one and the same covenant, that this is the first, and that this is the second, and yet these two should be both one, is strange: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the word, and the spirit:" it is true, the divine essence is one; but consider as there are three persons, they are not one; so if you will consider any thing as they are two, they are not one: now these covenants are called first and second, therefore they cannot be both one.

Again, the apostle speaks of a second coming in the place of the first; we cannot say of one and the self-same covenant, that it comes in place of itself; when one thing comes in the place of another, these two must needs be distinct: can you say of the one and the same thing, that it is disannulled, and that it is not? that it vanishes, and yet that it is come in the place of itself when it vanishes? In chap. vii. 18, you shall find plainly that the apostle, speaking of the covenant under the priesthood, calls it "the commandment that went before;" and says, it was disannulled in that it was weak and unprofitable. And in chap. x. 9, he tells us, that "he takes away (speaking of Christ) the first, that he may establish the second;" so that here you may plainly see, that these two covenants, one is not only called first, and the other second; but the one is so the first, and the other so the second, that the first must be taken away, that the second may come in place; and that the second doth not come till the

first be disannulled: but all the question will be, whether, when the apostle speaks thus of first and second, of old and new, of better and worse, of disannulling and coming in place; whether he means the covenant of grace, under which the Jews were, and under which we are in Christ, or some other.

For clearing this, I beseech you, consider what he speaks for the illustrating his own mind. In chap. viii. 8, having made a distinction of better and faulty, of first and second, see how he proves what he speaks, that they are distinct: For finding fault with them, he saith, "The days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt," (and, as Jeremiah adds, for he takes all this out of Jer. xxxi. 31,) "Although I was a husband to them;" and in the close of all, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." 1. You see the apostle, from Jeremiah, brings a direct distinction of two covenants; "I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers." Here are five covenants; a new one, and one made with their fathers. Some may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation of the moral law; but mark well that expression of Jeremiah, and you shall see it was the covenant of grace;" For, (saith he) not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, although I was an husband unto them." How can God be considered as a husband to a people under a covenant of works, which was broken by man in innocency, and so became disannulled? The covenant of works runs thus; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law;" and, "in the day that thou sinnest thou shall die the death." Man had sinned before God took him by the hand to lead him out of the land of Egypt, and sin had separated man from God; how then can he be called a husband in the covenant of works? The covenant, therefore, wins not a covenant of works, but such a one as the Lord became a husband in, and that must be a covenant of grace; and yet, saith he, "I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers," &c. In the close of this chapter, see how the apostle sums up the matter; ".In that he saith a new," saith he, "the first is waxed old, and so is ready to vanish away;" here you see again, how he makes this distinction between the covenants, old and new; one being new, is fresh; and the other, being old, is ready to

vanish away. Again, consider, in chap. ix. he goes on, as with main strength, to make good the thing, that there are two distinct covenants; "The first covenant verily," saith he, "had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." What is this first covenant? The apostle reckons up all the implements of it; he speaks of their candlestick, table, and gifts, and so he goes along; but mark, in ver. 14, what opposition he makes; "Wherefore," saith he, "Christ is a mediator of the new testament." Wherefore, upon what terms is this? In that first covenant, there was but blood of bulls and goats, which could never perfect the comers thereunto, as pertaining to the conscience; but when Christ comes with his own blood, "He obtained eternal redemption, and so purged the conscience from dead works:" so that by this you may perceive, he makes absolute distinction between the first, which did consist in those rites, and that whereof Christ is the mediator; in a word, in chap. x., he renews the distinction once more; the law consisted in burnt sacrifices, offerings, &c. which could never make the comers thereunto perfect, ver. 1, but there was a remembrance of sin once every year; therefore, saith the apostle, (speaking of the Lord)" Sacrifices and offerings thou wouldest not; then, said I, (that is Christ) Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God. In that he saith, Lo, I come, he takes away the first, that he might establish the second." If all this be not a sufficient evidence to clear this, that they are distinct covenants; and so distinct that though both be covenants of grace, yet the one must be disannulled before the other can be established, I know nothing that can be proved by scripture.

But to come to the main thing; there being two distinct covenants, let us see wherein that which Christ administered, is better than that the priests did; and this will be of very great concern to the settling of spirits: the differences are marvelous; the apostle expresses them in such language, that, I dare be bold to say, if any man should utter it, and not have his warrant from him, he would go nigh to be censured. That first covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, yet he spares not to say, that it was not faultless; that is, it was not without fault: he goes further, he saith it was unprofitable, yea, weak; nay, which is marvelous to consider, he calls the administration of that covenant, *beggarly rudiments*; whereas, on the other side, in the covenant Christ manages, he says, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," chap. x.

14. The difference then stands in these two things.

The covenant which the priests administered, was a very imperfect one; that Christ manages, is most absolute, complete, and perfect. There was a necessity of adding many things unto their covenant; but that which Christ managed, is so complete, that nothing in the world can be added to it: if any will stumble at the word faulty, you must understand, beloved, that there is a two-fold faultiness in things; it may be either sinful, or imperfect; the covenant was not sinfully faulty, for it was of God's own making that cannot sin; but you will say, being so, it cannot be imperfect.

You must distinguish perfection, which is two-fold; a thing may be said to be perfect, in respect of the end for which it was ordained, or to compass higher ends than it was ordained to: as for that first covenant of grace, it was not imperfect for that end that God appointed; for it did all that he purposed should be done by it; but it was imperfect to (to so much as Christ himself did. This is the main thing I would prosecute, to let you see wherein the covenant that Christ managed excels the covenant which the priests managed: there are three things principally wherein they differ. I will pass by many ordinary differences.

1. Christ's covenant is better, in respect of the remission of sins.
2. In respect of peace of conscience.
3. In respect of freedom from punishment and wrath as the desert of sin.

1. I have shewed before, that some remission of sins was under the Jews' covenant of grace; I shall now endeavour to let you see wherein that was imperfect, in comparison of what Christ hath now brought by his own offering himself once for all. It may be, this may seem somewhat strange, that I should affirm, that their remission of sins was imperfect; but, beloved, the apostle speaks fully to the point, and saith expressly, that there was "remembrance of sins again every year," chap. x. But, to handle things distinctly, and particularly.

1. Their remission of sins was imperfect, in comparison of what Christ by his own person hath wrought; they had not in their

covenant a plenary remission of all sorts of sins; they could not tell whither to go to find pardon for some*.

* Not but the saints under the old testament had full forgiveness by looking to the blood and sacrifice of Christ, which cleansed from all sin then, as now, but not by legal sacrifices, or in the Mosaic administration.

This is plain in Numb. xv. 28--80, where, Moses speaking of one sinning by ignorance, a she-goat being brought, there might be an atonement made for him, and the sin might be forgiven: but mark what follows, "The soul that sins presumptuously shall die;" here is a sacrifice for sins of ignorance, but "the soul that sins presumptuously shall die," no sacrifice for that. So again, Gen. xvii. 14, you shall find, that there was no sacrifice to be had for uncircumcision; "The man-child that shall not be circumcised, shall be cut off;" no other remedy, no appeal to other sacrifices; here was no sparing him by any means; no sacrifice to expiate his transgression. In Exod. xxxi. 14, also you shall see that there was no pardon to be met with for the profanation of the Sabbath, but that soul must be cut off; and so, whosoever eat of the sacrifice, and had uncleanness upon him, must be cut off, Lev. vii. 20. I might instance in many other particulars; but certainly there was a variety of sins for which no sacrifice could be admitted, and consequently no pardon obtained, nor sued out for them*:

* Pardon of sin might be sued out by faith then, upon the blood, and sacrifice of Christ; but not upon legal sacrifices, which for some sins were not admitted, and yet were pardoned through Christ, as David and others.

for pardon of sin was sued out upon those sacrifices God required: but now mark the difference; herein is the covenant, whereof Christ was the mediator, infinitely better than that other, in the large extent of pardon which it brought along with it. For this purpose, look into 1 John i. 7, where he saith, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sill." Observe it, I pray you, "from all sin;" see the extent of it; you cannot name the sin which a person would be willing to cast off, and have a pardon for, but the blood of Christ cleanseth from it. If the Jews would have given all their estates, that they might have been admitted to bring sacrifice for such and. such a

sin, it could not be; "But the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

But you will say, in chap. x. 26, the apostle seems to intimate, as if there were some sins for which we can have no remission; his words are these; "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin." Here, some may say, it seems that if a person shall happen to sin wilfully, after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there is no sacrifice for sin.

I beseech you, give me leave to open to you the meaning of the apostle, and his plain drift. I find thousands of persons are mightily mistaken in it, and so the text comes to be a very fearful burthen upon their spirits; but that you may understand the scope of it aright, know, that there he is closing all the former discourse, which stands mainly in these two things; that there is now one perfect sacrifice once offered by Christ himself, that perfectly doth all things to be done, and, therefore, must be offered no more; and that all the sacrifices that were to be offered, are now vanished; and, in the interim, he comes to this conclusion: now that you have received the knowledge of this truth, that all sacrifices must now cease, if you sin wilfully, that is, if you will reject this truth I have delivered unto you; if you think that this one sacrifice is not enough to serve your turn, but you will look to others, there remains no more sacrifice for your sin: as if he should say, You will but deceive yourselves to look in any other way for pardon; you may think such and such services, confessions, prayers, fastings, will do something towards the remission of sins; but deceive not yourselves in this, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Christ was but once offered; if you will not conclude to adhere to that one sacrifice once offered; nor have that to bring perfect remission of sins, you will certainly miscarry; there will be no other remedy, but indignation and wrath will fall upon you; every thing else will fail; that is the first. I beseech you have patience, and let me but open myself, lest I leave both myself and the truth to scandal.

2. The covenant he brings, is more perfect, in that though there was remission of sins in it, and so it differs from the covenant of works; yet mark it, and you shall find, that their covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, did not administer grace, but upon antecedent

conditions to be performed, before there could be any participation of the grace of it*;

* That is, in the Mosaic way, or according to the administration of the covenant of grace in that way; otherwise saints then, as now, had the pardon of their sins freely, looking to the grace of God and blood of Christ, and were justified as freely, and saved by the free grace of God, even as we are.

I say, there must be many things done first, before a pardon could be heard of; whereas, under the covenant of grace, which Christ brings, there is no antecedent condition at all; but the whole grace is communicated before ever the person doth any thing towards it. In that covenant they must be at the cost of sacrifices, must bring them to the tabernacle, must confess their sins to the priest; and, (for ought I know) in cases of extremity, must fast too, before they could obtain pardon of sin, and removal of judgment; but the covenant that Christ brings into the world himself, is such, that before ever the person could be able to do any one thing in the world that is good, the whole grace of it is made his, and we need not be at the cost of sacrifice, Christ is at that himself; we need not bring a Christ, he brings himself; we need not offer him, he offers himself; nay, our confession or sin is not antecedent to the forgiveness of it; remission doth not depend upon that, but only upon the grace of God; "I am found of them that sought me not; before they call, I will answer."

Do but mark, beloved, how the terms of the covenant of grace by Christ run; "Even while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ;" there could be no good thing done before our reconciliation, when we were considered simply and only as enemies: and so in Ezek. vi. 6, 8, "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, thy time was the time of love; I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine:" when? "When thou wast in thy blood;" there is no antecedent doing, before the participation of the covenant; nay, the covenant is sworn, even when in blood. The apostle, in Rom. iv. 5, tells us, "That to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Christ considers men under no other notion but ungodly, when he confers the grace of his covenant upon them: you shall never hear, in all the old covenant, pardon

bestowed, before works of bringing, and offering sacrifice; but under the covenant of grace, there is no respect of good works to the participation of it; even true faith itself is no condition of this covenant, neither is it required as an antecedent to it, or to forgiveness. True faith, indeed, is the evidence of things not seen; we know not that sin is pardoned, till we believe, because it is hid in the breast of God, or rather veiled in the gospel, under general terms, until Christ gives faith unto his people; whereby, they see their sins, as well as other believers, are forgiven; but simply to the conveyance of the pardon itself, there is nothing in the world but grace. You know, beloved, a prince sometimes looks upon a condemned person in pity, and considering him as a dying man, out of grace gives him, his pardon; and thus did the Lord by Christ in a new covenant; he looks upon such and such, as he sees good, going to execution, and merely out of pity cast upon them in this deplorable condition, sends Christ with pardon to them; not calling upon them to change their persons, to come thus and thus handsome, and then he will say something unto them; but as they are condemned malefactors, and come to execution, so he gives his pardon.

3. Though there was pardon under the old covenant, yet know,; that what they had, was but *gradatim*, and successively, as they offered sacrifice; it was not continued and successive, but it had interims and stops; in plain language, the covenant of the Jews reached out pardon of sin only so far forth as it was committed before such and such a sacrifice was offered; if a man had sinned ignorantly, till he had brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him; when he did bring it, it took away but that sin; it did not, neither could it, extend to future sins. Here presently is a succession of sin, and this must lie, till there crone a second sacrifice to take away that; and when that is gone, a third sin lies again upon the heart; and that is not gone, till there comes a new sacrifice for it; and the reason the apostle saith, "There is a remembrance again of sin;" because, "The comers thereto could not be perfect;" that is, they indeed had pardon by drops, now for one sin, then for another; it may be a week, a month's distance between, before they could have it; and still they had it, as their sacrifice was offered: mark the inconvenience of this; so long as any sin lay upon their spirits, these were under the burthen of their own transgressions; this is the reason you have often among the Jews so

many complaints; "My sins are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;" and of the exceeding bitterness of their spirits. No marvel, beloved, they were to bear their own sins; till the sacrifice came there was no discharge; so that, in the interim, sin lay upon their consciences: but mark how the covenant that Christ brought was better than that they had; "By one sacrifice once offered, hath he perfected for ever them that are sanctified:" as much as to say, those that are under this, are not put to these stops and interims for pardon, and are not to wait the time of the sacrifice, that so they may receive it from such a sacrifice; nor after they have some testimony of it, do they now lie under the weight of a sin new committed; but Christ did so perfectly go through the work of redemption, and taking away sin, that by one sacrifice he took it away at once for ever. (Dan.ix. 24) Here, beloved, lies one of the chiefest comforts of the whole gospel of Christ, to see that in him, sins past, present, and to come, are all at once wrapt up in this one sacrifice of his; there is an expiation before-hand for sin that shall be committed; there is not an: expectation of a future expiation; a sacrifice is already offered of value sufficient to take away the sins that afterward are committed; the value of this sacrifice went both upward and downward; upward to Adam, for the full pardon of all the sins of the elects, until Christ came; and it goes downward since he came, for the pardon of all the sins or every elect person until the end of the world; so that in consideration of sin committed since he offered himself, there is not some new thing to be done; but herein stands the perfection of what Christ did, it serves fully and completely for every purpose that could possibly happen afterwards.

There is but one particular more, and that is this, they had pardon (it is true) but as I may so say, that covenant though it did sweep, yet it left a great deal of dust behind; I mean this, though their daily and occasional sacrifices did take away sin, yet they did not take it away clean, but left some scattering of it behind: and this is plain by this, the apostle saith, that there were in these sacrifices a remembrance of sin again every year; that is, there must be an annual sacrifice to sweep away those relics of the dust of sin, which their daily sacrifice did leave behind; so that they were glad of the coming of the yearly sacrifice to take away sin, to make a clean riddance after these sacrifices, which could not do it; when these were offered, though there was something of remission of sins, yet certainly there

remained something of sin behind, and that till a year came about, or else that sacrifice once a year was in vain. Why could not their daily sacrifices do it? God would not, that they should make a clear riddance: and even that yearly sacrifice did not do it; for there must come another yearly sacrifice after that; and another after that; but now there remains no sacrifice for sin; no yearly, no daily, no occasional sacrifices for the taking away of sin.

But, you will say, will you take away all manner of duties and services under the gospel? I answer: I take not away the duty, no, by no means, but the end; there is no duty we perform that is now a sacrifice to take away sin; nothing but the blood of Christ only, takes away sin; as for the services of Christians, there are many other purposes for which they are required; as to express obedience to the will of God, the serving our generation, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free grace; these are the ends of our services; but to expect, by any service we do, to obtain pardon of sin, is absolutely Jewish, a new sacrifice upon commission of new sins; and directly overthrows all the fulness and sufficiency of that one sacrifice, offered by Christ himself.

2. The difference between these two covenants, stands in quieting the conscience; this follows necessarily upon the former. As there remains something of sin in that covenant of the Jews, so there must remain something of terror and trouble upon their conscience; a tender and well enlightened conscience, always sees and feels sin where it is; if there be any, a tender conscience feels it, and the gripe and gird of it; now, in that, there were sometimes some sins upon their persons no marvel that there were pain in their consciences for sin, for the apostle saith expressly, "That those gifts and sacrifices could not take away sin, as pertaining to the conscience;" that is, they could not take it away, that the conscience should be eased; for still there would be new sins committed that would disquiet it; hence it is that they cry, out of the bitterness of their spirits, that sin did lie upon them. But, beloved, that which Christ brought is better than this, in that "the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works;" for which cause he is called "The mediator of a new testament;" because his blood obtained a redemption, purged the conscience, not only from the foul acting of things, but from those sins, which, while they remain, lie as a weight to torment the spirit.

Christ takes away all the sins of his people; either you must say, Christ's sacrifice doth not take away all, or that there is not a sin left, after Christ hath cleansed the conscience of a believer. In a word, to close up all,

3. The covenant that Christ brought was better, in regard of wrath and judgment for sin. Justice you know follows sin at the heels; where it finds sin, there it executes: justice finding sin now and then upon the Jews, under that covenant, as it met with them so gave them a lash for them; hence you have those many complaints of God's justice plaguing them always: it was justice, because there was sin, which was their own, and was charged upon themselves, till the sacrifice came, and therefore their judgment was just; but Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, in that as he hath taken away all sin, so he hath taken away all the desert of it: though it be true under the gospel, the Lord chastises his people as a father with his rod; yet he never pours out indignation and wrath as their desert; he never looks to satisfy himself with any punishment of any member of Christ; for he beheld the travail of Christ, and was satisfied with that, Isaiah, liii.; and when God is once satisfied, he will never demand another satisfaction: if Christ hath worn out the rod of wrath to the stumps, and cast it into the fire, certainly there is no more of it to be remembered: the apostle is full to this, Gal. iii. 24; speaking of the Jews, he saith that they were under a schoolmaster, i. e. a scourge, until Christ; for so are the words in the original; "The law," saith he, "was a schoolmaster until Christ; but when faith was come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." They indeed were fit, to be scourged, because they were in a state subject to sin, guilt, and faults, until Christ came; but when faith, that is, Christ himself, was come, were no longer under a schoolmaster; therefore, in chap. iv. 1, the apostle calls them heirs indeed, because at length they did attain salvation; but in respect of the weight and burthen of the rod upon them, he saith, that for the present they differed nothing from servants; "The heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the appointed time of the father," that is, till Christ came; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son: I know it may be well interpreted of delivering persons in general, Jews and Gentiles, from under the slavery of sin; but doubtless the apostle hath an eye to this; namely, in respect of the imperfection of taking

sin from them, they did bear indignation and wrath for so much sin as was upon them; whereas Christ takes away all wrath and indignation from us, as it is the desert of sin.

Use I. In all this you may see the glorious liberty "wherewith Christ hath made you free," wherein stand fast, "and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

2. By keeping these truths, yon shall be able to answer satisfactorily to the knottiest objections that are or can be made against the free grace of God in Christ, especially from examples and actions under the old covenant.

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST THE GREAT PAYMASTER OF ALL THE DEBTS OF HIS PEOPLE.

ISAIAH liii. 6. latter part.

AND THE, LORD HATH LAID [or, made to meet] ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

OF all the chosen vessels to bear the name of Christ prophetically, before the children of Israel, there is none so like the apostles as this our prophet, in respect of the solemnity of his call; as appears by comparing both together; both he and they were called by visible fire settling on them, Isa. vi. 6, 7; Acts ii. 3, 4. Doubtless, this singular likeness of their calls, portended (as indeed, in the event it proved) a singular likeness between their ministries, as if he had been singled out to be the forerunner of them. Sure, if prediction be enough to denominate him a prophet, the glorious and precious gospel he preached, so far beyond the accustomed stream of his times, may well admit him into the fellowship of the evangelists; scarce coming short of any of them, in holding forth the "bright morning star," or "sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings:" it is true, the other prophets now and then met with Christ in their perambulations; but, as they saw him at a remote distance, so they could take but, as it were, a shadow of him, and accordingly represent him to the people; but this prophet seems to prepossess the beloved disciple's place, even the bosom of Christ: you may, with one eye, easily see, by comparing him with the rest, the vast difference. But to leave comparisons, because some think them odious; how admirably he preacheth the free and full grace of God to self-willed sinners, let this chapter serve for a sample; which both Christ himself, and his apostles, took so much notice of, that, of all the prophetic passages, there is none so frequently quoted by them, as these here mentioned, which the quotations in the margin point out unto you, as you may, there see. In the prophet's entrance upon

his sweet discourse of the unsearchable treasures of God's love in Christ to his people, whispered, as it were, a secret in his ear, he seems to be at a stand; as if he could hardly tell whether to bring it to light, or hold his tongue, out of a probable suspicion lie had grounded on former experience, that this kind of doctrine would be rejected; "Who hath believed our report?" &c. ver. 1. Now that this may not seem to be a calumny, but on good ground, in ver. 2, he gives an account of the reasons moving him to it, besides what occasioned it from former experience. He knew that the people expected great matters from Christ when he came; (as well they might) and, therefore, that his first appearance should promise much; and that if it should be in a mean low way, which would carry no likelihood of compassing great matters, he should not be believed: now it was revealed unto him, that Christ must "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," If therefore men judged according to outward appearance, (as probably they will) it might easily be judged that his labour would be vain, and that he should spend his strength for nought. Who expects a fair and plentiful crop in a barren heath or wilderness? What else but inconsiderable shrubs? How can men hope better of him, who must "grow up as a root out of a dry ground?" So long as common principles of reason rule, and ingross conclusions, Christ appearing, as is fore-prophesied, will not be taken for the man he is, but rather be laughed to scorn: as indeed, when he did so appear, he was by not only the vulgar, but also by the great doctors the Pharisees: afterwards the prophet more plainly expounds what he means by growing up as a root out of a dry ground; "He hath no form nor comeliness;" that is, his face will promise little or nothing, so that for lack of outward beauty, no desirableness will appear in him; hereupon, in ver. 3, he changeth his suspicion into a peremptory assertion, and concludes, "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows," &c

Yet, for all this, our prophet was in travail, and could not be at ease till he had brought forth the man-child, who was to save his people from their sins; it seems he was in Elihu's temper, Job xxxii. 17, 18, 19, full of matter, and the Spirit within him constraining him, his belly was as wine which hath no vent;: this ravishing news from heaven must out, or he must burst; speak he will, that he may be refreshed; though the most should put it from them, yet, some few,

be hoped, would gather crumbs of comfort from it, nay, be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of it; the dawning of the light whereof breaks forth in ver. 4, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted:" where he clears up a secret objection, which, unto common principles, ariseth out of the condition he was found in, viz. How can he be the Saviour of others that cannot save himself? If God plunge him in wrath, sure he can have but little power to prevail for the deliverance of others. The answer is touched in ver. 4, and more fully amplified and cleared up in ver. 5. The sorrows and griefs he sustained were not his own, but ours: it is true, he was wounded, bruised, and chastised, but not for any faults of his own, or out of any distaste God took against his person, who was his beloved Son; but "he was wounded for our transgressions," &c. In ver. 6, the prophet describes what those were, for which he was wounded; "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way:" now, in my text, he clears up the justice of God in wounding him "for our transgressions;" for it might be objected, that here can be no equity to punish an innocent for a delinquent: but that shews that though the delinquency be not his own act, yet the Lord laid it on him. As to the equity-of laying it on him, we shall have a fair opportunity to clear it up in handling of the text; but, before I crone to it, let us consider what place these words must have, in order of nature, in this discourse of the prophet: note, that though according to the order of the word, Christ is first said to bear our sorrows, then to be wounded, and then we bare peace through his chastisements, before our iniquities are laid on him; yet it is not rare to see the precious truths of God out of order in this regard: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling," saith Paul, (I bring this but as one instance). Salvation, as all know, in order of nature, and time also, follows our holy calling, yet in the words it hath precedency. It is so in this discourse; the true method of the gospel supposeth the creature's sinfulness, as it is first laid down in lifts verse, which, gives the occasion of Christ's being a Saviour; and, whereas wounds and stripes are the just wages of sin, this sinfulness of the creature must some way be on Christ, or else he might not in justice be wounded; punitive justice must first find a crime upon a man, before it can smite him; as for Christ, he himself never committed any fault, ver. 9, "He did no violence, neither was

any deceit in his mouth," as the Lord himself says; therefore, it follows, that the sins of others must be charged to his account, and he must be responsible for them, before he can justly be wounded; hence, in my text, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Now (as in suretyship) our debt becoming his, the execution goes justly out against him, and so God can give a just account of wounding him; and he being thus wounded, that is, bearing the full indignation and wrath our sins deserve, and so ending all the quarrel God had against us; it follows, that these wounds of his become the "chastisement of our peace;" God having hereby nothing to say against us; and seeing all is well between him and us, he doth not only lake away the anguish, but also proceeds to make a perfect cure; "By his stripes we are healed." And so I come to the words themselves, which are as the dawning of the day after a sad dark night; holding forth the first glimmerings of comfort to men, that have lost themselves in the dark. I confess it is supernatural for a man to see the exceeding horridness of sin, he being naturally blind; but yet many attain this, who come short of reaching the gracious mind of the Lord in acquitting men from their sins (witness Cain and Judas) which is no where more fully revealed than in this text.

The truth is, however a careless eye may mind but little extraordinary, or admirable in the words; yet I dare be bold to say, they contain well nigh the deepest mysteries of God, manifested in the flesh; even those things whereof our Saviour speaks, when he gave thanks to the father, for "hiding them from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes."

I am persuaded, that not any who profess themselves Christians, but will with both hands subscribe to the whole text in general, without any contradiction. Oh, that the heart were stedfast in file several particulars! There is not a word in it, but hath its special weight: Satan knows full well that each is a mortal dart to pierce the very heart of his destructive principles; and therefore is very busy with wiles to sophisticate the precious truths held forth herein, and bitter malice to poison this fountain: as by his instruments he would cozen the world with dross for gold, so would he, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, in making them believe their gold is but dross: or, at least, play the thief, and foist dross into their him instead of gold.

But, because it is gold tried in the fire, as near as may be, we will not lose a dust of it; and for the better husbanding hereof; let us sift these particulars in the words: 1. What this is which the Holy Ghost tells us is laid on Christ, "The iniquity of us all:" 2. How this is disposed of, "The Lord hath laid it on him:" 3. At whose disposal it is, "The Lord:" 4. On whom he laid it, "Him:" 5. Whose iniquities the Lord laid on him, "The iniquity of us all:" 6. When he laid it on him, the time is past, "He hath laid it on him." All which particulars offer to our consideration so many several most comfortable propositions: as,

I. God not only inflicted the desert of sin on Christ, in wounding him for it, but also he laid even iniquity itself on him; I mean the iniquity of his elect*.

* He (Christ) was willing to become our surety, and to answer for our sins, and to bare them imputed to him, so as to be oblige to bear the punishment of them, the wrath and curse, which, if he had not endured them, would have sunk every one or us into the pit of hell.— *Romaine on the Law and Gospel*, page 170, last edition.

II. God doth not connive at the iniquity of his people, as if, indeed, he knew well enough it lay on them, but yet he would overlook it, and be content to suppose it on Christ, whilst it remains indeed on them; but, in express terms, the Lord hath laid them on Christ.

III. This laying of iniquity on Christ, is the sole act of the Lord himself; none, nor any thing else can do it but he; Christ himself laid not the sins or his people on himself, but the Lord laid them on him. Christ is but the mediator between God and them in this business; contentedly, indeed, stooping to the burthen, when 'the Lord agreed, and would have it so; much less doth any act or man, whether it be repentance, or turning from his evil ways, or amendment of life, or his faith, in the purest act of it, lay them on him; or hath the least hand therein.

IV. The iniquity of God's people is no otherwise disposed by way of transfer from them, but only on Christ; none can bear or carry away iniquity from them, but he alone.

V. That which was laid on Christ, was the iniquity of us all even of us, who like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to our

own way; that is, the Lord had no other consideration in his thoughts at all, but our going astray, and turning to our own way, when he laid our iniquity on Christ: he did not observe any difference, as if one man were more lovely, or likely to be more serviceable, or were more pliable to his bent than others, which might win his love and pity; but looked only on their pollution in blood, rebellion, and enmity, taking the rise of this grace of his only from within himself, even his own compassion.

VI. The Lord is not now to do this, nor is it reserved till here-after; but he hath laid them on Christ already; the act is past long before. And from hence ye may perceive, that there is not now a new thing to be done by the Lord in the transferring the sins of believers to Christ; as if, when they begin to be called out of darkness into marvellous light, just then God begins to transfer sin from them, and lay it upon Christ; so that the act of God's laying sin upon him, is not a continued act, but what he hath done long before. In which point, it will be considerable to find out the time when the Lord laid the iniquity of his people upon Christ: and it will be further worth consideration, seeing the Lord *hath laid them*, what is become of them? where do they remain? As for the person whose sins are transferred, he is acquitted and discharged. And likewise Christ is acquitted of them too: *Hath laid*, imports them both. If he hath taken them off from him, that was the committer of them, and laid them upon Christ, they are gone from him too: if they were not gone from him too, the words would have been, the Lord *lays*, in the present tense; but they are in the prefer-perfect tense, *hath laid*. And this will be very clear, if you consider Heb. ix. 26, "He hath borne the sins of many, and to them that look for him, he shall appear the second time without sin." Mark it well, there was a time that Christ did not appear without sin; for he bore the sins of many: but there is a second time when he shall appear, and then he shall be without sin; so that believers have no sins upon them, (Cant. iv. 7.) and Christ hath none neither.

Every of these particulars will require time to discuss them fully; yet there is not any one of them out will give sweet consolation to the most drooping spirit under heaven: we will take them into consideration, and begin, with the first of them.

I. It is iniquity itself, even the sins themselves of those whom God

intends shall reap benefit by Christ, that are laid on him. Satan hath raised a foul mist to darken the glorious light of this admirable truth. At first looking on it, you may think there is no thing in it more than in other ordinary truths; but you shall find in the close, that all the comfort you can take, concerning your freedom from sin, will hang upon this point, that it is iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ. But, many are ready to think that the guilt (such as they call so) and the punishment of sin lay upon Christ indeed; but simply the very fault that men commit, that is, that the transgression itself is become the transgression of Christ, is somewhat harsh*:

* But it should not seem harsh, since transgressions only become Christ's by imputation, or by being in the sinner's stead, as immediately explained; nor that not the guilt and punishment of sin only are laid on Christ, but the fault itself, since that is not to be separated from guilt; and since the Scripture is so express, that sin, or iniquity itself is laid on Christ: hence the learned Witsius observe, "I know not why some should choose to say, the guilt or punishment of our sins are transferred to Christ, rather than sins themselves as to the guilt; since this latter is said by scripture itself, whose most pure, most wise, and very emphatic speeches, to desire to soften, by I know not what milder ones of ours, shews a mind nice and squeamish, and not setting that just value upon the sacred writings due unto them.— *Irenic. Ani-madv.* c. i. s. 15.

but when the text saith, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" the meaning is, that Christ himself becomes the transgressor in the room and stead of the person that had transgressed; so that in respect of the reality of being a transgressor, Christ is really the transgressors*,

* Not the real actor and committer of the transgression, as is afterwards explained, but as there was a real imputation of it to him, being the surety of his people who had transgressed; and is the true and only sense in which the Dr. is to be understood; for, as the excellent Witsius, just before quoted, says, "Not so, God imputes our sins to Christ, as to judge that he committed the sins that we have committed; as to be drunk with Noah, to commit incur with Lot, or adultery with

David; such a thought, so foreign from all reason, could never enter into any man in his senses, much less a Christian, and one that fears God." Ibid. s. 11.

as the man that did commit it was, before he took it upon him. Beloved, mistake me not; I say, not that Christ ever was, or ever could be, the actor or committer of transgression, for he never committed any; but the Lord laid iniquity upon him; and this act of God's laying it upon him, makes him as really a transgressor, as if he himself had actually committed it: and this I shall endeavour to clear by manifest scripture, that simply, without any equivocation, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself was laid upon Christ; I shall then clear some objections, and shew the necessity of the thing.

Look but into Isa. liii. 11, 12, there you shall find three words all expressing this one thing, that it is sin itself, and deviations, that are laid on Christ: "He shall bear their iniquities," ver. 11. "He was numbered among the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many:" mark it well, I pray.

Some have been ready to conceive, that the word iniquity in the text is spoken figuratively; iniquity, that is, the punishment of it, was laid on him; but see how careful the Spirit of God is, to take away all suspicion of a figure in the text; there are iniquity, transgression, and sin, three words, and all spoken to the same purpose, to confirm it; and it is strange, that all these three should still be understood of punishment, and not simply of sin itself without any figure; but, from hence it is clear, that the iniquity itself of the persons for whom Christ suffered is moved from a believer, and transferred upon him.

All the difficulty lies in that expression, "He was numbered among the transgressors." Some will be ready to say, he was so indeed, but by whom was he numbered? The Scribes and Pharisees called him a blasphemer, and a seducer; and they said, he had a devil, and was a glutton and wine-bibber; and, according to the charge, they crucified him with transgressors, and so he was numbered amongst them; but God did not account him so; and though they did, it doth not therefore follow that he was so.

I answer, Under favour, beloved, let me tell you, that in this place Christ being numbered with the transgressors, was spoken in respect of God's own accounting him among the number transgressors; for

he himself made him one at that time. Bear with the expression; for the apostle hath one higher than this, though it may seem harsh to you. Look into 2 Corinth. v. 21. There you shall see that God made him more than a transgressor; "He was made sin for us;" there is a great deal of difference between being made sin, and being made a sinner, with any that know how the expression in the abstract goes beyond that in the concrete: I know the word may be spoken hyperbolically; not that Christ simply could be made sin, or his essence be turned into sin; but the apostle's meaning was, that no transgressor in the world was such a one as Christ was*.

* This is true of Christ, not as the actor of transgression as the Doctor immediately observes, but as he was made so by imputation, in which respect he was the greatest transgressor in the world; for let any man be ever so great a one, he has only his own sins on him: but Christ, though he had none of his own, yet being the surety of his people, and standing in their place, had all their sins upon him, which he calls his own, and were innumerable, Ps. xl. 12, and so was, by imputation, what no sinner ever was, or could be; and this is saying no more than what divines, ancient and modern, have not scrupled to affirm. 2 Cor. v. 21. Phrases as strong as any the Doctor has here or elsewhere; and which, though not contrary to the divine judgment concerning Christ as our surety, nor derogatory to the perfect purity and holiness of our Lord, but are designed to express the most perfect imputation of sin to him, and the security of our salvation by him, as Witsius observes, yet I cannot but be of opinion with that same great man, that it would be better to abstain from the use of such phrases; since they are not scriptural, need much explanation, and may be offensive to tender minds.—
Animadv. Irenic. c. i. s. ii. S. 1, 4.

But still he was a transgressor, as our transgressions were laid upon him, not that he was the actor of any; and how could the Lord himself by his own act lay our transgressions and yet not number him among such as were transgressors*?

* That Christ was numbered by men among transgressors, is not denied; he was called and traduced by them as a sinner, and placed between two thieves when crucified, which

fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in part, Mark xiv. 27, 28. But then this being suffered by the Lord, shews that he was accounted so by him, and stood in the eye of justice as among, and in the place of, transgressors; and that this is the sense of the passage appears from what follow; *and* or *for he bore the sins of many*, as Junius and Tremellius render it; which could be no reason with men for so numbering him, who knew nothing of his bearing the sins of others; but is a reason with the Lord so to account him, since he himself laid these sins on him.

The apostle Peter speaks very fully to this business, in 1 Pet. ii. 24. He tells us, that " he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" he bare our sins, and it was he himself that did it, and it was on his own body; one would think that all these words need not; he might have only said, he bare them in his body; but he said more emphatically, "He himself bare our sins in his own body;" he speaks it so punctually, that all the world may see that there is no underhand, but plain dealing with God in this business; that so we may rest satisfied with it, that being made partakers of Christ, our iniquities were laid upon him; and if they ever be looked after, it should be where they are: and this is the main end why there are so many expressions in scripture, that our sins are laid upon Christ, to imply, that when any search is made for them among believers, they may know what is become of them, and so satisfy themselves about it: do but observe that excellent expression, Jerem. 1. 20; where you will find what the great scope and end is, why the Holy Ghost takes such and so much care to let us know, that it is iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ. "In those days, and at that time, shall the iniquities of Israel be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found."

Beloved, here is a strange mystery, the world will not receive it, except they receive this principle we are now upon, namely, that the iniquity itself of his people is laid upon the back of Christ. What, will some say, what no iniquity at all found in Israel, though it be searched for narrowly? No, saith the prophet, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Israel commits sins every day, you will say, and cannot the Lord find them? But the prophet saith, he hath laid this iniquity upon Christ, therefore it is

gone, it cannot be there, and here too; it cannot be on Israel and on Christ. Suppose a thief had stolen goods, and brought them home to his house, a friend comes and takes them away, in favour to save his life; there is a privy search made for them in the house of the thief, in every corner; how can they find these stolen goods there, supposing they are carried away by his friend? They are sought for, but they are not found, because they are carried away. Even so, hence it is, that iniquities are sought for in Israel, and there is none, because they are carried away already, and laid upon Christ. I will tell you by the way, the reason why believers groan so heavily under such bitterness of spirit, disquietness and horror in their consciences; they think they find their transgressions there, and imagine that there is a sting of this poison still behind wounding them; but, beloved, if this be received as a truth, that God hath laid thy iniquities on Christ, how can they, belonging to him, be fond in thy heart and conscience, if so be he hath already transferred them unto him?

Is thy conscience Christ? Either that must be Christ, or the Lord hath not laid thine iniquities upon him; or else thy heart must be freed from thy sin. I beseech you consider of it seriously; we know not what times are growing upon us, nor what may abide us; we may be cut off from the land of the living, and be in the Jews' condition, subject to bondage all our lives, long, through fear of death and hell; and what is the occasion and ground of it? it is to have sin lie close upon your spirits: separate sin from the soul, and it hath rest in the worst condition: being in the Jewish condition you will never have full satisfaction and settled quiet of spirit, in respect of sin, till you have received this principle, "That it is iniquity itself that the Lord hath laid on Christ." Now, when I say with the prophet, if is that itself that the Lord hath laid on him, I mean as he doth; it is the fault of the transgression itself, and to speak more fully, that very erring and straying like sheep*,

* The sin-offering, which was typical of Christ, is called *sin* itself, erring, going astray, or missing the mark, as the word signifies. See Mr. Samuel Crisp's (the Doctor's son) "Christ made sin," &c.; not the guilt and punishment of sin, but the *avouia*, the illegality and sinfulness of it were laid on Christ, and satisfied for by him: strip sin of this, and it will be an innocent thing, and deserve no punishment: nor could more

be inflicted on Christ than in proportion to sin, or what of sin was laid upon him; and if there is any thing in it, or belongs to it, not bore by him, it must be by the sinner himself, and upon this scheme not one of Adam's race can be saved.

is passed off from thee, and is laid upon Christ: to speak it more plainly, hast thou been an idolater, a blasphemer, a despiser of God's word? a trampler upon him, a prophaner of his name and ordinances, a despiser of government, and of thy parents, a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, a liar, a drunkard? Reckon up what thou canst against thyself; if thou hast part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually his, and cease to be thine; and thou ceasest to be a transgressor, from that time they were laid upon him, to the last hour of thy life*:

* Being Christ's by imputation; and though theirs by commission, and not Christ's, ye, being bore by him, shall not be reckoned to them, or charged upon them, or brought against them to their condemnation. Rom. viii. 38, 39.

so that now thou art not an idolater, a persecutor, a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, or a sinful person; reckon what sin soever you commit, when as you have part in Christ, you are all that he was he is all that you were: 2 Cor. v. 21, "He was made sin for us, that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Mark it well, Christ himself is not so completely righteous, but we are as righteous as he was; nor we so completely sinful, but he became, being made sin, as completely sinful as we*;

* But by imputation: Christ having all the sins or his people laid upon him, must, in this sense, be reckoned as completely sinful as they; and they, having his righteousness put on them, must be as completely righteous as he; which is to be understood, not of his essential righteousness as God, nor of the righteousness of his office as mediator, and the faithful discharge of that; for they are neither made gods nor mediators; but of that which he wrought out for them, in their room and stead, consisting of his active and passive obedience; "of which, (says Witsius,) seeing all the elect equally partake, all must needs be perfectly righteous, through the same most perfect righteousness of Christ, *aque*

ac ipse Christus, equally as Christ himself; since the righteousness of the elect is the very righteousness of Christ himself, only with this difference, that it is Christ's, because performed by him; ours, because imputed to us." Ani,adv, Irenic. c. vi. s. 9.

may more, the righteousness that Christ hath with the Father, we are the same, for "we are made the righteousness of God;" and that very sinfulness that we were, Christ is made before God; so that here is a direct change, Christ takes our persons and condition, and stands in our stead, we take his person and condition, and stand in his stead*. What the Lord beheld Christ to be, that he beholds his members to be; what he beholds them to be in themselves, that he beholds Christ himself to be.

So that if you would speak of a sinner, supposing him to be a member of Christ, you must not speak of what he manifests, but of what Christ was.

If you would speak of one completely righteous, you must speak and know that Christ himself is not more righteous than he is; and that that person is not more sinful than Christ was, when he took his sins on him; so that if you will reckon well, beloved, you must always reckon yourself in another's person, and that other in yours; and until the Lord find out transgressions of Christ's own acting, he will never find one to charge upon you.

Now, we have it professed unto us that "Christ was in all like things like unto us, sin only excepted;" and for whatever sin you have committed, do, or shall commit, there was one sacrifice once offered by Christ, through which he hath perfected them that are sanctified; that sacrifice of his made the exchange, by virtue of which became that which Christ was, and he became that which we were; thus the Lord laid iniquity upon him; therefore it is observable, the words in the text are indefinitely spoken, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity;" not this or that iniquity but the whole bulk of it.

And if this seem not enough, that every transgression, first and last, great and small, one with another, are carried away at once, and laid upon Christ; mark that well, in 1 John i. 7, it is as clear as the light: "For the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." [All] it is an admirable word though it be never so small; not past sins

only, but present sins; the person that belongs to Christ is acquit of all transgressions, that whatever he commits, it is as if he never committed any in the world.

1. As for that objection about guilt; that the Lord lays, the guilt and punishment, but not simply the sin itself, for ought that I see, it is a simple one; for, you shall never find this distinction in all the scripture, that God laid the guilt of sin upon Christ, and not that itself; as for the guilt of sin, it is not mentioned in all the scripture, that God lays it, or that Christ bears it; nay further, to affirm, that the Lord laid upon Christ the guilt of sin, and not the sin itself, is directly contrary to scripture; for you have many testimonies affirming, that the Lord lays sin upon him; what presumption then it is for a man to say, he lays on Christ the guilt, and not the sin itself!

2. That you may have a little more light concerning this word guilt; for I know many spirits are troubled about it: for my part, I do not think as some do, that guilt differs from sin, as that which is an obligation or a binding over to the punishment of sin, rather than sin itself being past and gone: but that you may have the true nature of it opened, I will give you an instance, Gen. xlv. 21. When Joseph's brethren were accused for spies, it is said, they spake one to another, "We are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." What is the meaning of *guilty* here? Reuben expounds it in verse 22. "Did not I say to you, sin not against the lad? but you would not hearken unto me," and therefore behold we are *guilty*: what is that? we sinned against the child; to be guilty, therefore, and to commit sin, is all one; they are but two words expressing the same thing: now that you may understand the word *guilt* better, suppose a malefactor be asked, guilty or not guilty? he answers, not guilty; what doth he mean? he means he hath not done that fact which was laid to his charge: when the jury is asked guilty or not guilty? The jury saith, guilty; what do they mean? Do they mean anything in respect of punishment? No; the jury hath nothing to do with that, but only with matter of fact; that is, whether the fact be done or not; so that to be guilty or not guilty, is to say the fact is done or not; guilt and sin are all one: where lies the difference? The guilt is upon Christ, but the sin itself is laid upon a man's own person; as much as to say, sin is laid upon Christ, but it is not laid upon him, that is just a

contradiction: and whereas it is affirmed by some, that the Lord laid the punishment of sin on Christ, and not the sin, that is false; though it be true that he was wounded for our transgressions, yet it doth not follow that he did not bear them; that scripture that warrants us that the punishment was laid upon Christ, warrants us, that sin itself was laid upon him: why do we that the punishment was laid upon Christ, but because the Holy Ghost hath revealed it unto us? The same hath revealed to us, that sin itself is laid upon him, as well as the punishment; he that rejects the one, rejects the other.

But, to sum up all, beloved; the truth is, Satan is very cunning, and, for a while, allows Christ the bearing of the guilt and punishment, that so he may take away his bearing iniquity; the truth is, if iniquity be not really transferred to Christ, there is neither guilt nor the punishment of our sins upon him. And observe these things,

1. If iniquity itself had not been laid upon Christ, it had been extremest injustice in the world for the Lord to have bruised him. That it was the Lord's own act, besides the Jews, is manifest; the apostles jointly concluded that they did nothing but what was by the determinate counsel and purpose of God; nay, in this liii, of Isaiah, the Holy Ghost saith expressly, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" well, then, the act of bruising is God's; if he himself will bruise his Son, he hath some reason for it; vindictive justice on a person, of necessity implies some fault committed. The Lord complaineth of his own people, that they should say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" that is men should be punished without fault; how could the Father possibly thus scourge his own Son, and yet have nothing to lay to his charge? He doth not acquit him from any sin of his own; "He did no violence" at all: if, therefore, Christ had not the faults of his own members become his; and, that the Lord did thus bruise him, as having these upon him, had been bruised for nothing.

Suppose a man should be cast into goal and arraigned, and, though there be nothing found against him, yet the judge will hang him; what justice is there in this? Beloved, if our sins be not transferred to Christ, and found upon him at the arraignment of God, he should have been found complete and absolutely innocent; and then, for the Lord to punish him when he had nothing to lay to his charge, had been injustice to him. That Therefore, might be just in punishing

Christ, and do no more upon him than what was deserved, he must first have the iniquity laid upon him, that is, the merit of that bruising; that there might be upon him the desert of what he did sustain.

(2.) Suppose Christ be bruised, and our iniquities not laid to his charge, what are the better for it? Suppose a man dies for a fault, what is this to a thief whose fault he doth not bear in his suffering? He must suffer for his own fault, till it be laid upon the person of another; and being laid upon him, this other suffers for him. Suppose a man be cast into prison for debt, and another after him; what is the casting in of the second, to fist, except it be as a surety to the first; then, indeed, the first may be acquitted by the imprisonment of the second; but if the second doth not lie in for the debt of the first, the first must suffer, as if the second had not suffered at all; Christ was wounded and bruised; what is that to the person whose iniquities he doth not bear?

If Christ did not suffer for your transgressions, what is that to you if he suffered ten times more than he did? The truth is, beloved, justice, as a blood-hound, follows the scent of blood, and seizes wherever it finds it. (Matt. xxii. 18; Rev. xx. 15.) If a deer-stealer shall cast off his garment of blood, and another, that did not steal, should take it on, the blood-hound would fasten upon him that is not the thief; but, if the thief himself bears the blood of his own garment, the blood-hound will fasten on him: and so will justice do; if Christ doth not take our sins upon himself justice will pursue us, that have our blood upon ourselves, and so consequently give us up to wrath: but, if Christ take our blood, justice will follow him, and seize upon him, as if he had been the very person acting the sin. If justice do not find the blood upon him, it never pursues him, but it pursues the person (Matt. vii. 23.) where this blood remains it will fasten wherever it finds it.

(3.) Whence should it be, in respect of the event, that the elect and reprobate differ one from the other? The difference lies in this, the elect shall be saved, and the reprobate shall be damned; (Rom. ix. 22; Heb. vi. 8) the immediate cause is this, the reprobate bears his own sin, by reason of which he bears his ensuing damnation; the elect person bears not his own sin, and so there is nothing found against him, for which he should be damned. Now, suppose that

Christ leaves iniquity still remaining upon him that is elected, and the sin be found upon him, as well as upon a reprobate, sin would bring the same desert that it doth, upon the reprobate. The first beginning of the difference is in this, Christ takes away the sins of the one, and leaves the sins upon the other still, and they bear the punishment in this and in the world to come. But, as for the elect, the Lord takes the iniquities of them, and translates them upon Christ, who, in that regard, bears all the wrath due to them for them; and so they become discharged from punishment both in this life and in the life to come. The truth is, wherever sin is, the justice of God will have plenary satisfaction, even for all the sins in the world, either by the sinner himself, or by some surety for him; Christ, seeing he hath taken the sins of the elect upon him, must pay the full value; and his pay must be as full as the reprobates in hell; for God will have the utmost farthing. This is the difference between an elect person, and a reprobate; Christ first paid all that for them, which they, with the reprobate, should otherwise have paid, in their own persons, in hell; and, therefore, you can conceive no real difference between them and you, if Christ doth not bear your sins upon himself.

A word of application, and so I will have done; and that shall be but one. If it be iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ, then beloved, see what cause you have to take up all your time to be his; that being his, and receiving the grace of God administered unto you by him, you may see what cause you have to take up the triumph of the apostle; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." It is a sweet song, beloved, and a song of songs indeed, and there is mighty strength in the argument: here is first a question, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Who is it? Some will say, It is God, I fear; I fear not men, they cannot do it; I fear God will lay something to my charge: if there be sin, it is against him; if there be any wrath, it is he that must pour it out: all that I fear is God. Nay, fear not, saith the apostle, "It is God that justifieth," therefore never fear that he will lay any thing to thy charge. Can God say, I pronounce thee innocent, and justify thee from thy sin; and will he, with the same breath say, I have this and that other sin to lay to thy charge? This were a contradiction. If any man in the world will offer to do it, they have nothing to do in this work; it is God, and he only charges with sin; and if he doth it not,

who can do it! Nay, "Christ is dead, nay rather is risen again;" as if he should have said, The Lord laid our iniquities upon him; he made him to bear the burthen of all, and it sunk him to death, and he was cast into the gaol for debt; now we see him come out. Seeing God is so exact that he will have the utmost farthing, it is certain he is quit, because he is delivered; he is freed, "He is not dead, but is risen." Oh! beloved, how comfortably might you walk in all conditions in the world, if you did but carry this in your breast! Well, come what will, I am quit of all my sins, I stand innocent; for Christ himself hath satisfied the Father to the full for them, and he will never remember them again.

Mark but one passage of scripture, and I will conclude; 2 Cor. v. 19—21, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and made him to be sin for us." Mark, in the business of transferring sin to Christ, God's order; when he will do all with Christ for men's sins, he gives to them a full acquittance; he cancels his bonds, so that he will have nothing in the world to shew against him, so it imports: as for the world (believers I mean) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" that is, he will not have a word more to say to them; he will not have a sin more to charge upon them; but, as for Christ, he shall be made sin; that is the reason why God gives them a discharge, because he hath found out one that is mighty to bear it, as you have it in Psalm lxxxix. 19, "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" as if he should have said to Christ, I have a company of broken creatures; for a debt that is owing to me I could punish them for ever, but I should never pay myself out of them; now I have found thee, a person able to pay; and, seeing I have found thee so, I will take it here I will pay myself out of thee.

In Heb. vii. 22, you have a notable expression of Christ; "Wherefore," saith the apostle, "he is the surety of a better testament:" God takes Christ as a surety; look as men will do, so deals God with him. A rich surety is bound for a broken debtor, that is not worth a groat; what will the creditor do in this case? He will never look after the beggar; he knows there is nothing to be looked for there; he will look after the rich man; the rich man must stand to it; let him look to it, he shall pay it: so doth God; Christ is become

the surety of a better covenant; man is a broken debtor, and Christ is a surety, one that is rich, and able to pay, therefore God will look after none but him; for this cause Christ gives his own single bond, and God is content to take it, and looks for no other payment but him. You know, when a surety becomes bound, instead of the principal, the surety is as much as the principal, after he is bound, as the principal was the debtor before: so Christ, being a surety, not only stands liable to the payment of the debt, but he actually stands the debtor, upon which ground the payment may be exacted: for, except the person be a debtor, there can be no just claim of payment; therefore the surety is a real debtor; nay, Christ being our surety, is become sole debtor; God hath not only taken him to be surety, but, upon Christ's coming and giving his bond, he cancels the bond, that now we are as free as if we never had been bound.

SERMON XVIII.

SIN TRANSACTED REALLY UPON CHRIST

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE, LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US
ALL.

I ENTERED upon these words, not far from hence, the last Lord's day; and, because some desired further light in the truth contained in them, I thought it not amiss to communicate something more, that light may shine forth from them.

The whole chapter sets out Christ abundantly, with ravishing sweetness: in this text, and the verse before it, is contained the sum of the whole gospel of Christ, the fountain of all the glad tidings published to the sons of men. Here the Holy Ghost tells us, how God disposes of our sins, then of the desert of them, and what the fruit of this disposing is; "He laid the iniquities of us all upon him; He was wounded for our transgressions." The fruit is, 1. Peace by his chastisement. 2. Healing by his stripe's. The words of the text are so many propositions or doctrines; there are these particulars contained in them:

1. What it is the Lord laid on Christ, "Iniquity." 2. How the Lord disposes of it, "He laid it on him." 3. Whose iniquities he lays on him." The iniquities of us all," such as have gone astray. 4. When he laid them on him, the thing is past, "He hath laid," it is already done. We have considered the first of these particulars, "That it is iniquity itself that the Lord laid upon Christ;" not barely punishment, leaving iniquity behind; but iniquity itself is laid upon him. I cannot stand to repeat all particularly; I will, therefore, fall at once upon the second thing, viz. How the Lord disposes of this iniquity, "The Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon him; let that be the proposition, putting the emphasis upon the word *laid*. If ever there be joy, peace, and rest of spirit, or thou wilt be of good cheer, as having knowledge

of thy sins being forgiven, it must be fetched out of this. "The Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon Christ." Men may suppose comfort and joy, and, in the strength of their fancy, peradventure, be at some kind of rest out of some other apprehensions; but there is no solid rest to any, but as it is founded on this, that iniquity is laid upon Christ. Satan knows this well enough, and therefore he raiseth a cloud of dust (as I may say) to obscure the glorious light of the sun of righteousness shining forth in this truth: there is such a stir to shilt off the plain genuine meaning of the Holy Ghost, that the truth is, persons scarce know where to find rest for the sole of their feet, in respect of peace, through the forgiveness of sins. And indeed, beloved, as the covenant of God is peculiar only to those that shall partake of the fulness of Christ; so none shall truly and thoroughly understand such truths as these, but those that are taught of God himself; which is one branch of the covenant, "They shall be taught of me."

That we may the better understand what evangelical sweetness is wrapped up in this truth, let us a little consider, what this phrase imports, according to the true meaning of the Holy Ghost. A great deal of shuffling there is about it, that the spirits of men can hardly receive it, or take it in plain English, "That iniquity is laid upon Christ:" by it, men generally conceive a kind of connivance of God; as if the Lord took notice, that this, or that, and the other person indeed bear transgression, but he forbears him, and will for the present purpose, that it is upon Christ; and so by laying its iniquity upon him, it must be no more, but God will be contented to esteem and think, iniquity is upon him; while indeed, and in truth, it remains where it was, upon the man himself that committed it.

But, beloved, under favour, I must be bold to tell you, that while men seek to vindicate God one way in this kind, they extremely abuse him in another; for if this be truth, that God only counts or supposes iniquity upon Christ, whilst he knows well enough, it is yet upon this, and that person, and he himself bears it; mark what will follow; what will you call this esteem of God? Is it such an esteem and supposition, that is righteous or false? Suppose a man speak of things, not according to the truth of the nature of the thing, but it is otherwise than he speaks of it; in this case, I would know whether such a speech be true or false: the truth of speech depends upon this,

when that, and the thing whereof it is made, do agree together; if they agree, the speech is true; if it tends one way, and the thing itself another, it is false: now then speeches are true or false, according to the truth of the thing spoken of; so are the thoughts and suppositions of the mind; for all these are but the work, or speech of it; therefore if the mind think of things, and these be otherwise, is it a true or false thought? a true one it cannot be, because it is not consonant to the thing thought of; so there is a mistake: but further, suppose a man know certainly beforehand, a thing is otherwise than he speaks, or than he thinks it to be, what call you this? This must be more than simply or barely a falsehood; in common acceptation this is no better than a lie; a man knows that a thing is thus and thus, yet he saith it is otherwise: suppose, I know a man is in such a place, and I will think him in another, what is this better than a lie? Now to come to the point in hand, "The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ:" what is that? he will suppose, think, or take it for granted, that iniquity is on Christ, but he knows it is on the persons themselves still; see how God must be charged by men that run into such a strain as this; at the best they charge him with mistakes; for if he knows that the sins of men remain still upon themselves, and yet will suppose they do not, but are on Christ, is this supposition according to the true being of the thing or no? Certainly, beloved, that all-wise, all-knowing, all-searching God, hath no other thoughts of things than as they are; as he himself either makes or disposes of them, he esteems and thinks of them, so consequently of sin. If he says, "He lays, or hath laid, iniquity upon Christ," and hath discharged the believer from all iniquity; certainly God supposes and esteems things to be thus, as he hath disposed of them.

Indeed, let us not make God so childish: if he laid iniquity on Christ, he past this real act upon him, and the thing is thus really, as he disposes of it; and therefore, in brief, this laying iniquity upon him, is such a translation of sin from those whose iniquity he lays upon him, that by it he now becomes, or did become, when they were laid, as really and truly the person that had all these sins, as those men who did commit them really and truly had them themselves: it is true, as I said before, Christ never sinned in all his life; "He did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" but this hinders not, but that there may be on him an absolute transaction; so that by laying iniquity on him, he becomes the sole person in the behalf of

all the elect, that truly hath iniquity upon him.

For the better clearing of this, give me leave to open a few expressions of scripture that speak to the same effect, and peradventure some will give better light than others; observe, 2 Cor. v.21. Having spoken of being reconciled unto believers, he tells us, "He (that is Christ) was made sin for us:" here is not only sin itself charged upon him, but it is expressed, how God charged it, "He was made sin;" and this word, made sin, hath more in it to show the reality of sin being upon Christ, by way of transaction, than the word laid: if you read the marginal notes upon our text, you shall perceive how translators render it; the Lord, saith the margin, made all our sins to meet upon him; the text, as we read it, runs, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" now what is it for a thing to be made? is it but a mere imaginary supposition or fancy? doth not the word (make) constitute the reality of the being of such a thing that is made? If you will know, what it is to be made sin more fully, look into Rom. v. 19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many are made righteous:" what is the meaning of that being made sinners? the whole drift (as you may plainly see) of the apostle, is to compare the restoration of persons by Christ, with the fall of them by Adam. It is true, men are made sinners two ways, they are made sinners fruitfully by Adam; there is not only an universal sin cast over all mankind, but there is a fruitfulness to commit it; but the apostle's drift in that place is, to shew, that the personal transgression of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit, became the sin of all the men of the world, even before they themselves did either good or evil; from whence David saith, in Psalm li. 5. "In sin was I conceived;" now David, when he was conceived, had not himself personally sinned, neither was sin fruitful in him, to do evil himself; and yet he, even then, was made sin by the disobedience of one; now, what is this? is it merely to be supposed or imagined to have sin? or is not there a reality of guilt, or of sin upon men by Adam's transgression? The apostle saith expressly, "By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners:" and it appears, that we are actual, that is to say, real sinners, by that very sin of his; that is, separate from transgressions, in our own persons: if then, a making persons sinners constitute a thing really in being, and not merely in imagination, it must follow, that Christ being made sin, or sin being laid upon him, is a real act; God really

passes over sin upon him, still keeping this fact, that Christ sinned not; so that in respect of this act, not one sin of the believer is Christ's*,

*This clearly shews the sense in which the Dr. is always to be understood; that the sins of believers become Christ's, not only in respect of the act, as done by him, but as debts become those who are surety for others; in which, as there is a real passing of debts over to them, so there is a real passing over of sins to Christ.

but in respect of transgression, the conveyance of it or passing accounts from one head to another, there is a reality of making Christ to be sin. When one man becomes a debtor in another's room, legally and by consent; this surety that becomes the debtor, is not barely supposed to be so, but by undertaking it, and legally having it passed upon him, he is as really and truly the debtor, as he was that was the principal before: so that there is an absolute truth and reality of God's act of passing over and laying sins upon Christ. If a judge would think such a man to be a malefactor, when in his own conscience he knows he is not, and upon his thought that he is, will actually hang him, is there any justice in such an act? If God will but suppose Christ to have sin upon him. and knows that he hath it not, but others have it upon them; and upon this supposition will execute Christ, what will you call this? As I said before, there must of necessity be a present desert upon a person, before the judge can inflict any thing upon him; a fault must be found upon a man, before he may be executed legally and justly; therefore the fault must be found really upon Christ himself, before there can be an act of God's justice in wounding him.

You have another phrase expressing the same thing, Isaiah liii. 11, 12, "He shall bear the sins of many:" now what is it to bear a thing? Doth a man hear a thing merely in the way of supposition? or where there is a *bearing*, is there not a real weight? This I am sure of, where the Holy Ghost speaks of men's "bearing" their sin," he speaks of such a thing as shall lie heavy upon men: in Leviticus you have it often expressed, "And they shall bear their iniquities;" speaking of persons that should be rejected and cast off: what is this hearing, but that sin should be found upon men, having a weight which shall be able to crush, bow, and break them? "My soul (saith Christ) is heavy

unto death;" and thus he spake before he suffered any real bodily pain; how came it to be heavy, if there were not some weight that he bore? If he did bear iniquity, and not the weight of it on him, how can his soul be heavy? Nothing is bowed down, except there be some real burthen borne that should do it: so that there must therefore be sin really past upon Christ, or else he could never stoop and bow, and be so heavy loaded as he was.

There is one phrase more in John i. 29; by the way, give me leave to tell you, that whereas it is generally received, that John prepared the way of Christ, and therefore is called his fore-runner, because he went in a way of beating down and breaking in pieces; you shall find, I say, that his main business, which he is called the preparer of the way of the Lord, was, he pointed with his finger to Christ, that so people might now see him whom they expected; "Behold (saith he) the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world;" I say, this was his main business, to point out Christ, that people might see him now to be come; and for this very cause, he is said to "prepare the way of the Lord:" what is the taking away of sin? it is worth consideration, beloved; it cannot sink into the head of any reasonable person, though he be but merely natural, that a thing should be taken away, and yet be left behind; it is a flat contradiction: if a man be to receive money at such a place, and he takes it away with him, is it left in the place where it was, when he hath taken it away? The Lamb of God, Christ, takes away the sins of the world, and doth he leave them behind him? it is a contradiction: look Lev. vi. 21, 22, where you have that most admirable type of all the types of Christ mentioned, and that is the type of the scape-goat; and there you will plainly perceive what it is for iniquity to be laid upon Christ, and how far forth it concerns the believer; "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions and sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away into the wilderness, and the goat shall hear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and they shall let go the goat into the wilderness." There was a goat slain, and a live one sent into the wilderness, that is, Christ dying, and Christ living: it is true, our sins are laid upon Christ dying, that satisfied for them; but the discharge of our sins, or receiving the acquittance, is from Christ alive or risen. Now as this scape-goat must have the sins

of the people laid upon the head of him, and, when laid, must go into the wilderness, and carry their sins with him; just so doth Christ with the sins of believers: God lays iniquities upon him, namely, by transferring them upon him, that he takes them away, and carries them into a land of forgetfulness, into the wilderness, a land not inhabited; that is, into a place that shall not be heard of any more: therefore, the Lord, in the closure of the new covenant, shuts it up thus, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more." How so? He hath carried them away into a land not inhabited; he hath taken them away, and, therefore, they are not left behind upon the person whose they were, till Christ took them away; though I say, still the person or a believer daily, hourly, every moment, renews several acts, which, in their own nature, are sins; they commit such things that are not according, to the revealed word of God; yet, Christ being become the "surety of a better testament," still has taken off every transgression which arises; he died not for present and past sins only, but "for the sins of the whole world;" that is, for all the sins of all *his elect* people at once, both Gentiles as well as Jews even to the end of the world; he hath taken and carried them away.

There are many objections, I know, arising in the hearts of men, yea even of believers themselves, till they come to be more and more enlightened, against this reality of transacting sin upon Christ, by which the person of a believer is acquitted: some of them are gathered out of phrases of scripture; others are raised up from reason; some are maintained by common and natural sense. I shall endeavour (as clearly as possibly I may) to answer those of greatest moment, that people may be satisfied in the truth.

Against such reality of transacting sin upon Christ, there is one phrase of the apostle Paul, very much objected, and that is [*imputing*]; and hence, say some, God's laying of iniquity upon Christ, is nothing else but God's imputing sin to him. Now this word [*imputation*] in the common understanding of people ordinarily, seems to carry something different in it from the real act of transferring sin from a believer unto Christ; it seems to signify only a supposition or connivance. Give me leave to open this word [*imputing*] to you; I am confident it stumbles many a person, not understanding the true meaning of the Holy Ghost in it; and I shall

endeavour to clear it to you out of scripture itself. First, That which I shall answer for the imputation of sin to Christ, is this; though I have searched the scripture as narrowly as possibly I may, yet, this I find, that throughout the whole there is not one passage of it that speaks of imputing our sins to Christ: in Rom. iv. the word *imputation*; and that which is equivalent to it, *accounting*, and *reckoning*, are seven times mentioned; and, in chap. v. 13, it is mentioned again; but still where the Holy Ghost speaks of *imputation*, he speaks of sin not imputed, and of righteousness imputed to us; but not once of sin imputed unto Christ*:

* Not that the Doctor was against the imputation of sin to Christ, or thought it an unscriptural doctrine; for it is the very thing, under different phrases, he is all along, in these discourses, contending for; and he makes use of it himself, p. 16; but what he militates against is, as some people understood it, as if it was a thing imaginary, which was only supposed of Christ, and not real; which sense he sets aside, and is his view in producing the objections he does; and settles the true sense of it by *reckoning* and *accounting*, which illustrates the true nature of imputation, as he after observes; and in which sense he readily allows it, as not being opposite to a real act of God in transferring sin to Christ; which is the thing his heart was set upon to prove, and to beat into the minds of men.

so that if we put this objection off as not being the phrase of scripture, it might be a full answer.

But some will say, there is that which is equivalent to it; for if sin be not imputed unto us and righteousness is; as we partake of Christ's righteousness, so he partakes of our sin; we partake of his righteousness by imputation, therefore he partakes of our sin by imputation.

I will not contend about words; we will take it for granted, that it is consonant to scripture, that our sins are imputed unto Christ; all the difficulty lies in the true understanding of the word *imputation*; how shall we find it? Look into Lev. xvii. 4, that will give light unto it; "What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that kills an ox, &c. blood shall be imputed unto that man, he hath shed blood, and

that man shall be cut off from among his people." Now, beloved, mark what the meaning of the word imputed is; it is no more but this, as he is truly and really guilty of blood, so he shall really and truly go for a bloody man: imputation here, you see plainly, hath reference to the truth and reality of the thing; he hath shed blood, and therefore blood shall be imputed to him.

Again, look into 1 Sam. xxii. 15, where you shall find Abimelech pleading hard with Saul, for his own life, and for the lives of his household: it seems Saul charged Abimelech, that he had relieved David with victuals and arms against him; for which cause, Saul calls him forth, to the end he might destroy him for it; now mark how Abimelech pleads for himself; "Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me, let not the king impute any thing to his servant;" what is the meaning of *impute* here? First, Abimelech acquits himself from being faulty in what Saul charged upon him; he did no such thing, he was accused of, hereupon, saith he, "Let not the king impute any such thing to me;" as much as to say, let the king determine and conclude of things according as really and truly they are: this is the meaning of the word there.

Again, look into Rom. v. 13, you shall see there again the word *impute*, is taken in the same sense; the apostle saith, "But sin is not imputed where there is no law;" now mark in chap. iv. 15, "Where there is no law, there is no transgression;" put these two together, the meaning must be this; God imputes no sin where he finds no law transgressed; that is, there is no sin in being, where there is no law transgressed; and therefore, he so determines and concludes of the thing. God's determining of things according as indeed they are, is his imputing things evermore.

Look into Rom. iv. 3, 4. There are two words that illustrate the nature of imputation, and they are these, *accounting* and *reckoning*; now enquire and understand the real and common use of these words, to *account* and *reckon*: suppose men are to pass an account, for that is the proper meaning of the word; to *account*, is to pass an account; and, upon the balance, there is so much money accounted to such a man; what is the meaning of it? Is it not that there is really so much money due to this man? And so, for the word *reckoning*, what is that? You know how ordinary it is for men to reckon together; for accounting and reckoning are all one. Men cast up their

accounts, and, upon the casting of them up, they find this and that due; that is, they reckon that such a man oweth so much: so that understanding the course of scripture, and the common use of the phrases of *reckoning* and *accounting*; you shall find that *imputing* is nothing but God's determination and conclusion that he passes upon things, as really and truly they are, without imagining things to be so and so, when indeed, and in truth, they are not so.

There is a second passage of scripture that is much objected against this reality of God's passing sin upon Christ, that is in Rom. iv., 17, and, indeed, at first glance, it seems to carry some strength with it, that there is not a reality in the thing, but that God is contented to account it so; "He calleth those things that be not, as though they were." Some may suppose that the Holy Ghost here imports to us, that it may well stand with God, though sins are not indeed upon Christ, yet to call them so, as if they were upon him.

But, beloved, give me leave to give you the true scope of the apostle in this place; and you shall plainly perceive, that this is broken sense, wholly torn away from his true meaning in it: mark it well, I pray; the apostle, in the beginning of this chapter tells us of God's promise made to Abraham, recited Gen. xvii. 5, "I have made thee a father of many nations." Now, because this promise was spoken before Abraham actually had children, and, when his body was dead in a manner, and so was not; hereupon he takes upon him to commend the faith of Abraham, that he should build upon the word of God, when there was so little likelihood of the thing; it was all one as if it were not at all; and he shews the ground whereupon he built with so much confidence, even the power of God, that makes things that are not, when he hath said the word, to be. So that the meaning of the place, is only this, though Abraham was not, that is, he was dead unto fruitfulness, yet the Lord having said, he would make him a "father of many nations," calls him as fruitful a person as he that was most so, though for the present he was not; so that, for the meaning of it, the utmost that can be made is this, that God, in respect of his power to bring to pass, when he saith the word, will call things as if they were present in being, when they are not, but in time shall be.

But what is this to the present purpose, if God did not really transfer sin to Christ, nor never meant to do it? For if he hath not done it

already, he never will; I say, if he neither hath nor will, how doth this place prove that "he calls things that are not, as though they were?" This is certain, beloved, though all things that ever shall be in the world, are most present to the Lord at once; for so they may be said to be, in respect of him, though, as to the things themselves, they yet are not; yet, in all the scripture, you shall never find the Lord expressing himself so; he never calls things thus and thus, when they never are, nor never shall be. If Christ has not already borne the sins of men himself, then certainly he never shall; for he is not now to do any more, to compass any thing not compassed; and if neither heretofore sin hath been, nor hereafter shall be, laid upon him, how cast God call that which was not, nor never shall be, as if it were?

There is, therefore, beloved, a certain transacting of sin upon Christ, so real, that, indeed, the believer, though an actor of transgression, is as absolutely and truly discharged of his sins, as if he himself had not committed them. As a debtor, when the surety hath taken the debt on him, and the debtor receives an acquittance, he is as free of the debt as if he had never run into it: so, I say, it is with believers, Christ being made "a surety of a better testament;" and, thereby becoming really and truly the debtor instead of them; he so bears all the debt himself; that they are altogether released and discharged, as if they had never been in debt. Still, I say, this hinders not, but that there is committing of sin every day by the believer; but yet the virtue of Christ's suretyship takes it off as soon as ever it is committed; nay, he hath a *proviso*, a stock (Cant. vii. 13. Psal. xxxi. 19,) in bank to satisfy for it before the commission of it.

Now, beloved, as there are many strong objections out of many passages of scripture; so, likewise, are there many strong ones, as many conceive from natural sense and reason; which, yet, being well weighed and considered, will vanish into smoke. I could willingly go on to answer these, but the time at present will not permit.

SERMON XIX.

SIN TRANSACTED REALLY UPON CHRIST

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE, LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US
ALL.

I HAVE elsewhere (as some of you know) entered upon these words, which afford divers notable, sweet, soul-refreshing truths; every word having its weight. 1. It was iniquity that the Lord laid upon Christ. 2. The Lord hath laid this upon him. This *laying* of our iniquity upon Christ, carries a deal of life in it; it weighs down the scale by which we mount. Now, by laying iniquity, the Holy Ghost means plainly such a taking away, and bearing of it by Christ, that the believer, whose iniquity he bears, is wholly discharged of it, as if he had never committed any at all. This laying of iniquity is not a mere supposition of God, that Christ now bears sin, while the believer in deed and truth bears it himself; but it is such a real act of God transferring the sin of a believer from him unto Christ, as when a surety stands in the room of a debtor, the debtor is by this acquitted of the debt, and the surety is as really the debtor now, as the debtor himself was before. It is true, where principal and surety are in a joint bond, the debtor lies open as well as the surety, and the surety as the debtor; but if the surety will come into the room of the debtor, he is so become the debtor, that the principal is now as free as if he had owed nothing. I use it as a demonstration, because it is the apostle's own, "He is made the surety of a borer testament." I cannot insist at large upon what I have formerly delivered; the sum is this, God made him to be sin, not only by way of supposition, but really; he bore the iniquities of many; he took away the sins of the believer; in all which there is a real act. And, whereas it is objected, that this word *laying* is expressed by the phrase of *imputing*, I answer, that it is not true; for, though the word *impute* is often used in reference to Christ; "Righteousness is imputed to us; our sins are

not imputed unto us," saith the apostle; but, in all the scripture, you shall not find sin imputed unto Christ; and, if sin be imputed unto him, it is no more but God's determining and judging Christ to bear sin, as in deed and in truth he doth bear it. But I must hasten.

I find, beloved, that there is nothing that embitters the life of a poor tender soul so much as this one thing, that they bear still their own iniquities, which lie heavy upon them; and I think that there cannot be a better service done to the poor weak members of Christ, than to shew them how they are wholly eased of this most unsupportable burthen of their sins. Satan knows, that now there is no other yoke of bondage to keep believers under, than to hold them under this principle, that their sins are not really already laid upon Christ, but that they themselves must bear some of them. I know the objections are very many, and, at first sight, seem to be very strong; we will see how we can take them away.

Natural reason, I know, pleads mightily against laying iniquity upon Christ, taken really and properly.

1. It is against justice, saith reason, that Christ, being innocent, should be charged with sin; as unjust as if you should take a true honest man, and charge him with felony, and execute him for it.

I answer, It is no injustice to charge iniquity upon Christ, though he be innocent, not only because the scripture saith expressly, "That the Lord did lay iniquity upon birth" though he never did violence himself, which is enough to satisfy any that will be ruled by scripture; but, I say, in reason itself, it is not injustice, though Christ be innocent, that yet he should bear iniquity: it is true, if God should take Christ, and force him to bear it, whether he would or no, it were injustice indeed; but Christ willingly offers himself to bear it, that God may have satisfaction, and a poor creature may have relief; he being thus willing to take it upon himself, it is no injustice in God to lay it upon him: observe it in reason, and it is not injustice; you have nothing in the world more common than this; suppose a man oweth an hundred pounds, if the creditor, come to another man (suppose a father) and demand payment, and arrest him for it, and make him pay it, this is injustice indeed; but if a father come to a creditor, and say, my son is a broken man, he can pay nothing, I am rich and able to pay all, lay your debt upon me, I will undertake it; upon such a

tender, is it injustice for the creditor now to charge the debt upon the father that thus offers himself? There is nothing more common, it is an usual thing for a man to seal bonds for his friend, though the debt be not his own till he hath sealed, yet then he is as truly the debtor as he that had the money; and so when the time of payment comes, the money is demanded of him, and lawfully charged upon him, because he hath made himself the debtor: so God the Father doth not take Christ as a rich man, to pay whether he will or no, but upon a joint agreement between them, Christ being contented, God takes him for a surety: "In the volume of the book it is written of me, (Heb. x. 7, 9,) that I should do thy will, O God: I am content," saith Christ, "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God:" here was, I say, a joint agreement; and seeing Christ agrees to it, where is now the injustice, that the "Lord should lay iniquity upon him," when for his satisfaction, Christ was contented to do it? The apostle tells us, that it was not possible that those gifts and sacrifices that were offered before of the Jews, could make those that did the service perfect, in Heb. ix. 9. Seeing then there was no other way to satisfy God, but Christ's own coming, and that he might be satisfied he would come, and freely tender himself, there was no injustice that he should have "iniquity laid upon him," when he was content to bear it.

2. It is further objected; saith reason, it is a contradiction to say, Christ is innocent, and yet bears iniquity. Innocence is nothing but full freedom from all crime and fault; how can Christ be said to be innocent, and yet to have fault upon him? it is a contradiction in reason.

I answer, it is no contradiction to say that Christ is innocent, and yet bears fault, being laid upon him: it is true, if these propositions were affirmed in every respect alike, it were a contradiction indeed; but it is commonly known, those things that are in their own nature contradictory, yet if they be spoken of in divers respects, are not so; Christ is innocent in respect of his own personal act; he bears fault as he stands a common person: Christ therefore is considered two ways. 1. Personally. 2. Representatively, as a common person. In respect of his own person, he is innocent; as he is a common person, he bears the fault of many.

3. Yet further, iniquity cannot be laid upon Christ, saith reason; for if he should really bear iniquity, he himself, for it, must be separated

from God; and if so, how can he make those that were sometimes afar off; near? The prophet saith, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;" was Christ separated from God, will you say? if he were not, how could he bear iniquity.

I answer, this objection makes it most manifest, that Christ did really bear iniquity, in that it is the cause of separation from God; it is certainly true, wherever iniquity is, it separates; nay, from this I affirm, as Christ did bear it, so for that he; was separated from God; this peradventure will need some strong proof, therefore you shall have the strongest that can be given for the demonstration of it: that Christ; was separated from God, it is his own testimony, and just at that instant, when sin lay heavy upon him; I pray construe well those words of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What do you call this forsaking here? was it not a separation between God and him? When friends, after they have gone hand in hand together, the one forsakes the other, what is that? he separates himself from him. God was here separated from, Christ, or else Christ speaks untruth, for he complains and cries out, in the bitterness of his spirit; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

You will say, it may be this forsaking was but for a little moment.

To this I answer, It was as long as sin was upon him; had not Christ breathed out the sins of men that were upon him, he had never seen God again; he having taken sin upon him, he must first unload himself of it, before he can be brought near to God: therefore, beloved, you shall find that passage of the Psalmist, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," is expounded by the apostle of the resurrection of Christ; as if the Lord did then beget his son anew, as it were. There was a separation and a forsaking when Christ died, but at his rising there was a meeting again, a kind of renewing of his sonship with God*,

* At the resurrection of Christ there was indeed a fresh declaration of his sonship, his, almighty power being exerted in the raising himself, Rom. i. 4. And so the begetting of Christ as a son is applied to his resurrection, Acts xiii. 33; as it may be, to any time, act, or instance, in which his divine power as the Son of God is displayed; but that there was any

redintegration, or renewing of his sonship, or a begetting him anew as a son, cannot be safely said: Christ, indeed, during his state of humiliation was in the form of a servant, and so was considered by his Father, and his divine sonship was little seen by men, yea by some he was charged with blasphemy for asserting it, and was pat to death for it; the reproach of which blasphemy was wiped off by his resurrection; but his divine Father always considered him as his Son, and more than one, in that state, declared him to be so; and Christ in his last moments commended his Spirit into the hands of God as his Father; wherefore if the Dr.'s meaning is, as some take it, that he was for a time abdicated by his Father, and as it were disowned as his Son, and upon his resurrection embraced again as such, I think he must be mistaken.

"This day have I begotten thee;" therefore in Rom. viii. 34, the apostle tells us, "That it is Christ that is dead, nay rather that is risen again, and sits at the right hand of God;" what doth he infer from thence? Who shall therefore lay, any thing to his charge? as much as to say, till Christ himself came off from men's sins, they were in danger of being charged with sin still. It is Christ that died, made satisfaction; nay rather, that is risen again, then he comes off; and the coming off of Christ himself from the sins he bore, was that which gives discharge unto believers, that now nothing can be laid to them; but still *he is risen*, is as much as to say, Christ is now come off himself, but he was not before he was risen; and by this he being secured from sin, we are secure in him.

Now let us come to some application, to see how near we can bring this home, to satisfy and bring rest to a weary laden spirit.

The use that I shall make of this point of God's laying, and the reality of passing over iniquity upon Christ, and desire every one of you to make with me, shall be this; only to press upon you a necessary and infallible inference that follows upon it; and that is this, if the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ, then whosoever thou art to whom the Lord will be pleased to give the believing of this truth, that thine iniquity is laid upon him, that is an absolute and full discharge to thee; so that there neither is, nor can be, any for the present, or hereafter, laid to thy charge, let the person be who he

will; if the Lord, I say again, give to any to believe this truth, that it is his iniquity he hath laid upon Christ, God himself cannot charge any one sin upon him.

Mark well, I beseech you, beloved, Rom. viii. 33, and ponder it a little, and see whether God himself can charge iniquity upon any, when once laid upon Christ.

He begins with triumph, with a great deal of magnanimity of spirit, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Who? may some say, he against whom the elect have transgressed? No, (saith the apostle) "It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" I pray mark it a little: understand rightly what it is for God to justify: to justify a person, is to discharge him from such a fault, or crime, that may be objected against him: suppose a man actually to be arraigned, it may be for twenty bills of indictment; upon the examination, of all these, peradventure nineteen of them are manifestly false, the man is clear of all of them; but the twentieth he is found guilty of, and upon examination he is found to be faulty; whether now doth the judge justify, or pronounce this person just, or no, where there is one fault that can be charged upon him? he must be clear of every fault, before he can be pronounced just. When the Lord justifies any person whatsoever, his justification is pronouncing his innocence; if he be criminal, he is not just, and if he be just, he is not criminal. To say that a person is just, and yet to say he is now criminal when he is just, is a contradiction; to pronounce a person just, is to pronounce him wholly innocent and clear from crime. Now then, if to justify a person, is to pronounce him clear from any crime, where is the iniquity that can be laid to thy charge, being a just person, as every believer is? Doth God now charge any thing upon thy spirit? if he doth, he doth in this pronounce thee an unjust person; and if he pronounce thee unjust, he doth not justify thee; for to justify, and yet to charge with a fault, is a contradiction; so that from the time the Lord justifies any person, he charges no sin ever after that upon him; except you will say, he once justifies men, and then unjustifies them again. How many justifications must we then make in the life of a believer, if sins committed, be charged upon the spirit of the man himself? As often as sin is committed anew, there is a revocation of a former justification, and a turning of that into an unjustification of him again: for though it be generally

received, that sanctification is a successive act, that is, God sanctifies us again and again, more and more; yet, that justification is an act of God at once, and the application, or giving of Christ to a person, is the justification of him: a man's justification, therefore, being but one act of God, how can it be successive? How much less can it be revoked, and a justified person stand afterwards unjustified? The apostle makes it so clear, that there can be no question made against it;" It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" As much as to say, the same God that justifies, will not pass sentence of condemnation upon one that hath received the sentence of absolution already. No, you will say, God doth not condemn; but yet he will let sin be charged upon the spirit of a man; doth not he then sentence him to be unjust?

There be divers condemnations; condemnation in sentence, and in execution. Condemnation in sentence, is a pronouncing of such a person guilty. You know, it is an ordinary course at the trial of a man at the bar, he is condemned when he is pronounced guilty. Now the other condemnation, which is the execution of punishment deserved for guilt, is but the effect of condemnation, rather than that itself. So far as God charges fault upon a person, so far he condemns him; so, that if God should charge a man as faulty, how can you' believe still that he is pronounced just by him?

I beseech you, beloved, stop your ears against all these quirks of Satan, and of your own deceived hearts by him, clamouring still to you, that sin lies yet upon you, and upon your own spirits. It is but the voice of a lying spirit in your own hearts, that saith, that you that are believers have yet sin wasting your consciences, and lying as a burthen too heavy for you to bear*;

* This is a passage that is excepted to, but without just cause. It is true, indeed, sin sometimes lies upon the conscience of a believer, as a burden too heavy for him to bear, as on David, and sadly wastes the conscience, that is, destroys the peace of it; but to what is this owing? To unbelief, which is no other than the voice of a lying spirit, it gives God the lie, and deceives the hearts of his people, I John v. 10, Heb. iii. 1.2; it is so when it tells believers their sins are upon themselves, and must be bore by them, though long ago, as the Dr. observes, laid on Christ with all their weight; and that the

wrath of God is upon them, and they ought to suffer distress and anguish in their souls for them, though their consciences have been purged by the blood of Christ.

I say, all the weight, the burthen, the very sin itself, is long ago laid upon Christ; and that laying of it upon him is a full discharge and a general acquittance unto thee, that there is not any one sin now to be charged upon thee. How can these two propositions stand together, thy sin is laid upon Christ, and yet lies upon thee? If God himself say it lies upon thee, and withal says, he before laid it upon Christ, how much is this better than a contradiction? But many will be ready to object, and this seems to be a very strong one:

Was not David a justified person, and did not he] bear his own sin, though he was justified? "My sins are gone over my head, they are a burden too heavy for me to bear:" and so many of God's people make the like complaint; by this it seemeth, though a person be justified, though his sins be laid upon Christ, yet he himself bears the weight of them.

I answer, I am not ignorant, beloved, that this objection seems to some to be unanswerable, and no marvel, till light breaks out of darkness to clear the truth.

First, I would fain know, whether now, under the times of the gospel, there be not many tender-hearted religious people that cry out of their own sins, and of the weight and burthen of them upon their spirits, as well as David? I must tell you, all that he speaks here, is from himself, and all that he spake from himself was not truth*:

* Here a great charge is brought, but without reason; every thing that a good man says of himself, and of the dealings of God with him, is not true; he only speaks according to his present apprehension of things, through ~ misguided conscience, and the power of unbelief, as David, Psalm xxxi. 22. And so Asaph, whom the Doctor through mistake calls David, and who himself acknowledges it was his infirmity to say what he did, Psalm lxxvii. 7—10, and lxxiii. 13—15; and as the church, Isaiah xl. 27, and xlix. 14, 15, 16. And under a like mistake David seems to be in the passage under consideration, Psalm xxxvlii. 1—4; for it is plain he thought

God was rebuking him in his wrath, and chastening him in his sore displeasure, which he deprecates; and what the Dr. afterwards observes, that there was something peculiar in his case, agreeable to the then dispensation of things, which required he should bear his sins till a sacrifice was offered, is not to be despised.

take that passage of his, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? and will he be favourable no more? I have washed my hands in vain." Did David speak well in these passages, to charge God that he had forsaken him forever, and that he will never be gracious more, and I have washed my hands in innoconey in vain? Did David (I say) speak well to charge God thus? If a weak believer complain, that makes not every thing a truth he complains of. David might mistake, that God should charge his sin upon him; and, it may be, he might charge his sin upon himself, without any warrant or commission from God.

But we will go a little further; suppose we grant David did indeed hear the weight of his own transgressions, and it was according to the will and pleasure of God, he having sinned, that he himself should bear it; and suppose we grant, that while, he did bear it he was a justified person, according to the covenant of grace, God made with him; yet it will not follow from hence that this instance of David should be a precedent to believers under the times of the gospel. I will clear a mystery unto you, though I have spoken elsewhere something of it; and I will clear it from the apostle himself in the epistle to the Hebrews; there is a great deal of difference between the times of David, and of the gospel, and that in particular of a man hearing his own sin. David was under a covenant of grace, and Christ was the substance of it; and so he had remission of sins, but with such a great difference, that the case is marvelously altered by Christ himself: it is true, when David sinned there was a sacrifice for his sin; and it is as true, there was no remission to be found, till the performance of it; "And they shall bring their sacrifice to the priest, and he shall make atonement for them, and their sins shall be forgiven them," Numb. xv. 28. Here is forgiveness of sins, but they must hear their sins till their sacrifice was offered; now the sin of David might lie upon himself till he had performed his sacrifice, because there was no remission to be found till that was

offered; now it is too probable that David, concealing his sin so long as he did, made no great haste to bring a sacrifice for it, and till that was offered there was no remission. Again, suppose his particular sacrifice was offered, yet that could not make those that came to it perfect: in Heb. x. 6, and ix. 9, speaking of those sacrifices, the apostle saith, that they were but a "Figure for the present;" and that it was impossible that those gifts and sacrifices should make perfect the comers thereunto; to wit, they that did the service could not thereby be made perfect: the truth is, though there was some remission, and so consequently some peace, upon the offering of those sacrifices, yet something was left behind, for which there was a yearly sacrifice to take away; even among the people of the Jews, under their covenant of grace which they had; which, though it were such a covenant; yet had not the large grants and charters that we have, now Christ is come; though they had remission of sins, yet it was successive, and admitted of intermissions and stops; sins committed before the sacrifice was offered, were remitted by it; but no sins committed after it, had any remission by the former sacrifice, but must stay for it till another succeeded: and from hence it appears, since there was a reiterating of sin, they had always some sin or other still lying upon their persons, because there was a successive offering up of new sacrifices. David complains of bearing his own sins; the reason is this, all the sacrifice he could make use of could not make his conscience perfect; as it is plain in Heb. ix. 9, "It could not make the comers there unto perfect:" so that though sin did lie upon David till such sacrifice took them away, yet it doth not follow under the gospel, since Christ's coming, that sin should lie any time upon the spirit of a believer in Christ. Why so? will you say; I answer, the apostle tells us, concerning Christ himself, that he is "become the mediator of a better covenant;" wherein better 7. will you say. I answer briefly, in this regard, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" as you have it in Heb. vii. 25; mark it, there is the difference; the sacrifices wherein the remission of sins was received," could not make the comers thereto perfect," but Christ being come, "He saves to the uttermost them that come to God by him:" Look into Heb. x. 14, there you shall find wherein the main difference lies, "By one sacrifice," saith the apostle, (speaking of Christ offering himself) "he hath perfected them that are sanctified:" the difference is this, Christ

being once come, the sacrifice of his own body had such a fulness of satisfaction in it, that there never needed any more to be done to the end of the world, for the taking away of any sin; but all manner of sins, of all believers, to the end of the world, were at once taken away by that sacrifice, and that *forever*.

So that now a believer is not to wait till a new sacrifice be performed, that he might be discharged from such and such a sin; but as soon as ever he hath committed it, he hath "the Lamb of God" in his eye, "that takes away the sins of the world;" that hath already taken away this very sin, at this very instant committed. Beloved, consider well of it either Christ hath taken away all sin already, or one of these two things must needs follow; either tile believer himself is to bear his own sin, or Christ is to come again, and do something more to take away that which remains behind: I say, if all sin be not taken away by what is done already, there must be somewhat done to fake it away; but, saith the apostle, in Heb. x. 26, "There remains now no more sacrifice for sin." In vain do men now look for something else, to come to take away this and that transgression; for there remains no more sacrifice for sin; that one sacrifice did all that was ever to be done, and therefore there is no more to follow: if therefore all be done by Christ that is to be done, to make "perfect the comers unto him," and "to save them to the uttermost;" then all the sins that believers now commit, or hereafter shall commit, nay, all the sins that all tile believers, to the end of the world shall commit, are already laid upon Christ, he hath nailed them to his cross. Therefore, saith the apostle, in 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin."

And whereas some may be ready to say, That this passage, that the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon him, is not peculiar unto these times now, after Christ's coming; for it seems the prophet Isaiah did proclaim the mind of the Lord in particular, before Christ himself came in person.

To this I answer, that all the prophets' passages concerning the fulness of grace to come by Christ, though they were spoken by them in their time; yet had reference to future times, after Christ's coming, and had not reference, in respect of their fulness, to those times wherein they spake: for the clearing of this, I shall desire you to consult a few words that Peter hath, being most full and clear to

this purpose as can be desired, 1 Pet. i. 9, 10, 11, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Here he speaks of the perfect fulness that comes by Christ, that is, salvation; "of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, when they testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow; unto whom," that is unto the prophets, "it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things that are now reported unto you by them that preached the gospel unto you." The apostle says plainly, "they diligently searched" into the times wherein those things they then prophesied of should come to pass; and that they did not preach them to themselves and that they did not administer these things unto themselves, but to us; I say, therefore, still Christ was the foundation of the covenant they had, and remission of sins was a fruit of it; but their covenant took not all their sins away; some were upon them for the time, which was the cause of their complaint: but Christ now hath taken all our sins away, that we are become incomparably perfect; and not only perfect in respect of sin to be charged on us, being passed from us upon Christ, but also our very consciences are acquitted: for, saith the apostle, speaking of the consciences of God's people under the gospel, in respect of the full discharge from sin, in Heb. x. 22, "Therefore (having spoken so largely of the remission of sins, upon which there remains no more sacrifice) we may come with boldness to the throne of grace with a true heart, and full assurance of faith." Upon what ground? Having our hearts purged or sprinkled from an evil conscience.

O let not therefore, beloved, I beseech you, any objection or objectors in the world, take you off from standing fast in that liberty wherein Christ hath made you free, and do not again entangle yourselves with such yokes of bondage, that neither you nor your fathers were able to bear.

If the ceremonies of the Jews were so weighty, and such yokes of bondage, what are the sins of people lying upon them? Beloved, you may search and enquire into many ways to find rest to your souls while they are disquieted; but if your hearts are rightly enlightened, and really tender, all the ways in the world shall never give rest to the sole of your foot, nor the least comfort to your spirits, till you

find rest upon this one principle, that the Lord hath discharged all your sins, and will remember no one sin against you; till, I say, you can behold a general release, all the whole force crossed, and God discharging you from every filthiness, there can be no rest to your spirits. Is there one sin upon you? that one sin will prove so heavy a pressure on you, that you shall never be able to endure it, especially when the Lord shall let you see what the fearful weight of any one sin is; but if you can receive this principle, that every sin you have committed, or shall commit, is cast upon the Lord Christ, and carried away; that you shall never hear again of any of them, in regard of accusation from God, or in regard of just accusation from your own spirits, then shall your souls return to their rest: but if you be not fully settled upon this principle, that the Lord hath so taken away every sin of every believer, that there is not any one remaining, nor any one shall remain for God to charge upon you, you can have none. Give me leave to bring in a few passages of scripture, that will be so evident, that except persons will wilfully resist the truth, they cannot but sit down with this resolution of spirit, that all their sins are manifestly taken from them, and they perfectly discharged of them. In Psalm li. 7, David complains, and makes his address to God, "Wash me," saith he, and what is the fruit of God's washing? "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." That God, when he first enters into covenant with persons, washes them, is as clear as the light: mark that in Ezek. xvi. 8, 9, 10, "When I passed by thee, I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine; then washed I thee with water:" I say, when God enters into covenant with his people, he washes them; and, how doth he wash them? Doth he leave some spots, blemishes, and stains behind? No: "Wash me, (saith he,) and I shall be whiter than snow." What blots can you find upon snow itself? there is nothing clearer than snow; yea, saith the prophet, "I shall be whiter than snow."

Look into Cant. iv. 7, see what an absolute discharge there is to every one that is a member of Christ, and that is a present one too; it is not for hereafter; "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee : " it is not, thou shalt be all fair, or have no spot in thee; but thou art even now so; so soon as thou art my spouse, thou art fair: nay, "thou art all fair;" nay, "there is not any one spot in thee : " is this the voice of Christ, or not? Look into Isa. xliii. 25, you shall see what a full discharge is given, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Beloved, suppose a person before a judge be arraigned for felony, and he that accuses him appeals to the judge himself, saying, Do not you know that this man committed such a thing? The judge saith, I remember no such thing; now if no other evidence comes in, is not the judge's not remembering any such thing, a sufficient discharge for him? The Lord saith, "I will not remember their sins;" how then can he charge them upon them, when he will not remember them? Shall I come and witness against a man, and say, he did steal, and is guilty of theft, and yet I never remember it? The Lord doth not remember, therefore he doth not charge: nay, saith he, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions:" now what is it to blot out a thing? Suppose there be a deed, or a bond, wherein a debt is chargeable upon a man, and every line or letter of it are blotted out; how can it be charged upon him, especially when the creditor himself hath blotted it out? where can this be charged? "I, even I, am he (saith the Lord) that blotteth out:" if any other besides the creditor should blot out a debt, there were some cause left of fear; but if the creditor himself shall do it, what need the debtor make any question of it? So if any creature in the world should undertake to blot out sin but God, this might not hold good; but when he himself comes and blots it out, where is any charge that can be laid upon him? he cannot recall his own act again.

In Ezek. xxxvi. 25, you shall see what a full discharge is given to believers: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put into you:" mark, what is that the Lord cleanses from? "All filthiness:" even then, when he enters into covenant, gives a new heart, becomes the God of a people, then he sprinkles with clean water, and they are clean from all their filthiness.

Look into Daniel ix. 23, 24, you shall find that the Lord whispers a secret in the ears of Daniel, which he would make him know was a fruit of the greatness of his love unto him: "I am come to shew thee, for thou art greatly beloved, therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision," or mystery: what is that secret that God will impart unto him, as the greatest expression of his love? it is this; "

Yet seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city;" and what is it that follows upon these seventy weeks? (Mark the words I pray) "To finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Neither transgression, nor sin were finished, nor iniquity come to an end, nor everlasting righteousness brought in, until the seventy weeks were ended; but upon the determination of them, then came sin to be finished. Mark the words well, iniquity then came to an end, and then came in everlasting righteousness. And Christ: seems to touch upon this very prophecy, when it. was accomplished upon the cross, "It is finished," saith he: what is the meaning? what is finished? sin is finished; for the speech hath reference unto the prophecy of Daniel; not that his suffering, but sin was finished; for he lay in the grave till the third day afterward, and was under death, but sin was finished according to that prophecy: now the seventy weeks being fulfilled, what transgressions can you have upon your consciences? wherefore do you complain of so much of tile burthen of them, seeing that sin is finished? If thy present transgressions be not finished, at the seventy weeks end, by that suffering of his, there is no truth in that of Daniel, sin is finished; a thing is not finished, when there remains any thing to be done about it; if there remains some sins to be taken away, then sin is not finished; but at the end of seventy weeks, sin was finished by Christ, and came to an end.

I could instance in many other passages of scripture; it were infinite to name them all; and such they are, as are more worth, and more glorious, than all tile treasures of the world. Any one of all these is a general discharge to every believer in the world. But you will say, do not believers commit sin now *.

I answer, They commit transgression, but long before they did it, it was paid for, and taken away; all the score is crossed, even from the time that Christ bore the sins of many upon the cross.

It is true, the Lord leaves the sins that believers act, legible still, though crossed: as when a man hath crossed his book, one may read every particular sum, or debt, that was formerly written; and though he may read them, yet it doth not follow that they are debts, for the crossing of it take away the nature of the debt; God crossed the score when Christ died, and then it was no more debt; all our sins, a.; ,q

debt, were then finished; only God will leave that, which was before a debt, fairly written still, that we may read them, and see how many there are, and what great sums they amount to; that so we might have hereby the clearer occasion, diligently to set forth the praise of the glory of that grace, that hath crossed such a score.

But some will be ready to say, yet once more, this kind of doctrine opens a wide gap to all manner of licentiousness. Licentiousness! how so? You will say, if a person know, before he hath committed his sin, that whatsoever he shall commit afterwards, are already laid upon Christ, and there is no fear he shall receive any damage by them; who will not break out into all manner of sins, that are so pleasing to men's corrupt natures, when they know they can have no hurt by them.

1. I answer, Did not the Lord himself know what corrupt inferences men would draw from grace revealed, and made to appear? Is it dangerous to preach the free grace of God, lest men should draw licentious inferences from it?

Where was the wisdom of God, that could not conceal these truths, that are so dangerous to be published? Did the Lord, and was he pleased, whatever danger might follow, to reveal the truth so graciously, and shall we say, we must mince it, or depress it, because some abuse it, and corrupt inferences are made of it.

2. I answer, If it be truth the Lord hath revealed, that we may, and should publish it abroad unto men; then we must preach it, let the consequences be what they will.

But I answer further, there is no such danger from those whom this free grace is given, that they should make such corrupt inferences: I do not deny, beloved, but that such as are rejected and given up of God, may make licentious uses of the doctrines of grace, and the fulness of pardon by Christ; but, who ever said, that this fulness of grace or any part of it, belongs to such that are rejected? Do now we say, that believers are the only persons on whom the Lord confers, and to whom he gives to receive it? Not that believing, in the act of it, is the efficient, or confirmation, but the manifestation of it to them, that it belongs to them; as for others that are not believers, we do not say their part is in it; it may be in it, though they be not now believers; yet we cannot for the present say they have their part in it,

till they believe though they do not now believe, they may afterwards; and whenever they do, that which before was hid, appears by believing.

I draw to an end: I say again, for believers, that the revelation of the fulness of grace, and acquittance from sin, are so far from opening a gap unto licentiousness of life; that the truth is, there is nothing in the world that raises up such a glorious sanctified life, as to know the full deliverance of file soul from sin: mark but what Zachariah saith, in Luke i. 74, 75, "That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness." It imports thus much unto us, that the serving of God, without fear, is the fruit of a saint's deliverance from his enemies, from sin: the more we believe that sin is already passed and carried away, the more shall we serve him without fear; therefore, Solomon speaks excellently, "The righteous are bold as a lion;" those that are once sure, in respect of God and their own souls, adventure upon any thing he calls them out unto; miscarry, or not miscarry, it is all one with them, for all stands right between God and them. While men know not whether their sins are passed away, and themselves discharged, and that there is no danger in respect of them, how many duties that God calls them to, do they baulk? and how many sufferings, for the cause of God, are they ready to shrink from, before they have the assurance of the pardon of their sins? The apostle tells us, "That the grace of God," his loving-kindness and favour," that brings salvation, hath appeared;" what is tile fruit? Are we saved by grace? Then may we live as we list? may some say. No; "this grace, that brings salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." However others may turn the grace of God into wantonness, yet believers, who have received this mercy, and assurance thereof, to have all their sins cast upon Christ, cannot sin in this kind; and why not? "They are born of God, (saith St. John) and they cannot sin, because the seed of God abides in them;" or as the apostle expresseth it more fully thus, "We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. It is most certainly true, indeed, corrupt nature, having no bridle to restrain it from sin, but only the sour sauce that follows, take away that, corrupt nature will break out. But, beloved, take the believer saved by grace, and delivered from all his sins, he hath

another principle over-ruling in his spirit, and that is the seed of God in him; and this so over-rules him, that he hath not that maw (as we use to say) as he had when corrupt nature had power over him.

But, you will say, then is this ground of presumption; now many thousands will run into it, upon this doctrine delivered?

I answer, Understand presumption well; consider what it is, and then you shall see how vain the objection is. What is it? It is no more but this, promising to myself any great thing without any good ground: if I promise myself, such a man will give me an hundred pounds, and he never said so, and I have no ground to think so, this is presumption; but, if a man engages himself to give me so much, is it presumption in me to expect it, though I pay nothing for it? So here, if so be that the discharge from all sin at once were without any ground, it were presumption to build upon it; but if the Lord hath, as you have heard, published all this to the world, of his grace to his own people, what presumption is it to build upon so sure a foundation as the word of grace? God himself must change before this bottom, whereupon the foot of a believer stands, shall sink:

But, you will say, though there be this free grace and full discharge of sin, Christ taking sill upon himself, yet it doth not belong to licentious persons, therefore it should not be published so generally as men preach it.

I answer, who is it for? Is it for the righteous, or for the wicked? "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," saith our Savior; that is, to turn and come to me. It is not for *the whole, they need not the physician, but the sick*. In brief, beloved, mark hut the tenor of the gospel, and you shall see who they are to whom the free grace of God is tendered; "If, while we were enemies, (saith Paul) Christ died for us, how much more shall we be saved by his life?" Now, I will ask, whether is the free grace of God delivered to the enemies of Christ, considered as such, or no? "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I swam unto thee, and I spread my skirt over thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," and all this in blood, "Then washed I thee with water;" when? after he had sworn and entered into covenant, and spread his skirt over them. To whom, beloved, doth this entrance into the free covenant belong? Why, to persons in their blood before their washing; for

washing follows entering into covenant: "In due time," saith the apostle, "Christ died for the ungodly:" and, in Rom. iv. 5, it is expressed thus; "Now to him that worketh not, but to him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imitated to him for righteousness." It is the ungodly that God justifieth, and who is he? the ungodly that doth not work: "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Now, then, to whom should we preach the free grace of God, and discharge from all sin, but to those to whom the Lord reaches it out? But you will say, doth it belong to all? I answer, it belongeth not to all, but to every ungodly man under heaven, to whom God will give to believe and receive this truth; "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to he gave power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name." The truth is, it is a secret in the bosom of the Lord himself, to whom the grace belongs; "And secret things belong unto God, but things revealed belong to us and our children;" wherefore we are to publish it to particular persons; and to every one to whom the Lord gives to believe, this grace belongs: for, when he believes (Heb. xi.1; Rom. v. 2.) it, it is manifest to him that his full portion is in it, let his conversation be what it will before.

I speak not this to bolster any man in any manner of wickedness; for, when the Lord gives faith, he will certainly change the heart, and that will work by love: this, I say, that when God is pleased to make a person so to see his own sin and emptiness, as to reach after the grace of God in Christ, there is not a soul that believes in Christ, and reaches after him, that possibly can miscarry; "Him that comes to me, I will not cast off;" no one that believeth. There is not one soul under heaven; but if the Lord gives him to come, and receive this grace, and not reject it, (let his sins be what they will) there is a present participation; nay more, there is a present manifestation to him in special, that all the grace of the gospel is his. And so much for this time.

SERMON XX.

TO LAY OUR SINS ON CHRIST, IS THE LORD'S PREROGATIVE ONLY.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

I HAVE made entrance formerly in some other place (as some here present peradventure know) upon the words that I have now read unto you. The whole mystery of the gospel, in the excellency of it, is summed up in them, and in what goes immediately before; even those excellencies, which, though the prophets spake of before, yet it was revealed unto then, "That not unto themselves, but unto us these things were particularly intended," concerning this glorious gospel; the whole completeness of the people of God, from the first rise of it to the consummation of it, with all the steps and degrees to it, is comprised in this text. And lest any should boast of himself when he shall partake of the glory of this grace, the Lord is pleased to lay down a caveat in the beginning of it, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every man to his own way:" this is the best we are, and in this condition the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; that so all the world may know, even the best of men, that not for their own righteousness, doth the Lord do this to them, or for them.

But I must not dwell upon particulars, which I have formerly delivered upon this subject. I will lead you by the hand, and point out what I have passed through, that so we may make a more orderly progress. Every word in this text hath so much weight in it, that each word contains a great latitude and immenseness in it of the grace of God to us.

1. It is iniquity itself that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; not only our punishment, but our very sin.

2. And that this transaction of our sins to Christ is a real act; our sins so became Christ's, that he stood the sinner in our stead, and we discharged.

3. That which remains yet to be considered is another branch, shooting out of this tree of life, for so I may call this text; and that is drawn from the efficient of this great grace of laying our iniquities upon Christ; it is the Lord himself that is the agent; he himself hath done this thing; "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." As Satan hath cast a mist over other glorious branches of the gospel, so he hath endeavoured to cast very darkness itself over this truth, namely, "That this is the Lord's own act." It is true, Satan is contented to allow men general and gross notions of it, that our iniquities are disposed of by the Lord; but when there shall be a thorough searching into particulars concerning this truth, then he bestirs (John viii. 4.) himself, even to raise contradictions against what men, in general, will grant. The truth is, beloved, it is hardly received of men, and very rare it is, to let the Lord himself be the sole and only agent in laying our iniquity upon Christ; and yet if it were not he alone that did it, all the creatures in the world would break their backs with heaving at iniquity to lay it upon him. And assuredly, beloved, let any malt take any other course in the world, putting the work of laying iniquity upon any other, but the Lord alone, he shall never effect it; he shall never lay it upon Christ: the point therefore flint I shall deliver, is briefly this.

It is the Lord, it is he singly, he exclusively, he only and alone, and none but he, that layeth iniquity upon Christ.

There is nothing in the world can do this but the Lord. Nay, I will go further. There is nothing in the world moves, persuades, or prevails with him, to lay our iniquity upon Christ: the Lord is so alone the founder, and author, or agent in this work, that he is moved and stirred up only by himself to do it; and nothing in the world moves him to do it but himself.

For the clearing of this truth, give me leave to dive a little into it, and I shall only desire this justice at your hands, that the manifestation and evidence of scripture, may carry your judgments without prejudice; I say, for the clearing of it, I shall dive into these particulars.

The Lord is so the sole agent, in laying our iniquities upon Christ, that even Christ himself doth not lay them upon himself; nay, I must go yet further, the Lord himself doth so, of and from himself, without regard to any motive whereby he might be persuaded to lay our iniquities upon Christ; that Christ himself is not the first motive to the Lord to do this thing: I say again, Christ is not the mover, or persuader of the Lord unto it; but the Lord merely from himself simply, as he is the Lord God, moved and prevailed with himself alone to lay our iniquities upon him. And yet, beloved, this will be no derogation to Christ at all, but will only constitute him in his own true and proper office as he is the mediator; for according to that once we speak of him here. I say, It is not Christ himself that lays our iniquities upon himself: it is true, Christ doth many admirable things about iniquity being laid upon him; "He takes away the sins of the world; he bears the sins of many; he is made sin for us;" but you shall nowhere find, that Christ laid upon himself the sins of man: he himself was as careful that his Father should not be robbed of his own glory, as that his people may be saved by his righteousness; all along you shall still find that Christ is so far from making this taking of iniquity his own original act, that he still acknowledges, that bearing it was not only for the pleasure of his Father, but also in subjection unto him, and in obedience to his command: observe but that expression of Christ himself, in Heb. x. 5, 6, you shall plainly perceive, that Christ doth not lay iniquity upon himself, but according to the charge of his Father, he is contented to take what he layeth upon him; "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God; thy law is written in my heart," saith Christ there, "A body hast thou prepared for me, thou hast fitted a body for me, "thou hast bored mine ears," &c. Out of these expressions I will observe this to you: 1. That the main discourse of Christ here, hath reference to the taking away of the sins of men; for, in the beginning of the chapter, you shall find how the apostle hath distinguished between the weakness of the Jewish rites concerning remission of sins, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice for the perfecting of it. In these services there was a remembrance of sin every year; "Because it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." For this cause Christ comes into the world. To what purpose? To do

that which those sacrifices could not do, to take away sin perfectly; but by what authority came Christ? Doth, he come of his own head? Doth he of himself take the sin upon himself? No, beloved, he doth not; "In the volume of the book (saith Christ) it is written of me," or as it is in the original, "in the head of the book it is written of me;" As if he had said, in thy book it is written, as a chief head or matter; remission of sins is ascribed unto me as a business committed unto me, or passed over to me.

But it may be by way of courtesy, some may say.

I answer, Mark well the meaning of that place, Christ saith, "Thy law is in my heart;" so then it seems this book which contains this business of Christ, about the remission of sins, is a book that runs in the strain of a law upon him, or unto him; so that in the business of bearing the sins of inert, Christ was so far from taking it upon himself, to lay their iniquities upon himself, that he acknowledges he was under a law in this thing; nay, Secondly, See that it was the Lord's own business that Christ is sent about; for he tells us expressly, that the Lord every way furnishes him to this work: "A body hast thou prepared me," or fitted for me; and all to shew that Christ is in a manner passive about the business of taking off iniquity; he doth not take it upon himself, but only bears it, being laid on by the commission, nay the hand of God himself. And therefore, in Heb. v. 9, the apostle tells us expressly, That "though Christ were a Son, yet learned he obedience:" and in John x. 18, Christ saith, "I have power to lay down my life, and to take it up again, and no man can take it away from me;" in which he may seem to be his own mover, and that he doth it of himself to bear the sins of men; yet afterwards he shews plainly, that he speaks this not at all in reference to his father, but in reference to the creature: no man takes it away from, him indeed, but in reference to the Father, he saith, "This commandment have I received from my father, that I should lay down my life." That no man should take away my life, that is true indeed, but that I should lay it down: and in John xv. 13, our Saviour calls out his disciples upon a service of the Lord, from an argument of his own obedience; "As I have kept my Father's commandment, and abide in his love, so if you keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love." By all which expressions may perceive, that Christ, as he stands the mediator and bearer of

the sins of men, stands as one looking still for his commission, when the Lord himself will lay their iniquities on him; he doth not of himself, and of his own accord, lay them on himself; and therefore the apostle to the Hebrews, saith expressly, "No man taketh this office upon himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." What office was that? The office of the priesthood to bear the sins of men; and he speaks of Christ himself in this place, that he did not take this upon himself; but waited till the Lord was pleased to lay the load upon him, and then he laid his shoulders under it: it is true, God's laying iniquity upon Christ was not by compulsion; but there was a voluntary agreement; it was the agreement of a son to a father, that keeps his authority and power in this business; Christ is but the mediator; he comes between as he is chosen the umpire.

But if any shall say, Though Christ doth not lay the iniquities of men upon himself, yet surely he moves and persuades the Father to lay them upon him.

I answer, This is received for a general truth, that what the Lord doth about the discharge of a believer's sin, he doth all upon the motives Christ put him upon, by that prevalency that he hath with him; but, beloved, you shall find this, that in all Christ's discourse, he very frequently puts off many things from himself, and gives them to his Father; and therefore he saith expressly, "That of himself he doth nothing, but as he hears so he speaks." It is true, that the Lord hath given to Christ the pre-eminence in all things, as he by whom alone he works all good in the world to the sons of men; but he hath not given Christ this pre-eminence, to be the first mover of him to do that good to men that he doth: the Lord himself is the fountain of his own motives, and is moved simply, and only from himself, to do that good that he doth to the sons of men. And that it may appear plainly to you, that Christ was not the first mover of the Father to dispose of the sins of men upon himself, observe but this one thing, what was the motive that Christ himself should have such a being as he had, to wit, of mediatorship? Was not Christ himself given unto the world to be the Saviour of men? How could he be a motive to the Father to give him a being to move him, before he himself had a being to move withal? There must therefore be a love boiling in the Father to the sons of men, that must stir him up to give Christ to be their Saviour, or else he could not have come into the world. If

therefore the love of God to men, was the first mover of himself to give Christ to them, holy could he be the mover of the Father, that he should be given to them, since it was the good pleasure of the Father, that Christ should be? It is true, indeed, Christ is the mover of the Father to execute all the good pleasure of his to the sons of men: but lie is not the mover of him first to love them; the thoughts of God were from himself towards men. Now, because that "mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace might kiss each other," which only Christ could compass, therefore was he sent of God into the world, to make up whatsoever might conduce to the accomplishment of his love. When God first cast his love upon men, and saw their transgressions must be satisfied for, that justice might not be violated, that mercy might not swallow up justice, nor justice might not trample upon, nor devour mercy; therefore there must be satisfaction made, that justice might have its own right: for this cause Christ was sent into the world as a *medium*, or means, whereby the love that God had formerly set upon the sons of men, might have its free course without interruption.

Peradventure, beloved, this discourse may seem' somewhat vain and impertinent, that God himself should be his own mover to lay the iniquities of the sons of men upon the body of Christ; but now by that which follows you shall see, that it is of great concern; for if Christ himself did not lay our iniquities upon himself, and if he did not move the Father primarily to lay them upon him, how much less could we, and any thing we could do, attain to that height to lay them upon him? I know that all will be ready to grant, that Christ is greater with the Father than all the things in the world; and if any thing were able to move him to lay the iniquities of men upon Christ, lie were able to do most in this matter; if then Christ himself doth not lay our iniquities upon himself, ail that we can do, or are, cannot possibly do it.

There is a great mistake (and I suppose it is out of ignorance, for lack of diving into the bottom of the gospel) among men, I mean, among tender-hearted godly people, those that are deeply wrought upon; and a conceit it is that is deeply rooted in their spirits, that some performances of their own must lay their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose there be a sin committed, it may be more scandalous than ordinary, which peradventure to sense wounds the spirit; the

question now is, what it is that must, or doth, rid such a one of the sting and guilt of this or such like transgressions committed? What discharges the soul of such a sin? Usually it is taught among us, by those who would be accounted the greatest protestants, and haters of popery, that the proportion of repentance, tears, sorrow, and fastings, answerable to the latitude and height of such transgressions, is that that gives ease; this takes away the burthen, this lays the soul at rest and quiets it: therefore when a soul hath transgressed, if it be tender, most, or almost, all the pantings of it, are after extraordinary enlargements in bitterness, heaviness, mourning, melting, and tears; these are accounted they that wash away iniquity: but, beloved, let me tell you, it is impossible that all the righteousness of men though it were more perfect than it can be, should lay one iniquity, or the least circumstance of one, upon Christ. If a man could weep his heart out, if it could melt like wax, dissolve into water, and gush out rivers of tears for sin; all this could not carry away the least dram of the filthiness of sin from such a soul unto Christ, nor unload the soul of any sin to load him with it: therefore they do but deceive themselves that ascribe the unloading and easing of their own spirits, to the greatest enlargements in any performances in the world; Christ himself did not lay iniquity upon himself, much less can the righteousness of any man lay it upon him. Look upon the best of your righteousness, suppose the things mentioned already; suppose a spiritualness in all that righteousness, what can they do towards this, namely, unloading a man's own spirit of his sin, and the loading of Christ with it? Suppose the righteousness you perform were perfect and complete, that God himself could find no fault with it after any sin is committed; make the largest supposition that can be imagined; when all this is done, what can all this conduce to the taking away of sin already committed? Do you not owe all this righteousness to God, as you are under his command? And if you owe it, then the very payment of it is but the payment of his own debt; and how can the payment of this debt discharge for a former debt? Suppose a man oweth two hundred pounds, to be paid each at six months, at two payments; if he fails in the payment of the first, and at the second day of payment pays one of the hundred pounds, every penny of it, doth this balance the account? doth the payment of the last hundred pounds satisfy the whole debt? If he had paid the first and second hundred pounds, he

had paid but what was due; can the second payment then be any satisfaction and furthermore to payment of the former debt? No, not at all. In whatever we have sinned, we have failed in the payment of that which was God's due; and when we come to perform any righteousness, that is his due too: if we had not failed in the former, this latter is God's due too, this must have been paid; and when we perform any righteousness after: sins, committed, suppose it were perfect and complete, this doth but satisfy its own debt, for God requires all this: and if it do but satisfy its own debt, how can it discharge a former?

Besides, beloved, how is it possible any righteousness of man can lay iniquity upon Christ, when besides what we have already said, there is new iniquity contracted against the Lord, in all the righteousness that men perform? This is an odd payment of debts, by payment still to run more and more in debt; that our righteousness may acquit us of former transgressions, and yet that itself contracts new transgression to men, making it more than it was before; how can any man in ordinary sense conceive this to be any way of discharge?

But some will say, Though our performances do not lay our iniquities upon Christ, yet they prevail with God, and move him with pity towards us, and stir him up to take our iniquities off from us, and lay them upon Christ: God cannot but melt, will some, say, to see the tears of his people, the bitterness of their spirits, their crying, their earnestness, and their sorrows; these cannot but prevail with him to have compassion on them.

I know this is the general conceit of too many in the world: but, beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing in all creatures in the world that hath the least prevalency with the Lord, let them do what they can. All our prayers, tears, fastings, mournings, reluctancy, and fighting against our corruptions, move God not a jot to lay our sins upon Christ; he is moved only from himself. If they move God, what must they move him to? If he be moved by any thing from man, he is moved according to the nature of the thing that is done; if the nature of the thing produce evil effects, God must be moved to do evil to men; if good effects, if there be good in the things, they may move him to good: now I ask, is there good or evil in any thing men do? when they have sinned, they pray, confess, mourn, and fast; is

there evil or good in these, looked upon in their own nature? No man can deny, but that there is abundance of iniquity in the best performances a man doth; and "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." That which must move God to do good, must have a goodness in itself; all the motive, therefore, in the Lord is simply himself.

And that it may appear manifestly unto us, that the Lord doth not fetch motives from us, to lay our iniquities upon Christ, you shall find through the whole current of the gospel, he takes a time of laying them upon him, when all the world may see there is no possibility that any creature should move him to do it. Mark well, Rom. ix. 11, "The children being yet unborn, before they had done good or evil, it was said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Before Jacob had done either good or evil, God's love was fastened upon him, to shew that evil did not move him to reject, nor good persuade him to love: while Jacob was in the womb God loved him, and what in him did move him to love him? he was conceived and born in sin, as David confesseth of himself What should move God to love Jacob, and to put away his transgression? "That it might be according to the purpose of election, not of him that worketh, but of God that sheweth mercy." "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood (Ezek. vi. 8,) I spread my skirt over thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." Israel being now in blood, what was in him to persuade God to swear to him, and to enter into covenant with him? By *blood*, he means the filthiness in the creature, and such that no eye could pity it, when God first set his love upon it. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son;" mark the expression; there was no distance between *being enemies* and *reconciliation*: there was reconciliation even while enemies. What motive is there in an enemy, while such, to persuade reconciliation? "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," saith the text. What motive can an ungodly man use to persuade God to lay iniquity upon Christ, I say, considering him as ungodly?

But you will say, this is a way, and a highway, to destroy all performances whatsoever. What, can they do nothing? to what purpose should any man then fall upon any employment?

Beloved, I am not ignorant how the apostle Paul himself was

slandered, when he preached the free grace of God, simply out of his own bowels, without any motive from the creature, as if he allowed and maintained continuance in sin, and breaking out into all manner of licentiousness, because grace abounded. I believe it hath been a charge upon the ministers of the gospel, ever since his time. Oh, if ministers preach the free-grace of God, and that what he doth, he doth for his own sake, then farewell all obedience and performances; this opens a gap for all manner of idleness! Be not deceived, the Lord hath many special ends, for which he hath set up a course of uprightness of conversation in the world, though there be no stroke in them to move him to shew mercy to them that walk thus uprightly; and it is but the ignorance of men to think, that holiness in conversation must presently fall to the ground, if it hath not a prevalency in it with God to do good to men. You know what the apostle saith, Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10, "You are saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; we are his workmanship, Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk in them."

A man would think that he contradicted himself; works have nothing to do in man's salvation, nor move God to save; "Not of works," saith he; "but of grace;" yet "You are ordained unto good works:" these stand well together. The apostle Paul tells Titus, that men should "study good works, for these are profitable unto men:" a man serves his generation, while he walketh in good works, and he doth good to them among whom he lives: he serves not himself in all the good works he doth; for the Lord Christ hath fully served his turn already; either we must make our performances Christ's, or else we must disclaim them: what pride and arrogance is this! either men will rule the roast, or else they will not abide in the house! As every man hath his office in a family, so every thing in man hath its office: good works have very necessary offices in the family, but they were never ordained to be Christ's, much less to be God's. When Christ was tempted by the Pharisees about tribute, he makes this reply; "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's." Let not the righteousness of men encroach upon God, to take his work upon itself; I tell you, beloved, we know not the evil of these vain imaginations. Should the Lord deal with you according to your own hearts, that as you, performances could lay your sins upon Christ, and discharge you, so you should be

discharged, when would you ever do it? when (alas!) instead of laying old sins upon Christ by new performances, you do but add new sins to the old; all our righteousness, is hut a renovation of new transgressions; "For all our righteousnesses," he speaks of every particular, "are as filthy rags, and a menstruous cloth." Isaiah lxiv. 5. Is this the way to case a man of his sin or to get God to discharge him of it, to throw dirt anew in his face? Is this a way for a traitor to get the king's pardon, to come into his presence, and throw poison in his face again? There is not one righteous actions man performs, but he therein anew throws dirt in the face of God by it: because sin, as the Wise Man saith, "Is abomination to the Lord." Who knows the errors of his life and the multitude of his failings in the best righteousness he doth? Man's righteousness may serve is own turn, but not God's. Though there be failings in out' righteousness, it may be, profitable to men;" but as there is, the eyes of God cannot away with it.

But you will say again, Christ makes our righteousness to be accepted and pleasing, by purging away all the filth that is in it; and then it may prevail with God, to lay our iniquities upon him.

I answer, it is true, Christ purges away all the filthiness, both of righteousness and unrighteousness in believers; but not that their righteousness may prevail with God to lay iniquity upon him; but that it may be accepted in him, the beloved, as services. He himself was without spot, or the least sin, yet he takes not away iniquity by laying it upon himself; and if our righteousness be made complete, by his taking away the filth of it, and putting his own perfection on it; it is not that our iniquities may be laid upon him by it, but that it may be accepted by way of service.

I should go yet one step higher, and let you know, that as it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ, so not only all our performances are unable to do it, but even our faith itself doth not do it: ye may easily perceive, beloved, what I drive at in all this discourse, namely, to strip the creature stark naked, leave it shiftless, and unable any way to help itself, that all the help that it receives may appear to be of the free grace of God, merely, without its concurrence in it. I say, therefore, it is not the faith of believers that lays their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose thou hast committed many sins, and they are apparent; thou wouldst be rid of them, and hear of

them no more; what is the way? Works have not power to do it, you will say; but faith is able to discharge the soul from all transgressions, and lay them upon Christ. But I must tell you, though God hath given many glorious fruits and effects to fruit, and made it instrumental of much excellent and abundant consolation to his people; yet hath he not honoured it with this, that it should lay iniquity on Christ, or move God to do it.

This cannot be, you will say, for the apostle Paul saith expressly, "I conclude that a man is justified by faith, and not by rite works of the law;" therefore, we are justified by faith, and what is that, but to have sins laid upon Christ, and we discharged of them?

I confess, it seems to be a strong place at first, where the apostle speaks of justification by. faith that consists in the taking away of sins from men; but give me leave to examine it a little, that faith encroach not upon God, and take that which is his own, and which he hath said he will not give to another: I say, it is not the faith of a believer, though ever so strong and powerful, that lays iniquity upon Christ; I shall give you a touch of it fin' the present: and to this purpose, it were very needful to consider, what it is for a person to be justified; for upon that depends the knowledge of the very thing, "that lays iniquity on Christ." Time will not give me leave to discourse freely upon it; in short, therefore, I will only shew what it is to be justified. I speak of justification before God, and of his own justification of a man; and it must, of necessity, be granted of all men, that know what justification is in common sense, that a person justified before God, is such a one, who, when God himself makes search to try him, whether he be guilty, or not guilty, of a crime, finds none upon him; and upon not finding any, he pronounceth him just. Let men say what they will, it is a flat contradiction for God to say, this a just person in mine eyes, and yet I have some transgressions to charge upon him: how can God say he is just, and yet charge him with injustice done? Therefore he must be fully freed from all injustice, or God cannot pronounce him a just person.

You will say, No man under heaven can be justified; for God can charge all with transgression.

I answer, God cannot. That his people have transgressed, is true; but he finds, in fact, that all their transgressions are already satisfied for

by his own Son, though the sins were afterwards committed; yet upon payment made beforehand, he charges not sin upon them, having charged it upon Christ already, and taken the full payment of him for it. There is no person under heaven, that God pronounceth just, but he therein says, I have not one sin to charge upon him. It is true, I find many crimes committed by him, but also I find, that my Son hath discharged them already, and he hath given me good satisfaction for them: now then, this being the justification of a sinner before God; how is it possible, that faith can discharge a person from all iniquity, that God himself, upon strict search, should find none to be charged upon him? How can faith do it? Suppose a person had no transgression for God to find, till he believes, yet this believing brings transgression with it, enough for God to find him guilty; that itself is sinful; "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief:" there is a mixture of unbelief in the faith of all believers; and there are many weaknesses in it: and how can that justify a person, that is not able to justify itself? Though Christ was like to us in all things, yet "sin was excepted:" must he himself be free from sin to justify us that he might purchase our redemption, and shall faith justify us that are not free from sin? If faith justified a person, what must justify faith? for that must have something to justify it, being not able to justify itself.

But, you will say, this is but argumentation; the apostle Paul saith (Rom. v. 1,) "That being justified by fairly, we have peace with God;" and since the Holy Ghost saith, "we are justified by faith," we must not dispute against it.

I will answer in brief and desire one thing of you, and that is to consult Beza upon this place; he renders the words out of the original, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God," without any stop from the first to the last. Our translators render the words thus, "Being justified by faith," and then put a comma; but as Beza renders then: (who is accounted a most sincere renderer of the original) he makes no stop: and, it that be true: why may not they be as well rendered thus; "Being justified, by faith we have peace with God?" And so ascribe justification to Christ, as a thing done before, and let faith have reference to our peace; being justified by Christ, by faith we come to have peace with God; which stands current with the analogy of faith, and truth of the gospel: "For it is God that

justifieth," Rom. viii. 34. Justification is truly and properly the work of God himself and cannot be the work of faith.

* Faith is never said to justify, nor are we justified by it as an act or work, but by the object of it, Christ, and his righteousness who is sometimes called faith, Gal. ii. 23, 24, 25.

But, Secondly, suppose the words to run as they are commonly rendered; I answer, then are we to distinguish in faith two things; there is the *act* of believing, and the *object* on which we believe; and so the words may be understood thus, "Being justified" by the righteousness of faith, or by the righteousness of Christ which we believe, "we have peace with God;" and so ascribe our justification to the object of our believing, the righteousness of Christ, and not to the act of believing. the truth is, beloved, the act of believing is a work, and as much ours, as our fear, prayer, and love are; and the apostle should contradict himself when he saith, "We are saved by grace, through faith, not of works," if he mean the act of faith; he might as well have said, we are not justified by works, but we are justified by them.

Finally, to draw towards a conclusion, I answer thus; You may consider justification in a double sense, and that, according to the opinion of our divines, there is justification in heaven, and in a man's conscience. Justification in heaven, is God's act alone; justification in the consciences of men, is the manifestation of that act of God to them, by which a man comes to know, and consequently to rejoice in it; and so you may read the words thus, "Being justified by faith," that is, through faith having the justification of God evidenced and manifested to our spirits, "we have peace with him." And, beloved, you shall find this to be a very solid and genuine interpretation of the words, and agreeable to the scriptures; for peace and joy are always appropriated to persons believing; as much as to say, the act of justification in heaven, though perfectly done, is yet secret in the breast of God alone, till he gives persons faith, that beholds the grace of God. that brings the glad tidings of justification to the soul, and so it rejoiceth in it; therefore the apostle prays after this manner, "The Lord fill you with all joy and peace in believing." So that it is true, we have not the comfort; we cannot say particularly to our spirits, God hath justified me, and I rejoice in this, till we believe; because faith is made, by

the Lord, to be the "evidence of things not seen," as in Heb. xi. 1. And that is the proper work that God hath given to believing, not to effect any thing to the good of a man, but only to be the witness of that good to his spirit; and so give light to that which was secret before. So that still it remains, that the laying of iniquity itself, upon Christ, is the Lord's act, and his only; our faith seeth what the Lord hath done; and, when God gives us to believe, faith manifests it to us, and so our souls come to have peace. In sum, therefore, beloved, God lays, Christ bears, and faith sees iniquity laid upon him. God, through Christ, perfect this work in us, that so, faith seeing, "we may have all joy and peace in believing."

SERMON XXI.

TO LAY OUR SINS ON CHRIST, IS THE LORD'S PREROGATIVE ONLY.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US
ALL.

I FIND no scripture so punctually and fully revealing the riches of the grace of God to men, as this that I have now read unto you, surpassing others depending upon it; and I find no truth more clouded, to the trouble of God's people, than those truths that concern the grace of God to men; which hath exceedingly provoked me to improve that talent I have received, to communicate the mind of the Lord, as fully as I may, to them.

Of this truth, upon sundry occasions, I have spoken several things out of these words; each word containing a special observation by itself; every word hath its weight, and speaks admirable grace to the sons of men. God not only punishes Christ for men, but he lays the very iniquities of men upon him. The purity of God naturally can never take pleasure, in a filthy vessel. Should Christ be punished over and over again for the sins of men; yet if, for all this, they lay upon themselves, God must abhor them. There can be no expectance of a smile from the face of God, upon any creature in the world, till it be all fair; and this cannot be, till all spots of sin be taken from them; and this taking away of the filthiness of the creature, is not a kind of supposed taking of it away, but is a real act of God; he makes Christ as very a sinner as the creature himself was*:

* That is, by imputation, which is a real act of God, and by which all the sins of the sinner are put upon Christ, so that he, standing in his stead, is reckoned in the eye of justice as what the sinner himself is.

"He was made sin for us," 2 Cor. v. 21. The Lord laid our very iniquities themselves upon him: this is the greatest grace the soul can have comfort in, in this life, that iniquity is done away; and, therefore, it concerns all that hear such admirable tidings, to know from whence it comes, who undertakes this great work, to discharge a poor sinner, and to lay all its iniquities on Christ. Had all the creatures in the world undertaken, with all their strength, to lay them on him, it would have broke the back of them all, so much as to lift at sin to lay it upon him; therefore the grace of the Lord is evident in this, that it is he himself that laid iniquity upon him. No undertaken in heaven or earth could have brought this great work to pass, but the Lord alone. It is strange, that Christ should be enabled to undertake so much as he did; yet God did not oblige him to take and lay our iniquities upon himself, Christ learned obedience in this, and waited the pleasure of his Father to lay iniquity upon him, and doth not lay it on himself; "I came not to do my own will (saith he), but the will of him that sent me:" nay, Christ was not the first motive to it; but the thoughts of God's own love towards poor creatures, were the motives to himself to give him to bear the sins; and if Christ himself doth not lay iniquity upon himself, much less doth the righteousness of man lay it on him. It is not all the prayers, the tears, the fasting, the repentance, though ever so perfect and complete, that lays any one iniquity upon Christ; it is the Lord alone that does it; nay, none of these performances have the least moving power in them to persuade him to it; the Lord moves himself to do it: all our services are for other purposes; they have no prevalency with him at all, no, our faith itself lays not our iniquities on Christ; but, as I said, the Lord lays, Christ bears, our faith doth but see and make evident that, in time, which before was hid and not seen.

We cannot amplify the particulars so largely as necessity requires; I must proceed to what remains behind. Now, beloved, I shall shew you clearly, I hope, that it is not to be imagined, that any thing in the world can possibly lay iniquity upon Christ, but only the Lord himself; for the clearing of which I desire to take some specialties into consideration.

1. None in the world hath any thing to do with iniquity, to dispose of it, but only the Lord; and therefore none can lay it upon Christ, but only he. For the believer clearing of which, you must understand,

that iniquity, or sin (as in 1 John iii. 4.) "is the transgression of the law: for where there is no law, there no transgression as the apostle Paul speaks: the meaning is this, transgression is a swerving or going; astray from the pleasure of God revealed in his law; nothing is transgression, but what against him, and his mind revealed to men: and whereas in a subordination there may be transgression against men, one against another; yet all such transgression hath its denomination, not as man's, but as God's will is transgressed. As for instance, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" in the breach of this, here is a transgression of a man against a man; for one man to commit adultery with another man's wife, is an offence against her husband; yet this were not properly a transgression, if it were not a transgression of the law of God made against it; "For where there is no law, there is no transgression. To come to the purest in hand, transgression is only against God; for which cause, David, though he committed adultery with Uriah's wife, and slew him with the sword of his enemy, and therein transgressed against those persons; yet David riseth to the fountain of transgression, and so to the true nature of it, when he confesseth, Psalm li. 4. "Against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight."

And you shall find, when Samuel had been set up to be judge over Israel, and the people began to despise and reject him, because they would have a king, as other people had; there was a sinning against Samuel in subordination; yet the Lord saith, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." They sinned against God principally, and Samuel subordinately, because they sinned against God's ordinance; Samuel being substituted by God over them.

If sin then be against God, against whom it is committed, then it is only in his power to dispose of it at his pleasure. Suppose a man owe a debt to another, it is not in the power of a third party to dispose of this debt as he pleaseth, but in the creditor himself only; if a creditor should arrest a debtor, and make him pay, or lie by it himself, it is not in the power of any other to take surety in the stead of this debtor; the creditor may take a surety if he will, and it is at his pleasure, whether a surety shall stand, or be accepted, or no. Every transgression of a man is a debt to the Lord; and, as it is a debt to him, so it is only in his power, and at his pleasure, to dispose of it; whether or no, persons shall lie by it till they have paid the utmost

farthing themselves; or whether he will take a surety to stand in their room, and pay the debt for them. From hence are these words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and whom I will I harden:" as much as to say, I will take a surety for as many as I list, and none for as many as I please; such and such, I will take a surety for; and therefore you shall find, that in this business of laying iniquity upon Christ, he goes under the notion of a mediator; he is the mediator of a better covenant, or testament: as much as to say, Christ himself will not take upon him, to dispose of the sins committed against the Father; he indeed mediates with him; he is contented, if the Father please to make him a surety, he will see him paid. A mediator is one that comes between men to over-rule them if possible; so Christ deals with the Father, he will become the surety of a better covenant or testament; and accordingly, be the surety for such as God seeth good, and no other; and the rest they shall, they must lie by it. And therefore you shall see, that for so many as God is contented, Christ should be their surety; he is so far from disposing of their sins upon himself, that though he paid the utmost farthing, and the Father was fully satisfied with it; yet he acknowledged for all that, that this very suretyship of his, instead of others, was an act of grace, and an act of grace to himself; "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." How was it a gift? Did not Christ pay well for them? Did not he lay down the price of his blood, a satisfactory price? Yea, he did; yet, "Thou gavest them me," saith Christ: how so, will you say? I answer, God might have chosen whether Christ should have come to offer satisfaction, or whether he would accept of it made by him the surety; in that he would accept or a price, there was a gift.

2. It must only be the Lord's work to dispose of the sins of men, to lay them on Christ; nothing else could do it; none but the Lord could qualify and fit Christ to bear the sins of men: none but he alone could do it. Suppose it were in the power of the creature to lay iniquity of men up on Christ, what could this avail, except Christ, when it is laid upon him, should become able to bear it, and not sink under it, when it was laid upon him? therefore none could lay it with effect, but God alone. There are two things that are exceeding necessary, that iniquities might be laid beneficially upon him, and all the world could do neither of them.

1. That he should have a body, wherein to bear iniquity.
2. Having a body, that he should be steeled above natural strength; that that body prepared, should not sink under such a weight.

Now this is the Lord's own work; nay, all the world could never reach it but he, to furnish Christ with both these; and you shall find both or them intimated in one expression, in Heb. x. 6, 7; "When he came into the world he said, burnt offerings and sacrifices thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:" they are both intimated in these words, "A body hast thou prepared me:" where you shall find that it is the Lord himself that furnishes him with this body.

1. There must be a body, that he might come to do the will of God; "A body hast thou 1. prepared me: that I should do thy will, O God!" that is, do it in a body. And, 2. note, that this body is not an ordinary one, but prepared; therefore in the margin it is, "a body hast thou fitted me;" as a man fits a case to a thing to be put into it; that builds a house, a fit habitation for himself to dwell in; or a fort for' some to be fortified in it, he prepares it accordingly; so, "A body hast thou prepared for me," that is, a body hast thou fitted for me, and steeled it, that it may be of more than natural strength to bear the sins of men. The divine nature is incapable of bearing transgression, therefore there must be a body given and prepared, that may be subject to bear; and this body, because the weight of sin is infinite, and enough to press an ordinary one into hell, must be steeled with an infinite strength above nature, that it may stand steadfastly under it, and firm to the work; therefore the Psalmist tells us, "Thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, thou hast laid help upon one that is mighty:" it is not an ordinary body, that this help must be laid upon, but must be mighty; therefore Christ tells us, in John iv. 34, that he himself had received the spirit, not by measure; there was more strength given to him, than ordinary strength, that is common to the creature.

Now, beloved, except any creature in the world could thus furnish Christ, and steel him that he might not sink, to what purpose should any lay iniquity upon him? and therefore in Isa. xlii. 16, you shall find, that he doth not only call us out to behold his servant whom he hath chosen, but he tells, us, how he disposes of him, that he may be

for our use; "Behold my servant whom I uphold—I will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people." I have kept thee, as well as given thee; the Father must help Christ in this work, as well as give him; there must be furnishing with abilities to the employment, as well as a calling forth to it; to what purpose is it to call a multitude of people to resist a common enemy? What use will they be of except they be furnished with arms, and all things fitting for the service they are called out unto? If iniquity be laid upon Christ, and he not furnished to bear it, to what purpose is it? He will shrink under the burthen, and we perish in his sinking. It is not of small consequence, therefore, to know that the Lord hath laid iniquity upon him.

3. None but the Lord alone can lay iniquity upon Christ: in that, none but he hath so much power over, and interest in Christ, to prevail with him to be content to bear it: all the world could never have won Christ to put his shoulders to undergo such a burthen, but only the power of the Lord prevailed with him. Beloved, it is not such a light weight, to be under the weight of all the sins of all the elect at once, that Christ should make so light of it, as to take it upon himself. This one complaint of Christ may resolve us of the weight of transgression that was upon him; "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and he sweat drops of blood as water, because of that agony his soul was in, by reason of sin that was then upon him; and it made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" so heavy was it upon him. Who in the world ever had, hath, or ever shall have, so much interest in Christ, to prevail with him to take the sins of his people upon himself, if they could lay them upon him? Though the elect of God reap an unsearchable fruit from hence, yet it is not they, nor their ease, which is the prime motive which prevailed with Christ to bear them; but that which chiefly prevailed with him, was the pleasuring of his Father: he knew well enough how hot the heart of God was set upon this, that the iniquities of men should be borne by him, and carried away from them, and they discharged; now, for the pleasuring of him, he was content to do it; and you shall find much of Christ's discourse, and of the prophets that spake of him, tending to this; that the eye of Christ was principally upon the pleasuring of his Father in bearing the sins of men: in Isa. liiii. 10, 11, 12, three times you shall find it expressed, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: he

shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied: and it pleased the Lord to bruise him:" still you see the eye of Christ was upon the satisfying of his Father, and pleasuring of him in that he did; that his pleasure should prosper in the work, therefore the hand of Christ takes it; that the Father be satisfied with this, he is content to be in travail in his soul, and to bear iniquity; in that it pleased the Lord to bruise him, therefore was he content to be broken. All the world could never prevail with Christ to undergo it, had it not been that he might give his Father content. It is worth your observation, what is recorded in Heb. x. 5, 6, 7; mark it well, I pray; when Christ comes into the world, he saith, "Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldest not, in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings thou hadst no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come:" observe his motive to come into the world, namely, to do that which burnt offerings and sacrifices could not do. "There was a remembrance of sin (saith the apostle) every year, since the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin;" therefore the Lord was not pleased and contented with burnt-offerings and sacrifices; upon this, saith Christ, "Lo, I come;" as if he had said, seeing they cannot give thee content, that thou mayest have pleasure, lo, I come to do the work thoroughly, that thou mayest be satisfied.

4. None but the Lord could lay iniquity upon Christ, because, none but he could give him a fit and proportionable reward for bearing it. It is fit every one should have consideration for the work he doth; and it is most certain, Christ in undertaking to bear the sins of his people, hath an eye to a proportionable consideration for it; now none but the Lord could give him it; therefore, none else could win him to lay iniquity upon him. In Heb. xii. 2, 3, it is plain that Christ had an eye to some good consideration; "Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and now sits at the right hand of God." he did not only suffer, but also despised the same that sin brought upon him; for he being made sin, became also a shame, and he despised that; and what; was that which moved him to it? It was joy; and what was that joy? "He sits at the right hand of God his Father;" and who could thus reward Christ but the Lord? And, beloved, you shall find that God, when he puts him on to bear the sins of men, he proposes rewards to him for his encouragement: in Psa. ii. 8—8, where he speaks of anointing of Christ to be his

"King upon his holy hill;" "Ask of me, (saith he) and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession:" here is that which God will give to Christ, and wherefore doth he make this deed of gift to him, but that it may be a reward to him for his sufferings, and so encourage him to the work? And for this purpose, let us consider that passage in Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; "Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:" (mark what follows) "Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of JESUS, every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is the Lord." Here you see expressly, how the Lord rewards him for this very thing, that he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," while "he thought it no robbery to be equal with God."

And, indeed, beloved, no marvel that the Lord will propose such a reward to Christ, to make him satisfaction for the taking upon him the sins of men; for consider men as they were to bear their own transgressions themselves, and as some are yet to bear them; alas! What payment was the Lord likely to have! payment like that of broken debtors: he must have given time, to all eternity, before he could have his debt paid; whereas Christ, coming into the world, makes round, present, and ready payment; he pays all at once: and is not this a good reparation? When as a debtor is broke, and the creditor has to stay many years for his money, and take it by piece-meal too, would it not be thank-worthy for one to come now, and pay down the full sum upon the nail, ready money? When Christ came into the world he paid down all at once; God hath all from him (as they say) in ready cash. From hence there is a translation of the debt from us, broken debtors, to one that is mighty; he bears the burthen, and pays the debt for us; the Lord is satisfied to his content, and he requites him for it. Now if all that we ever did, or can do, be not a requital of him, how can we expect that we should lay our iniquities upon Christ?

Now for application. If it be the Lord himself that lays our iniquities upon Christ, it is but meet and right that he should have "the praise

of the glory of his own grace;" and that nothing in the world should go away with the praise of it from him. I remember a complaint of the poet, who, it seems, had made some verses that carried some credit with them, and some foister had taken it upon himself;" I have made the verses, and another hath the honour of them; as the bee makes honey, and another hath the fruit of it." Beloved, it may be the just complaint of the Lord to the sons of men; I have laid the iniquities of you all upon Christ, and every thing almost runs away with the honour of it; as if something else did ease you of the burthen of them, and I am neglected. Now so long as you have these vain conceits in you, that any thing you do becomes your ease, and the lightening of the burthen of your sins, they will go away with the praise that is due to God. To whomsoever we apprehend ourselves beholding, as we say, for such a courtesy, such a one shall go away with the praise of it: 2 Sam. xvi. 1, 2, I remember how Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, Saul's son, came to David with the stolen goods of his master, and pretended that it was his own courtesy to David that he had brought so many mules, and a large quantity of provision; David asked for his master, he belies his master, and tells him he abides at Jerusalem, hoping that Israel would set the crown upon his head; but mark it well, whilst that David is possess that Ziba is he that hath done him a courtesy, he shall go away with the glory of it, and Mephibosheth shall be neglected; and David gives all the land of Mephibosheth to Ziba upon this mistake, and so he carried away all the praise of the courtesy from Mephibosheth. And so it is most true, beloved, as long as we reckon our own holy duties, repentance, and enlargement in prayer, &c. as the bringers of refreshment to our spirits, and the unloaders of our hearts from our transgressions, that are the burthen of the soul; so long these are exalted above measure. Hence these strange epithets and expressions are fixed to them: "Oh! the omnipotency of repentance! and of meeting with God in fasting and humiliation! oh! the prevalency of tears to wash away sin!" They supposing that these ease us of the weight of sin, go away with the glory. Oh! who is omnipotent but the God of heaven! What washes away the sins of men but the blood of Christ? Shall we give the glory to Ziba, that is due to Mephibosheth? In 2 Sam. xix. 24, you shall hear how Mephibosheth makes his apology for himself, and pleads his sincerity to the king, and declares how his servant had abused him; and then David

restored half his lands again to him; but yet Ziba must share with him still.

Oh! beloved, I desire you to deal more equally with God; let him have all the praise; let not Ziba and Mephibosheth divide the land; let not your performances share with God in the praise of his grace, in laying iniquities upon Christ.

It is God alone that lays your iniquities upon Christ, and your performances cozen you, while they tell you, that they ease you of your burthen, and lay it upon him. Oh! turn them out, and let them not share with the Lord in the praise due to his name.

It was the sin of the Jews, when they had gotten a prey, they presently thought it was their own nets and drags that got it; and therefore (saith the prophet) "They sacrifice to their own nets, and offer incense to their drags." Beloved, you will incense to your performances, as long as you go to them to be your deliverers. The deliverance from the weight of your sin, is not from the virtue of any thing you do; it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ; and, therefore; let him alone carry away the praise and glory of it; let nothing rob him of it. In paradise the Lord made a large grant to the sons of men Adam; "Or all the trees in the garden thou shalt eat, save only the tree of knowledge of good and evil:" he reserved that one tree to himself; and but that one; he gave him of his bounty to eat of every one besides; and yet such was his itching humour, that of all others, fain would he be meddling there, till he brought ruin on his own head. In the gospel, all our grants are large; "All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is Gods: God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to death for us all;" nay more, "I am your God, and you are my people." He thinks not much to give his Son, nor himself, to his people; there is but one thing he keeps to himself, Isa. xliii. 8; "My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images;" all that the Lord reserves to himself; is but "the praise and glory of his own grace." Oh! pilfer not that from God, which, when you have it, will do you no good in the world! and seeing he will have only this, do not grudge it him. It is not out of niggardliness that God keeps this to himself, for in Isa. xlii. 6, you shall find that he is bountiful enough, for all that; "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes, and to bring the prisoners out of prison:" that will do us more good; and, that he may do us good, his

own Son shall be given for a covenant; but "my glory, that shall not be given to another," as it follows presently after. Oh! therefore; let not your performances, be they ever so exact, aspire so high, as to usurp that glory that is due to the Lord alone!

But some will be ready to say, though our performances do not lay our iniquities upon Christ, and, therefore, ought not to have the glory of it; yet, surely, the Lord requires these duties, that he may lay our iniquities upon Christ, and so honour our services as the motives by which he is pleased to lay them upon him.

Do not mistake, beloved, performances are not only not the principal efficient, but they are not so much as the instruments, or means, of laying the iniquities of men upon Christ; nay, not as motives: and it is a gross mistake, (I would the truth might shine more clear, that I might undeceive men;) men run away with vain imaginations, that the renewing of faith and repentance is a now laying of iniquities upon Christ; or that the Lord anew lays it on him, when we renew these duties; I say, this is a gross mistake; for God doth not lay iniquity upon Christ upon the performance of them; nay, these have no stroke in it. I would fain know this one thing, Christ being now in heaven, whether he now, before the throne of his Father, actually bears the iniquities of men? Doth Christ stand as a sinner before the face of God in glory? Certainly no unclean thing shall enter into the heavenly Jerusalem; and if, upon the renewing our repentance and faith, our sins we commit are carried from us, and laid upon him in heaven, then he stands besmeared with the sins of men as in heaven, in glory. One sin is committed at this instant by the believer, another at that, and another at a third; and so, from the first moment, to the end of the world, there is a continual succession of acts of sin by believers. Well, what do men do? They believe and repent; and what do these do? When men believe and repent, (you say) they lay iniquity upon Christ, and then it is upon him.

How can it possibly enter into the heart of any man, that he that is set down in glory with the Father, having done his work, finished transgression, and put an end to sin, by one sacrifice upon the cross, should yet still bear the iniquities of men upon him, before him?

Besides, beloved, I beseech you consider this one thing, if Christ hath iniquity laid upon him now, and hereafter, as men believe and

repent, what course must he take to rid himself of it? If there be iniquity upon him, there must be a way for him to rid himself of it, and it must be taken off most certainly: but when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, he, by one offering, did so perfect the work, that he sits down, (saith the apostle in Heb. x. 12,) "For ever at the right hand of God; and there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Wherever sin is found, there must be shedding of blood, or else there is no remission: and if sin be laid upon Christ, there must be a new shedding of blood before it can be taken away.

And therefore you must consider, that this laying of sin upon Christ, is a business that God hath done long ago, and not now to be done; for the text saith not, God lays, or will lay, iniquity upon him; but hath laid it on him: therefore, saith the apostle in Heb. ix. 28, "Christ was once offered to take away the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ himself must appear without sin, that he might have power to prevail with the Lord: it is observable, that while sin lay upon him, and he was forced to bear it, he himself was forsaken of the Father.

In Dan. ix. 24," Seventy weeks shall be determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness;" mark, I pray ye, these "seventy weeks" were expired, when Christ was upon the cross, then sin was finished, and therefore he said, "It is finished;" therefore, the laying of iniquity upon Christ, is not a new thing, now to be done; neither is it your faith and repentance that lay it upon him, but it is a thing done long ago: therefore cast off gross conceit, as if God did daily lay your sins upon Christ, as you daily renew your faith and repentance.

But what do they then serve for, will you say?

I answer, They serve for this purpose; the Lord is pleased when he hath freely, and of his own accord, pardoned the sins of men, having laid them upon Christ, to reveal himself in this his grace, and manifest to them that which he hath done long before, when they meet with him in prayer, fasting, and ordinances; he is pleased to manifest in them to us, what he hath already done, and not that they

are yet to be done, much less that these things do them.

Well, is it the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ? Then behold matter of admirable consolation: none in the world like this, the Lord hath laid it; if any thing else had, but he alone, men were undone for ever. God is unchangeable, "I am the Lord, I change not (saith he) therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." That which the Lord doth, is for ever, not to be revoked and altered again; that which the creature doth is changeable, but God changes not.

But I must hasten. In the last place, is it then the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ; then take it off from him who dare, and bring it back again to the peer soul, from whom the Lord hath taken it, and laid it upon him: who art thou that darest to dispute against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of one lump a vessel of honor, and another of dishonor? If the Lord is pleased of his good will and free grace, to make thee a vessel unto honor, by purging thee thoroughly from sin, and laying it upon Christ, wilt thou dispute with God, and say thy iniquities are not laid upon him?

In Gen. xlviii. Joseph brings his two sons, Manasses and Ephraim, to Jacob his father, to be blessed by him before he died; he brings Manasses, and sets on Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim on his left hand; but Jacob, when he began to bless them, changed his hand, and put his left hand upon Manasses the eldest, and his right hand upon Ephraim the youngest: Mark, what saith Joseph then? "Not so, my father, for this is the eldest; yea, I know it my son, I know it, (saith Jacob) very well:" that is not the purpose, Manasses "shall be great, but his younger brother shall be greater than he:" Joseph would needs correct his father, thinking he did not prudently in that he did, and that his hand was not placed right, and therefore he would be mending it. Just so we judge of God's proceedings, in the dispensation of his grace to men; we think that he deals imprudently, when he lays his right hand of mercy upon the head of a notorious sinner, an enemy; and his left hand of severity upon an elder brother, a sincere man, one that walks uprightly: not so, my father, say men, that is a wicked man, a notorious sinner; this is an honest, righteous, and godly man; this is the elder, lay thy right hand of grace upon him: I know very well, (saith God) what they are; it is my pleasure; the youngest shall have the blessing, and the eldest go without it; "you are righteous in your generation, (saith Christ) but the

publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, and yourselves shall be shut out." Beloved, let the Lord lay his hand where he please, and let him dispose of iniquity as he seeth good, and lay whose sins he please upon Christ: "Even while we were enemies we were reconciled." Let no man therefore look upon human prudence, nor discourse according to reason; but let us look upon the act of God in dispensing of his grace, as he who is wisdom itself, orders it; and know that he which cannot err, disposeth of iniquity, and layeth it upon Christ; and whom he blesseth, is, and shall be blessed. I may speak of the act of God, in laying men's sins upon Christ once passed, and set forth the unchangeableness of it, by that act of Isaac blessing Jacob, though Jacob got the blessing by deceit from his father, making him to believe, that he was his eldest son; and Esau coming in afterwards for the blessing, saith Isaac, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed:" shall Isaac, a man, stand to what he hath done, though gotten from him by a mere cheat; and shall the Lord change in what he hath done; having laid iniquity upon Christ, shall he take it off again? "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent;" and therefore, beloved, you may take up that glorious challenge of the apostle in Rom. viii. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." There is the ground of all; so say to you, to your spirits, who shall call me to account for my sins? Who shall lay them to my charge? Who will make me bear them on my own back? It is God himself hath taken them off, and discharged me: "It is God that justifieth me;" if man had justified me, he might have been mistaken; had he pronounced me innocent, I might have borne my sins still. "Christ died, or is rather risen again;" wherefore, who shall lay any thing to our charge? And so you may trample over all the accusations of Satan upon this very consideration, that God" hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

SERMON XXII.

OUR SINS ALREADY LAID ON CHRIST.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US
ALL.

The last day, as you may remember, we took notice of the author of this grace, "Of laying iniquity upon Christ:" it is the Lord's own act; none but he laid it on him; Christ took not the offense of priesthood upon himself, but as he was called of God. The office of his priesthood was the bearing of sin; that was the prime business of the high priest to represent all the people, and to enter into the holy of holies to bear their sins before the Lord. "No man takes this honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was," Heb. v. 4. Therefore the apostle saith expressly, the Lord spake thus, I have said, "Thou art a priest for ever," that was his call; and for the confirmation of it he established it by an oath, "The Lord hath, sworn thou art a priest for ever," Heb. vii. 21. And if Christ himself takes not upon him to dispose of the sins of men, much less is it in the power of any mere creature. It is not in the power of any righteousness we do, though ever so complete, no nor of our faith, to lay iniquity upon Christ; *The lord lays, Christ bears, and faith beholds this iniquity thus laid by him, and borne by Christ;* and so the soul receives comfort upon the apprehension of it. None but the Lord can possibly lay iniquity upon Christ, because none hath to do with the disposing of it but he; "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight;" yet he had sinned against Uriah and his wife; but properly the sin was against God, as that sin was a transgression of his law: if the debt be God's, who hath power to dispose of it, either to take it off the principal, or transfer it to a surety, but he that is the creditor? What hath any man to do with another man's debt?

Again, None but the Lord can dispose of iniquity, because none hath

so much interest in Christ as he hath; it is a burthen of a heavy weight, and he must have great interest that can prevail with him to bear it. Though it is true, we, the sons of men partake of abundance of comfort in the discharge of sin by Christ; yet his primary intention in bearing it, was not the salvation of man, but the satisfaction of his Father; "Lo, I come, to do thy will," Heb. x. 9. "This is my meat and drink, to do the will of him that sent me," John ix, 34. "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, therefore glorify me," John xvii. 1—4, 5. Still the eye of Christ ran upon the pleasuring of his Father; this is that which made him so hearty in bearing sin, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," Isaiah liii. 10.

Again, None could fit Christ to bear sin but the Lord, therefore none else could lay it on him: a body he must have, or he could not bear sin: the God-head cannot bear sin; "And a body," saith Christ, "hast thou prepared me," Heb. x. 5; all the world could not prepare a fit body to bear sin for Christ; a body natural is but weak; and too weak to bear itself up under such a weight. A body there must be that is supernatural, steeled and supported; and this also is the mere work of the Lord: Isaiah xlii. 6, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold;" saith he, God must uphold him; "I will keep thee, I will help thee, I will strengthen thee, I will hold thine hands."

Finally, None but the Lord could requite Christ for such a service as this; it is fit he should have his pay for his pains: the Lord tells him plainly, that upon the terms of bearing iniquity, let him ask of him, and he shall "have the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession," Psalm ii. 8. Nay, he saith, because he was "obedient to the death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," Phil. ii. 8, 9.

It should therefore serve to put the people of God upon the admiration of the great love of God, (seeing it is only the Lord that layeth iniquity upon Christ) to give unto him the praise of the glory of his grace: oh, let nothing go away with that, seeing none but the Lord doth the thing!

And to this end, beloved, the Lord must open your eyes that you may see it; it is he alone that doth it; but till you see it, whatever you may think of yourselves, you will sacrifice to nets and drags instead

of him; if righteousness seem to be the easing of burthens in spirit, then that shall, and will be exalted above measure: from whence proceed these strange expressions, oh, the omnipotency of fasting, prayer, and repentance! What is this but to give the glory of the Lord to our services, as if they discharged us of our sins, when it is he only that discharges us of them? But I must hasten.

There is another observable passage in these words, more observable indeed than heeded by most; and that is to be taken from the circumstance of time, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ: the text saith, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Satan knows well enough of what great consequence this circumstance of time is," both to the manifestation of the glory of God's grace, and to the establishment of the comforts of his people; and therefore he hath raised a foul dust to misguide poor wretches, that they may not lay hold upon it, and the comfort that will flow from it. The text saith not, the Lord doth, or will lay, iniquity on him; much less that the time is over, and he will not now do it.

Satan is very busy with tender, ignorant hearts, either to persuade them that the work is now a doing, or hereafter shall be done, but not yet done, or the time is overslipped; it might have been done, if inert had not neglected the opportunity; but now it is too late; it is never to be done.

The last of these hath troubled the hearts of many people; whence come these expressions; I have neglected the day of my visitation, saith one; I had the opportunity, the presence of the Spirit of God: my fear is, that was the day of God's grace to me, but I have let it slip; and now there is no more hope left for me: but, beloved, let the evident word of the Lord himself be your guide, and know, that every thing that is spoken, contrary to the mind of the Lord revealed in it, is but the natural fruit of the father of lies, who is a liar from the beginning. The Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ: hath he done it already, and is it now to be done? Nay, hath he done it, and doth he revoke it, and will not suffer it to be done? the point then briefly is this.

This gracious act of the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, is not now, or hereafter to be done, much less a thing he never wills to be done, but it is a thing he hath already done.

Every school-boy will be able to tell you, that this expression [*hath laid*] imports the time past, the word being in the preterperfect tense; it is not in the present tense, the Lord layeth; nor in the future tense, the Lord will lay; but in the preterperfect tense, the Lord hath done it; it is an act past. I will remember what was said unto that resolute king; "Let not him that putteth on the harness boast himself, as he that puts it off," I Kings xx. 11. Beloved, you know, when armies go out, there are tremblings of heart, what the success may be, till the fight be over; when the victory, is gotten, then there is joy, the thing is done. When a poor prisoner lies in prison condemned, though he have friends to beg his pardon; while that is in agitation, and not actually done, he is in suspense, between fear and hope, and restless in spirit; but when the act of grace is once past, and the king's hand and seal to it, the thing is done, then his spirit comes to have rest: even so the rest of your spirits will lie in this, not that a thing is in writing; or that there are previous acts to be done to produce this act of laying iniquity upon Christ; but that the thing is dispatched to your hands before; you may see it at this instant done and finished: though the Lord in himself be unchangeable, yet our unbelieving hearts are suspicious of it, and we are ready to cry, "A bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush:" now to condescend to the weakness of men, he is pleased, not that the bird should be in the bush, but in our hands; not that he should have his mercies within himself, but he passes them over, and gives the possession of them to us, that so we may be the securer in them.

I doubt not, beloved, but by this time, the truth is cleared to you, and that you find abundance of establishment in it so cleared; therefore we shall endeavour to let you know (as fully as possibly we may) "when it was, that the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ."

But before we fall upon that particular, there is one caution I shall recommend to your consideration, as very necessary to be considered, for the avoiding of confusion; which is this, that you carefully distinguish between the Lord's sole and only act of laying iniquity upon Christ, and the believer's act of applying this grace. We are now upon the former consideration, the Lord's sole and only act without the creature, in laying iniquity upon Christ.

I find, beloved, that too many poor wretches, out of ignorance, not understanding distinctly the course of God's proceedings with men,

are apt to confound God's sole act of laying, and the believer's act of applying together, as if they were both one; as if our sins were laid upon Christ, only when we believe; and as if that were the only thing, whereby they are laid upon him; but it is certain, that these are distinct acts: I hope I shall not need to trouble myself, or you, much, to make it appear that they are; the agent acting, and the instrument manifesting, are different. Though the Lord gives men to believe; yet the putting forth of that act is man's, by the power of the Lord; as for the laying of iniquity itself upon Christ, this is solely the Lord's own act; our application doth but introduce the knowledge of that which the Lord hath done before, and so we come to have the comfort. Now it is true, indeed, that in respect of the application of this grace to ourselves, "The laying of iniquity upon Christ," may be considered either present or future; that is, at this present instant, a person may believe this grace of God, and so here is now an application of it; and possibly one, that doth not for the present believe, and apply it to himself, may believe, and in that respect, the applying it, may be future; but for the act itself, of laying iniquity upon Christ, that is the Lord's, and is neither present, nor future, but was before, and is already past and gone.

The truth is, it is not possible that any person can truly believe, his iniquities are laid upon Christ, except there be a previous act of the Lord's laying them on him; the Lord's act of laying must go before our act of applying it to ourselves. It is not possible for any man to act any thing, but there must be an object in being, about which it is conversant. Suppose a man believe his sins are laid upon Christ, I would fain know, whether his believing be true or false; if he believe indeed, he hath a foundation for this faith of his, and what is that? He hath a grant from the Lord, that is the very being of his faith; a grant, I say, he finds out, that is a stirring up of his believing: now suppose I am to believe the forgiveness of my sins, what must be the ground of this my believing? The Lord must make his grant to me, and finding that, I have ground to believe it; then whensoever this grant was made, the thing that I am to believe, was done in respect of God's act: now we can find no grant, but as the Lord reveals the same in the word of his grace to us; when, therefore, that which is the foundation of my faith was made, then the act of God was made to me, which I apply to myself.

If the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, has being, at the same instant men believe, then the grant which men believe, hath its first being then; so all grants, upon which men are to believe, must be new and immediate revelations, or they must be founded in the word of grace: if they be founded in that, then they were there before we believed; and if they were there before we believed, then the Lord, for his part, had passed over all that he intends to pass over. Doth he pass over any thing anew to men, besides what is in the word of grace? Then that must be by a new revelation; and who can resolve of that?

The word, and that alone is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, and fit for every good work. The mind of God is wholly-contained in this word; and therefore it must needs be a mistake in the minds of people, that God then begins to pass over such an act to them, that their iniquity is laid upon Christ, upon their believing; I say, believing follows, and gathers its ground from what God has done already.

I have heard some argue, that God lays iniquity upon Christ, just then when men believe; because the act, and the object about which it is conversant, are relatives, and therefore are it, nature together; and are both as the Son and the Father; the Father is no sooner a Father, but the Son is a Son.

But, beloved, here is a mistake; it is not faith that gives being to this act, or grant, that our iniquities should be laid upon Christ, it is the Lord alone that gives being to it, and it is his act; so that it is true, iniquity is not laid upon Christ, till he lays it; but it follows not, that it was not laid upon him, till our act of believing goes along with it; because that doth not give being to it, but is only a manifestation of that, which was before. This then is carefully to be premised, and observed, namely, the difference between the Lord's act of laying iniquity upon Christ, and the act of a believer, to apply that grace; concerning the latter, it is present to some, and future to others as men believe; but the act of laying iniquity upon Christ is solely the Lord's, and was done before, and is not to be done.

Now let us come to consider, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ; he hath done it, it is past: but when did he do it, will you say? For the opening of this truth, there are some specialties to be

considered, as,

1. That the Lord laid iniquities upon Christ, by way of obligation.
2. By way of execution.
3. By way of his own application thereof to his people; for, as you shall hear, we must distinguish between God's application of this grace, and their application of it; this we shall speak to afterwards.

We come now to consider, when the Lord laid iniquities upon Christ, and for that you must know; 1. The Lord laid them upon him, by way of obligation; I mean thus, he did then lay iniquity upon Christ, when he obliged himself to it; you know when a man once enters into bond, though peradventure the day of payment may be some months, or years, after the bond is sealed; yet when he enters into bond, he delivers that as his act and deed; at the first instant of the sealing of the bond, then is the thing done; other specialties, it may be, are cancelled, and the whole debt remains according to the tenor of the bond. So when the Lord entered into bond, he tied himself to lay iniquity upon Christ; then was his act and deed; then were all the specialties cancelled, as they were charged upon us; and when was that? It was from all eternity; I say, God tied himself irrevocably then to lay iniquity upon Christ, even from all eternity; then he did it in his own determinate counsel; I mean, when in his own council, he determined it should be done. God's determination and resolution, that Christ should bear the sins of men, were the act of God's laying them upon him; and though, unhappily to this church, the everlasting decree, and doctrine of God's election of men, hath been, and is still, suppressed as a dangerous truth; yet you must know beloved, that the foundation of all the gracious acts of God, was laid in this decree of election; the Lord sat down, as a man may speak with reverence, by himself, and drew out a draught of all the particular passages, especially concerning his own people, how he would order and dispose every thing in its season; and, in this eternal council, he set down his fiat, It should be so; and this fiat of the Lord, from all eternity, did make the thing itself an irrevocable act. You know, that the royal assent makes an act, and it is a real statute; councils having contrived before, that which it yields unto.

Now it may be, that that which royal assent makes an act, may not be of present use; that is, people may not have present occasion of such an act; suppose it be an act of grace; yet, notwithstanding, from the first instant of that assent, it hath as much force in it, as when occasion of use cometh, which is derived from it: so also the act of laying of iniquity upon Christ, that, that gives being to it, as an act, and so gives life to it, is the royal assent of God. When God first set his assent that iniquity should be borne by Christ, this made it an act as firm, good, and true, as ever will be. When a man hath occasion to make use of a statute of grace, there is no addition of force, added to it, when it is sued out for use; it hath no more virtue in itself, than at the first instant, when the royal assent was put to it: when we, in time, by the grace of the Lord, make application of this, that our iniquities are laid upon Christ; this application of ours, gives not any being at all unto the thing; the grant, that had as much strength and three in it; at the first assenting to it, as it hath when it is applied, or as ever it will have. Now, beloved, this is certain, that the royal assent is a binding act, even from the very instant of it; kings, when they give it to an act of grace, are not only bound to make it good, when any person sues it out, but they themselves are bound at that instant, when they passed it, that they cannot revoke it. The Lord, it is true, was free in himself how to dispose of the sins of men; but when he had contrived for his own glory's sake, and his people's good, that their iniquities should be transacted to Christ, this counsel, though secret within his own breast, obliged him for ever to the thing: the Lord is unchangeable, "I am God, and change not, therefore ye, the sons of Jacob, are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6. Now, beloved, should there be any time in which the Lord should not lay iniquity upon Christ, after his former assent to it, how could he be unchangeable? He did assent then, now he will not; is not this changeableness? So that the whole truth, faithfulness, and uprightness of God, is tied to make good the everlasting laying of iniquity upon Christ, by virtue of this act of his own assent to it.

(2.) As there was a secret obligation upon God, which was from all eternity, to lay iniquity upon Christ; so there is a public and manifest tie upon him, when he openly, in the face of his people, and to them binds himself even to their apprehensions, that they see that he is obliged to it; then did the Lord lay the iniquity of his people upon Christ openly, when he did openly bind himself by covenant to do it;

and that he did from the first moment they were in any transgression whatsoever. When Adam, as a common person, had sinned for himself and his whole posterity, the Lord bound himself by promise and covenant, to secure his people from such transgression by his Son Christ; "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed, (speaking to the serpent of the woman, that is, Eve) he shall break thine head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," Gen. iii. 15. As if he had said, thou hast got a great catch by getting the sons of men under thy clutches, as thy prey; thou hast bruised his heel by reason of transgression; but the seed of the woman shall break thine head; the head, that is the seat of principality; therefore, they that have the principality are called heads in scripture. Now, saith the text, "He shall break thine head;" that is, that, wherein consisteth thy chiefest strength, shall be bruised and broken to pieces; because that, wherein the strength or headship lieth, shall be taken away from thee; the seed of the woman shall take away sin, wherein the headship of Satan lieth. Now, as soon as the Lord had published this to men, he was under bond, that iniquity should be borne by Christ.

Now you are not to conceive that this publication of God's grace is the first act of it by him, he having acted it in his councils long before; therefore the apostles being met together, on occasion of persecution, began to pray, and in prayer had this clause, "They have done (speaking of their cruelty to Christ) whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 28. By which it plainly appears, that the act is not passed really in being in the publication of it; which is but an issue flowing from this first spring, from whence it derived its original; namely, the determinate council of the Lord. It was upon record in heaven before; now, upon occasion, the record is taken out and published. As I said before, it is royal assent, which gives being to an act of grace; it is not the publication of it in print, and making it known to the world, that gives being to it a jot; indeed that gives people the comfort of it, but royal assent gives being to the thing; publication doth not give so much as confirmation to it; only it gives settlement of spirit to the staggering hearts of people, that know not what to do, nor where to set the sole of their feet for rest, till they have this grace published; and then venture themselves upon it when published.

Concerning the laying of iniquity upon Christ, he doth not make a

new act; all that he doth is but the publication and manifestation of it; not that the Lord is bound now, and not before, but that we might know he is bound, and have the stronger consolation. In Eph. i. 4, the apostle speaks expressly and fully touching God's eternal act, that gives being to this grace of laying iniquity upon Christ; and also, that, by which persons reap the fruit of it, when they come to know it; he saith, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." And afterwards he tells us, this reaches to the "forgiveness of our sins." There you shall find, that though the Lord was pleased to publish this grace, concerning the laying of iniquities on Christ, yet it hath not its beginning then, but "before the foundation of the world was laid." In brief, you must know, that though sin in creatures was not actually in being from all eternity; nay, though Christ, as having a body prepared, was not himself in being from eternity; yet the omnipresent eye of God, that forecasts things with himself, that afterwards should come to pass, had every particular person in his thoughts from all eternity, that should come in all after time, and before him they appeared, as if they had been actually existing then; and he had not only their persons, but in this omnipresent eye of his, he had every such transgression, that by every such person as his own, should from the first to the last of their being, be committed; he had all this at once in his eye. And having this platform before him, as if all were then in being, he sets down his own act of royal assent, that for every such transgression that should be committed at such and such a time, by such and such persons, he would accept of Christ whom he would fit to bear their transgressions; and, that from eternity to eternity, the Lord reckons all things as he had then and there set them down. We actually commit sin to-day, yesterday, and so shall again to-morrow; in the eternal councils of God, the very sin of this day *, (Heb. iv. 13.) of yesterday, and to-morrow, were all open in the eyes of God; the Lord, from all eternity, looking upon these transgressions, assented to this, that Christ, for whom he would prepare a body, should indeed, in time, actually bear them all; but, in God's own account they must be reckoned as borne from all eternity by Christ, by way of obligation; Thus you see how the Lord, by way of obligation, lays the iniquities of his people upon Christ, and when he did thus lay them on him.

2. The Lord did lay the iniquities of his people upon Christ by way

of execution; I mean thus, he laid iniquity upon him, as he did, in time, serve the execution upon him: as I told you before, a man makes himself actually a debtor, when he first enters into bond, and he goeth all that time for a debtor, from the sealing of the bond; but the debt is properly laid upon him when an execution is served upon him, and he is caused to make good the bond, and pay the debt; now is he actually called to account. The Lord, from all eternity, reckoned Christ to be the bearer of the transgression of his people; but in time he served the execution upon him.

Now it would be questioned when it was, that the Lord did this; that is, when he actually and really charged sin upon him?

For the understanding of this, you must know that there is a twofold serving the execution upon Christ: it may be" considered either virtual, or actual, and real. The execution is served upon Christ in the virtue of it, from the first instant that ever there was a transgression committed; and not only when first committed, and from thence to the time of his suffering, but also afterwards, from the time he suffered, to the end of the world. You must of necessity admit of this distinction between the virtual and actual serving of the execution upon Christ; and the ground of it is this, that though the Lord took Christ for paymaster for all the sins in the world that the elect would be guilty of; yet he was pleased to give him a long day of payment; the debt indeed run on from the fall of Adam, and so continued, and will continue to the end of the world; but Christ was not to come into the world till the fulness of time; Gal. iv. 4, 5, "And, when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" therefore, it must follow, that either there could be no discharge from the time of the first commission of sin, till Christ appeared in the flesh; or, that before the actual payment that Christ made, there was the virtue of having iniquity upon him; by which there was a discharge given before he had actually paid the debt.

To clear the point a little to you, consider, a man sends his son to the university, to such a tutor, who knows he is a rich man, and therefore, he saith, I will agree with you thus; I will teach your son so many years, and, at three years' end, you shall pay all the arrest for the time past; and whatsoever it will come to for three years

more. Now the father, according to the agreement made, comes at one time, and reckons for all that is past for the tutorage of his son, and lays down that all at once; and, for the time to come, saith he, there is so much more, I will pay all them too, and make but one payment of all. So it is with Christ, he takes upon himself to discharge all the transgressions of those to whom it is given to believe; the Lord takes Christ for it, he knows he is one that is mighty, and is contented therefore to lay his help upon him: now the time runs on from the first sin committed, till the fulness of time that he comes; here is no payment all this while, no not of a farthing; yet God still discharges men of their sins; he discharged Abraham, Isaac, and David, and all the rest of the Fathers; and blessed they were in that their iniquities were forgiven, and their sins were covered," Psalm. xxxii. 1. Here God acquits these believers under the Old Testament, but where is the payment? All this while he hath no satisfaction yet; why, he depends on Christ for satisfaction when the day of payment comes; and so satisfaction is made virtually before it be done by Christ actually: and so for after-times; Christ came in the fulness of time, and reckoned with the Father, and he hath so much of him for all that is past, and as much for after-times to the end of the world; saith Christ to the Father, here is so much for every one of mine, that they have run out for the time that is past; and here is so much for every one of them that shall come after; they will commit so many sins in time to come; here is so much for all that they shall commit.

Now there was a pitched time wherein God served execution actually upon him; and that was when God forsook this Son of his; when he called him forth, and charged sin upon him, and laid load upon load on him, as the desert of transgressions*.

* This is charged as an error by D. W. in his Gospel-Truth, &c. p. 28, that the time when our sins were actually laid on Christ was when he was nailed to the cross but the Doctor does not say, that this was the first time sin was charged upon him, and he bore it; for he after observes, that God charged it upon him in the garden, when he was *heavy unto death*, and said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me;" though, when he was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for sin, was more properly and precisely the time when as was

charged and laid upon him, and he bore it: the apostle says, That "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Heb. ix. 28; so that it was when he was offered up, that sin was laid upon him, and he bore it; yea, he was offered up, that it might be done, and appear to be done: the apostle Peter is still more express for this; "Who his on self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," I Pet. ii. 24; hence it appears that it was upon the cross that sin was charged, and the load was laid, there borne.

Beloved, you know what our Saviour saith himself, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now was the execution served, and God charged the payment upon him, when he said, "I am heavy unto death; Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; here was the time of payment, and or satisfying God. This was the very time of the end or seventy weeks, wherein there was an end put to sin, and the finishing of transgression: and you must know this, beloved, that, in this laying iniquity upon Christ by way of execution, there was the matter of the greatest trust in the world, between God the Father and his Son Christ: it had been a toilsome thing to Christ to pay every debt, one after another, as it was taken up; and therefore, to save all this trouble, God was contented all should be paid at once; and likewise that Christ should do all in equality of time not pay all at first, nor at last, but in the middle time; as if a man were to take up wares at several times, some at the beginning of the year, and some at the end of it, and pay all his money at the middle of it: so was it between God and his Son; something was to be paid at the beginning of the world; and something at the end of it; now to make an equality, Christ pays all at the middle time, or some good time before the end; God is content to trust him from the beginning until the fulness of time: and he did so trust him, that he discharged all the sins of the elect before payment, as if already done. At the fulness of time, Christ comes and pays all for the time past, and so dischargeth that trust of God the Father upon him; and moreover pays to the full for all the sins that should be committed afterwards; so that now the Son trust the Father, that he will reckon right with him, and deal justly with him. The price is fully paid into the hands of the Father, for all the elect to the end of the world, at that instant that Christ suffered; yet the value of this price is to be made out many hundreds of years after;

wherein the Father is to give out unto man the worth of that Christ paid, even to the end of the world, as if he had not been paid before.

So that, in brief, look upon the execution, or rather serving of the execution, that is, the actual laying iniquity upon Christ; this was done at that instant when he was upon the cross, and God nailed the sins of men to it; and from that time there was not one sin to be reckoned either to believers, who are the members of Christ, or to himself; he having then made satisfaction, and upon it given out to the world, "it is finished:" what was finished? the payment of the price so long looked for. The utmost farthing is now laid down, therefore the prophet Isaiah, in his 53d chapter, saith expressly, that when the Lord beheld the travail of his soul, he was then satisfied, when the work of the Lord was in the hand of Christ; that is, when he was actually managing the business of bearing the weight of sin; then the pleasure of the Lord prospered on him; then the work went on with such success in his hand, that it prospered; then came this issue of his labour, that he obtained his father's pleasure that he aimed at; when the thing comes into the hands of Christ, thou the pleasure of the Lord goeth on.

There yet remains one thing very considerable, and that is the application of this grace to particular persons, and the time when the Lord comes to this man, and to that woman, and calls out persons particularly, and applies it to them, as the grace of this person individually, "Thy iniquity is laid upon Christ." This requires more time to open it, than now we have; and therefore in the afternoon we shall have opportunity elsewhere.

SERMON XXIII.

OUR SINS ALREADY LAID ON CHRIST.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US
ALL.

I HAVE elsewhere made some progress in these words; which indeed contain in them the fulness of the mystery of free-grace. It is iniquity itself, as well as the punishment of it, that the Lord laid upon Christ: he bare the sins of many, as well as he was wounded for them: this is a real transaction; Christ stands as very a sinner in God's eye, as the reprobate, though not as the actor of sin; yet as he was the surety, the debt became as really his, as it was the principal's before it became the surety's; and this translation of our iniquities from us unto Christ, is the sole and only act of the Lord himself; none but he could lay iniquity on him.

The *fourth* thing considerable in the words, is, "The Lord hath done it already:" it is not, the Lord doth lay, or will lay, iniquity upon Christ; but he hath laid it upon him: the business is not to be done now. Thou hast, peradventure, this day committed this, and that, and the other sin; yet the Lord is not now to lay it upon Christ: it is done long ago.

We have entered upon this point elsewhere this morning: and here I briefly propose to you this, for the better clearing of the time, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ; and I will leave it with you as a caution to distinguish between the Lord's act of laying iniquity, and the believer's act of applying this grace to himself. When we believe our iniquities are laid on Christ, is one time; when God lays them, is another: God, long before we believed, laid them upon Christ; and, when we believe, the foundation of it is an ancient grant that we find upon record, enacted and entered long ago: faith hath a word of truth, if it be true faith, whereupon it builds; it looks not for present

revelation of things not extant before, but takes them as it finds them upon record, when the record is first entered, nay, when the act was first made, from whence it was entered, then was grant; then God did his part in laying iniquity upon Christ; and we, in time, by the grace of the Lord given to us, believe, find out his ancient grant, which now at believing, becomes apparent, and so comes our application. Application at present, or may be hereafter; but the laying iniquity itself, an act passed long before by God.

For the better understanding of God's laying iniquity upon Christ, when he did it, there are these three things considerable.

1. The Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ by way of obligation.
2. By way of execution.
3. By way of application of this benefit to us.

1. God's act of having iniquity upon Christ by way of obligation; so he laid it upon him, as soon as ever he was bound to it; a bond is a man's act and deed before payment. As soon as ever God bound himself, the iniquity was laid upon Christ; for he had forfeited his own faithfulness, if he had not fulfilled. Now the time wherein he this laid it on Christ, was from all eternity. Royal assent gives being to any act of grace. Before there could be any believing of this grace, God's assent, by his determinate counsel, (Acts iv. 28) gave being to it.

2. Then there was the laying iniquity on Christ by way of execution; Christ from all eternity stood engaged to answer all the sins of the elect, but God gives him a long day of payment. There is a twofold laying iniquity upon Christ by way of execution, the one virtual, the other real and actual: the virtual laying iniquity on Christ, was long before payment, lint the other at it. Abraham sinning, his sins were laid on Christ; God laid his execution upon him, for the sins of Abraham; and yet, notwithstanding, Christ was not actually called to account, where observe, that here wins but a virtual execution served upon Christ, not the actual; the real and actual way of execution is, or rather was, when Christ actually stood out, and had the load of sin pressing him down, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now sin actually lay upon him: "our iniquities (saith the prophet) have separated you and „our God:"

when iniquity came once to separate, then was it actually laid upon Christ; he himself was separated from his Father, and then did he bear iniquity; then was Im called to account for it: but I hasten.

3. There is one thing more very considerable, that is, the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, by way of application; I mean, when it is that the Lord singles out this and that, and the other person now present, and takes your very sins you have committed, and shall hereafter, and lays them upon him. Concerning the elect in general, as they were in the eye of the Lord, before they had a real existence, so all their iniquities were laid upon Christ from eternity; but it must needs be granted, beloved, that the particular application of this grace to persons, that the Lord hath laid my, and thy iniquities upon Christ individually, must needs be in time. Before a man is in being, there cannot be a personal application of the grace of God unto him; God cannot apply his grace to nothing. Though in his eye he may apprehend a person as being, though not actually, and so reckon Christ as a sinner, instead of him, when he be; yet to say to such as one by name, thy iniquities are laid upon Christ; and the Lord reckons thee ht person, as such as one who hath not one iniquity he can charge upon thee, this is done in time. Now it will be worth the while, to know when the Lord singles out particular persons, and when this grace of laying this man's iniquities upon Christ, is appropriated by hint to him; for you must know, that there is a twofold appropriation of God's grace of laying iniquity upon Christ. There is God's application, and man's application; God's application is, when he himself says from heaven, that he loves this very person; and that his iniquities are carried away by Christ. Man's application is, when God gives to him to believe, and by this act to be persuaded that he hath done it: we are yet upon the first kind of application, when the Lord himself applies to such a particular person, that his iniquities are laid upon Christ.

In the clearing of this, beloved, I must tell you, I dare not confine myself to the judgment of any man under heaven; nor pin my faith upon any man's sleeve; to conceive such a thing truth, because such men speak it; and therefore I shall desire you, if you be sincere, and mean that the word of the Lord shall be your guide, to resolve you it, such comfortable truths, to mind not so much what I, or any man say, as what the Lord himself saith; and according to the clearness of

the Lord in his own word, so set you up you rest.

And that you may be the better resolved of this truth, so much inquired into, when the Lord laid my, and thy iniquities, upon his Son Christ; know that he laid the iniquities of every elect person two ways upon him; 1. Secretly; 2. Manifestly and openly: in the secret application of this grace unto a man, he hath a full discharge; and in the manifestation hereof, in the second way of application, he hath the comfort of it.

As concerning the Lord's secret applying unto a person, the grace of laying his iniquity upon Christ; I shall desire you, beloved, what you may see in one view, both him, the Lord did this, and the time when he doth it: it is a secret thing, for a time, to those for whom he doth it,) to look into Rom. ix. 10, 11, 12, 13, a place very well worth your consideration, that hath been much canvassed; yet, for all this, I see the evidence of the Spirit of the Lord, is not so fully seen as possibly it might be. The apostle there tells us, of the admirable free grace of God, and how that the Lord in shewing mercy, intends that it may appear to all the world, that what he doth, is merely and solely of grace, and for his own sake; and for the illustration of it, he bringeth in an example of Rebecca and her sons, Jacob and 'Esau, saying, "When Rebecca conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, the children being yet unborn, neither having done any good or evil, (that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated:" mark the words well, I pray you. Out of this passage, I shall note these particulars to you: first, you have here expressed the Lord's declaring himself personally and individually to the one, Jacob, I mean, that he loved him: there was a love from eternity to him, as he was among the rest, in the election of grace; but mark it well, beloved, till there was a single individual person, as Jacob, the Lord did not say, "Jacob have I loved;" therefore, you shall see, here is a personal singling out of Jacob by name, distinct from any other whatsoever, and a love pronounced to him, "Jacob have I loved."

Then consider next, what kind of love this was, that the Lord here pronounces on Jacob; it is a love that is opposed to the hatred, wherewith he hated Esau; now what kind of hatred was that? You know the hatred of Esau, was a hatred of rejection; the love of Jacob,

then, was a love of acceptance; a love, wherewith he received him as one of his own: now then consider, when the Lord first began personally to fasten this his love, the love of his justification; the text saith, "When they were not yet born, neither had done good or evil, that the purpose of God might stand, according to election, not of works, but of grace, it is said, Jacob have I loved:" as much as to say, the Lord did not tarry some space of time after Jacob had a being till he called him, and then pronounced love unto him, as if there had been no love to him till he was called; but before he came into the world, while he was yet in dm womb; nay, when he was first conceived, the Lord pronounced, "Jacob have I loved;" and yet this was a secret, that there was any such thing as love to him; he being yet in the womb, and not capable to understand that God did thus love him: so that it is plain, there is a secret passing over of the grace of God, into the possession of a particular person, before he can know it; and this hath its being in the very conception, as soon as he hath any being.

From whence I gather this conclusion, that God applies or appropriates, unto his elect, his grace of discharge from all iniquity, and his love, at the very instant that such a person hath a being in the world.

I am not ignorant, how men differ in their judgments about God's first applying his grace unto the sons of his election: some think that God never applies pardon of sins to them till they be called and manifestly converted, but this cannot be; Jacob could not be called in the womb, but he was beloved in it, with such a love, as was opposed to the hatred of Esau. And others affirm, that the Lord first appropriates justification to persons when they are baptized, and not before; this cannot be neither; for (whereas circumcision had the place of baptism) Jacob was declared manifestly to be beloved before circumcision; and in Rom. iv. 10, the apostle (speaking of Abraham's. faith) saith expressly, that the Lord justified him, "not being in circumcision, but in uncircumcision;" then the Lord singled him out, and possessed him of his own grace before ever he was circumcised.

Let me tell you, beloved, I conceive people are much mistaken, and exceedingly trouble their own spirits in vain, about the time when the Lord should give them their possession of this grace of laying

their iniquities upon Christ. It is thought by some, that in case such a person should happen to die before God call him to grace, and give to him to believe, that he had been damned; and that elect persons are in a damnable estate, in the time they walk in excess of riot, before they are called. Let me speak freely to you, and, in so doing, tell you, that the Lord hath no more to lay to the charge of an elect person, yet in the height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed; I say, even then, when an elect person runs such a course, the Lord hath no more to lay to his charge, than he hath to lay to the charge of a believer; nay, he hath no more to lay to the charge of such a person, than he hath to lay to the charge of a saint triumphant in glory*.

* Not that the sins of God's elect, in a state of unregeneracy, are not sins; or, that: they are not guilty of sin; nor that they are not deserving of the wrath of God, for they are "children of wrath even as others;" or that they are not under the same sentence of condemnation: but then, as the elect of God, as they are redeemed by Christ, and as he has had their sins laid upon him, and made full satisfaction for them, as full as for the saints in heaven, no more charge can be brought against them by the justice of God, than against these; nor is it possible that they should come into a state of actual condemnation and death, or suffer the vindictive wrath and justice of God: it should be observed, that this is said in opposition to some, who thought elect persons in a damnable state, before calling: that judgment is come upon them to condemnation sententially, as they are considered in Adam, and transgressors of the law, is owned; and that their sins are deserving of eternal damnation will be granted; but that there is a possibility of their being damned, must be denied; or the election of God would not stand sure; redemption, by Christ, would be in vain, and his satisfaction must be void; they are as secure from damnation before calling, as after, though they have not the knowledge, sense, and conifer, of, till they believe. The Doctor says not, that a man, living and dying in such a state shall be saved; but that an elect person shall be saved, who shall believe, be changed in heart and life. See the Doctor's own answer, to the charge against him for these words, in his Sermon on Cant. iv. 7.

It is true, such an one, not called, is never able to know individually of himself, that he is one that God hath nothing to charge upon him; because, till calling, God gives not unto men to believe, and it is only believing that is evidence to men of things not seen. Things that are not seen, are hidden, and shall not be known; I mean, the things of God's love shall not be known to particular men, till they believe; but, considering their real condition, the Lord hath not one sin to charge upon an elect person, from the first moment of conception, till the last minute of his life; there is not so much as original sin to be laid on him; and the ground is, the Lord hath laid it on Christ already: when did he lay sins on him? when he paid the full price for them. Now, suppose this person, uncalled commits iniquity, and that this is charge, d upon him; seeing that: his iniquities are laid upon Christ already, how comes it to pass they are charged upon him again? How come they to be translated from Christ again, and laid upon him? Once they were laid upon Christ it must be confessed: "For the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7; and "by one sacrifice he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. x, 14. Was there, by one act of Christ, the expiation of sins, and all at once, that are committed from the beginning of the world to the end of it? How comes it to pass that this and that sin should be charged upon the elect, when they were laid upon Christ long before? He did, by that one act of his, expiate all our sins, or he did not: if he did not expiate them fully, then he did not "save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" but, if he did, then all iniquity is vanished and gone; he extracted it out, as some plaister, of excellent virtue, extracts out the venom of a plague-sore; so Christ, by once offering up himself, took away all the sins of the elect at once.

Therefore, beloved, I cannot see what the instant of time may be wherein the Lord hath not yet taken the sins of such an elect person, and laid them upon Christ; suppose the distance of time between birth and baptism, which is the nearest time any man comes to; now, before baptism, where lie these iniquities? on elect person is conceived in sin, as David was, what becomes of it? where lies it? doth it lie upon him now? Then was it not laid upon Christ before, and so his blood hath not cleansed from all sin; he hath not borne all the transgressions of his people; he hath not perfected for ever them that are sanctified by one sacrifice upon the cross. He that hath one

sin lying upon him, is not perfect till that be taken from him; but saith the apostle, "By one sacrifice he hath perfected for ever them that "are sanctified;" but it seems by this, that he hath not perfected them; here is a middle time, or some time wherein such a person is not perfect; for there is no perfection while there is sin: if there be sin upon persons, how can such be perfect? Therefore know, beloved, to your abundant comfort, that every elect vessel of God from the first instant of his being, is as pure in the eyes of God from the charge of sin as he shall be in glory; no more sin shall be reckoned to him now, than he shall have in heaven: the saints in heaven, how came they to be pure and holy, but only thus, Christ bare their iniquities for them, and paid the price of their transgressions? for if they had gone to heaven, and he had not borne them, they must have carried them with them; their purity is, that he bore their iniquities, and how did he bear the iniquities of a saint in heaven? it is all one with his bearing the sins of an elect person in the womb; the scripture makes no such difference, that he bore the sins of the one more, and other: wish; than the sins of the other; but he equally perfected all the elect at once. The saints in heaven were no sooner perfected, than the elect child in the womb, save that there is a distance of time between the first being of the one, and of the other; for as those now in glory had their first purity in the womb, so every elect person now receives his there.

"Beloved, I should be loth to put any new and strange things into the minds of men, that are not fully consonant to the mind of God recorded in the scripture; but I see not how it can be avoided, but that Christ's sacrifice must be an imperfect one, and that it sanctified by halves, and degrees, and so he must do something more than he hath done, except there be a complete purging away of sin all at one instant: surely, Christ must do something anew, if something yet remain to be done; if there be any one sin in the world, concerning the elect, to be taken away, he must come down again upon the earth to take it away; if there be but a farthing behind, he must come down again and pay it, before ever they be imperfectly acquitted: but Christ left something behind him imperfect; and herein the apostle shews the difference between Christ's priesthood and that after the order of Aaron; speaking of Aaron's, he saith, "There is a remembrance of sin again every year;" for that their sacrifices could not make the comers thereto perfect, and therefore they were fain to

reiterate them; but when Christ came, he offered himself up once for all, and then "sat down at the right hand of God:" surely Christ should have had no leisure to sit down, if any business of his were to be done; and if there be a remembrance of sin again, there must be a new sacrifice, to take away those sins whereof there is a remembrance; so that if you suppose any elect person, at any time, to have sin not yet taken away, Christ must come again upon the earth, and offer himself up again; for without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Christ must come to shed his blood again, if there be new sins to be remitted that were not remitted before.

Beloved, this may be of use to you in some respect, in behalf of your children; suppose they die in the womb, as you have many abortives; the case of such a child is the same, and as good as is the estate or a person that hath determined to the most evident calling as ever man was called by; for Jacob was beloved whom Rebecca conceived him, while yet he was in the womb; and the Lord appropriates and applies to such a person that grace of his, the laying of his iniquity upon Christ.

I deny not but that the scripture speaks of a time of regeneration; but I desire you will understand, according to the mind. of the Holy Ghost, what this time is that is spoken of: I know, it is the time of calling, but this is no prejudice at all to the applying of the grace of God, even from the womb. Take this regeneration for the act of conversion, and that is done in time, and it will amount to this; that though God secretly gives over the right and title of his own grace to a person in the womb, yet he doth not make it known to him till he hath it, till such time as he calls him: in Gal. iv. 1, 2, 8, the apostle, having spoken of the difference between the law and the gospel, that during the time of being under the law, they were under schoolmasters, tutors, and governors, saith, "When faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster;" then he follows that with a fresh allegory, and makes use of the similitude of an heir, and a child under age; "Now this I say," saith he, "that the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father: Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to

redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Wherein I observe,

1. That there is an heirship during childhood itself; "The heir as long as he is a child," saith the apostle.

2. That there is this heirship when there, is no difference between being a son and a servant; "While he is a child, he differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all:" he is an heir, though there be no difference between him and w servant, during his childhood: what is the reason there is no difference during that? "He is," saith he, "under tutors and governors;" how doth he apply this?" Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the rudiments of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, he sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" as if he had said, there is a time when a person is an heir under age; and there is a time when he comes to enjoy that whereof he is an heir, and differs from a servant manifestly, as indeed in nature he doth, and did before: a child is an heir, if the first born, as soon as ever born; nay, when he is first conceived in the womb. Suppose a man die estated in a great deal of land, leaving his wife but a month gone with child, he leaves his child as heir; yet for all this, there is a long time in the womb, and also of education, in which this child is used as a servant; there is no difference appears, he hath no more in possession than a servant, yet this child is still an heir: so it is with all believers; the elect of God are the heirs of God; and as they are, so the first being of them puts them into the right of inheritance; he that is an heir born, is an heir the first moment he is conceived: so that either you must allow, that there is a time when an elect person is not an heir, or you must confess, that there is no time but such a one is a child of God; and, as much, is purged from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; purged, I mean, by way of imputation, in the reckoning and account of God: though sins be committed afterwards in respect of which there may be, for a time no difference between the life Of an heir, and the life of a servant; yet as this person is an heir of all, so none of this iniquity is reckoned to this person, nor ever shall be, in this life, nor in the life to come, though for the time he doth not now it.

But some may be ready to object, How is it possible, that from the

first instant of an elect person's being, all his sins should be reckoned as laid upon Christ, even from that instant? Can a sin be laid upon Christ before sin is existent? Can sin be laid upon Christ before sin is committed?

I answer, sin is laid upon Christ before it is; and it is no absurdity in reason itself to say so: you know it is possible a man may buy out trespasses before he doth them; suppose a man is addicted to hawking and bunting, and must trespass upon his neighbour's ground; he may lay down a good. large sum: at once, that shall countervail all the trespasses that shall be done afterwards; beloved, shall any man say, that there was no trespass borne, paid, and satisfied by Christ, because there was none acted? what then shall become of all the elect that have been in the world since Christ's coming, if there be not a real serving of sin upon him, and satisfaction made by him, before sin be, committed? What will become of the sins of the apostles, and of the people of God since them? all their sins were committed since the reckoning was made; and if of particular persons in the church, why not so of every particular elect person by' himself? If you shall have no more sins laid upon Christ, or reckoned to him, but what were committed before Christ made payment, there will be none of our sins found to be laid upon him, for all the sins we have committed, have been committed since Christ suffered.

Secondly, some object, and say, Christ puts us upon our prayer, and in prayer that God would forgive us our trespasses How can our iniquities be laid upon Christ already, when we are to pray that God would forgive them to us? It is a vain thing for us to pray to God to forgive them, when they were long ago forgiven.

I answer, they were reckoned to Christ long before we pray for the forgiveness of them, and yet we do well in praying for it. We have a common answer known to all, there is a twofold forgiveness of sins, a forgiveness of sins in heaven, and in the consciences of men. Forgiveness of sins in heaven, in that which is acted by God alone; forgiveness of sins in the consciences of men, is the manifestation of his former act. So then to pray for it, is no' more but to pray that God would manifest to us that he hath forgiven our, sins; and that it may be clear that he hath forgiven them, before we pray for it; and that prayer is grounded upon God's act before-hand made.

Consider this one thing: I would ask this of you, you that pray for forgiveness of your sins; do you pray in faith, or not? If not, mark what the apostle James saith; chap. i. 6, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; he that wavereth, let him nothing he shall receive any thing of the Lord:" beloved, your prayers stink in the nostrils of God, if you do not pray in faith. Well, you pray in faith, you will say: if you do, if you pray for the forgiveness of sin in faith, what is the ground of your faith? If you believe, you have a ground for it; you will say, the grant and word of God is the ground of it. Well, if that be the ground of your believing, then the grant hath a being before your faith, and so consequently before your prayer is made: as for example, God promised forgiveness of sins; now sin was forgiven by him as soon as ever he made the grant and record; at that instant, it was made, sin was forgiven, and God did his part in pardoning the transgressions of his people. Well, then, if you pray in faith that your sins are forgiven, upon this ground, because God hath made this grant, and you find it upon record; then it seems your sins were forgiven you before your prayer was made. You will say, God hath granted this before, and now you pray to God that he would make good that to you which he hath granted before. Beloved, what is this more than to make that evident to you, and to give you the knowledge of that which he hath before granted, that you may have the comfort of it?

In brief, when people pray for any grace that God hath passed over to men, all their prayer is, that he would make them perceive that he hath done that for them in special; so that all our prayers get no new thing of God that he hath not done before only he is pleased, when people pray to him according to his own mind, to meet with them in that ordinance, and then to manifest to them what secretly he had done before for them.

To conclude. If so, here is a word of admirable comfort to poor souls, in that bitter suspense they usually are: thou art in a wavering condition; I know not (sayest thou) whether God hath laid mine iniquities upon Christ or no; I hope well, that Christ is at work with the Father for me; I hope I shall hear well from him. Beloved, your suspense may fall to the ground; your business is done to your hand already; there is not one gone about to do it in heaven for you now, as if it were in the power and pleasure of God to grant or not to grant:

observe the saying of the apostle, in Rom. x. 6, 7, &c. that you may have the greater consolation that God intends to you, settledness of spirit, that the pardon of sin is so firm that you need no more look after it with fear or doubting; where he follows his former discourse, having largely disputed upon the freeness of God's grace, he begins to draw towards a conclusion; for he tells us there, expressly, "That the righteousness, which is of faith, speaks, on this wise, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend up to heaven? that is, to bring Christ from thence; nor who shall descend into the deep? that is, to raise Christ from the dead: but what. saith it? the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart; and this is the word of faith which we preach." Before you shall find the apostle speaking of the establishing our own righteousness, and neglecting the righteousness of God; and here he comes, in the closure, to shew what this righteousness of God is, he presseth so much upon men, and chargeth them with the neglect of it is as if he should say, You think, you must take a great deal of pains, by your own righteousness, to obtain the pardon of your sins, and what would you have? You will, you must, climb up higher, and go down steps to do it: but, saith he, the righteousness of faith runs in another strain; there will be not clambering up to heaven to fetch Christ down, nor going down to hell to fetch him up; there is no such thing to be done, nor required of you: he is conic already, therefore you may save all your pains, care, and fear; he is in your mouths and in your hearts; he is in you and with you, already; as if he had said, You may well save all your fears, cares, and doubts of your condition, whether Christ hath obtained grace with the Father, on your behalf in this point, or no: know that the work is done and finished to your hand: the pardon is come down from heaven already. You know what distraction and trouble must needs be in the heart of a malefactor condemned to die, as long as his pardon is in agitation, when he hath a friend gone to court to get it for him: he is now in hope that his friend will procure it; he is by-and-by full of fear lest his business should miscarry, and he be executed; but when the pardon is sealed, and he knoweth it is done, when it is brought to him, and he hath it in his hand, then his heart leaps within him, and he hath no joy till then. I tell you, beloved, Christ is not now gone to heaven to get a pardon, but he hath got one under seal already; it is in your hands, and in your mouths, and at your doors; it is with you, and in you; iniquity is laid

on Christ already.

Well, hath he done it, and shall he change? Will he not be as good as his word? Heaven and earth shall pass, but, one word that he hath spoken shall not fall to the ground. When Jacob had got the blessing, by deceit, from his father, yet, saith he," I have blessed him, and he is blest, and shall be blessed;" I have said it, and I will stand to it. Shall Isaac, a man, stand to what he did in blessing, though out of a mistake? and shall the God of heaven and earth, that did such an act of blessing, by laying iniquities upon Christ, not upon mistake, but upon determinate counsel, go from his word? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." This is like the law of the Medes and Persians, that shall never be disannulled; it is enacted and passed under hand and seal, that he hath laid on Christ the iniquities of us all.