

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

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OF
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Volume 6

The Faithful Covenanter

I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.—Gen. XVII. 7.

God having framed man an understanding creature, hath made him fit to have communion and intercourse with himself; because he can by his understanding discern that there is a better good out of himself, in communion and fellowship with which, happiness consists. Other creatures — wanting understanding to discern a better good out of than in themselves, their life being their good—desire only the continuance of their own being, without society and fellowship with others. But man, having the knowledge of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, but especially of God the Redeemer, providing for him a second being better than his first, understandeth that his best and chiefest good dependeth more in him than in himself; and because his happiness standeth in acquaintance and fellowship with this God, which is the chief good, he desireth a communion with him, that he may partake of his good.

This communion and fellowship of man with God, was first founded on a covenant of works made with Adam in paradise. If he did obey, and did not eat of the forbidden fruit, he should have life both for himself and his posterity; the which covenant, because God would not have forgotten, he afterward renewed in the delivery of the ten commandments, requiring from man obedience to them in his own person, exactly, at all times, perpetually: promising life on the obedience, and threatening death and cursing if he continued not in everything the law required to do. But this fellowship being placed in man's own freedom, and having so weak a foundation, he lost both himself and it, so that now by the first covenant of works, Adam and all his posterity are under a curse; for we cannot fulfil the law that requireth personal obedience, perfect obedience, and exact obedience. He that 'continueth not in all is cursed,' Gal. iii. 10. The law then findeth us dead and killeth us. It findeth us dead before, and not only leaves us dead still, but makes us more dead.

Now after this fall, man's happiness was to recover again his communion and fellowship with God; and therefore we must have a new

covenant before we can have life and comfort. God must enter into new conditions with us before we can have any communion with him.

God therefore, loving man, doth after the breach of the first agreement and covenant, when Adam had lost himself by his sin, and was in a most miserable plight as ever creature was in the world, falling from so great a happiness into wondrous misery; he raised him up and comforted him by establishing a second, a new and better covenant, laying the foundation of it in the blessed seed of the woman, Christ the Messiah, who is the ground of this new covenant, and so of our communion and fellowship with God, without whom there can be no intercourse between God and us in love. And because this covenant was almost forgotten, therefore now in Abraham's time God renewed it to Abraham in this place: 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee,' &c.

There are four periods of time of renewing this covenant: first, from Adam to Abraham; and in those first times of the world, those that were under the covenant were called the 'sons and daughters of God,' 'the children of the promise,' and the covenant of grace was called a promise of the blessed seed.

Secondly, From Abraham to Moses; and then it was called a covenant, and they the children of the covenant. 'I will establish my covenant.' A covenant is more than a promise, and a more solemn thing, because there be ceremonies.

The third period of renewing the covenant of grace was from Moses to Christ; and then it was more clear, where as the covenant made with Abraham, who was sealed with the sacrament of circumcision, the sacrament of the paschal lamb was added, and all the sacrifices Levitical; and then it was called a testament. That differeth a little from a covenant; for a testament is established by blood, it is established by death. So was that; but it was only with the blood and death of cattle sacrificed as a type.

But now, to Christ's time to the end of the world, the covenant of grace is most clear of all; and it is now usually called the New Testament, being established by the death of Christ himself; and it differs from a covenant in these respects:

First, A testament indeed is a covenant, and something more. It is a covenant sealed by death. The testator must die before it can be of force. So

all the good that is conveyed to us by the testament it is by the death of the testator, Christ. God's covenant with us now, is such a covenant as is a testament, sealed with the death of the testator, Christ; for 'without blood there is no redemption,' Heb. ix. 22; without the death of Christ there could be no satisfaction, and without satisfaction there could be no peace with God.

Secondly, A testament bequeatheth good things merely of love. It giveth gifts freely. A covenant requireth something to be done. In a testament, there is nothing but receiving the legacies given. In covenants, oftentimes it is for the mutual good one of another, but a testament is merely for their good for whom the testament is made, to whom the legacies are bequeathed; for when they are dead, what can they receive from them? God's covenant now is such a testament, sealed with the death of Christ, made out of love merely for our good; for what can God receive of us? All is legacies from him; and though he requireth conditions, requireth faith and obedience, yet he himself fulfilleth what he asketh, giveth what he requireth, giveth it as a legacy, as we shall see afterward.

Thus you see that the communion and fellowship of man with God, must either be by a covenant of works or by a covenant of grace. And we must distinguish exactly between these two covenants and the periods of them.

When the covenant of works was disannulled by our sins, because we could not fulfil the law exactly and perpetually, God will have a new covenant. If we believe in Christ, we shall have everlasting life. Now, if we stick to the one, we must renounce the other. If it be of faith, it is not of works; and if it be of works, it is not of faith. This was excellently signified by Joshua and Moses. Joshua bringeth the people to Canaan, and not Moses. Moses doth not bring any to heaven. It must be Joshua, the type of the true Jesus, that must bring them through Jordan to Canaan. This was typified also in the ark. There was the law, the covenant of works in the ark, but the propitiatory, the mercy-seat, was above the ark, above the law, and from thence God made all his answers; to signify to us that we can have nothing to do with the law without the propitiatory. Christ is the propitiatory, the mercy-seat. In Christ God heareth us. He makes all his answers in the propitiatory, Christ. Therefore when the question is our salvation, how we have title to heaven, not by the merit of works, for then we reverse the covenant of grace; but our title is merely by God's mercy in Christ

apprehended by faith. The evidence indeed to prove our faith to be a true faith, is from works, but the title we have is only by Christ, only by grace. Here we must appeal from Sinai to Sion; from the law to the gospel; from Moses to Christ. We must fly with Joab to the horns of the altar, 1 Kings ii. 28. That must be our refuge. Fly to Christ in the covenant of grace, and we shall not be pulled from thence, as Joab was from the altar. There let us live and die.

Remember, I say, that the covenant of grace is distinct in the whole kind from the covenant of works; yet this, they are both in the church, and both taught, one subordinate to the other; as thus, the covenant of works is taught to show us our failing, that seeing our own disability to perform what the law requireth, we may be forced to the new covenant of grace. And therefore, saith Paul, 'By the law I am dead to the law,' Gal. ii. 19. It is an excellent speech, 'By the law I am dead to the law;' by the covenant of works I am dead to the covenant of works. That is, by the law's exacting of me exact and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed, I come to see that I cannot fulfil it, and therefore am dead to the law; that is, I look for no salvation, for no title to heaven by that; and therefore he saith, 'The law was added for transgression.' Why was the law added to the promise of salvation by Christ made here to Abraham? Why was the covenant of works added in the wilderness afterwards? It was for transgression, to increase the sense of transgression, that we by the law might see what we should do, and what we have not done, and that we are by that come under a curse, and so might fly to the promise of grace in Christ.

I have stood the longer in the clearing of this, because it is a main point.

But to come to that which I specially intend. The words, as I said before, contain the renewing of this blessed and gracious agreement between God and man to Abraham, the father of the faithful.

'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee.'

The words, you see, contain a covenant; and here are all things—all the articles and circumstances that agree to any covenant whatsoever.

Here are the parties, both that make the covenant and that are covenanted with.

Here is the substance of the covenant, and the qualities of the covenant, and the condition of the covenant.

The party making the covenant is God, ‘I will be thy God.’

God is the party covenanting. God indeed is both the party covenanting and the substance of the covenant: ‘I will be a God to thee.’ They fall both together in one. It is a most sweet sign of God’s great love, that he will stoop so low as to make a covenant with us, to be our God; to be himself all in all to us. For consider but both these parties: God and we; the Creator and the creature; the immortal God and mortal man; the glorious God and ‘dust and ashes;’ the holy God and sinful man; the great King of heaven and earth, and rebels and traitors as we are. For him to condescend so low as to make a covenant with us, to enter into terms and articles of agreement with us, it is a wondrous sign of his gracious mercy and love. What can we but hope for from so gracious a God? But I shall have occasion to touch that afterward.

The parties covenanted with, are Abraham and his seed—his seed by promise.

The substance of the covenant is, ‘I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.’

The qualities of the covenant are, first, it is a sure covenant: ‘I will establish my covenant.’

Secondly, It is an everlasting covenant: ‘I will establish my covenant for an everlasting covenant.’

Thirdly, It is a peculiar covenant: ‘I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed; that is, only between me and thee, and thy seed; not with the refuse of the world, but only with thy seed by promise; only believers, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Fourthly, It is a most free covenant. It was made to Abraham, whom God called out of Ur of the Chaldees, out of an idolatrous nation, out of an idolatrous family; even as it was at the first most freely made to Adam in paradise, when he was in a most desperate estate. When he was as low as hell in a manner, ready to sink into despair, then the ‘seed of the woman’ was promised. So here it was freely made to good Abraham: First, the love of

God was free to him when he called him, being an idolater; and then it was freely renewed afterward, when he was good, as we shall see anon.

And lastly, It is a covenant consisting most of spiritual things. It is a spiritual covenant. I mean especially, promising spiritual favours, although the other things, as appendices of the main, are likewise meant. For after that the covenant was made to Abraham and his posterity, they endured many afflictions. After the promise was renewed to Jacob, we know he fled from his brother Esau, to whom the covenant of grace was not made, and yet of Esau presently came duke such a one, and duke such a one, Gen. xxxvi. 15, seq.; and poor Jacob was fain to fly for his life in regard of the promise. So that I say it must be specially of spiritual blessings.

These are the qualities of the covenant. It is a sure, an everlasting, a peculiar, and a most free covenant, aiming specially at spiritual things.

And then, lastly, you have the condition of the covenant; and that, though it is not expressed, yet it is implied. 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.' Therefore thou shalt take me for thy God, carry thyself to me as to thy God, &c. It is usual in other places of Scripture, where mention is made of this covenant, to imply the condition required on our parts. Sometimes both the covenant and condition are mentioned together, as in Zech. xiii. 9, 'I will say,' saith God, 'It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' The one springeth from the other. When God is a God to any, he makes the heart to answer, Thou shalt be my God, and I will be thine always. This is the condition on our part that we make with God in this covenant, to take him for our God, to be his people, and his peculiar ones.

'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.'

Though these words, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed,' be the last words of the test, yet being the substance of the covenant, I think it shall be best to speak of that before I speak of the qualities of the covenant or anything else.

'I will be thy God.'

This is the covenant in the Messiah; but first, what is it to be a God?

I answer, To be a God, take it in the general, is to give being to the creature that had no being of itself, and to protect and preserve the creature

in its being: in a word, to be a creator; for providence is the perpetuity and continuance of creation. This is to be a God. The office of God, as God, is a most glorious function. To be a king is a great matter, but to be a God, to give being to the creature, to support it when it hath a being, to do all that God should do, this is a most glorious work. But this is but creation. This is not intended especially here, for thus he is the God of all his works. Thus by creation and preservation he is the God of all the men in the world out of the church.

"What is then to be thy God? 'I will be thy God.'

I answer, To be a God in a more peculiar manner, is to be a God in covenant; that is, not only to be a God to preserve and continue this being of ours in a civil life, but it is to be a God in a higher relation to us; to be a God in a reference to an eternal, supernatural estate in heaven; to be a God here in grace, and hereafter in glory; and thus God is a God in a gracious covenant, only by Jesus Christ, and to those that believe in him.

'I will be thy God that is, 'I will be thy God in Christ,' to give thee a better being than this world can afford; to free thee from the cursed estate thou art in by nature; to deliver thee from all ill, spiritually and eternally; especially to bestow on thee all good, spiritually and eternally; especially as we have it in the words of the covenant, Gen. xv. 1, 'I will be thy shield and thy exceeding great reward;' a shield to keep off all ill, and a reward for all good. So in Ps. lxxxiv. 9, 'God will be a sun and a shield,' &c.: a sun for all sweet comfort and good, and a shield in regard of defence from ill; a sun and a shield till we come to the possession of eternal happiness. This is to be a God in a peculiar manner, to give all things necessary for grace and life too—for this life and for a better; to do all things requisite to bring us to heaven and happiness through Christ, 'in whom all the promises are yea and amen,' 2 Cor. i. 20; to be all in all; to direct the protections and provisions of this life, of our estate here, to a supernatural happiness hereafter, to a state beyond nature. For God directs the favours of this life, so that he takes them away or he giveth them, as he seeth them advantageous, or hindrances to a better estate. So is God a God to those that are in covenant with him. To do all this, and to do all this in opposition of all enemies whatsoever; to do all this in weakness and in the impotency of the creature; to do all this when all second causes are contrary, as it were, to bring a man to heaven in spite of the devil and of our own corruptions, or all oppositions whatsoever—this is to be a God indeed.

But why doth he say only, 'I will be thy God'? Why doth he not say, 'I will give thee grace and protection, I will give thee heaven and life everlasting'?

Because all is one, for all things in the world are in this one promise, 'I will be thy God.' See the wisdom of heaven, how much he speaks in how little. There cannot be more spoken than thus, 'I will be thy God.' For in saying, 'I will be thy God,' he implies that whatsoever he is, or hath, or can do, shall be thine too. 'I will be thy God;' that is, my wisdom shall be thine, to watch over thee, to find out ways to do thee good; my power shall be thine, to keep thee from danger, to defend and rescue thee from all enemies, and to subdue them by degrees unto thee; my providence shall be thine, to turn all things to thy good; my mercy shall be thine, to forgive thy sins; my love shall be thine, to bestow on thee all necessary comforts. There is no phrase in the Scripture that hath so much in so little as this here, 'I will be thy God,' if we could unfold and lay open this excellent promise. All other particular promises in the covenant of grace are members of this. What is the reason, as Saint Paul saith, 'all things are yours?' 'Because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Cor. iii. 23. God is the God of Christ, and our God. We are in covenant with the God of Christ. Christ is the heir of all, and we are members of Christ. God who is the God of all things is ours. It is a wondrous comprehensive promise.

'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.'

The substance of the covenant then is, that God will be a God to us. The point to be observed is this, that God graciously in the blessed seed, the Messiah, Christ Jesus, he takes upon him to be a God to all those that are in covenant with him; that is, to be all-sufficient, to bring us to happiness—all-sufficient in this world and in the world to come, to be our portion, to be all in all.

This is the first and fundamental promise of all other. Indeed, it is the life and soul of all the promises, and it is the life and soul of all comfort whatsoever. For all other relations spoken of God tend to this, that he is 'our God.' This is before to be a Father, before to be anything. God first is a God, and then a Father, and then all in all to us. As he is first the God of Christ, and then the Father of Christ; as you have it usually in the beginnings of the epistles, 'God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ first the God, and then the Father. To be a God, then, is the fundamental and principal favour.

From thence cometh our election; his choosing of us to eternal salvation before all time; his protection and preservation of us in time unto heaven.

I shall not need to speak more of this, having unfolded it before.

But you will say, How shall we know that this covenant belongeth to us? that we are such as we may say, God is our God?

I answer, first—to lay this for a ground—you must know that to be a God is a relation. Whosoever God is a God to, he persuadeth them by his Spirit that he is a God to. The same Spirit that persuadeth them that there is a God, that Spirit telleth them that God is their God, and works a qualification and disposition in them, as that they may know that they are in covenant with such a gracious God. The Spirit as it revealeth to them the love of God, and that he is theirs, so the Spirit enableth them to claim him for their God, to give up themselves to him as to their God.

And the Spirit doth this, because friends cannot be in covenant and confederate without there be a likeness or an agreement. There must be more words then, on to a covenant. Though God's grace do all, yet we must give our consent; and therefore the covenant is expressed under the title of marriage. In marriage there must be a consent of both parties. In reconciliation between a king and subjects, that are fallen out, when they are rebels, there must be an accepting of the pardon, and a promise of new subjection. So then if God be our God, there will be grace given to take him for our God; to give him homage as a king; to give him our consent as to our spouse. 'Thou shalt be my God, and I will cleave to thee, as to my lord and husband.' 'Can two walk together,' saith the prophet, 'and not be friends?' Amos iii. 8. There can be no friendship with God, except there be somewhat wrought in us by his Spirit, to make us fit for friendship, that we may look on him as an object of love and delight. If we look on him as an object of hatred, what terms of friendship can there be? Now, that we may look on him as an object of love, fit for converse with him, he must make us such by consent and yielding to him, by framing the inward man to his likeness, that so there may a peace be maintained with him. You see the ground of it, of necessity it must be so.

Well, to come to the trials. But let me first add this to the former: whomsoever God is a God to, it is blown specially by spiritual and eternal favours. A man cannot know certainly that God is his God by outward and common things that castaways may have; for a castaway may have Ishmael's

blessing and Esau's portion, blessings of the left hand, common graces. To know undoubtedly, therefore, that God is our God, must be by peculiar matters; for those whose God God is are a peculiar people, a holy nation, severed from others. First of all, then, know what the Spirit of God saith to thy soul; for they that are God's have his Spirit, to reveal to their spirits the secret and hidden love of God. But if the voice of the Spirit be silent in regard of testimony, go to the work of the Spirit; but go to the peculiar work of the Spirit. For though the Spirit may be silent in regard of his testimony, yet there are some works or other of the Spirit in a man, whereby he may know that God is his God; as the Spirit of God works in some sort a proportion in him unto God, and none can know better what God is to him than by searching of his own heart, what he is back again to God; for as God saith to him by his Spirit, Thou art mine, so they say to God, Thou art mine. Let us then come to the trial by our carrying ourselves to God. Can we say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' or 'What is there in earth in comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. When the conscience can tell us that we make God our treasure and our portion above all earthly things, then we make him our God. A Christian singleth out God above all things in the world for his happiness. Lord, thou art mine! Whatsoever wealth is mine, or riches mine, or friends mine—I stand not upon that, but thou art mine. A rich man runneth to his wealth, and makes flesh his arm. He runneth to friends, to bear him out in ill causes; but a true Christian that hath God for his God, he may know it by this, he singleth out God for his portion, runs to him in all extremities. Lord, thou art mine. This is a sign that God hath said to his soul first, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 8. How can the soul appropriate God to himself? How can he say, as Thomas did, 'My Lord and my God,' John xx. 28, except the Lord have spoken peace to the soul before, and have said, 'I am thy salvation?' It is a sign we have made God our God, when we prize him and value him above all the world; and when, with St Paul, Phil. iii. 8, we count all things 'dung and dross, in comparison of Jesus Christ our Lord.' What we will do most for, that is our god. If we will do most for God, he is our God. If we do most for pleasures, they are our god. If we do most for riches, break our rests and crack our consciences for them, that is our god. In a word, whatsoever we value highest, that is our god.

Examine what affections we have to God: for it is affection that makes a Christian. Single out some few that we are most offending in. As, first, for fear, it may shame us all. Indeed, a Christian upon his best resolution is better. But the ordinary carriage of men is, they fear men more than God; they fear everything more than him that they should fear above all. For

instance, is the retired carriage of men to God such as their carriage is to the eye of the world? Will not they do that in secret oftentimes that they will not do openly? In secret they will commit this or that sin, and think, Who seeth? There are secret abominations in the closet of their hearts. They will not fear to do that in the eye of God, that they fear to do in the eye of a child of six years old, that is of any discretion. Is this to make God our God, when we fear the eye of a silly mortal creature more than the eye of God, that is ten thousand times brighter than the sun, that is our judge? Is God our God the whiles? Undoubtedly, when God is made our God, there is an awe of the eye of heaven upon a man in all places. . Therefore this is the condition of the covenant, 'Walk before me,' or 'Walk as in my sight,' 1 Sam. ii. 30. How do we walk before God as in his sight, when there is such a great deal of difference in our carriage secretly, and before the eyes of men? when we labour more to approve our carriage to men, than we make conscience of our spirits to God? This may shame us. Even the best of us who are in covenant with God, and have made God our God, we have cause to be abased for this: and surely one of the best ways to make God's children abased and humbled, is to compare the different proportion of their carriage; how they carry themselves to men whom they respect, and to outward things in the world, and how they carry themselves to God. If God be our God, there will be an universal fear and care to please God in all times and in all places, because he is everywhere; darkness and light are all one to him.

Try yourselves therefore by this affection. If we make God our God, we will fear him above all; for there being such a distance between God and us — he the mighty God, and we creatures whose breath is in our nostrils— there can no other way be a covenant of peace betwixt us, but with much reverence. Therefore all Christians are reverent creatures; they do all in fear; they pass 'the whole time of the conversation here in fear,' 1 Peter iii. 2; they 'make an end of their salvation with fear and trembling,' Philip, ii. 12; they enjoy their liberties in fear. St Jude makes mention of a number of wretched people in his time, that ate without fear, ver. 12. You may know a man that hath not this grace of God in his heart, by his unreverent carriage. He never thinks of the presence and all-seeing eye of God. A Christian that hath God to his God, knows that wheresoever he is, he is in the eye of heaven. Therefore he is jealous, even of his own most secret corruptions. He knows that they are lawless of themselves; and therefore he always sets himself in the presence of God. He is full of reverence, full of fear, even in the enjoying of his Christian liberties.

So likewise for the affection of love. If God be thy God, thou hast grace given thee to love him above all things. With whom God is graciously reconciled, he giveth them his Spirit to be reconciled back again to him. He loveth us, and we love him again; for we are by nature enemies to God, as he is to us. There is no wicked man in the world can love God; indeed, as God is a God that promiseth salvation, he loveth him—he would fain have that, and therefore would fain be in his favour—but he cannot love God as he is in all respects; but he hateth him, and he hateth his children. He triflith with his name by oaths and blasphemy, and the like. He scorneth God. He wisheth that there were no God. Can this man say that God is his God, when he doth not carry himself back again to him in his affection as his God? No such matter. He is God's enemy, and God is his enemy. So if God be our God, if he have set his love upon us, we cannot but love him again. If he be reconciled to us, we are reconciled to him. This is a sure sign that God is our God, if we love him above all.

Now, that may be known if we be zealous when God is dishonoured any way; for whatsoever we make our god, we will not endure to have touched. If a man make his lust his god, if that be touched, he is all in a chafe. When that which a man loveth is touched, experience shows it, he is presently all on a fire. And here the best Christians have cause to be abased. Hath God their love, when they can bear him disgraced, and his name abused, without being greatly moved, and yet notwithstanding, in the mean time, will not endure their own credit to be touched, but they are, as I said, all on a fire? Where there is no zeal, there is no love. Certainly when we can bear God's children misused, and religion endangered, and profession scoffed at, &c., and yet not be affected, nor cannot take God's cause to heart, this is great fault in our love.

And so for joy and delight: we make God our God when we joy in him above all things in the world; when we make him our boast all the day long, as it is Ps. xlv. 8; when we make him our glory, as he is called our glory in Jer. ii. 11, 'They changed their glory.' God is our glory if he be our God. We count it our chiefest glory that we are his, and that he is ours. "Whatsoever our estates be, we glory in God, and not in ourselves. A Christian when he would joy and glory, he goeth out of himself to God, he is his joy. But do not men joy in the creature, and delight in it oftentimes more than in God? It is a great shame for us, and that for which even the best of us all may be abased, to consider what a deal of delight and comfort we take in the creature more than in God. We see Jonah, a good man, when his gourd was taken from

him, that God raised up to be a shelter for him—a poor simple defence it was; and yet we see how pettish the good man was. All the comfort he had could not keep him from anger and fretting when the gourd was gone; and yet God was his God. So many men, whereas they should joy in God above all things, yet if God take outward comforts from them, they are as if there were no God in heaven, no comfort there; as if there were no providence to rule the world; as if they had no Father in covenant with them. I say this is a great shame for us.

Again, If God be our God, we will trust in him, rely and depend upon him above all things; for whatsoever our trust is most in, that is our god. Now if our conscience tell us that we trust most in God, more than in wealth or friends, and will not, to displease God, please any man, it is a sign that we have made God our God, because we trust in him. And surely, if we would examine ourselves, the best of us all, it would bring us on our knees, and make our faces be confounded, to consider what a deal of atheism there is in our heart (though we are not altogether atheists, yet what a deal there is), that must be mortified and subdued. For if an honest man, and that we know is faithful, should say to us, I will be yours; I will take upon me to provide for you, to defend you, to protect you, to stand by you against all adversaries; we believe and hope that he will do it. But do we so to God? Hath he our trust and affiance? Alas, no! so far forth, I mean, as we are not subdued to God. A Christian, indeed, in some measure is enabled to make God his trust and confidence, but there remains abundance of atheism even in the best of us. If God be our God, why do we not trust in him, depend upon him for all things; depend upon him for protection and deliverance from all ill, spiritual ill specially, from sin, Satan, hell, and wrath; depend upon him for all good, the good of grace specially, for the change of our nature and the forgiveness of our sins, for spiritual privileges, adoption and sonship, for the inheritance of heaven, &c. It is a sign, I say, that God is our God when we trust in him above all the world, and trust other things only from him and for him. I will trust man, but man may deceive me. I will not trust him therefore with an absolute confidence. No. That were to make a god of him. What is the reason that God confoundeth proud men at last? David shows the reason. 'This man he took not the Lord for his God.' When men will, in contempt of religion, set up themselves and somewhat else to rely on, besides God, God at the last brings it to pass, that the world shall note them out, This man trusted in his greatness; he trusted in his policy, in his wit, in his friends; this man took not the Lord for his God.

Again, If we make God our God, we may know it by our obedience, especially by the obedience of the inward man. When the inward man is vowed to God, when a man yieldeth inward obedience to God, it is a sign that God is his God. When a man can arraign his thoughts and desires before God, and when lusts rise in his heart contrary to the Spirit, he checks them presently. This becometh not those that are God's; it beseemeth not those that walk after God, that have God's Spirit for their leader. Therefore he is ashamed presently of base temptations. A Christian can perform the first and last commandments, which are the most spiritual commandments. He can make God his God in his affections. His affections are placed upon him alone, as I have showed before. He can yield up all his inward affections of fear and love and joy, and such like, unto God, which is the sum of the first commandment; and he can be content not to have his lusts rage and range, suppresses his very thoughts and desires, will not suffer anything to rise in his heart unchecked and uncontrolled, which is the sum of the tenth commandment. I mean, he can do it in some measure. And there is a inward passive obedience too. It is God, as David and other saints said. 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good in his own eyes,' Ps. cxix. 68. I am God's, and he shall dispose of me. The soul that knoweth God to be his God hath an inward obedience of contentment with his estate. God is my portion, and it is large enough. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof, Ps. xxiv. 1. Therefore I will be content to be at his disposing, whether it be more or less; and if any murmuring arise in his heart, against God in respect of his estate or otherwise, he presently suppresseth it, as being contrary to the blessed government that a Christian is under, that should resign his whole soul unto God.

Thus by our affections, by the trial of them, we may know whether God be our God, if we give him the affections of the heart, which religion most stands in; when we make the whole inward man stoop, and bow, and bond unto him; when we make him our king, and give him the supremacy; when we set the crown upon his head; when he hath our fear, our joy and delight, our love, our trust; I mean, when he hath the supreme of all, for we may love man, as God deriveth good to us by him, and so for the rest.

But God must be supreme. Others must be loved and feared, &c., in him and for him, but he chiefly, when we depend upon him for all deliverance out of ill and for all good, and show our dependence on him by our subjection to him in all his ways, by our yielding to him obedience answerable to all this; and especially when we shall show it by performing

inward worship to him, when we walk before him perfectly and sincerely, as it is in the beginning of this chapter, 'I am God all-sufficient: walk before me and be perfect.' By this we may know that God is our God. I need not enlarge it. The practice of the first commandment will teach us what is our God. Whatsoever we give the supremacy of the inward man to, whatsoever we love most, whatsoever we trust most, whatsoever we fear most, whatsoever we joy and delight most, whatsoever we obey most—that is our god. 'I am the Lord thy God,' in the first commandment. There is the ground. What follows? 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me;' that is, thou shalt love nothing in the world, nor fear nothing, nor trust in nothing, nor joy in nothing more than me, no, nor with me; but all things else thou shalt trust them and fear them, &c., in me and for me. Otherwise what is our love is our god, what is our trust is our god, what is our greatest fear is our god. If we fear man, fear him to do ill, man is our god; if we love the creature, or sin, that is our god; if we crack our consciences for wealth, the covetous man's wealth is his god; if we crack our consciences for pleasures, or for our bellies, our pleasures and our bellies and our lusts are our god. We make not God our God except we give him the supremacy of the inward man.

But to proceed, and to come to some few familiar signs more that will try us, though these may try us, in the intercourse that is between God and us.

Whosoever hath God for their God, they have the Spirit of supplication and prayer, to cry unto God, to run unto him, especially in extremity. All God's children have the Spirit of adoption to cry, 'Abba, Father!' They have the Spirit to give them boldness to God, when otherwise their nature, and likewise trouble joining with nature and tentations, would make them run from God; yet the Spirit of God in them makes them bold to go to God in Jesus Christ. God's children, that are in covenant with him, can at all times pray to God. If they cannot pray, they can 'chatter' and sigh to God. There is somewhat they can do. There is a Spirit in them that groaneth and sigheth, as Rom. viii. 26, and God heareth the voice of his own Spirit. They are cries in his ears. 'My groans and sighs are not hid from thee,' saith the Psalmist, Ps. xxxviii. 9. The Spirit of supplication will show God to be our God, because if he were not ours, we could not be bold to go to him, in the time of extremity especially. This sign you have in Zech. xiii. ver. 9, 'They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them; they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' Invocation and prayer is a sign that God is our God, when we go to God presently in all our wants and necessities by prayer. Pharaoh and reprobate

spirits say to Moses, 'Pray you for me,' Numb. xxi. 7; but as for a spirit of supplication in themselves, they have not. They may speak of prayer, but they cannot pray. Whosoever is God's, he can cry to God. A child, we know the first voice is uttered as soon as it is born, it cries; so God's new-born children they can cry unto God. Paul in Acts ix. ver. 11, you shall find him praying as soon as ever he was converted; and certainly those that use not to pray morning and evening, and upon all occasions, that acquaint not themselves with God, God is not their God. If he were their God, they would seek to him, and be acquainted with him. The Spirit will teach them to go unto God as to a Father.

Again, We may know that God is our God by this, by our separating from all others, in ourselves and out of ourselves. There is a separation in ourselves, for there is the first separation. God, whose God he is, he giveth them his Spirit, and that like fire severeth the dross, and gathereth the fold together. And as heat in the body, that severeth good nourishment and separateth that which doth not nourish the body, so where the Spirit of God is, he works a separation between the flesh and the spirit. The Spirit will know what is spiritual, and will discern what is in us that is fleshly, and will join to spiritual things, and the Spirit will be one as it were. There will be a sweet agreement in the word, in the sacraments, in good company, in holy meditation and the like, and a separation from the flesh. A Christian knows that he is redeemed from himself, as far as he is naught. We are redeemed from ourselves and our own base nature, as well as from hell and damnation. Therefore there is first a separation in ourselves from ourselves. It begins there. We have nothing to do with our corruptions. We will not own them.

And where this sweet covenant is, that God is our God, as there is a separation from ourselves and our corruptions, so there is a separation from all that joineth with our corruption; a separation in affection from delighting in all that is not God, from all such occasions and company as strengtheneth our corruption. A Christian knows what he hath of God's in him, and what he hath of Satan, and that he must weaken. Therefore he severeth himself from that which strengtheneth the one and weakeneth the other. This trial is expressed in 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, 'Come out from amongst them, separate yourselves, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' He speaks for direction, especially in our society and acquaintance, for that is the thing he aimeth at. How shall we know that God will be our God? We must separate ourselves, and touch no unclean thing, nothing that will help rebellion. Therefore those that have an indifferent disposition to all

companies, and can solace themselves in any society, though never so corrupt, that hear themselves plausible to all, and would be thought well of all, and so will venture upon all occasions, it is an ill sign that they are carnal people. When in the nearest league in friendship or amity, or in intimate familiarity, they will join with any,—all are alike,— it is a sign they have not God for their God. For then they would have common enemies and common friends with God; common enemies with God. Whom God hated they would hate. As God in covenant blesseth them that bless us, and curseth them that curse us, so they that are in covenant and friendship with God will hate with a perfect hatred whatsoever it is that hateth God; they will have nothing to do in intimate familiarity further than their callings press upon them; they will give them their due in humanity and courtesy, but no more. Their love and delight will be in God and those that are his, that represent him, that have his Spirit and image. How oft is this ‘I am the Lord your God’ repeated by Moses as a ground of separation from idolatry? It is expressed almost everywhere; and indeed, if the Lord be our God, there is ground enough of separation from all that is not God. It cannot be otherwise.

Another sign and evidence that God is our God is victory over our base corruptions in some measure. This you have in Rev. xxi. 7: ‘He that overcometh shall inherit all things; I will be his God, and he shall be my son.’ How shall I know that God is my God, and that I am his son? If by the power of his Spirit I am able to overcome and conquer in some comfortable measure base temptations and my base corruptions and lusts; when I lie not as a beast or as a carnal man under sin, but God hath given me in some measure spiritual strength over sin.

Undoubtedly these and such like works of the Spirit, together with the testimony of the Spirit, will be wheresoever God is our God.

In a word, to name no more trials but this, whosoever God is a God to, there will be a transforming unto God, a transforming unto Christ, in whom God is our God. For we must know that we are renewed according to the image of the ‘second Adam.’ Our comfort is by God revealed in Christ. If God be our God in Christ, we will be like to God; and that will be known that we are like to God, if we be like to God in the flesh, God incarnate. For we are predestinated to be like God incarnate. God, first he is Christ’s God before he is ours; and as Christ carried himself to God, so if we be God’s, we

must carry ourselves like Christ, be transformed unto him. How did Christ carry himself to God? God was his God.

‘My God, my God,’ saith Christ upon the cross. Now the gospel showeth that he obeyed his Father in all things, in doing and suffering: ‘Not my will, but thy will be done,’ Luke xxii. 42. You know how full of mercy and compassion he was; how he prayed all night sometimes. Though he knew God would bestow things on him without prayer, yet he would pray in order to God’s appointment. You know how full of goodness he was, going about continually doing good, Acts x. 38; and that in obedience and conscience to God’s command. In a word, look how Christ made God his God, and carried himself to God. So must we; for we are predestinated to be transformed to the image of the ‘second Adam,’ Christ. Especially observe one thing—I touched it before—whom we run to and trust to in extremity, is our god. Christ in extremity, when he felt the anger and endured the wrath of God, being a surety for our sins, yet ‘My God, my God’ still. So if we make God our God, chiefly in the greatest extremity, in the time of desertion, as Christ did, it is a good sign. I do but touch these things. The point, you see, is large. I only give you matter of meditation. You may enlarge them yourselves in your own thoughts. These I think sufficient trials, whereby you may know whether God be your God.

Having now thus unfolded these terms, let us see what we may draw from thence for our use and comfort.

1. First, then, if by these trials we find that God be not, or have not been, our God, alas! let us never rest till we make it good that God is our God. For what if we have all things, if we have not God with all things? All other things are but streams; God is the fountain. If we have not the spring, what will become of us at last? Ahithophel had much wit and policy, but he had not God for his God. Ahab had power and strength, but he had not God for his God. Saul had a kingdom, but he had not God for his God. Herod had eloquence, but he had not God for his God. Judas was an apostle, a great professor, but he had not God for his God. What became of all these? Wit they had, strength they had, honour they had, friends they had, but they had not God; and therefore a miserable end they made. What miserable creatures are all such, when they shall say, Friends have forsaken me, wealth hath forsaken me, and health hath forsaken me; terrors lay hold upon me, the wrath of God hath overtaken me. But they cannot say, God is my God. Oh, such are in a miserable case, in a fearful estate indeed. Nay,

suppose they have all these, suppose they could say they have a world of riches, they have inheritances, they have friends, &c., yet if they cannot say, God is my God, all is vanity. The whole man is this, to have God to be our God. This is the whole man, to fear God and keep his commandment, Eccles. xii. 13. If a man have all the world, and have not God for his God, all is but vanity and vexation of spirit. Never rest therefore till we can prove ourselves to be in the covenant of grace, till we can say, God is my God.

But, secondly, when we have found God to be our God, then make this use of it, a use of resolution. Is God my God? then I will resolve to please him, though all creatures be against me. This was their resolution in Micah iv. 5, 'Every nation walketh in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.' Resolve with Joshua and others to please God, whosoever saith the contrary; to walk after the commandments of God, whatsoever others do or say. In all discouragements from men or devils, let us set this as a buckler, God is my God. Arm ourselves with resolution against all fears and threatenings of men, of men of terror, against the arm of flesh. They say they will do this and this; ay, but God is my God. All that they do they must do in his strength. Arm ourselves with this against the power and gates of hell. Fear not the devil. If we fear man or devil more than God, fear them so as to do anything to displease God, we make them god. If our conscience rightly tells us that what is to be done by us is the will and command of God, and that herein I serve God, we need not fear any opposer; but oppose this as an armour of proof against all creatures, against all discouragements whatsoever. And certainly experience telleth us, and approveth it to be true, that nothing can dismay a man that doth things in conscience to God, and knows God will hear him out in it, though not from danger in this world; and yet for the most part he doth that too. Those that are the stoutest men for God are oftentimes most safe, always freed from inward dejection. Yet God disposeth of it so as that he that keeps a good conscience shall always be a king, and rule over the world; and therein he performs his promise. Whatever discouragements he endureth outwardly, yet no discouragement can cast down that soul that looks to God. In his conscience he knows that he takes God to be his, that he serveth him, and that it shall go well with him at last, that God will be all-sufficient to him; and this raiseth him above all, makes him rule and reign over his enemies, and be a terror to those that do him hurt.

3. Again, If God be our God, then let this stop all base and covetous desires after earthly things. If God be our portion, why should we grapple

too much after the world then? What need we crack our consciences and break our peace for the muck of the world? Is not God our portion? Is he not rich enough? Is not he Lord of heaven and earth? Hath not he promised that he will not fail us nor forsake us? 'I am thy exceeding great reward,' saith God to Abraham. Is not this enough? What doth Satan for us when he getteth us to crack our consciences by gripleness after earthly things? He promiseth, thou shalt have this and that, but I will take God from thee, as he did Adam in paradise. Thou shalt have an apple, but thou shalt lose thy God. All his solicitations to base and earthly courses tend to nothing else but to take God from us. Now, when God is our God, and he hath promised to be our portion, let it be sufficient for us; let us not, for the displeasing of him, take any condition from Satan or the world upon any terms.

4. Again, If so be we know this for a truth, that God is our God, then let it be a use of exhortation to stir us up to keep, and maintain, and cherish acquaintance and familiarity with him; as it is in Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God.' If we be acquainted with him now, he will be acquainted with us in time of sorrow, in the hour of death; therefore cherish acquaintance with him. Wheresoever we may meet with God, be there much; be much in hearing, in receiving the sacrament, in praying to him and making our suits known to him in all our necessities; be much in the society of saints, God hath promised to be there. Therefore cherish the society of all that are good. What a friendly course doth God take with us! He seeks for our acquaintance, and therefore giveth us his ordinances, the word and sacraments; sendeth his messengers, the good motions of his Spirit, to our hearts, to [leave the world and vanities of it; to make us out of love with bad courses, and join with him in friendship and familiarity. Oh let us make use of these blessed means, check not these good motions, but yield unto them and obey them, grieve them not! The Spirit is sent to make God and us friends, who were enemies. Grieve not the Spirit, entertain his motions, that we may be acquainted with God. But do we do so? Truly no. Indeed, if God will be our God to save us, and let us live in our swearing and lying and deceiving, and in other base courses, we would be content with him upon these terms; but to be our God, so that we must serve him, and love him, and fear him, and joy in him above all, and have nothing in the world without his favour, then let him take his favour to himself, we will have none of it. Though men speak it not with their mouths to the world, yet the inward speech of their hearts is to this purpose. If we must be the people of God upon these terms, to renounce our pleasures and profits, let him be a God to whom he will for us! If he will save us, then welcome his favour, we will be

glad of his acquaintance; otherwise we will have none of it. What is the speech of the world but this? These men, when they shall at the day of judgment claim acquaintance with God, and say, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' 'we have known thee in the streets,' &c., what will God say?

'Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I know you not,' Mat. xxv. 41. You were acquainted with me indeed outwardly in the ministry of my word, but you kept not an inward and spiritual familiarity with me in my ordinances; you used not the society of the saints, you entertained not the motions of my Spirit, which I sent to you, to leave your ill courses; I know you not. This shall be the answer to such wretched persons.

5. Lastly, If by these comfortable signs we find God to be our God, then here is a spring of comfort opened to a Christian. If God be mine, then all that he hath is mine; he is my Father; he is my husband; he is my rock; his goodness, his wisdom, his providence, his mercy, whatsoever he hath is mine. If we had any man in the world that had all wisdom in him, and all the strength of the world, and all goodness, and all love in him, and all this for us, what an excellent creature were this! God hath all this, and a Christian that hath God for his God hath all this and much more; for whatsoever is in the Creator is much more in him. Hereupon cometh all those styles and sweet names that God hath taken upon him in the Scripture, because he would have us to know, that all comforts are together in him. The names of all the creatures that are comfortable, God hath been pleased to take upon him, to show us what a God he is. He is water to refresh us, a sun to comfort us, a shield to keep evil from us, a rock to support us, chambers to cover us in the time of danger, and such like; and in every creature God hath left footsteps and beams of himself, that man, being an understanding creature, might find out God in them. In water there is a beam of his refreshing power; in the sun, a beam of his cherishing power, and the like; and when we receive comfort from the creature, which hath but a drop, a beam of his goodness, we should consider how good God himself is. If this he so comfortable, what is God that is my God! Here we use the creatures to refresh us, and God deriveth his goodness usually to us by them. What will he be to us in heaven, when he will be all in all; and whatsoever comfort God hath, Christ hath; because God and Christ join together for our good. For God is in Christ 'reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19; and if God he ours, Christ is ours; and if God and Christ he ours, all things are ours, because all things are God's. Angels are ours, cherubim are ours, because God is ours. It is a point of wondrous comfort. A poor Christian, when he

hath nothing to trust to, he may perhaps say sometime, that he hath no friend in the world, and he hath many enemies. Ay, but he hath a God to go to. If he have not the beam, yet he hath the sun; if he have not the stream, yet he hath the fountain; if he have not particular benefits that others have, yet he hath better. Whatsoever portion he have in the world, he hath a rich portion, for God is his portion. 'God is my portion,' saith the church in the 3d of Lamentations, ver. 21, 'therefore will I hope in him.' The poor church had nothing else in the world to comfort it, for it was in captivity, in the midst of enemies, had no wealth, nor friends, nor anything; yea, but God is my portion, saith my soul, and therefore God being mine, in him I have friends, and wealth, and pleasure, and all whatsoever; and so hath every Christian soul, and never more than when the creature and the comfort of it is taken away. He never finds God more his God than when he is deprived of those means that usually derive comfort to him, for then God immediately cometh to the soul and comforteth it; and the disposition of a true Christian is, at those times, to take advantage by grace to get nearer to God, to cling faster to him, to solace himself more in him as his portion. What a spring of comfort is here arising to a Christian in all estates! If God he his God, then he may claim him upon all occasions and at all times, as the saints in the Scripture have done. David, Jehosaphat, and all the saints, what do they allege in their prayers to God? 'Thou art our God,' 'we are thy people,' 'the sheep of thy pasture,' 'the vine that thy right hand hath planted,' 'the Lord is my shepherd,' &c. "What made the disciples, when they were ready to be drowned, to cry out, 'Master, save us,' but because they knew that they were servants in covenant, that he was their Master. We should use this as a plea to God in all the calamities of the church. We are thine, thou art ours! Doubtless thou art our God, saith the church, though Abraham have forgotten, and Israel he ignorant of us, Isa. lxiii. 16. It is a point of spiritual wisdom, when we know we are in covenant with God, to improve it as an argument to persuade God to help us in any strait. 'I am thine: Lord, save me,' saith David, Ps. cxix. 94. Thou art my God; Lord, look to me, protect me, direct me, ease me, receive my soul. This is a plea that obtaineth anything of God in all extremities whatsoever.

'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,' &c.

I come now to the qualities of this covenant; and before I speak in particular of them, I beseech you observe one thing (which I will but touch, to make an entrance to that which follows), from the manner of setting down

the covenant; it is not here set down as it is in other places of Scripture: 'I will be thy God, and thou shalt be my people;' but here is only the first part, the main of the covenant of grace recited, 'I will be thy God.' Why doth he not say, too, 'Thou shalt take me for thy God?' Because where the first is, he ever works the second; our part depends upon his. All our grace that we have to answer the covenant, is by reflection from God. He chooseth us, and then we choose him. He knoweth us, and therefore we come to know him. He loveth us first, and then we love him. He singleth us out to be a peculiar people, and we single out him above all things to be our portion. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25.

It is therefore—to come to the first quality—called a free covenant. It cometh from God merely of grace. It is of grace that he would enter into any terms of agreement with us. It is of grace that he would send Christ to die to be the foundation of the covenant. It is of grace that he giveth us hearts to take him for our God, to depend upon him, to love him, to serve him, &c. All is of grace, and all cometh from him.

So you see that it is a free covenant. That is the first quality.

Again, secondly, it is a sure, a certain covenant. I will establish my covenant. But in whom is it established? how cometh it to be sure? It is established in Christ, the mediator of the covenant, in the Messiah; for 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,' Gen. xii. 8. That is the fundamental promise. All other promises, the promise of the land of Canaan, the promise of the multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven, they were all but accessory. This is the grand promise in thy seed, in Christ, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. So it is a sure covenant, because it is established in the Messiah, Christ, God-man. And Christ being God and man, is fit to be the foundation of the covenant between God and man, for he is a friend to both parties. As man he will do all that is helpful for man; and as God, he will do nothing that may derogate from God; and so being God, and being God and man, he brings God and man together comfortably and sweetly, and keepeth them together in a sure and firm agreement. For first of all, he takes away the cause of division that was between God and us, because by his sacrifice and obedience he did satisfy God's wrath; and that being satisfied, God and us are at peace and friendship; for God till then, though he be a fountain of goodness, yet he was a fountain sealed. The fountain was stopped by sin; but when there is a satisfaction made by Christ,

and we believing on him, the satisfaction of Christ is made ours. It is a sure covenant, because it is established in Christ the blessed seed.

And as it is a sure covenant, so, thirdly, it is an everlasting covenant. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with thee.' So it is set down here.

Everlasting in these respects. For when we are in Christ, and made one with him by faith, he having satisfied God's wrath for us, and made him peaceable, then God is become our father, and he is an everlasting father. His love to us in Christ is like himself, immutable. For even as Christ, when he took upon him our nature, he made an everlasting covenant with our nature, married our nature to himself for ever, and never layeth aside his human nature, so he will never lay aside his mystical body, his church. As Christ is God-man for ever, so mystical Christ, the church, is his body for ever. As Christ will not lose his natural, so he will not lose his mystical body. 'I will marry thee to myself for ever,' saith God in the prophet. So then it is everlasting in respect of God, he being immutable. 'I am God,' saith he, 'and I change not,' Mal. iii. 6; and Christ, the foundation of the covenant, is everlasting.

And then again it is everlasting in regard of us; because if we be not wanting to ourselves, we shall be for evermore, in grace here and in glory for ever. The fruits of grace in us—that is, the work of the Spirit—it is everlasting; for howsoever the graces we have be but the first-fruits of the Spirit, yet our inward man grows more and more, till grace end in glory, till the first-fruits end in a harvest, till the foundation be accomplished in the building; God never takes away his hand from his own work.

Everlasting also in regard of the body of Christians. God makes a covenant with one, and when they are gone, with others. Always God will have some in covenant with him. He will have some, to be a God to, when we are gone, so long as the world continueth.

So that we see it is in every respect an everlasting covenant. God is everlasting, Christ is everlasting, the graces of the Spirit are everlasting. When we are dead, he will be a God unto us, as it is said, 'I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,' their God when they were dead. He is the God of our dust, of our dead bodies. He will raise them up, for they are bodies in covenant with him. I am the God of whole Abraham, and not of a piece; therefore his body shall rise again. It is an everlasting covenant. That is the third quality.

Lastly, It is a peculiar covenant. 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed. All are not the children of Abraham, but they that are of the faith of Abraham. God is in covenant only with those that answer him, that take him for their God, that are a peculiar people. It is not glorying in the flesh; but there must be somewhat wrought that is peculiar before we can be assured we are of Abraham's seed, and in covenant with God.

And we may know that we are God's peculiar by some peculiar thing that we can do. What peculiar thing canst thou do? To speak a little of that by the way. Thou lovest and art kind; but, saith Christ, what peculiar thing canst thou do? A heathen man may be kind and loving, but canst thou overcome revenge? Canst thou spare and do good to thine enemies? Canst thou trust in God when all means fail? What is the power of the Spirit in thee? Doth it triumph in thee over thy natural corruption? Canst thou do as Abraham did? He left all at God's command; canst thou do that if need should be? Canst thou leave children, and wife, and life, and all at God's command? Canst thou sacrifice Isaac as he did? Canst thou more trust in the promise of God than in the dearest thing in the world, yea, than in thy own feeling of grace? Whatsoever is not God, canst thou be content to be without? Canst thou rely upon God when he appeared to be an angry God? Abraham knew that there was more comfort in the promise than in Isaac. If thou have comfort in the promise more than in anything else, then thou art one of Abraham's seed, thou hast sacrificed thy Isaac. Never talk of Abraham else; never think that thy portion is great in God, be what thou wilt by profession, if there be no particular thing in thee which is not in a natural man. If thou art covetous, as gripple for the world, as very a drudge in thy calling, as licentious in thy course as carnal men are, thou art none of God's peculiar ones, thou art none of Abraham's seed. God's people have somewhat peculiar that the world hath not. It is a peculiar covenant.

Thus you see the qualities of this covenant. It is a free covenant; a sure covenant, established in the blessed seed, the Messiah; it is an everlasting covenant; and it is a peculiar covenant.

To make some use of this, in a word.

Here, then, you see is another spring of blessed comfort opened to a Christian. If he findeth God, though his assurance be little, to be his God in regard of peculiar favours, let him remember it is an everlasting favour. His love is everlasting. The foundation is everlasting; the graces of the Spirit are an everlasting spring, always issuing from Christ our head. Grace is never

drawn dry in him. God is our God to death, in death, and for ever. All things in the world will fail us: friends will fail us; all comforts will fail us; life will fail us ere long; but this is an everlasting covenant, which will not fail.

It is a point of comfort in the loss of friends, in the loss of estate in this world. If I lose friends, yet I cannot lose God; if he be mine, he is mine for ever; a friend now, and a friend ever; my portion now, and my portion for ever. Whatsoever God takes away, he never takes away himself; and in him I have all that is taken away. All the comfort that he doth still derive to me by friends, he resumeth to himself. It is not perished with the party. He can immediately, by himself, convey whatsoever comfort was derived to me by others, he is God all-sufficient; that is, put the case all the world were taken away; not only friends, but the sun, the light, the earth, food and raiment, all, as it shall be at the day of judgment; if all be taken away, yet I have him; yet I have him that made all, that supporteth all. Cannot he do all in a more excellent manner? Is not he all-sufficient, though I lose all things else? It is a point of wondrous comfort. God knew it well enough. Therefore he laboureth to establish the heart of the father of the faithful, good Abraham, here, with this instead of all, 'I am God all-sufficient, and I will be thy God.'

Again, If this be so, that God will be a God to us for ever, let us comfort ourselves hence in all the unfaithful dealings of men. They are friends to-day and enemies to-morrow; but God is my God; and whom he loveth he loveth to the end, John xiii. 1. An ingenuous spirit certainly esteemeth it the greatest cross in the world; and if anything will whet a man to heaven,- this is one, that those whom he trusteth will prove false, and at length deceive him. Man is but man; in the balance he is lighter than vanity; but he that is in covenant with God, his promise, and love, and faithfulness never faileth. A Christian in all the breaches of this world hath this comfort, that he hath a sure God to trust to. He that hath not God to trust to, and is unfaithfully dealt withal in the world, what a wretched man is he! This was David's comfort. When he was beset with calamities and miseries, all took from him, and the people were ready to stone him, he trusted in the Lord his God. I come to the extent of it.

'To thee and to thy seed after thee.'

Why doth he make the covenant with his seed as well as with himself?

I answer, We apprehend favours and curses more in our seed oftentimes than in ourselves; and it will humble a man to see calamities on his posterity,

more than on himself; and a man more rejoiceth to see the flourishing of his seed than of himself. It is said that Josiah did die in peace, though he died a bloody death, because he saw not the ruin of his house and family, which was worse than death. God saw how Abraham apprehended and valued seed, when he said, 'What wilt thou give me, since I am childless?' Gen. xv. 2. Therefore God, intending a comfortable enlargement of the covenant of grace to Abraham, extends it to his seed: 'I will be the God of thy seed.' It is a great blessing for God to be the God of our seed. It is alluded to by St Peter in the New Testament, 'The promise is made to you and to your children,' Acts ii. 89.

But what if they have not baptism, the seal of the covenant?

That doth not prejudice their salvation. God hath appointed the sacraments to be seals for us, not for himself. He himself keepeth his covenant, whether we have the seal or no, so long as we neglect it not. Therefore we must not think if a child die before the sacrament of baptism, that God will not keep his covenant. They have the sanctity, the holiness of the covenant. You know what David said of his child, 'I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me;' and yet it died before it was circumcised. You know they were forty years in the wilderness, and were not circumcised. Therefore the sacrament is not of absolute necessity to salvation. So he is the God of our children from the conception and birth.

But how can God be the God of our children, when they are born in corruption, children of wrath? Can they be the children of wrath and the children of God both at one time?

I answer, Yes; both at one time. For even as in civil matters, in our city here, a man may be a freeman of the city, and yet be born lame or leprous, or with some contagious disease—this hindereth not his freedom— so the children of a believing father and mother may be freemen of the city of God, and in the covenant of grace, and yet be tainted with original sin, that overspreadeth the powers of the soul notwithstanding.

Whence we see a ground of baptizing infants, because they are in the covenant. To whom the covenant belongs, the seal of it belongs; but to infants the covenant belongs; therefore the seal of it, baptism, belongeth to them. If circumcision belonged to them, then baptism doth; but circumcision belonged to them, for the eighth day they were circumcised; therefore baptism belongeth to them.

Anabaptistical spirits would not have children baptized if they believe not. Why then were the children of the Jews circumcised? They were circumcised because they were in covenant; and is not the covenant of grace enlarged? Wherein doth the new covenant differ from the old, but, among many other things, in the enlargement of it? There is now a new people, the Gentiles, in covenant, that were not before, new priests, new sacrifices, new sacraments. All is new in the covenant of grace. If all be enlarged in the covenant, why should we deny the seal of the covenant to them in the new that had it in the old, even children? It is senseless. The Scripture, to meet with such, applieth baptism to them and circumcision to us, to show that in the covenant of grace they are all one in effect: 1 Cor. x. 2, 'All they were baptized under the cloud;' and St Paul saith. Col. ii. 11, 'We are circumcised with circumcision without hands.' We are circumcised, and they were baptized; to show, I say, that all are one in Christ. Christ is all one, 'yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8: 'yesterday,' to them that were under the law; 'and to-day,' to us under the gospel; and 'for ever' to posterity. And therefore, if children had interest in Christ then, so they have now. This is clear and undeniable: God is the God of our children.

This should be an encouragement to parents to be good, if not for love of themselves and their own souls, yet for their children and posterity's sake, that God may do good to their children for them. They cannot deserve worse of their children than to be naught themselves.

How many examples are there in Scripture that God plagued and punished the children for the fathers' sins! Though in the main matter he will not do it sometimes, because he is gracious and good; he will be good to the children, though their parents be naught, as Joshua and Caleb came into Canaan, though their parents were rebels, and died in the wilderness. Yet it is a discomfortable thing. When parents are naught, they may look that God should punish their sin in their children.

There is a great deal of care taken by carnal parents here in the city (and everywhere too, but in the city especially) by covetousness, a reigning sin; they will not make God their God, but the wedge of gold to be their god. They labour to make their children great. If they can leave them rich men, great men in a parish, to bear office, to come to honour, that is their main endeavour; for this they drudge, and neglect heaven and happiness. But, alas! what is this? Thou mayest leave them much goods, and the vengeance of

God with them; thou mayest leave them much wealth, and it may be a snare to them. It were better thou hadst left them nothing.

Look into the state of the city. Those that are best able in the city, do they not rise of nothing? And they that have been the greatest labourers for these outward things, that they may call their lands after their own names, Ps. xlix 11, God hath blown upon them, and all hath come to nought in a short time, because they have not made God their portion. Of all things, parents should labour to leave them God for their God, to leave them in covenant with him; lay up prayers in heaven for them, lay the foundation there; sow prayers there, that they may be effectual for them when you are gone.

And this likewise should be a comfort to poor Christians, that have not much to leave their children. I can leave my child nothing, but I shall leave him in covenant with God; for God is my God, and always hath been, and ever will be; he will be the God of my seed. I shall leave him God's blessing; and a little well gotten goods that the righteous hath is better than a great deal ill gotten. God addeth no sorrow with that. There is no 'fearful expectation' another day, as there is of that which is ill gotten; when the father and child shall meet in hell, and curse one another; when the son shall say to the father, You ensnared yourself to make me happy, and that turned to my ruin. This shall make wicked wretches curse one another one day. A poor Christian that cannot say he hath riches to leave his children, yet he can say, God is my God, and I am sure he will be their God; though I have but little to leave them else, I shall leave them God's blessing. Good parents may hope for a blessing upon their children, because God is their God, and the God of their seed.

For the sacrament, a word.

The sacrament is a seal of this covenant, that God is our God in Christ, . and we are his people. God to his word addeth seals, to help our faith. What a good God is this! how willing is he to have us believe him! One would think that a word from him, a promise, were enough; but to his promise he addeth a covenant. One would think a covenant were enough, but to that he addeth seals, and to them an oath too: 'I have sworn to David my servant,' Ps. lxxxix. 3. Thus he stoops to all conditions of men; He condescendeth so far to use all these means that he may secure us. You know that a promise secures us, if it be from one that is an honest man. We say that we are sure to have it because of his promise; but when we have his covenant, then we are assured more, because there is somewhat drawn. Now, we have God's

covenant and his seal, the sacrament; and then his oath. If we will take him for our God, and renounce our wicked courses, we shall lose nothing by it; we shall part with nothing for God but we shall have it supplied in him. If we lose honour, wealth, or pleasure, we shall have it abundantly in him.

What do we hear in the sacrament? Do we come only to receive his love to us? No; we make a covenant with God in the sacrament that he shall be our God, and we promise by his grace to lead new lives henceforth. We have made a covenant with God at first in baptism, now we renew it in taking the sacrament; and it is fit, for if he renew his covenant oft to us in love to be ours, we should renew ours oft with him, to take him to be our God. Seven times in Genesis he renewed his covenant to Abraham, because he would have him trust what he said. Then we should seven times, that is, oft, come to the sacrament, and renew our covenant with him, to take him for our God; and remember what it is to sin after the receiving the sacrament. Sins against conscience break off a covenant renewed. Sin hath an aggravation now. You that mean to receive, if you sin willingly after, it were better you had not received. What makes adultery worse than fornication? Saith Malachi, 'It was the wife of thy covenant,' ii. 14. Adultery breaks the covenant of marriage. It is worse than fornication, where there is not a covenant. So you have made a covenant with God in your baptism, and now you come to renew it. If you sin now, it is an aggravation of the sin. It is adultery, it is disloyalty against God.

Remember, therefore, that we do not only take here God's kindness sealed in the sacrament, but we re-promise back again to lead new lives. All must resolve by his grace to obey him henceforward, and to take him for our God. The way, therefore, will be to put this into the condition of your promise now, and prayer after. Lord, I have promised this; but thou knowest I cannot perform the promise I have made, and the condition thou requirest, of myself. But in the covenant of grace, thou hast said that thou wilt make good the condition. Thou hast promised to give the 'Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke xi. 13; thou hast promised to 'circumcise my heart,' Col. ii. 11; thou hast promised to 'teach me,' Ps. xxxii. 8; thou hast promised to delight over me for good; thou hast promised to 'wash me with clean water,' Ezek. xxxvi. 25; thou hast promised to put thy fear in my heart,' Jer. xxxii. 40; thou hast promised 'to write thy law in the affections,' Jer. xxxi. 33. I would fear thee, and love thee, and trust in thee, and delight in thee; thou knowest I cannot fulfil the conditions. Thou art able and willing; thou art as able to make me do these things as to command me to do them.

Thus we should desire God to give the grace that he requires in the use of the means; for that must not be neglected. We must attend upon the ordinances; use the parts that are given us; and in that, 'to him that hath shall be given,' Mat. xiii. 12. Thou shalt not need any necessary good to bring thee to heaven, if thou wilt claim the promise of the covenant in the use of means. We shall want degrees perhaps; but in the covenant of grace, it is not degrees that brings us to heaven, but truth.

Now, in our renewing the covenant with God, let us not despair of his performance; let not that hinder us from coming to the sacrament, but come cheerfully, and know that he that hath made the covenant with thee to be thy God, and to give thee all particular grace, in the use of all good means, will perform it. He will perform it if we come in sincerity of heart. If we come to 'daub' with God, and after to follow our sinful courses, this is to mock God. This made David take it to heart so much, that 'his familiar friend, that ate at his table, lift up his heel against me,' Ps. xli. 9. May not God complain of us, that we come to the communion, to his table, with false, Judas hearts, and afterwards betray him? He may say, My familiar friends they came and ate with me, yet they have lift up the heel against me; they are rebellious; they will leave no sin that before they were enthralled to. So, instead of a blessing, we bring a curse upon us, a just reward of our disloyalty. Oh remember that it is a great aggravation of sin after the sacrament.

I speak not this to discourage any, but to encourage us rather. If we come with sincere hearts, and with resolution to please God, we may look for all the promises from God. All that he hath promised he is ready to perform, if we in faith can allege the promise, 'Lord, remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to put his trust!' Ps. cxix. 49.

Josiah's Reformation

I. The Tender Heart

And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard, Because thine heart was tender, Ac.—2 Chron. XXXIV. 26.

These words are a part of the message which the prophetess Huldah sent to good King Josiah; for as the message was concerning him and his people, so his answer from her is exact, both for himself and them. That part which concerned his people is set down in the three foregoing verses; that which belongs unto himself is contained in the words now read unto you, 'But to the king of Judah,' &c. The preface to her message we see strengthened with authority from God, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel;' which words carry in them the greater force and power from the majesty of the author. For if words spoken from a king carry authority, how much more then the word of the Lord of hosts, the King of kings? Here is her wisdom, therefore, that she lays aside her own authority, and speaks in the name of the Lord.

We see that waters of the same colour have not the same nature and effect, for hot waters are of the same colour with plain ordinary waters, yet more effectual; so the words of a man coming from 'a man may seem at first to be the same with others, yet notwithstanding, the words of God coming from the Spirit of God, carry a more wonderful excellency in them even to the hearts of kings. They bind kings, though they labour to shake them off. They are arrows to pierce their hearts; if not to save them, yet to damn them. Therefore she speaks to the king, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard,' &c.

Here we read of Josiah, that he was a man of an upright heart, and one who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; and answerably we find the Lord to deal with him. For he, desirous to know the issue of a fearful judgment threatened against him and his people, sendeth to Huldah, a prophetess of the Lord, to be certified therein; whereupon he receiveth a full and perfect answer of the Lord's determination, both touching himself and his people, that they being forewarned might be forearmed; and by their

timely conversion to the Lord, might procure the aversion of so heavy wrath. He in uprightness sends to inquire, and the Lord returns him a full and upright answer. Whence we may learn,

Doct. 1. That God doth graciously fit prophets for persons, and his word, to a people that are upright in their hearts. Where there is a true desire to know the will of God, there God will give men sincere prophets that shall answer them exactly; not according to their own lusts, but for their good. Josiah was an holy man, who, out of a gracious disposition, desirous to be informed from God what should become of him and his people, sends to the prophetess Huldah. It was God's mercy that he should have a Huldah, a Jeremiah, to send to; and it was God's mercy that they should deal faithfully with him. This is God's mercy to those that are true-hearted. He will give them teachers suitable to their desires; but those that are false-hearted shall have suitable teachers, who shall instruct them according to their lusts. If they be like Ahab, they shall have four hundred false prophets to teach falsehood, to please their lusts, 1 Kings xxii. 6; but if they be Davids, they shall have Nathans. If they be Josiahs, they shall have Huldahs and Jeremiahs. Indeed, Herod may have a John Baptist, Mark vi. 27; but what will he do with him in the end when he doth come to cross him in his sin? Then off goes his head.

Use. This should teach us to labour for sincerity, to have our hearts upright towards God; and then he will send us men of a direct and right spirit, that shall teach us according to his own heart. But if we be false-hearted, God will give us teachers that shall teach us, not according to his will, but to please our own. We shall light upon belly-gods and epicures, and shall fall into the hands of priests and Jesuits. Where such are, there are the judgments of God upon the people, because they do not desire to know the will of God in truth. We see, Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, the people desired to have a stumblingblock for their iniquity. They were naught, and would have idols. Therefore they desired stumbling-blocks. They would have false prophets, that so they might go to hell with some authority. Well, saith God, they shall have stumbling-blocks: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'To every man that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire; I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols; according to his own false heart, and not according to good.' What brought the greatest judgment upon the world, next to hell itself, I mean antichrist—the terriblest judgment of all, that hath drawn so many souls to hell—but the wickedness

of the place and people, and his own ambition? The sins of the people gave life to him. They could not endure the word of God or plain dealing; they thought it a simple thing. They must have more sacrifices, more ceremonies, and a more glorious government. They would not be content with Christ's government which he left them, but were weary of this. Therefore he being gone to heaven, they must have a pope to go before them and lead them to hell. Therefore let men never excuse those sins, for certainly God saw a great deal of evil in them, and therefore gave them up to the judgment of antichrist. But let us magnify God's mercies that hath not so given us up. Thus we see how graciously God deals with a true-hearted king: he sends him a true answer of his message.

Ver 27, 'Because thine heart was tender,' &c.

Now here comes a comfortable message to good Josiah, that he should be taken away and not see the miseries that should befall his people; the cause whereof is here set down, 'Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God;' which cause is double.

1. Inward. 2. Outward.

1. The inward is the tenderness of his heart and humbling of himself.

2. And then the outward expression of it is set down in a double act:

(1.) Bending of clothes. (2.) Weeping.

'Because thou hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me.' After which comes the promise, 'I have also heard thee,' saith the Lord; 'behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.'

I will first remove one doubt, before I come to the tenderness of Josiah's heart.

Quest. What! may some say, Is there anything in man that can cause God to do do him good?

Ans. No. One thing is the cause of another, but all come from the first cause. So tenderness of heart may be some cause of removal of judgment;

but God is the cause of both, for they all come from the first cause, which is God. So that these words do rather contain an order than a cause. For God hath set down this order in things, that where there is a broken heart there shall be a freedom from judgment; not that tenderness of heart deserves anything at God's hand, as the papists gather, but because God hath decreed it so, that where tenderness of heart is, there mercy shall follow; as here there was a tender heart in Josiah, therefore mercy did follow. God's promises are made conditionally; not that the condition on our part deserves anything at God's hand, but when God hath given the condition, he gives the thing promised. So that this is an order which God hath set down, that where there is grace, mercy shall follow. For where God intends to do any good, he first works in them a gracious disposition: after which he looks upon his own work as upon a lovely object, and so doth give them other blessings. God crowns grace with grace.

By 'heart' is not meant the inward material and fleshy part of the body; but that spiritual part, the soul and affections thereof. In that it is said to be 'tender' or melting, it is a borrowed and metaphorical phrase. Now in a 'tender heart' these three properties concur:

1. It is sensible. 2. It is pliable. 3. It is yielding.

1. First, A tender heart is always a sensible heart. It hath life, and therefore sense. There is no living creature but hath life, and sense to preserve that life. So a tender heart is sensible of any grievance; for tenderness doth presuppose life, because nothing that hath not life is tender. Some senses are not altogether necessary for the being of a living creature, as hearing and seeing; but sensibleness is needful to the being of every living creature. It is a sign of life in a Christian when he is sensible of inconveniences. Therefore God hath planted such affections in man, as may preserve the life of man, as fear and love. Fear is that which makes a man avoid many dangers. Therefore God hath given us fear to cause us make our peace with him in time, that we may be freed from inconveniences; yea, from that greatest of inconveniences, hell fire.

- 2, 3. Again, A tender heart is pliable and yielding. Now that is said to be yielding and pliable, which yields to the touch of anything that is put to it, and doth not stand out, as a stone that rebounds back when it is thrown against a wall. So that is said to be tender which hath life, and sense, and is pliable, as wax is yielding and pliable to the disposition of him that works it, and is apt to receive any impression that is applied to it. In a tender heart

there is no resistance, but it yields presently to every truth, and hath a pliability and a fitness to receive any impression, and to execute any performance; a fit temper indeed for a heart wrought on by the Spirit. God must first make us fit, and then use us to work. As a wheel must first be made round, and then turned round, so the heart must be first altered, and then used in a renewed way. A tender heart, so soon as the word is spoken, yields to it. It quakes at threatenings, obeys precepts, melts at promises, and the promises sweeten the heart. In all duties concerning God, and all offices of love to men, a tender heart is thus qualified. But hardness of heart is quite opposite. For, as things dead and insensible, it will not yield to the touch, but returns back whatsoever is cast upon it. Such a heart may be broken in pieces, but it will not receive any impression; as a stone may be broken, but will not be pliable, but rebound back again. A hard heart is indeed like wax to the devil, but like a stone to God or goodness. It is not yielding, but resists and repels all that is good; and therefore compared in the Scripture to the adamant stone. Sometimes it is called a frozen heart, because it is unpliant to anything. You may break it in pieces, but it is unframeable for any service, for any impression; it will not be wrought upon. But on the contrary, a melting and tender heart is sensible, yielding, and fit for any service both to God and man. Thus we see plainly what a tender heart is. The point from hence is,

Doct. 2. That it is a supernatural disposition of a true child of God to have a tender, soft, and a melting heart. I say that a disposition of a true child of God, and the frame of soul of such an one, to be tender, apprehensive, and serviceable, is a supernatural disposition; and of necessity it must be so, because naturally the heart is of another temper—a stony heart. All by nature have stony hearts in respect of spiritual goodness. There may be a tenderness in regard of natural things; but in regard of grace, the heart is stony, and beats back all that is put to it. Say what you will to a hard heart, it will never yield. A hammer will do no good to a stone. It may break it in pieces, but not draw it to any form. So to a stony heart, all the threatenings in the world will do no good. You may break it in pieces, but never work upon it. It must be the almighty power of God. There is nothing in the world so hard as the heart of man. The very creatures will yield obedience to God; as flies, and lice, to destroy Pharaoh; but Pharaoh himself was so hard-hearted, that after ten plagues he was ten times the more hardened, Exod. x. 28. Therefore, if a man have not a melting heart, he is diverted from his proper object; because God hath placed affections in us, to be raised presently upon suitable objects. When any object is offered in the word of God, if our hearts were not

corrupted, we would have correspondent affections. At judgments we would tremble, at the word of threatenings quake, at promises we would with faith believe, and at mercies be comforted; at directions we would be pliable and yielding. But by nature our hearts are hard. God may threaten, and promise, and direct, and yet we insensible all the while. Well, all Josiahs, and all that are gracious, of necessity must have soft hearts. Therefore I will shew you,

1. How a tender heart is wrought.
2. How it may be preserved and maintained.
3. How it may be discerned from the contrary.

1. First, A tender heart is made tender by him that made it. For no creature in the world can soften and turn the heart, only God must alter and change it; for we are all by nature earthly, dead, and hard. Hence is it that God doth make that gracious promise, Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within their bowels; and I will take away the stony hearts out of their bodies, and give them a heart of flesh that is, a living, sensible heart.

Quest. But doth God immediately make the heart tender, and change it, without any help by means?

Sol. 1. I answer, Means do not make the heart tender, but God through the use of means softens it by his word. God's word is a hammer to break, and as fire to melt the hardened heart, Jer. xxiii. 9. And thus it works, first, when God doth shew to the heart our cursed estate, and opens to the same the true dangers of the soul, which it is in by nature and custom of sin, and sets before it the terrors of the last day and present danger of judgment. "When the Spirit of God, by the word, doth convince the soul to be in a damned estate, dead, born under wrath, and an heir of damnation; that by nature God frowns, and hell is ready to swallow us up; when the soul is thus convinced, then the heart begins to be astonished, and cries out, 'Men and brethren, what shall I do?' Acts ii. 37. When the word is thus preached with particular application, it doth good. For a man may hear the word of God generally, and yet have no broken heart. But when a Peter comes and saith, 'You have crucified the Lord of life and when a Nathan comes to David, and saith, 'Thou art the man,' then comes the heart to be broken and confounded.

But it is not enough to have the heart broken; for a pot may be broken in pieces, and yet be good for nothing; so may a heart be, through terrors, and sense of judgment, and yet not be like wax, pliable. Therefore it must be melting; for which cause, when God by his judgments hath cast down the heart, then comes the Spirit of God, revealing the comfort of the word; then the gracious mercy of God in Christ is manifested, that 'there is mercy with God, that he may be feared,' Ps. cxxx. 4. This being laid open to the quick, to a dejected soul, hence it comes to be melted and tender; for the apprehension of judgment is only a preparing work, which doth break the heart, and prepare it for tenderness.

Sol. 2. Again, Tenderness of heart is wrought by an apprehension of tenderness and love in Christ. A soft heart is made soft by the blood of Christ. Many say, that an adamant cannot be melted with fire, but by blood. I cannot tell whether this be true or no; but I am sure nothing will melt the hard heart of man but the blood of Christ, the passion of our blessed Saviour. When a man considers of the love that God hath shewed him in sending of his Son, and doing such great things as he hath done, in giving of Christ to satisfy his justice, in setting us free from hell, Satan and death: the consideration of this, with the persuasion that we have interest in the same, melts the heart, and makes it become tender. And this must needs be so, because that with the preaching of the gospel unto broken-hearted sinners cast down, there always goes the Spirit of God, which works an application of the gospel.

Christ is the first gift to the Church. When God hath given Christ, then comes the Spirit, and works in the heart a gracious acceptance of mercy offered. The Spirit works an assurance of the love and mercy of God. Now love and mercy felt, work upon the tender heart a reflective love to God again. What, hath the great God of heaven and earth sent Christ into the world for me? humbled himself to the death of the cross for me? and hath he let angels alone, and left many thousands in the world, to choose me? and hath he sent his ministers to reveal unto me this assurance of the love and mercy of God? This consideration cannot but work love to God again; for love is a kind of fire which melts the heart. So that when our souls are persuaded that God loves us from everlasting, then we reflect our love to him again; and then our heart says to God, 'Speak, Lord; what wilt thou have me to do?' The soul is pliable for doing, for suffering, for anything God will have it. Then, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,' 1 Sam. iii. 9.

And when the heart is thus wrought upon, and made tender by the Spirit, then afterward in the proceeding of our lives, many things will work tenderness: as the works of God, his judgments, the word and sacraments, when they are made effectual by the Spirit of God, work tenderness. The promises of God also make the heart tender, as Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, offer up your souls and bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.' There is no such like argument to persuade men to tenderness of heart, as to propound the love and mercy of God. And so the fear of any judgment will work tenderness. This made Josiah's heart to melt, but yet this did not work first upon him: for he having a tender heart before, and being sure of God's love, when he heard the judgment that should come upon his people, out of love to God and to his people, his heart melted, not so much for fear of judgment, but to think that God should be provoked by the sins of his people.

And thus we have seen how tenderness of heart is wrought. Now I come to show,

2. Second, The means how we may preserve this tenderness of heart, because it is a disposition of God's children. How then shall we preserve ourselves in such a perpetual temper? The way to preserve a tender heart is,

1. First, To be under the means whereby God's Spirit will work; for it is he by his Spirit that works upon the heart, and doth preserve tenderness in us; and he will work only by his own means. All the devices in the world will not work upon the heart. Therefore let us be under the means that may preserve tenderness, and hear what God's word says of our estate by nature, of the wrath and justice of God, and of the judgment that will shortly come upon all the world. This made Paul to cry, though he knew that he was the child of God, and free from the law. 'Therefore,' saith he, 'knowing the terror of the law, we admonish you.'

2. And then, go into the house of mourning, and present before yourselves the miserable and forlorn estate of the church of God abroad. It was this that broke Nehemiah's heart. When he heard that the Jews were in great affliction and reproach, that the wall of the city was broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, Neh. i. 4. This made this good man Nehemiah to mourn, so that all the princes of the court could not comfort him. This also made Moses's heart to melt, when he looked on his brethren's affliction in Egypt. So we might keep our hearts tender if we did

but set before our eyes the pitiful estate of God's church abroad, and that we may come to be in such an estate ourselves ere long.

3. And if thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, labour for a legal and evangelical faith. We must believe that all the threatenings of God's vengeance against the wicked shall come to pass. Faith doth make these things present before our eyes; for it is the nature of faith to set things absent as present before us. 'What makes the malefactor to tremble and be cast down, but when he sees that he is ready for to die, is going to the place of execution, and sees death look him in the face? So faith setting the day of judgment before our eyes, will make us to tremble. Therefore Paul doth so often adjure Timothy by the coming of the Lord Jesus to judgment, 2 Tim. iv. 1; and Enoch set the day of judgment before him, at the beginning of the world, as we may see in Jude 14. He had a faith, that set things to come as present, and made him to walk with God. So if we had an evangelical faith to believe the goodness of God, pardon from him, and everlasting life, this would preserve tenderness of heart.

4. Again, Good company will preserve tenderness of heart, sorting ourselves with those that are tender-hearted. For the soul will reason thus: Doth such a one make conscience of swearing, profaning the Sabbath? and doth he mourn for the miseries of the church? Then what a hard piece of dead flesh am I, that have nothing in me!

5. Again, If thou wouldst preserve tenderness of heart, by all means take heed of the least sin against conscience, for the least sin in this kind makes way for hardness of heart. Sins that are committed against conscience do darken the understanding, dead the affection, and take away life; so that one hath not the least strength to withstand the least temptation. And so it comes to pass by God's judgment; for when men will live in sins against conscience, he takes away his Spirit, and gives up the heart from one degree of hardness to another. For the heart at first being tender, will endure nothing, but the least sin will trouble it. As water, when it begins to freeze, will not endure anything, no not so much as the weight of a pin upon it, but after a while will bear the weight of a cart; even so at the beginning, the heart being tender, trembles at the least sin, and will not bear with any one; but when it once gives way to sins against conscience, it becomes so frozen that it can endure any sin, and so becomes more and more hard. Men are so obdurate, having once made a breach in their own hearts by sins against conscience, that they can endure to commit any sin; and therefore God gives them up from one

degree of hardness to another. What will not men do whom God hath given up to hardness of heart?

G. Again, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, take heed of spiritual drunkenness; that is, that thou be not drunk with an immoderate use of the creatures; of setting thy love too much upon outward things. For what saith the prophet? 'Wine and women take away the heart,' Hosea iv. 11; that is, the immoderate use of any earthly thing takes away spiritual sense; for the more sensible the soul is of outward things, the less it is of spiritual. For as the outward takes away the inward heat, so the love of one thing abates the love of another. The setting of too much love upon earthly things, takes away the sense of better things, and hardens the heart. When the heart is filled with the pleasures and profits of this life, it is not sensible of any judgment that hangs over the head; as in the old world, 'they ate and drank, they married and gave in marriage, they bought and sold, while the flood came upon them and swept all away,' Mat. xxiv. 37. When a man sets his love upon the creature, the very strength of his soul is lost. Therefore in the Scripture, God joins prayer and fasting both together, Mat. xvii. 21; that when he would have our hearts raised up to heaven, we should have all use of earthly things taken away. Therefore when we are to go about spiritual duties, we must cut ourselves short in the use of the creatures. Talk of religion to a carnal man, whose senses are lost with love of earthly things, he hath no ear for that; his sense is quite lost, he hath no relish or savour of anything that is good. Talk to a covetous man, that hath his soul set upon the things of this life, he hath no relish of anything else; his heart is already so hardened to get honour and wealth, though it be to the ruin of others, that he cares not how hard it become. Therefore we are bidden to take heed that our hearts be not overcome with drunkenness and the cares of this life, for these will make a man to be insensible of spiritual things, Luke xxi. 34.

7. Again, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, take heed of hypocrisy; for it causeth swelling, and pride makes the heart to contemn others that be not like unto us. They bless themselves that they live thus and thus, they think themselves better than any other; and if they hear the minister reprove them for sin, they will shift it off, and say, Oh, this belongeth not to me, but to such a carnal man, and to such a wicked person; as the Scribes and Pharisees, who were vile hypocrites, yet they were the cause of all mischief, and more hard-hearted than Pilate, an heathen man; for he would have delivered Christ, but they would not, Luke xxiii. 14, seq. So, take a Romish hypocrite, that can proudly compliment it at every word with

enticing speech, yet you shall find him more hard hearted than Turk or Jew; for full of cruelty and blood is the 'whore of Babylon.' Therefore, if thou wilt have tenderness of heart, take heed of hypocrisy.

8. Again, Above all things, take heed of great sins, which will harden the heart; for little sins do many times not dead the heart, but stir up the conscience; but great sins do stun and dull a man; as a prick of a pin will make a man to start, but a heavy blow maketh a man for to be dead for the present. Therefore take heed of great sins. Thus it was with David. He sinned in numbering of the people, and for this his heart smote him; but when he came to the great and devouring sin of Uriah and Bathsheba, this was a great blow that struck him and laid him for dead, till Nathan came and revived him, 2 Sam. xii. 1. For when men fall into great sins, their hearts are so hardened, that they go on from sin to sin. Let us therefore be watchful over our own hearts, to preserve tenderness. The eye being a tender part, and soonest hurt, how watchful is man by nature over that, that it take no hurt. So the heart, being a tender thing, let us preserve it by all watchfulness to keep blows from off it. It is a terrible thing to keep a wound of some great sin upon the conscience, for it makes a way for a new breach; because when the conscience once begins to be hardened with some great sin, then there is no stop, but we run on to commit sin with all greediness.

9. Lastly, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, consider the miserable estate of hardness of heart. Such an one that hath an hard heart is next to hell itself, to the estate of a damned spirit, a most terrible estate. A hard heart is neither melted with promises nor broken with threatenings. He hath no bowels of pity to men or love to God. He forgets all judgment for things past, and looks for none to come. When the soul is in this case, it is fit for nothing but for sin and the devil, whereas a tender-hearted man is fit for all good. Let God threaten: he trembles and quakes; let God promise: his heart melts and rejoiceth, and makes him even to break forth into thanksgiving; let God command: he will perform all; he is fit for any good thing to God and man. But when a man's heart is hardened by hypocrisy, covetousness, or custom in sin, he hath no pity, no compassion: let God command, threaten, or promise, yet the heart is never a whit moved. This is a terrible estate of soul.

Now, to speak a little to young men that are like to this holy man Josiah. Surely his tenderness had some advantage from his years. Let those that are young by all means labour to keep tenderness of heart; for if young persons

be good, there is a sweet communion between God and them, before the heart be pestered with the cares of the world. God delights much in the prayers of young men, because they come not from so polluted a soul, hardened with the practices of this world. Let such, therefore, as are young, take advantage of it, to repent in time of their sins, and let them not put it off unto their old days. While we are young, let us not neglect natural tenderness; although we cannot bring ourselves under the compass of God's kingdom by it, yet shall we get our hearts the sooner to be tender. In our youth, therefore, let us not neglect this good opportunity, as good Josiah did not when he was but young. Therefore let us repent of every sin betimes, and acquaint ourselves with those that are good; as it is said, Heb. iii. 18, 'Let us provoke one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Let us use all means to keep our hearts tender. Oh, it is a blessed estate! We are fit to live when our hearts are tender; fit to die, fit to receive anything from God, fit for duties of honesty to men, for any service to God. But when we have lost sense and feeling, it must be the almighty power of God that must recover us again, and not one amongst an hundred comes to good. Therefore labour to preserve a tender, soft, and melting heart.

Now, ere I proceed, give me leave to answer some cases of conscience, as,

Quest. 1. First, Whether the children of God may be subject to this hardness of heart, opposed to this tenderness?

Quest. 2. Secondly, Whether a Christian may be more sensible of outward things than of spiritual, as the love of God, or his own sin, and the like?

Sol. 1. To the first I answer, that the child of God may be hard-hearted. He may have some degrees of hardness of heart in him. For a Christian is a compounded creature; he hath not only body and soul, but flesh and spirit. He is but in part renewed; and therefore, having in him both flesh and spirit, he is subject to hardness of heart; and it is clear that it may be so. Examples shew that God's children are not always alike sensible of the wrath of God and of his mercy. They do not yield so to his commands as they should. But what is the reason that God doth suffer his children to fall into this hardness of heart? There is something in us that makes him give us up unto it, for we are no longer soft than he works upon us.

Quest. But what doth move him to leave us in this disposition?

Sol. I answer, he doth it for correction of former negligences, for sins of omission; especially when they neglect some means of grace whereby their hearts might be kept tender: it is for want of stirring up of God's grace in them; for want of an high esteem of grace bestowed upon them; want of care of their company, for not associating themselves with such as are tender-hearted; and from hence it comes that God suffers his children to fall into hardness of heart.

Quest. But now, from hence ariseth another question: How may a man know his heart from the heart of a reprobate, seeing that God's children may have hardness of heart?

Ans. I answer, that the heart of a man that is a very reprobate is totally, wholly, and finally hardened, and it is joined with security and insensibleness; it is joined with obstinacy, and with contempt of the means. But the child of God hath not total and final hardness of heart, but hath a sensibleness of it, he feeleth and seeth it. Total hardness doth feel nothing, but a Christian that hath hardness of heart, doth feel that he hath it; as a man that hath the stone in his bladder, feels and knows that he hath a stone. A hard-hearted man feels nothing, but he that hath but only hardness of heart doth feel: for there is difference between hardness of heart and a hard heart; for the child of God may have hardness of heart, but not a hard heart. Now, I say a child of God that hath hardness of heart is sensible of his hardness, and performs the actions of a sensible soul: he useth some good means for the softening of it, for the sense thereof is grievous to him above all other crosses; and whiles he is under it, he thinks that all is not with him as it should be: therefore he complains of it above all other afflictions, which makes him cry to God, as we may see, Isa. lxiii. 17, 'Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear?'

Obj. But some may demand how God doth harden.

Sol. I answer, the cause is first from our own selves; but he hardens four ways:

First, Privatively, by withholding and withdrawing his melting and softening power. For as the sun causeth darkness by withdrawing his light and warming power, so God withdrawing that melting power whereby we should be softened, it cannot be but that we must needs be hardened.

2. Secondly, Negatively, by denying of grace; by taking away from us his graces, which are not natural in us. Thus God doth to those whom he doth absolutely harden; he takes away that which they have, and so they become worse than they of themselves were by nature. When men walk unworthy of the gospel, God takes away very rational life from them, and gives them up to hardness of heart, that they run on in such courses, as that they are their own enemies, and bring upon themselves ruin.

3. Thirdly, And as God hardens by privation and negation, so, in the third place, he hardens by giving us up to the devil, to be vexed by his troubles, to harden us. It is a fearful judgment. When we take a course to grieve the Spirit of God, the Spirit will take a course to grieve us: he will give us up to Satan, to blind and to harden us. So that though God doth not work, as the author, effectually in this hardening, yet as a just judge he doth, by giving us up to Satan and the natural lusts of our own hearts, which are worse than all the devils in hell.

4. Fourthly and lastly, He doth harden objectively, by propounding good objects, which, meeting with a wicked heart, make it more hard, as, Isa. vi. 10, it is said, 'Harden these people's hearts.' How? By preaching of the word. A good object, if it lights upon a bad soul, hardens the heart; for they that are not bettered by religion, under the means, are so much the worse by their use. So we see God cannot be impeached with the hardening of our hearts, because all the cause is from ourselves; for whether he hardens by privation, negation, tradition, or by propounding good objects, it is all from ourselves; and likewise we have seen that God's children may have hardness of heart in some measure, but yet it differs from a reprobate, because they see and feel it, grieve for it, and complain of it to God.

Quest. The second question is, But whether may a child of God be more sensible of outward joys or crosses, than of spiritual things? for this makes many think they have not tender hearts, because they are more sensible of outward things than of spiritual.

Ans. I answer, It is not always alike with them; for God's children are still complaining of something: of their carelessness in good duties, of their want of strength against corruption. They go mourning when they have made God to bring them down upon their knees for their hardness of heart; but there is an intercourse, in the children of God, between the flesh and the spirit. They are partly flesh and partly spirit. Therefore many times, for a while, when the flesh prevails, there may be a sudden joy and a sudden

sorrow, which may be greater than spiritual joy or spiritual sorrow; but yet it is not continual. But spiritual sorrow, grief for sin, though it be not so vehement as, for the sudden, outward sorrow is, yet it is more constant. Grief for sin is continual; whereas outward sorrow is but upon a sudden, though it seem to be more violent.

2. And again, in regard of their valuing and prizing of earthly things, there may be a sudden sorrow: for a child of God may, upon a sudden, overprize outward things, and esteem them at too high a rate; but yet after that, valuing things by good advice, they prize spiritual things far beyond outward; and therefore their sorrow and joy is more for spiritual things, because it is constant. This I speak, not to cherish any neglect in any Christian, but for comfort to such as are troubled for it; therefore let such know, that God will not 'break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.' If they have but a desire, and by conscionable use of means, do shew their desire to be true, they shall have it at last, for Christ doth continue to make intercession for us; and if there were no weakness in us, what need Christ continue to make peace for us? for peace is made for those that fall out. Therefore, if there were no falling out between God and us, what need Christ to continue to make intercession for us? For these reasons, we see a child of God, for the present, may be more sensible of outward things than of spiritual.

Quest. But here another question may be asked, How shall we know that we have sensibleness and pliability, or not?

Ans. I answer, Easily, by applying of the soul unto objects, as 1, to God; 2, to his word; 3, to his works; 4, to man.

We may try our tenderness and pliability of heart these four ways:

1. To God. As it is tender from God, so it is tender for God; for the three persons of the Trinity. He that hath a tender heart cannot endure to dishonour God himself, or to hear others dishonour him, either by his own sins or by others.' He cannot endure to hear God's name blasphemed. So that they have a tender heart who when they see Christ in his religion to be wronged, cannot choose but be affected with it. So again, a man hath a tender heart when he yields to the motions of the Holy Ghost. When the Spirit moves, and he yields, this shews there is a tender heart. But a hard heart beats back all, and as a stone to the hammer, will not yield to any motion of God's Spirit.

2. Now, in the second place, to come downward, a tender heart is sensible in regard of the word of God; as, first, at the threatenings a true tender heart will tremble, as Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look, even to him that is of a contrite and broken spirit, and trembleth at my words.' A man that hath a tender heart will tremble at the signs of the anger of God: 'Shall the lion roar, and the beasts of the forest not be afraid?' Amos iii. 4. Yes, they will stand still and tremble at the roaring of the lion; but much more will a tender heart tremble when God roars, and threatens vengeance. A tender heart will tremble when it hears of the terrors of the Lord at the day of judgment, as Paul did: 'Now knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men,' 2 Cor. v. 11. It forced him to be faithful in his office. This use the apostle Peter would have us make of it: 2 Pet. iii. 11, 'That seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness?' And so for the promises in the word. The heart is tender when the word of God doth rejoice a man above all things. How can the heart but melt at God's promises, for they are the sweetest things that can be. Therefore when a tender heart hears God's promises, it makes him to melt and be sensible of them. Again, a tender heart will be pliable to any direction in the word. To God's call it will answer, 'Here I am;' Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? As Isaiah, when he had once a tender heart, then 'Send me, Lord,' Isa. vi. 8. So David to God's command, 'Seek ye my face,' answers, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. There is a gracious echo of the soul to God in whatsoever he saith in his word. And thus a true, tender heart doth yield to the word of God, and is fit to run on any errand.

3. Thirdly, By applying it to the works of God; for a tender heart quakes when it doth see the judgment of God abroad upon others. It hastens to make his peace with God, and to meet him by repentance. So again, a tender heart rejoiceth at the mercy of God, for it doth see something in it better than the thing itself; and that is the love of God, from which it doth proceed.

4. Fourthly, A man may know his heart to be tender and sensible, in regard of the estate of others, whether they be good or bad. If they be wicked, he hath a tender heart for them; as David, Ps. cxix. 136, 'Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water, because men keep not thy law.' So Paul saith, 'There are many that walk inordinately, of whom I have told you before, and now tell you weeping,' &c., Phil. iii. 18. So Christ was sensible of the misery of Jerusalem, wept for it, and a little while after, shed his own blood for it, Mat. xxiii. 37. Thus had he a tender heart. But when Christ looked to God's decree, he saith, 'Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou

hast hid these things from the wise and noble, and hast revealed them unto babes,' Mat. xi. 25. And so likewise for those that are good, in giving and forgiving; in giving, they give not only the thing, but they give their hearts and affections with it; and so in forgiving, they apprehend Christ's love in forgiving them; therefore they forgive others. So for works, will God have a tender heart to do anything, it will do it. If he will have it mourn, it will mourn; if to rejoice, it will rejoice; it is fit for every good work. By these marks we may know whether we have tender hearts or no.

But to apply this; how is this affection of Josiah in the hearts of men in these days? How many have melting hearts when they hear God blasphemed, and the religion of Christ wronged? How few are there that yield to the motions of the Spirit! We may take up a wonderful complaint of the hardness of men's hearts in these days, who never tremble at the word of God. Neither his promises, nor threatenings, nor commands will melt their hearts; but this is certain, that they which are not better under religion, by the means of grace, are much the worse. And how sensible are we of the church's miseries? For a tender heart is sensible of the miseries of the church, as being members of the same body, whereof Christ is the head. But men now-a-days are so far from melting hearts, that they want natural affection, as Paul foretells of such in the latter times, 1 Tim. iv. 1. They have less bowels of pity in them, when they hear how it goes with the church abroad, than very pagans and heathens. This shews they have no tender hearts, that they are not knit to Christ by faith, who is the head; nor to the church, the body, in love. How is thy heart affected to men when they commit any sin against God, as idolaters, swearers, drunkards, liars, and the like? Is it mercy to let these go on in their sins towards hell? No, this is cruelty; but mercy is to be shewed unto them, in restraining men from their wicked courses. Therefore do not think thou shewest mercy unto them by letting them alone in sin, but exhort and instruct them. Coldness and deadness is a spiritual disease in these days. But surely they that have the Spirit of God warming their hearts, are sensible of their own good and ill, and of the good and ill of the time. Well, if you will know you have a tender heart, look to God, look to his word, to his works, to yourselves, and others; and so you shall know whether you have tender hearts or not.

Quest. But here may be another question asked, How shall men recover themselves, when they are subject to this hardness, deadness, and insensibleness? If after examination a man find himself to be thus, how shall he recover himself out of this estate. I answer,

Ans. 1. First, As when things are cold we bring them to the fire to heat and melt, so bring we our cold hearts to the fire of the love of Christ; consider we of our sins against Christ, and of Christ's love towards us; dwell upon this meditation. Think what great love Christ hath shewed unto us, and how little we have deserved, and this will make our hearts to melt, and be as pliable as wax before the sun.

2. Secondly, If thou wilt have this tender and melting heart, then use the means; be always under the sunshine of the gospel. Be under God's sunshine, that he may melt thy heart; be constant in good means; and help one another. 'We must provoke one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Heb. iii. 13. Physicians love not to give physic to themselves. So a man is not always fit to help himself when he is not right; but good company is fit to do it. 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?' said the two disciples, holding communion each with other at Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32. For then Christ comes and makes a third, joins with them, and so makes their hearts burn within them. So Christ saith, Where two or three are met together in his name, he is in the midst of them,' Mat. xviii. 20. Now they were under the promise, therefore he affords his presence. Where two hold communion together, there Christ will make a third. Therefore let us use the help of others, seeing David could not recover himself, being a prophet, but he must have a Nathan to help him, 2 Sam. xii. 7. Therefore if we would recover ourselves from hard and insensible hearts, let us use the help one of another.

3. Thirdly, We must with boldness and reverence challenge the covenant of grace; for this is the covenant that God hath made with us, to give us tender hearts, hearts of flesh, as Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within their bowels; I will take away the stony hearts out of their bodies, and I will give them a heart of flesh. Now seeing this is a covenant God hath made, to give us fleshly hearts and to take away our stony, let us challenge him with his promise, and go to him by prayer. Entreat him to give thee a fleshly heart; go to him, wait his time, for that is the best time. Therefore wait though he do not hear at first. These are the means to bring tenderness of heart.

Now, that ye may be stirred up to this duty, namely, to' get a soft and tender heart, mark here,

1. First, What an excellent thine/ a tender heart is. God hath promised to dwell in such an heart, and is it an excellent thing to have God dwell in

our hearts, as he hath promised, Isa. lvii. 15, 'For thus saith he that is high and excellent, he that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is the Holy One: I will dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to give life to them that are of a contrite heart?' So Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look, even to him that is poor and contrite in spirit, and doth tremble at my words.' Now God having promised to dwell where there is a soft heart, and no hardness, no rocks to keep him out; can God come into a heart without a blessing? Can he be separated from goodness, which is goodness itself? When the heart therefore is pliable and thus tender, there is an immediate communion between the soul and God; and can that heart be miserable that hath communion with God? Surely no.

2. Secondly, Consider that this doth fit a man for the end for which he was created. A man is never fit for that end for which he was made, but when he hath a tender heart; and what are we redeemed for, but that we should serve God? And who is fit to be put in the service of God but he that hath begged a tender heart of God?

3. Thirdly, To stir you up to labour for this, consider that a tender heart is fit for any blessedness. It is capable of any beatitude. What makes a man blessed in anything but a tender heart? This will make a man to hear the word, to read, to shew mercies to others. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' saith Christ, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' A tender heart is blessed, because that only heareth God's word, and doth it; and it is always a merciful heart, and therefore blessed.

4. Again, Consider the wretched estate of a heart contrary, that is not tender, and will not yield. Oh what a wonderful hardness would the heart of man grow to, if we do not follow it with means to soften it! What a fearful thing was it to see what strange things fell out at Christ's death, what darkness there was, what thunders and lightnings. The veil of the Temple rent, the sun was turned into darkness, the graves opened, and the dead did rise, yet notwithstanding none of these would make the hypocritical Pharisees to tremble, but they mocked at it, although it made a very heathen man confess it the work of God, Mat. xxvii. 45-54. For a ceremonial hypocrite is more hard than a Turk, Jew, or Pagan. All the judgments of God upon Pharaoh were not so great as hardness of heart. The papists, after they have been at their superstitious devotion, are fittest for powder-plots and treasons, because their hearts are so much more hardened. What fearful

things may a man come to, if he give way to hardness of heart! He may come to an estate like the devil, yea, worse than Judas, for he had some sensibleness of his sin; he confessed he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. But many of these hypocrites have no sensibleness at all, which is a fearful thing. Eli's children hearkened not to the voice of their father, because that the Lord had a purpose to destroy them, 1 Sam. ii. 25. So it is in this case a shrewd sign that God will destroy those that are so insensible that nothing will work upon them. But these hypocrites shall be sensible one day, when they shall wish they were as insensible as in their lifetime they were. But it will be an unfruitful repentance to repent in hell; for there a man shall get no benefit by his repentance, seeing there they cannot shake off the execution of God's judgment, as they shake off the threatenings of his judgments here. Well, to this fearful end, before it be long, must every one that hath a hard heart come, unless they repent. Therefore let every one be persuaded to labour for a tender, pliable, yielding, and sensible heart here, else we shall have it hereafter against our wills, when it will do us no good; for then hypocrites shall be sensible against their wills, though they would not be sensible in this life.

And thus I have done with the first inward cause in Josiah that moved God so to respect him, namely, tenderness of heart.

II. The Art of Self-Humbling

Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, &c.—2 Chron. XXXIV. 27.

A tenderness of heart, the first inward cause in Josiah, which moved God to pity him, so as he should not be an eye-witness of the fearful calamities to come upon his land and people, is largely spoken in the former sermon; wherein is also shewed how it is wrought, preserved, discerned, recovered when it is lost; what encouragements we have to seek and labour for it, with some other things which I will not here repeat, but fall directly upon that which follows, 'And thou didst humble thyself before God.' In which words we have set down the second inward cause in Josiah, that moved God to shew mercy unto him; the humbling of himself. And thou didst humble thyself before God.' Tenderness of heart and humbling a man's self go both together; for things that are hard will not yield nor bow. A great

iron bar will not bow, a hard stony heart will not yield. Now, therefore, humbling of ourselves, the making of us as low as the ground itself, is added unto tenderness; for the soul being once tender and melting, is fit to be humbled, yea, cares not how low it be abased, so mercy may follow. For the better unfolding of the words, we will consider,

1. The person that did humble himself: 'Josiah,' a king, a great man.

2. Humiliation itself, and the qualities of it: 'and humbledst thyself before God,' which argued the sincerity of it.

3. The occasion of it: 'when thou heardest the words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof.'

4. The outward expression of it, in weeping and rending his clothes; which we will handle in their place.

1. First, for the person, 'Thou didst humble thyself,' Josiah a king, who was tenderly brought up, and highly advanced; a thing which makes the work so much the more commendable; whence we learn,

Doct. 1. That it is a disposition not unbefitting kings to humble themselves before God. For howsoever they are gods downward, to those that are under them, yet if they look upward, what are kings? The greater light hides the lesser. 'What are all the inhabitants of the earth in his sight, but as a drop of a bucket, as dust upon the balance, of no moment! Isa. xl. 15. I have said you are gods, but you shall die like men,' Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7. For howsoever the saints of God differ from other men in regard of their use, and the inscription God hath set upon them, yet they are of the same stuff, dust, as others are. And so kings, though in civil respects they differ from other men, yet are they of the same metal, and shall end in death, all their glory must lie in the dust.

Therefore it is not unbefitting kings to humble themselves before God, seeing they have to deal with him who is a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29, before whom the very angels cover their faces. I say it is no shame for the greatest monarch of the earth to abase himself when he hath to do with God; yea, kings, of all other persons, ought most to humble themselves, to shew their thankfulness to God, who hath raised them from their brethren to be heads of his people. And considering the endowments which kings usually have, they are bound to humble themselves, as also in regard of the authority

and power which God hath put into their hands, saying, 'By me kings reign,' Prov. viii. 15. But usually we see, from the beginning of the world, that kings forgot God. Where there is not grace above nature, there kings will not stoop to Christ; but so far as it agrees with their pleasure and will, so far shall Christ be served, and no farther.

But yet God hath always raised up some nursing fathers and mothers, — as he hath done to us, for which we ought to bless God,—who have and do make conscience of this mentioned duty, so well beseeming Christian princes, as in sundry other respects, so also in this, that therein they might be exemplary to the people. For no doubt but Josiah did this also, that his people might not think it a shame for them to humble themselves before God, whereas he their king, tender in years, and subject to no earthly man, did before them, in his own person, prostrate himself in the humblest manner before the great God of heaven and earth.

As that ointment poured upon Aaron's head fell from his head to the skirts, and so spread itself to the rest of the parts, even to his feet, Ps. cxxxiii. 2, so a good example in a king descends down to the lowest subjects, as the rain from the mountains into the valleys. Therefore a king should first begin to humble himself. Kings are called fathers to their subjects, because they should bear a loving and holy affection to their people, that when anything troubles the subjects, they should be affected with it. Governors are not to have a distinct good from their subjects, but the welfare of the subjects should be the glory of their head. Therefore Josiah took the judgments threatened as his own: howsoever his estate was nothing unto theirs.

It is said moreover, 'Thou didst humble thyself.' He was both the agent and the patient, the worker and the object of his work: it came from him, and ended in him. Humiliation is a reflected action: Josiah humbled himself. And certainly this is that true humiliation, the humbling of ourselves; for it is no thanks for a man to be humbled by God, as Pharaoh was; for God can humble and pull down the proudest that do oppose his church. God by this gets himself glory. But here is the glory of a Christian, that he hath got grace from God to humble himself; which humbling is, from our own judgment, and upon discerning of good grounds, to bring our affections to stoop unto God; to humble ourselves. Many are humbled that are not humble; many are cast down that have proud hearts still, as Pharaoh had. It is said, 'Thou humbledst thyself.' Then we learn,

Doct. 2. That the actions of grace are reflected actions. They begin from a man's self, and end in a man's self; yet we must not exclude the Spirit of God; for he doth not say, thou from thyself didst humble thyself, but 'thou didst humble thyself.' We have grace from God to humble ourselves. So that the Spirit of God doth work upon us as upon fit subjects, in which grace doth work. Though such works be the works of God, yet they are said to be ours, because God doth work them in us and by us. We are said to humble ourselves, because we are temples wherein he works, seeing he useth the parts of our soul, as the understanding, the will, and the affections, in the work. Therefore it is foolish for the papists to say, good works be our own, as from ourselves. No; good works, say we, are ours, as effects of the Spirit in us. But for the further expression of this humbling of ourselves before God, we will consider,

1. The kinds and degrees of it.
2. Some directions how we may humble ourselves.
3. The motives to move us to it.
4. The notes whereby it may be known.

1. First, for the nature and kinds of it; we must know that humiliation is either

- (1.) Inward, in the mind first of all, and then in the affections; or,
- (2.) Outward, in expression of words, and likewise in carriage.

(1.) To begin with the first inward humiliation in the mind, in regard of judgment and knowledge, is, when our understandings are convinced, that ire are as we are; when we are not high-minded, but when we judge meanly and basely of ourselves, both in regard of our beginning and dependency upon God, having all from him, both life, motion, and being; and also in regard of our end, what we shall be ere long. All glory shall end in the dust, all honour in the grave, and all riches in poverty. And withal, true humiliation is also in regard of spiritual respects, when we judge aright how base and vile we are in regard of our natural corruption, that we are by nature not only guilty of Adam's sin, but that we have, besides that, wrapt ourselves in a thousand more guilts by our sinful course of life, and that we have nothing of our own, no, not power to do the least good thing. When we look upon any vile

person, we may see our own image. So that if God had not been gracious unto us, we should have been as bad as they.

In a word, inward conviction of our natural frailty and misery, in regard of the filthy and foul stain of sin in our nature and actions, and of the many guilts of spiritual and temporal plagues in this life and that which is to come, is that inward humiliation in the judgment or understanding.

Again, Inward humiliation, besides spiritual conviction, is when there are affections of humiliation. And what be those? Shame, sorrow, fear, and such like penal afflictive affections. For, upon a right conviction of the understanding, the soul comes to be stricken with shame that we are in such a case as we are; especially when we consider God's goodness to us, and our dealing with him. This will breed shame and abasement, as it did in Daniel. Shame and sorrow ever follow sin, first or last, as the apostle demands, Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' After conviction of judgment there is always shame; and likewise there is sorrow and grief. For God hath made the inward faculties of the soul so, that upon the apprehension of the understanding, the heart comes to be stricken through with grief, which works upon our souls. Therefore we are said in Scripture to afflict ourselves; that is, when we set ourselves upon meditation of our deserts. Hereupon we cannot but be affected inwardly, for these sorrows are so many daggers to pierce through the heart.

The third penal affection is, fear and trembling before God's judgments and his threatenings, a fear of the majesty of God, whom we have offended, which is able to send us to hell if his mercies were not beyond our deserts. But his mercy it is, that we are not consumed. A fear of this great God is a part of this inward humiliation. So we see what inward humiliation is: first, a conviction of the judgment; and then it proceeds to inward afflictive affections, as grief, shame, fear, which, when upon good ground and fit objects, they are wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, they are parts of inward humiliation. But as for the wicked, they drown themselves in their profaneness, because they would not be ashamed, nor fear, nor grieve for them. But this makes way for terrible shame, sorrow, and fear afterwards; for those that will not shame, grieve, and fear here, shall be ashamed before God and his angels at the day of judgment, and shall be tormented in hell for ever.

2. Secondly, His outward humiliation is expressed and manifested in words, in outward behaviour and carriage. The words which he used are not here set down; but certainly Josiah did speak words when he humbled

himself. It was not a dumb show, but done with his outward expression and his inward affection. This is evident by those words of the text, 'I have heard thee also,' saith the Lord. Without doubt, therefore, he did speak something. But because true sorrow cannot speak distinctly,—for a broken soul can speak but broken words,—therefore his words are not here set down, but yet God heard them well enough. And indeed, so it is sometimes, that the grief for the affliction may be stronger than the faculty of speech, so that a man cannot speak for grief. As a heathen man, by light of nature, did weep and grieve for his friends, but when his child came to be killed before him, he stood like a stone, because his sorrow was so great that it exceeded all expression. So humiliation may so exceed that it cannot be expressed in words; as David himself, when he was told of his sins by Nathan, did not express all his sorrow, but saith, 'I have sinned;' yet afterwards, he makes the 51st Psalm, a composed speech for supply, a fit pattern for an humble and broken soul. So doubtless there was outward expression of words in Josiah, although they be not here set down. This speech, which is a part of humiliation, is called a confession of our sins to God; with it should be joined hatred and grief afflictive, as also a deprecation and desire that God would remove the judgment which we have deserved by our sins; and likewise a justification of God, in what he hath laid or may lay upon us. Lord, thou art righteous and just in all thy judgments; shame and confusion belongeth unto me; my sins have deserved that thou shouldest pour down thy vengeance upon me; it is thy great mercy that I am not consumed. The good thief upon the cross justified God, saying, 'We are here justly for our deserts; but this man doth suffer wrongfully,' Luke xxiii. 41. Justification and self-condemnation go with humiliation. This is the outward expression in words. Now the outward humiliation in respect of his carriage, is here directly set down in two acts:

1. Rending of clothes. And 2. Weeping.

But of these I shall speak afterwards when I come at them. Thus we have seen the degrees and kinds of humiliation.

Seeing it is such a necessary qualification, for humiliation is a fundamental grace that gives strength to all other graces; seeing, I say, it is such a necessary temper of a holy gracious man to be humble; how may we come to humble ourselves as we should do? I answer, Let us take these directions:

1. First, Get poor spirits, that is, spirits to see the wants in ourselves and in the creature: the emptiness of all earthly things without God's favour; the insufficiency of ourselves and of the creature at the day of judgment; for what the wise man saith of riches may be truly said of all other things under the sun: they avail not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death, Prov. xi. 4.

Josiah was not poor in respect of the world, for he was a king; but he was 'poor in spirit,' because he saw an emptiness in himself. He knew his kingdom could not shield him from God's judgment, if he were once angry.

(1.) Let us consider our original. From whence came we? From the earth, from nothing. Whither go we? To the earth, to nothing. And in respect of spiritual things, we have nothing. We are not able to do anything of ourselves, no, not so much as to think a good thought.

(2.) Likewise, consider we the guilt of our sins. What do we deserve? Hell and damnation, to have our portion with hypocrites in that 'lake that burneth with tire and brimstone.'

(3.) Let us have before our eyes the picture of old Adam, our sinful nature: how we are drawn away by every object; how ready to be proud of anything; how unable to resist the least sin; how ready to be cast down under every affliction; that we cannot rejoice in any blessing; that we have no strength of ourselves to perform any good or suffer ill; in a word, how that we carry a nature about us indisposed to good, and prone to all evil. This consideration humbled Paul, and made him to cry out, when no other afflictions could move him, 'O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Rom. vii. 24. By this means we come to be poor in spirit.

2. If we would have humble spirits, let us bring ourselves into the presence of the great God: set ourselves in his presence, and consider of his attributes, his works of justice abroad in the world, and open ourselves in particular.

Consider his wisdom, holiness, power, and strength, with our own. It will make us abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Let us bring ourselves into God's presence, be under the means, under his word, that there we may see ourselves ripped up, and see what we are. As Job, when he brought himself into God's presence, said, 'I abhor myself, and repent in

dust and ashes,' Job xlii. O. Job thought himself somebody before; but when God comes to examine him, and upon examination found that he could not give a reason of the creature, much less of the Lord's, afflicting his children, then he saith, 'I abhor myself.' So Abraham, the more he talked with God, the more he did see himself but dust and ashes. This is the language of the holy men in Scripture, when they have to deal or think of God. 'I am not worthy,' says John Baptist, John i. 27. So Paul: 'I am not worthy to be called an apostle,' 1 Cor. xv. 9. So the centurion:

'I am not worthy thou shouldst come into my house,' Mat. viii. 8. 'I am less than the least of thy blessings,' saith Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. Thus let us come into the presence of God, under the means of his word, and then we shall see our own vileness, which will work humiliation; for, as the apostle saith, when a poor simple man doth come, and hears the prophecy, that is, the word of God, with application unto himself, laying open his particular sins, doubtless he will say, God is in you, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

3. That we may humble ourselves, let us be content to hear of our sins anti baseness by others. Let us be content that others should acquaint us with anything that may humble us. Proud men are the devil's pipes, and flatterers the musicians to blow these pipes. Therefore it is, that though men have nothing of their own, yet they love to give heed to flatterers, to blow their bladder full, which do rob them of themselves; whereas a true, wise man, will be content to hear of anything that may humble him before God.

4. And withal, that we may humble ourselves, look to the time to come, what we shall be ere long, earth and dust; and at the day of judgment we must be stripped of all. What should puff us up in this world? All our glory shall end in shame, all magnificency in confusion, all riches in poverty. It is a strange thing that the devil should raise men to be proud of that which they have not of their own, but of such things which they have borrowed and begged; as for men to be proud of themselves in regard of their parents. So, many there are who think the better of themselves for their apparel, when yet they are clothed with nothing of their own, and so are proud of the very creature. But thus the devil hath besotted our nature, to make us glory in that which should abase us, and to think the better of ourselves, for that which is none of our own. Nay, many in the church of God, are so far from humbling themselves, that they come to manifest their pride, to shew themselves, to see and to be seen. Thus the devil besots many thousand silly creatures, that' come in vainglory into the house of God; that whereas they should humble

themselves before him, they are puffed up with a base empty pride, even before God. Therefore let us take notice of our wonderful proneness to have a conceit of ourselves; for if a man have a new fashion, or some new thing, which nobody else knows besides himself, how wonderful conceited will he be of himself! Let us take notice, I say, of our proneness to this sin of pride; for the best are prone to it. Consider, it is a wonderful hateful sin, a sin of sins, that God most hates. It was this sin that made him thrust Adam out of paradise. It was this sin which made him thrust the evil angels out of heaven, who shall never come there again. Yea, it is a sin that God cures with other sins, so far he hateth it; as Paul, being subject to be proud through the abundance of revelations, was cured of it by a prick in the flesh: being exercised with some dangerous, noisome, and strange cure. Indeed, it is profitable for some men to fall, that so by their humiliation for infirmities, they may be cured of this great, this sacrilegious sin. And why is it called a sacrilegious sin? Because it robs God of his glory. For God hath said, 'My glory I will not give to another,' Isa. xlii. 8. Is not the grace, goodness, and mercy of God sufficient for us, but we must enter into his prerogatives, and exalt ourselves? We are both idols and idol-worshippers, when we think highly of ourselves, for we make ourselves idols. Now God hates idolatry; but pride is a sacrilege, therefore God hates pride.

5. If we would humble ourselves, let us set before us the example of our blessed Saviour; for we must be conformable to him, by whom we hope to be saved. He left heaven, took our base nature, and humbled himself to the death of the cross, yea, to the washing of his disciples' feet, and among the rest, washed Judas's feet, and so suffered himself to be killed as a traitor, Philip, ii. 5-7; and all this to satisfy the wrath of God for us, and that he might be a pattern for us to be like-minded. Therefore, if we would humble ourselves by pattern, here is a pattern without all exception. Let us be transformed into the likeness of him; yea, the more we think of him, the more we shall be humbled. For it is impossible for a man to dwell upon this meditation of Christ in humility, and with faith to apply it to himself, that he is his particular Saviour, but this faith will abase the heart, and bring it to be like Christ in all spiritual representation. A heart that believeth in Christ will be humbled like Christ. It will be turned from all fleshly conceit of excellency, to be like him. Is it possible, if a man consider he is to be saved by an abased and humble Saviour, that was pliable to every base service, that had not a house to hide himself; I say, is it possible that he which considers of this, should ever be willingly or wilfully proud? Do we hope to be saved by Christ, and will we not be like him? When we were firebrands of hell, he

humbled himself to the death of the cross, left heaven and happiness a-while, and took our shame, to be a pattern to us. We know that Christ was brought into the world by a humble virgin. So the heart wherein he dwells must be an humble heart. If we have true faith in Christ, it will cast us down, and make us to be humbled. For it is impossible that a man should have faith to challenge any part in Christ, except he be conformed to the image of Christ in humility. Therefore let us take counsel of Christ: 'Learn of me, for I am humble and meek; and so you shall find rest to your souls,' Mat. xi. 29.

Lastly, That we may humble ourselves, let us work upon our own souls by reasoning, discoursing, and speaking to our own hearts. For the soul hath a faculty to work upon itself. Now this, being a reflected action, to humble ourselves, it must be done by some inward action; and what is that? To discourse thus: If so be a prince should but frown upon me when I have offended his law, in what case should I be! Yet, when the great God of heaven threatens, what an atheistical unbelieving heart have I, that can be moved at the threatenings of a mortal man, that is but dust and ashes, and yet cannot be moved with the threatenings of the great God! Consider also, if a man had been so kind and bountiful to me, if I should reward his kindness with unkindness, I should have been ashamed, and have covered my face with shame; and yet how unkind have I been unto God, that hath been so kind to me, and yet I never a whit ashamed! If a friend should have come to me, and I have given him no entertainment, what a shame were this! But yet how often hath the Holy Ghost knocked at the door of my heart, and suggested many holy motions into me of mortification, repentance, and newness of life, yet notwithstanding I have given him the repulse, opposed the outward means of grace, and have thought myself unworthy of it; what a shame is this!

Thus, if we compare our carriage in earthly things with our carriage in heavenly, this will be a means to work upon our hearts, inwardly to humble ourselves. Thus was David abased; for when Nathan came and told him of a rich man, who having many sheep, spared his own and took away a poor man's, which was all that he had; when David considered that he had so dealt with Uriah, he was dejected and ashamed of his own courses. Let us labour to work our hearts to humility, into true sorrow, shame, true fear, that so we may have God to pity and respect us, who only doth regard a humble soul. Thus we have seen some directions how we may come to humble ourselves.

Further, There is an order, method, and agreement in these reflected actions, when we turn the edge of our own souls upon ourselves and examine ourselves; for the way that leads to rest is by the examination of ourselves. We must examine ourselves strictly, and then bring ourselves before God, judge and condemn ourselves; for humiliation is a kind of execution. Examination leads to all the rest. So, then, this is the order of our actions; there is examination of ourselves strictly before God, then indicting ourselves, after that comes judging of ourselves.

Oh that we could be brought to these inward reflected actions, to examine indict, judge, and condemn ourselves, that so we might spare God a labour, and so all things might go well with us!

3. Now I come to the third thing I propounded, the motives to move vs to get this humiliation.

(1.) First, Let us consider of the gracious promises that are made to this disposition of humbling ourselves; as Isa. lvii. 15, 'For thus saith he that is holy and excellent, he that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is the Holy One; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to give life to them that are of a contrite heart.' So there is a promise that God will give grace to the humble. An example of mercy in this kind we have in Manasseh, who, though a very wicked man, yet because he humbled himself, obtained mercy. Peter humbled himself, and David humbled himself, and both found mercy. And so likewise Josiah; yea, and in James iv. 10, we are bid to 'humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt us in due time.' There is the promise. Yea, every branch of humiliation hath a promise. As confession of sins, if we confess and forsake' our sins, we shall have mercy and find pardon. So those that judge themselves shall not be judged.

A humble heart is a vessel of all graces. It is a grace itself, and a vessel of grace. It doth better the soul and make it holy, for the soul is never fitter for God than when it is humbled. It is a fundamental grace that gives strength to all other graces. So much humility, so much grace. For according to the measure of humiliation is the measure of other grace, because a humble heart hath in it a spiritual emptiness. Humility emptieth the heart for God to fill it. If the heart be emptied of temporal things, then it must needs be filled with spiritual things; for nature abhorreth emptiness; grace much more. When the heart is made low, there is a spiritual emptiness, and what fills this up but the Spirit of God? In that measure we empty ourselves, in that measure we are

filled with the fulness of God. When a man is humbled, he is fit for all good; but when he is proud, he is fit for all ill, and beats back all good. God hath but two heavens to dwell in; the heaven of heavens, and the heart of a poor humble man. The proud swelling heart, that is full of ambition, high conceits, and self-dependence, will not endure to have God to enter; but he dwells largely and easily in the heart of an humble man. If we will dwell in heaven hereafter, let us humble ourselves now. The rich in themselves are sent 'empty away;' the humble soul is a rich soul, rich in God; and therefore God regards the lowly and resists the proud. As all the water that is upon the hills runs into the valleys, so all grace goes to the humble. The mountains of Gilboa are accursed,' 2 Sam. i. 21. So there is a curse upon pride, because it will not yield to God.

(2.) Again, All outward actions benefit other men; but this inward action of humbling a man's self makes the soul itself good.

(3.) An humble soul is a secure and safe soul; for a man that is not high, but of a low stature, needs not to fear falling. A humble soul is a safe soul;—safe in regard of outward troubles; for when we have humbled ourselves, God needs not follow us with any other judgment: safe, in regard of inward vexation or any trouble by God; for when the soul hath brought itself low, and laid itself level as the ground, then God ceaseth to afflict it. Will the ploughman plough when he hath broken up the ground enough? or doth he delight in breaking up the ground? See what Isaiah saith to this purpose in chap, xxviii. 28. When God seeth that a man hath abased himself, he will not follow with any other judgment; such a one may say to God, Lord, I have kept court in mine own conscience already, I have humbled and judged myself, therefore do not thou judge me; I am ready to do whatsoever thou wilt, and to suffer what thou wilt have me. I have deserved worse a thousand times, but, Lord., remember I am but dust and ashes. Thus God spares his labour when the soul hath humbled itself. But if we do not do this ourselves, God will take us in hand; for God will have but one God. Now if we will be gods, to exalt ourselves, he must take us in hand to humble us, either first or last. And is it not better for us to humble ourselves than for God to give us up to the merciless rage and fury of men, for them to humble us, or to fall into the hands of God, who is a 'consuming fire'? For when we accuse and judge ourselves, we prevent much shame and sorrow. What is the reason God hath given us up to shame and crosses in this world, but because we have not humbled ourselves? What is the reason many are damned in hell? Because God hath given them reason, judgment, and affections, but they

have not used them for themselves, to examine their ways, whether they were in the state of condemnation or salvation. They never used their affections and judgment to this end, therefore God was forced to take them in hand. Well saith Austin, all men must be humbled one way or other; either we must humble ourselves or God will; 'if we will do this ourselves, the apostle promiseth, we shall not be judged of the Lord, 1 Cor. xi. 31. But we do not these things as we should, because it is a secret action. We love to do things that the world may take notice of, but this inward humiliation can only be seen by God, and by our own consciences. Let these motives therefore stir us up to humble ourselves, for humbled we must be by one way or other. How many judgments might be avoided by humbling ourselves! How many scandals might be prevented if we would judge ourselves! What is the reason so many Christians fall into scandalous sins, whereby, provoking God's anger, they fall into the hands of their enemies, but because they spare themselves, and think this humbling themselves a troublesome action. Therefore to spare themselves, they run on. Because they would not work this upon themselves, they grow to be in a desperate state at last. Wherefore upon any occasion be humble, let us prepare ourselves to meet the Lord our God. When we hear but any noise of the judgments of God, we should humble ourselves, as good Josiah did; when he did but hear of the threatenings against his land, it made him humble himself.

Quest. But here it may be demanded, considering that wicked men do oftentimes humble themselves, being convinced in their consciences, and thereupon ashamed,

4. How may we know holy from hypocritical humiliation? which is the last thing I propounded concerning humiliation, namely, the notes and marks whereby we may know true humiliation from false, which are these.

Ans. 1. First, Holy humiliation is voluntary; for it is a reflected action, which comes from a man's self. It ends where it begins. Therefore Josiah is said to humble himself. But, on the contrary, the humiliation of other men is against their will. False humiliation is not voluntary, but by force it is extorted from them. God is fain to break, crush, and deal hardly with them, which they grieve and murmur at. But the children of God have the Spirit of God, which is a free Spirit, that sets their hearts at liberty. For God's Spirit is a working Spirit, that works upon their hearts, and hereby they willingly humble themselves, whereas the wicked, wanting this Spirit of God, cannot humble themselves willingly, but are cast down against their wills. For God

can pluck down the proudest. He can break Pharaoh's courage, who, though he was humbled, yet he did not humble himself. A man may be humbled, and yet not humble. But the children of God are to humble themselves, not that the grace whereby we humble ourselves is from ourselves: but we are said to humble ourselves, when God doth rule the parts he hath given us, when he sets our wits and understanding on work to see our misery, and then our will and affection to work upon these. Thus we are said to humble ourselves when God works in us. An hypocrite God may humble and work by him. He may work by graceless persons, but he doth not work in them. But God's children have God's Spirit in them, not only working in them his own works, as he doth by hypocrites and sinful persons, but his Spirit works in them. So that here is the main difference between true humiliation and that which is counterfeit. The one is voluntary, being a reflected action, to work upon and to humble ourselves; but the other is a forced humiliation.

2. Again, True humiliation is ever joined with reformation. Humble thyself and walk with thy God, saith the prophet: Micah vi. 8, 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what he doth require of thee, to humble thyself, and walk with thy God.' Now the humiliation of wicked men is never joined with reformation. There is no walking with God. Josiah reformed himself and his people to outward obedience, as much as he could, but he had not their hearts at command.

3. Again, Sin must appear hitter to the soul, else we shall never be truly humbled for it. There is in every renewed soul a secret hatred and loathing of evil, which manifests the soundness both of true humiliation and reformation, and is expressed in three things.

(1.) In a serious purpose and resolution not to offend God in the least kind. The drunkard must purpose to leave his drunkenness, and the swearer resolve between God and his own heart, to forsake his base courses, and cry mightily herein for help from above.

(2.) Secondly, There must be a constant endeavour to avoid the occasions and allurements of sin. Thus Job made a covenant with his eyes, that 'he would not look upon a maid,' Job xxxi. 1; and thus every unclean and filthy person should make a covenant with themselves against the sins which they are most addicted unto. When they came to serve God, in Hosea, then 'away with idols,' Hosea. xiv 8. So must we, when we look heavenward, cast from us all our sins whatsoever.

(3.) Thirdly, There must be a hatred and loathing of sin in our confessions. We must confess it with all the circumstances, the time when, and place where. We must aggravate our offences, as David did: 'Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;' Ps. li. 4; and as the apostle: 'I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor,' I was thus and thus. He did not extenuate his sin, and say, the rulers commanded me so to do; but, 'I persecuted the church' out of the wickedness of mine own heart. A true Christian will not hide his sins, but lay them open, the more to abase himself before God. This aggravating of our sins will make them more vile unto us, and us more humble in the sight of them. True reformation of life is ever joined with an indignation of all sin, there is such a contrariety in the nature of a child of God against all evil.

[1.] We should therefore first hate sin universally; not one sin, but every kind of sin, and that most of all which most rules in us, and which is most prevalent in our own hearts. A sincere Christian hates sin in himself most. We must not hate that in another which we cherish in ourselves.

[2.] We should hate sin the more, the nearer it comes to us, in our children and friends, or any other way. It was David's fault to let Absalom his son go unreprieved in his wicked practices, and Eli for not correcting his sons. We see what came of it, even their utter overthrow.

[3.] He that truly hates sin will not think much to be admonished and reprieved when he errs. A man that hath a bad plant in his ground, that will eat out the heart of it, will not hate another that shall discover such an evil to him; so if any one shall reprove thee for this or that sin, and thou hate him for it, it is a sign corruption is sweet to thee.

Only this caution must be remembered, reproof must not be given with a proud spirit, but in a loving, mild manner, with desire of doing good. There is a great deal of self-love in some men, who, instead of hating sin in themselves and others, approve and countenance it, especially in great men, flattering them in their base humours, and fearing lest by telling them the truth they should be esteemed their enemies.

[4.] Our hatred of sin may be discerned by our willingness to talk of it. He that hates a snake, or toad, will flee from it; so a man that truly abhors sin, will not endure to come near the occasions of it. What shall we say then of those that prostitute themselves to all sinful delights? As hatred of sin is in

our affection, so it will appear in our actions. Those that love to see sin acted did never as yet truly loathe it.

It is a sign that we do not hate sin when we take not to heart the sins of our land. 'Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Kedar,' saith David; 'mine eyes gush out with tears because men keep not thy law,' Ps. cxx. 5. Lot's soul was vexed at the unclean conversation of the wicked, 2 Peter ii. 7. But, alas! how do we come short of this! The greatest number are so far from mourning for the abominations of the land, that they rather set themselves against God in a most disobedient manner, and press others to sin against him. Are magistrates of David's mind, to labour to cut off all workers of iniquity from the land? Indeed, for small trifling things they will do a man justice, but where is the tenderness of God's glory? Where are those that seek to reform idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, and profaneness amongst us? Pity it is to see how many do hold the stirrup to the devil, by giving occasions and encouragements to others to commit evil. Do we hate sin, when we are like tinder, ready to receive the least motion to it, as our fashion-mongers, who transform themselves into every effeminate unbecoming guise? Shall we say that these men hate sin, which, when they are reprov'd for it, labour to defend it or excuse it, counting their pride but comeliness, their miserable covetousness but thirst, - and drunkenness only good fellowship?

To strengthen our indignation against sin the better, consider,

1. The ugliness thereof, how opposite and distasteful it is to the Almighty, as appears in Sodom and in the old world. It is that for which God himself hates his own creature, and for which he will say to the wicked at the day of judgment, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,' Mat. xxv. 41. Sin is the cause of all those diseases and crosses that befall the sons of men. It hath its rise from the devil, who is the father of it, and whose lusts we do whensoever we offend God.

There is not the least sin but it is committed against an infinite majesty, yea, against a good God, to whom we owe ourselves and all that we have, who waits when you will turn to him and live for ever; but if you despise his goodness, and continue still to provoke the eyes of his glory, is a terrible and revengeful God, and ready every moment to destroy both body and soul in hell.

Sin is the bane of all comfort. That which we love more than our souls undoes us. It embitters every comfort, and makes that we cannot perform duties with spiritual life. Our very prayers are abominable to God so long as we live in known sin. What makes the hour of death and the day of judgment terrible but this?

2. Again, Grow in the love of God. The more we delight in him, the more we shall hate whatsoever is contrary to him. In that proportion that we affect God and his truth we will abhor every evil way, for these go together. Ye that love the Lord, hate the thing that is ill. The nearer we draw to him, the farther we are separated from everything below.

3. And to strengthen our indignation against sin, we should drive our affections another way, and set them upon the right object. A Christian should consider, Wherefore did God give me this affection of love? Was it to set it on this or that lust, or any sinful course? Or hath he given me this affection of hatred that I should envy my brethren, and condemn the good way? No, surely. I ought to improve every faculty of my soul to the glory of the giver, by loving that which he loves, and hating that which he hates. God's truth, his ways, and children, are objects worthy our love, and Satan with his deeds of darkness the fittest subjects of our indignation and hatred.

4. Fourthly, True humiliation proceeds from faith, and is in the faithful not only when judgment is upon them, but before the judgment comes, which they foreseeing by faith, do humble themselves. True humiliation quakes at the threatenings, for the very frowns of a father will terrify a dutiful child. As Josiah, when he did but hear of the threatenings against the land, he humbled himself in dust and ashes. 'He rent his clothes.' So true humiliation doth quake at the foresight of judgment, but the wicked never humble themselves but when the judgment is upon them. Carnal people are like men that, hearing thunder-claps afar off, are never a whit moved; but when it is present over their heads, then they tremble. So hypocrites care not for judgments afar off; as now when the church of God is in misery abroad we bless ourselves, and think all is well. It is no thanks for a man to be humbled when the judgment is upon him, for so Pharaoh was, who yet, when the judgment was off, then he goes to his old bias again.

Let us try our humiliation by these signs, whether we can willingly humble ourselves privately before God, and call ourselves to a reckoning; whether we add reformation of life to outward humiliation, when our heart doth tell us that we live in such and such sins; whether our hearts tremble at

the threatenings, when we hear of judgments public or private. What is the ground that may deceive themselves? They say, if any judgment come upon them, then they will repent, and cry to God for mercy; and why should I deny myself of my pleasures of sin before? Oh, this is but a forced humiliation, not from love to God, but love to thyself. It is not free, therefore thou mayest go to hell with it. Others defer off their repentance till it be too late. When they have any sickness upon them they will cry to God for mercy. This is but Ahab's and Pharaoh's humiliation. It is not out of any love to God, but merely forced. It is too late to do it when God hath seized upon us by any judgment. Do it when he doth threaten, and now he hath seized upon the parts of the church abroad already; therefore now meet thy God by repentance.

5. A fifth difference between true humiliation and false is, that with true humiliation is joined hope, to raise up our souls with some comfort, else it is a desperation, not a humiliation. The devils do chafe, vex, and fret themselves, in regard of their desperate estate, because they have no hope. If there be no hope, it is impossible there should be true and sound humiliation; but true humiliation doth carry us to God, that what we have taken out of ourselves by humiliation, we may recover it in God. Therefore humility is such a grace, that though it make us nothing in ourselves, yet doth it carry us to God, who is all in all. Humiliation works between God and ourselves, and makes the heart leave itself, to plant and pitch itself upon God, and looks for comfort and assurance from him. And where there is not this there is no true humiliation. There is nothing more profitable in the world than humility, because, though it seem to have nothing, yet it carrieth the soul to him that fills all in all. Hence it is, that there is an abasing of ourselves for anything that we have done amiss, from love to God and love to his people, but yet it is joined with hope. We know God to be a gracious God unto us, and therefore we humble ourselves, and are grieved for offending of him.

6. A sixth difference between true humiliation and false is this, That hypocrites are sorrowful for the judgment, that is upon them; but not for that which is the cause of the judgment, which is sin; but the child of God, he is humbled for sin, which is the cause of all judgments. As good Josiah, when he heard read out of Deuteronomy the curses threatened for sin, and comparing the sins of his people with the sins against which the curses were threatened, he humbled himself for his sin and the sins of his people. For God's children know, if there were no iniquity in them, there should no

adversity hurt them; and therefore they run to the cause, and are humbled for that. Whereas the wicked, they humble themselves only because of the smart and trouble which they do endure.

7. The last difference between true humiliation and false is this, that true humiliation is a thorough humiliation. Therefore it is twice repeated in this verse, 'thou didst humble thyself before God;' when thou heardest the words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, 'and humbledst thyself before me.' It is twice repeated in this verse, and afterward expressed by 'rending of clothes,' and 'tears.' It was thorough humiliation. For he dwelt upon the humbling of his own soul. So that the children of God thoroughly humble themselves, but the hypocrite, when he doth humble himself, it is not thoroughly. They count it a light matter. As soon as the judgment is off, they have forgotten their humiliation, as Pharaoh did. Many will heave a few sighs, and hang down the head like a bulrush for a time; but it is, like Ephraim's morning dew, quickly gone. They have no sound and thorough humiliation. It is but a mere offer of humiliation. Whereas the children of God, when they begin, they never cease working upon their own hearts with meditation, until they have brought their heart to a blessed temper, as we see in David, Ezra, Hezekiah, and Daniel, how they did humble themselves.

But why do God's children take pains in humbling themselves?

Partly because it must be done to purpose, else God will not accept it; and partly because there is a great deal of hardness and pride in the best, and much ado before a man can be brought for to humble himself. Therefore we must labour for this. We see what ado there was before Job could be brought to humble himself. Yet Job must be humbled before there comes 'one of a thousand' to comfort him, as Job xxxiii. 23. If a man be once thoroughly and truly humbled, he shall soon have comfort. By these marks we may know' true humiliation from an humiliation counterfeit.

Quest. But here may arise another question, How may we know when we are humbled enough, or when we are grieved enough?

Ans. To this I answer, 1. That there is not the same measure of humiliation required in all. For those whom God did pick out for some great work, he doth more humble them than others, as he did Moses and Paul before he wrought the great work of converting the Gentiles. So David, before he came to be king, was a long time humbled.

2. Again, There are others that have been greater sinners, and more openly wicked in their courses than others, and in them a greater measure of humiliation is required.

3. Again, There are others that are more tenderly brought up from childhood, who have often renewed their repentance. These need not to be humbled so much as others; for humiliation should be proportionable unto the sinful estate of the soul; which because it differs in divers men, in like manner their humiliation ought to differ. But to answer the question more directly, we are said to be humbled enough,

1. First, When we have wrought our souls to a hearty grief that we have offended God, when we have a perfect and inward hatred of all sin, and when thou dost shew the truth of thy grief by leaving off thy sinful courses. So that, dost thou hate and leave thy sinful course? Then thou art sufficiently humbled. Go away with peace and comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee. Therefore it is not a slight humiliation that will serve the turn, but our hearts must be wrought unto a perfect hatred and leaving of all sins; for if this be not, we are not sufficiently humbled as yet. And when we find ourselves to hate and leave sin in some measure, then fasten our souls by faith, as much as may be, upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. For the soul hath two eyes, the one to look upon itself and our vileness, to humble us the more; the other, to fasten upon the mercy of God in Christ, to raise up our souls. For if the whole soul were fastened upon its own misery and vileness, then there could not be that humiliation which ought to be, neither could we serve God with such cheerfulness; therefore we must have our souls raised up to God's mercy. How let us labour for the first, because the devil is so main an enemy unto it; for he knows well enough, that so much as we are humble and go out of ourselves to God, and rest upon him, so much we stand impregnable against his temptations, that he cannot prevail against us; and so much as we do not trust in God, but upon the creature, so much must we lie open to his snares.

Therefore all his temptations tend to draw us to trust in the creature, to have a conceit of ourselves, and to draw our hearts from relying upon God. His first plot is always to make us rest in ourselves. Therefore let us labour to go out of ourselves, to see a vanity in ourselves, and a happiness in God, that so going out of ourselves, and relying upon God and his mercies, we may stand safe against Satan's temptations.

Use. This should teach us to take heed of such affections as tend directly contrary to humiliation; for how can it be but that those should be proud, that hold the doctrine of the Church of Borne, as, first, that we have no original sin in us, but it is taken away by baptism; that we are able to fulfil the law fully in this life. This is presumptuous. Whereas Paul cries out after baptism, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!' Rom. vii. 24. Nay, they can do more, namely, works of supererogation, whereby they merit heaven. How do these blow up the heart of man, and make it swell with pride! This must needs make men very proud, to think that a man can merit by works. With such blasphemous opinions they have infected the world, and led captive millions of souls into hell. Therefore let this be a rule of discerning true religion; for surely that is true religion which doth make us go out of ourselves; that takes away all from ourselves and gives all the glory to God; which makes us to plead for salvation by the mercy of God through the merits of Christ. But our religion doth teach us thus. Therefore it is the true religion, and will yield us sound comfort at the last. Thus much for inward humiliation, the humbling of ourselves, as Josiah did.

III. The Art of Mourning

But because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.—2 Chron. XXXIV. 27.

As the waters issuing from the sanctuary, mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel, grew deeper and deeper; first to the ankles, then to the knees, and after to the loins, until it came to an overflowing river, so hath it fared with us in handling of this text; wherein, from tenderness of heart, we have waded deeper and deeper through the mysteries of humiliation in the inward man, until at length from thence we are broken forth to the outward expressions of Josiah's inward humiliation, his 'rending of his clothes,' and overflowing floods of 'tears;' which sprung partly from his apprehension of ruin at hand, to come upon God's sanctuary, and partly from the sorrow and sense of sin in himself and the people, as causes of his fear.

But to come to the text now read in your hearing, ‘And didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me,’ here we have set down the outward expression of Josiah’s inward humiliation.

For true humiliation shews itself as well outwardly as inwardly. Now, the outward expression of his inward affection is set down in two things:

1. By rending of his clothes; 2. By his weeping.

No doubt but he did express his sorrow as well by words as by these gestures, although they be not here set down with the other; for he might for the time be surprised with so great a measure of sorrow and grief, as could not be expressed presently at that instant, or we may conceive that for the time he was so thoroughly humbled, that he could not speak orderly. Wherefore God did regard and look more to his affections and tears than to his words, for he rent his clothes and wept before God. As it is written of the poor publican, that he could not say much, and looked down with his eyes, saying, ‘Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,’ Luke xviii. 13; and as it was with the poor woman in the gospel who came to Christ weeping, and washed his feet with her tears, yet she said nothing, Luke vii. 38; and as when Christ, upon the cock’s third crowing, looked upon Peter, we find not what he said, but that he went out and wept bitterly, Luke xxii. 61, 62; so here, we may imagine Josiah’s affection was too full of sorrow to speak distinctly and composedly; for from a troubled soul can proceed nothing but troubled words; from a broken heart comes broken language. But howsoever, likely it is that Josiah did speak somewhat; for God saith, ‘I have even also heard thee.’ But to leave this and come to the outward expressions here set down, let us learn somewhat from his rending of his clothes and weeping.

‘Rending of clothes’ was a thing frequently used in old times, as we see in the Scriptures; and it was a visible representation of the inward sorrow of the heart. Job rent his clothes, Job i. 20; his friends rent their clothes, Job ii. 12; Paul and Barnabas rent theirs, Acts xiv. 14; the high priest rent his clothes, being to accuse Christ, Mark xiv. 63; and Hezekiah rent his clothes when he heard the words of Rabshakeh, Isa. xxxvii. 1. Nay, this was a common action, and frequently used among the heathen also; for they likewise, upon any disastrous accident, were used to rend their clothes; as we read of a heathen king, that having his city invaded round about with enemies, rent his clothes. So that it hath been the custom both of God’s church and also of heathen, to rend their clothes. But what is the ground or reason of this? The reason of such their rending of clothes was, because that

in their sorrow they thought themselves unworthy to wear any. They forgat all the comforts of this life; as holy Josiah forgets his estate, his throne, his royal majesty, and crown. He looks up to the great God, and considers duly whom he stood under, and the miserable estate of the people, over whom he was governor; and thereupon he rends his clothes, shewing hereby that he was unworthy of those ornaments wherewith he was covered. We know that clothes have divers uses; as,

1. First, For necessity, to cover our nakedness, and to preserve from the injuries of the weather.

2. Secondly, Clothes are given for distinction of sexes and degrees: to know the great man from the mean, the woman from the man.

3. And lastly, They serve for ornaments to honour our vile flesh, which is so base that it must fetch ornaments from base creatures. Now, so far as they served for ornaments, he rent his clothes, as thinking himself unworthy of any garments; for he being in grief doth rend his clothes, thinking with himself, why should I stand upon clothes and outward things to cover me? God is angry. Till he be appeased I will take no pleasure in any earthly thing. Therefore, apprehending the wrath of God, he rent his clothes. Well, this is but an outward expression, and therefore it must proceed from inward truth. This rending of clothes was a national ceremony, which seeing we have not used amongst us, we must rend our hearts with grief. For the rending of clothes shews the rending of the heart before, without which there is no acceptance with God; for the rending of the clothes without the rending of the heart is but hypocrisy; as Joel ii. 13, he says, 'Rend your hearts, and not your garments, ye hypocrites.' So that outward expressions of sorrow are no further good, than when they come from inward grief and affection. Now, when both these are joined together it is a comely thing; for wherein stands comeliness but when all the parts of our body do agree in proportion, when one limb is not bigger than another? So it is uncomely and an hypocritical thing for a man to have all outward expression and yet to have no inward grief. This is but acting of humiliation, when we hang down the head like a bulrush, and the heart is not sound. But outward expressions are good when the heart is grieved to purpose; when they proceed from inward humiliation.

Quest. And why ought this to be?

Ans. Because both body and soul have a part in the action of sin. Therefore it is needful that they should be joined in humiliation for sin.

There is no sin of the body but the soul hath part in it, nor any sin in the soul but the body hath part in it. Therefore both body and soul should be humbled together. Labour then to have outward expressions and show's of sorrow come from a true sorrowful heart. There be two things in the religious actions of men.

1. There is the outward action or expression.
2. There is the inward, which gives life to the other.

The outward is easy, and subject to hypocrisy. It is an easy matter to rend clothes and to force tears, but it is a hard matter to afflict the soul. The heart of man taketh the easiest ways, and lets the hardest alone, thinking to please God with that. But God will not be served so; for he must have the inward affections, or else he doth abhor the outward actions. Therefore let us as well labour for humble hearts as humble gestures. We must rend our hearts and not our clothes, when we come into the presence of God. We must labour, as to shew humility, so to have humility, that so we be not like hypocrites, who make show of a great deal of devotion in carriage, but yet have none in heart; a great deal of outward humiliation, whereas they have none within.

The papists are wicked and erroneous in all their devotions, especially in the point of justification, and in other points of the worship of God; for is it not a superstitious error, to think to please God with outward observations, when they do not come from inward truth? Their religion is all an outside, consisting merely of outward performances. But true devotion, the Scripture teacheth, cometh from a heart judicially understanding the case of its own self; considering what a great God it hath to deal withal, a God full of glory and majesty. Doth God love blind sacrifices? No. Devotion must come from the heart, and spread itself from thence into the countenance and carriage. For then it is true, when the outward expression doth shew the inward disposition.

Use. This reproveth the negligence of people in these times. Where is their inward humiliation? Nay, where is their outward humiliation? In popery, there is an acting of humiliation. They whip themselves in their bodies, and other such outward fooleries and gestures they have in their hypocritical devotions. Thus do they in some sort humble themselves. But how few are there amongst us that humble themselves in apprehension of their own misery, who yet, if they look to their own persons, have cause enough! Yea,

and how few are there that are humbled for the miseries of the church abroad! Where shall we find a mourning soul?

Well, seeing it is not a custom amongst us to rend our clothes, yet let us make conscience of being proud in apparel; for it is a wicked and a fearful thing when men will regard some wicked and foolish fashion, and set more by it than by God's favour, threatenings, and judgments abroad. Many there are that, instead of rending their clothes, come into God's house to shew their bravery; to see and to be seen. Where they should most of all humble themselves, there they come to shew their pride, oven before God. Whereas they should come to hear the voice of the great God of heaven, and stand in his presence, who is a 'consuming fire.' Before whom the very angels cover their faces and the earth trembles, they, contrariwise, come to outface and provoke him with their pride. We see Josiah, though he were a king, he rent his clothes, forgot all his bravery, "and considers himself not so much a king over the people, over whom God had set him, as a subject to God. Wherefore, though, as I said, the custom of rending of clothes be not used in our church, yet let us ever make conscience of rending our hearts, and so to make our peace with God, as this good king did. It follows; —

'And weptest before me.'

In which words is set down the second outward expression of Josiah's inward humiliation, which is 'weeping.' This came nearer to him than rending of clothes, for it touched his body. Hence, in a word, observe,

Doct. 1. That the body and soul must join together in the action of humiliation, for the soul and body go together in the acting of sin, therefore they must go together in humiliation. As they were both made by God, and redeemed by Christ, so they sin and practise good together. Now I will shew three ways wherein the soul and body have communion one with another, whereby it may appear how reasonable and fitting a thing it is they should be both humbled together.

1. First, The soul and body have communion together by way of impression or information; for sensible things have an impression upon the senses, and so come into the soul; for nothing comes into it but through the senses of the body; because, though the soul may imagine golden mountains, and things that it never saw, yet the working of the soul depends upon the body, for the body informs it of all outward objects. As the body is beholding to the soul for the ruling and guiding of it, so the soul is beholding

to the body for many things; as now in the very sacrament, God helps the soul with the senses; Christ, as it were, in the sacrament enters through the senses more lively than in the preaching of the word, for there he enters in by the ears, but in the sacrament he is seen, tasted, handled, felt. So that the soul and body have communion together by way of information.

2. Secondly, The soul and body have communion together by way of temptation; for the soul standing in need of many outward things which are pleasing and delightful, and having sympathy with the body, it is led away by the body. Outward objects are pleasing to the senses of carnal men. Now these passing through the senses into the soul, it is led away, and so they become a dangerous temptation.

3. Thirdly, The soul and the body have communion together, both in sinful and in good actions, by way of subjection or execution; for God hath made the body, with the parts thereof, to be the instruments and weapons of the soul. The body is a house wherein the soul is kept. It is a shop for the soul. Now the soul useth the body, with the members thereof, as instruments or weapons, either to honour God or dishonour him. The wicked fight against God with all the members of their body, with their eyes, tongue, feet, hands. Now the body having thus a part in sin, as well as the soul, therefore it is necessary that the body and soul should join together in humiliation.

Caution. Here we must take heed of a notable sleight of the devil in popery. The papists think the body only in fault for sin, and therefore they humble and afflict their bodies for it, while they puff up their soul with pride, a conceit of merit and satisfaction. They are falsely humble and truly proud, while they afflict the body and omit the soul. They are falsely humbled, because they humble their body only; but truly proud, because they think by afflicting and humbling their bodies to merit. But let us take heed of this gross error, and remember to let both soul and body join in the work.

Doct. 2. The second thing here to be noted is, that when God will afflict or humble a man, it is not a kingdom that will save him. As Josiah, though he were a monarch,—for he was an absolute monarch,—yet if God threaten, his kingdom can do him no good. If God will abase men, whether they be his children or enemies, it is not a kingdom can protect them. When God shewed Belshazzar the handwriting upon the wall, he could take no comfort in anything, Dan. v. 5; yea, his dear children, if he shew but tokens of his displeasure against them, though they be kings, as Josiah was, yet he can

humble them. If God roar, it is not their greatness can keep them; if not now, yet he will make them to tremble hereafter.

Doct. 3. The third thing here that we learn from the example of Josiah, being a king, is, That tears and mourning for sin, when it comes from inward grief, is a temper well befitting any man. It is a carriage befitting a king. It is not unbecoming any, of what sex or degree soever. It is no womanish or base thing. When one hath to deal with God, he must forget his estate and take the best way to meet with God. This is evident by many instances, for David, though a man of war, yet when he had to deal with God he watered his couch with his tears, Ps. vi. 6. So Hezekiah, though a great king, yet he humbled himself, Isa. xxxviii. 1, seq. Nay, our blessed Saviour himself did it 'with strong cries and tears,' Heb. v. 7, when he had to deal with God.

Use. This serves for the justification of this holy abasement and humbling of ourselves. When we have to deal with God, then all abasement is little enough. 'I will be yet more vile than thus,' saith holy David, 2 Sam. vi. 22. So let us say when we have to deal with God; I will be yet more vile, and so cast ourselves down before the Lord. All expression of devotion is little enough, so it be without hypocrisy. Yet I pray give me leave once again to give warning unto you concerning outward actions, for most have conceived wrong of devotion and humiliation. They think that devotion is only in outward actions; as in outward act to hear a little, to read, confer, or pray a little, whereas in truth these outward acts do only make up the body of devotion, which, without the soul, namely, the inward religious affection, looking unto God, is no better than a dead carrion. Our outward expression must come from the apprehension of the goodness, mercy, and justice of God, before whom the very angels veil their faces. It is not outward devotion that will serve the turn, as to come to the church with this bare conceit and forethought; I will go pray, and kneel, and express all outward carriage, in the meantime neglecting to stir up the soul to worship God with these or like thoughts; I will go to the place where God is, where his truth is, where his angels are, to hoar that word whereby I shall be judged at the last day. Therefore let all holy actions come from within first, and thence to the outward man. Let us work upon our hearts a consideration of the goodness, justice, majesty, and mercy of God, and then let there be an expression in body, such as may bring men off from their sins; for else there is a spirit of superstition that will draw men far from God in seeming services, conceiving that God will accept of outward and formal expressions only. "Well, we see that weeping and mourning for sins is a carriage not unbecoming for a king.

Therefore it is a desperate madness not to humble ourselves and be abased, now we have to deal with God. Your desperate atheists of the world will not tremble at threatenings, nor humble themselves till death comes, which humbles them and makes them tremble; whereas, on the contrary, that soul which, feeling the wrath of God, humbles itself betimes, and trembles at threatenings, that soul, I say,—when the great judgment of death comes, and appearance before God,—looks death in the face with comfort; whereas your desperate atheists, that can now scorn God, swear at every word, and blaspheme God to his face; let God but shew his displeasure, they tremble and quake upon any noise of fear. Therefore when we have to deal with God, it is wisdom, and the ground of all courage, to humble and abase ourselves with fear, as Josiah did although he were a king.

‘And thou didst weep before me.’

His tender heart did melt itself into tears. In the first clause of the verse you have his tender heart set down, and here we have the melting of the tender heart. There we have the cloud, here we have the shower. Therefore I will speak something of the original of tears. We know that tears are strained from the inward parts, through the eyes; for the understanding first conceiveth cause of grief upon the heart, after which the heart sends up matter of grief to the brain, and the brain being of a cold nature, doth distil it down into tears; so that if the grief be sharp and piercing, there will follow tears after from most. But to come to the particulars; we see the provoking cause of tears, from without, in Josiah, was the danger of his kingdom, hearing the judgment of God threatened against his country and place. Whence, for the instruction of magistrates, I will enforce this point.

Doct. 4. That it concerns magistrates above all others, to take to heart any danger whatsoever, that is upon their people; for as kings are set above all other people in place, so they should be above them in goodness and grace. They ought, above all others, to take to heart any judgment, either upon them already, or feared; as good Josiah did, whom, while he looked not so much to himself and his own good, as to that state whereof he was king, the very threatenings of judgment against it, made to express his grief with tears. The bond that knits the king to the people, and the people to the king, requires this; for kings are heads, and shepherds over the people. Now the shepherd watcheth over his flock; the head is quickly sensible of any hurt of the body; all the senses are provident for the body. So it should be with all great persons in authority. They should cherish the good estate of the

subjects as their own; for they are committed to their care. And even as the head doth care for the body, and forecast for it, so those that are in authority should forecast for any good to the body of the commonwealth. An excellent example of this we have in holy David; who, when there was a judgment coming upon his people, Lord, saith he, let the judgment come upon me and my father's house; what have these sheep done?' 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. And surely such magistrates as are tenderly affected with the case of those under them, shall lose nothing by it; for the people likewise will carry a tender affection towards them again. As we see, when the people went to fight against Absalom, they would not let David go with them, but they said to him, 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us,' 2 Sam. xviii. 3; that is, they had rather that ten thousand of them should die in the battle, than that David should have any hurt come to him; so he lost nothing for his love and affection towards the people, for they shewed the like love to him in his distress. So likewise when Josiah was dead, the people wept largely for him (for with him perished all the glory of that flourishing kingdom), as we may read in the story, 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25, compared with Zech. xii. 11. They mourned for him with an exceeding great mourning, in Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo. So that there is no love lost between the magistrate and the people; for if the magistrate be tenderly affected to them, the people will likewise weep for him again, and lament his case in his distress. But now to come to a more general instruction, we will leave speaking of Josiah as king, and take him into consideration as an holy man, and make him a pattern unto us all, of whatsoever civil condition we be; and so we learn this point,

Doct. 5. That it is the duty of every Christian to take to heart the threatenings of God against the place and people where he doth live; to take to heart the afflictions and miseries of the church and commonwealth, the grievances of others as well as his own. The mourning and weeping of Josiah was for the estate of the church, when he heard the judgment threatened against the place and inhabitants thereof. There be tears of compassion for ourselves and for others. There were both of them in Josiah; for no doubt but he wept for himself and his own sins, and over and above his own had special tears of compassion for his people. Thus then it becomes a Christian that will have the reward of Josiah, to abase his heart as he did for the estate of the church. Good Nehemiah took to heart the grief of his country. The joy of his own preferment did not so much glad him, as the grief for his nation the Jews cast him down. What joy can a true heart have, now the church of God is in affliction? We are all of one house. When one part of the house is a-fire, the other part had need to look to itself. There were many

things wrought upon the heart of Josiah, which caused him to weep; so there are many causes should move us, as the seeing of the sins that are committed in the land ought to make us grieve, and to express our grief one way or other. And the love of Christ, were it in us, would make us mourn; as when we hear God blasphemed, and his name dishonoured, and when we see the people bent to idolatry; how can this but break even a heart of stone, nay, a gracious heart will mourn and weep for the judgment of God upon wicked men, considering them as men, and as the creatures of God. Thus Christ wept for the wicked Jews in Jerusalem, though they were his enemies: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' &c., Luke xix. 41; and so good Jeremiah, though he were ill used, and exceedingly abused by the people, yet he saith, 'Oh that my head were water, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for them,' Jer. ix. 1. Though they had wronged, persecuted, and counted him a contentious fellow, only because he taught the truth of God; yet such was the affection of tender-hearted Jeremiah, that he desired that he might weep day and night for them. But continual weeping must have a lasting spring affording continual issues of tears, which Jeremiah not finding in himself (such is the dryness of every man's heart, that it is soon emptied of tears), and thereupon fearing he should not weep enough, he doth earnestly desire it, and if hearty wishes may obtain, he would have it to be supplied with a plentiful measure of tears in his lamentation for the ensuing calamity of his people: 'O that mine head were a well of water, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!'

Quest. But why did not Jeremiah rather pray that they had a fountain of tears to weep for themselves?

Ans. Because he, knowing the hardness of their hearts, thought it to no end to entreat them to weep for themselves. Their hearts were harder than the nether millstone. They never desired it, yet he weeps for them. Thus we see how godly men have been formerly affected, and [that] it is our duty even to weep and mourn for the very wicked. We have matter enough of lamentation and weepings at this day, if we look abroad; and at home, if we look to judgments felt and feared, we have cause to weep, before the decree come out against us. Therefore we should meet God beforehand. It is no thank for a man to be humbled when the judgment is come upon him; but when we can weep before the judgment is come, it is a sign of faith. Happy were we if faith could make us do that which sense makes wicked men to do. If the believing of the judgment before it come would make us seek unto

God, Oh how God would love such a one! This should teach us every one to mourn; and indeed a Christian soul cannot but do it, and that for divers reasons.

1. First, Because of that sympathy between the Head and the members. A Christian hath the spirit of Christ, who takes to heart the miseries of the church. Now, can that spirit of Christ be in any, and he not affected as Christ in heaven is affected? Surely no.

2. Again, It must needs be so in regard of the communion which is between the members of the body. We are all a part of one mystical body, whereof Christ is the head. What member can he be of this body that doth not take to heart the miseries of the other members? There is want of life where there is no sense of misery.

3. Thirdly, Where there is true grace there will be weeping and mourning for the church, in regard of the insolency of the church's enemies and their blasphemous speeches. Where is now their God? their religion? What is now become of their Reformation? What child can hear the reproach and dishonour of God his Father without bowels of compassion?

4. Again, A gracious man will weep in regard of the danger of not mourning; for by not mourning we have a kind of guilt lying upon us, for we make the sins and miseries of the church our own, as Paul tells the Corinthians, reprovng them for not mourning, 1 Cor. v. 2. Therefore as we are a part of the body, so we must have a part of the shame and grief. Again, God hath promised to mark- and single out all those that mourn for the sins of the time; therefore, on the contrary, those that do not mourn are in a dangerous estate, Ezek. ix. 4.

5. Again, We must add reformation unto lamentation, else the whole church and commonwealth is in danger. If Achan be not sought out and punished, the whole state is in danger, and lies open to the wrath of God.

For these reasons we ought to take to heart the sins and miseries of the times; for the Spirit of God is in every Christian, that will not suffer him otherwise to be, than to weep and mourn for his own sins, and for the sins and miseries of others.

Use 1. If this be so, what will become of those that take not to heart nor mourn for the miseries of the church? that judge not aright of the poor, but

censure the judgment of the afflicted, add affliction to the afflicted and misery to the miserable? What shall we say to those that are so far from helping God, that they help the enemies of God, and are grieved at the heart to hear any cause of comfort on the church's part? whose hearts it doth joy to hear of any overthrow on the church's side? Such false hearts there are, and many that are glad of the sins of others, thinking thereby to hide their own wicked courses. These men are far from mourning. Let our souls also be far from entering into their secrets.

Use 2. If this be so, that holy men ought to take to heart and weep for the judgments of the commonwealth, both felt and feared, and also for the judgment of God upon the churches abroad, then Quest. How may we get this weeping and mourning for others? I answer,

Ans. 1. First, Remove the impediments that hinder; as, first, a hard and stony heart, which is opposite to tenderness. Josiah had a melting heart, and therefore it was soon dissolved into tears. Our hearts are worse than brass or stone, for workmen can work upon them; but nothing will work upon the hard heart of man. All the judgments in the world will not work upon it; for all the Israelites saw the judgments of God in Egypt, and all his mercies and blessings unto them in the wilderness, yet it would not work upon them, because they had hard hearts. Therefore let us get a good spring of tears, that is, a soft and tender heart, and let us beg it of God, for it is his promise to give us tender hearts; and then there will be an easy expression of it in the outward man.

2. The second, Let us beware of the love of earthly things, and get a heart truly loving towards God; for love is compared to fire; and fire, among many other properties it hath, melts the gold, and makes it pliable. Heat is the organ of the soul, whereby it doth anything, and the instrument of nature. So spiritual heat, a warm soul, warmed with the love of God and of our Christian brethren, will make the heart pliable, and melt into tears. Therefore get a loving heart, filled with love to God and Christian brethren, that we may mortify self-love, which dries up the soul. There can be no melting in such a self-loved soul. Let us therefore labour for spiritual love, to cross and subdue carnal self-love. It is this blessed heat that must send forth this heavenly water of tears; it is the spirit of love that must yield this distillation from the broken heart; this works all heavenly affection in us. Therefore Christ compriseth all the commandments under love. And indeed that is all.

3. Thirdly, If we would have our souls fit to grieve, let us be content to see as much as ice can, with our own eyes, the miseries of others. The best way to weep is to enter into the house of mourning, and set before our eyes the afflictions of others. The very sight of misery is a means to make the soul weep. And let us be willing to hear that which we cannot see; as Nehemiah was content to hear, nay, to inquire, concerning the church abroad; and when he heard that it was not well with them, it made him weep. Every man will cry, What news? But where is the man, when he hears of the news beyond the seas, that sends up sighs to God? prayer, that he would take pity upon his church? It is a good way to use our senses, to help our souls to grieve.

4. Again, Let us read of the estate of God's church, what it hath been from the beginning of the world; what miseries God's children have endured in former ages by reason of war and the like, that so we may work grief upon our own hearts. We have always matter of grief while we are in this world; if we look abroad, we shall find matter of mourning. And surely we should labour to mourn if we desire to be blessed. For 'blessed are they that mourn: they shall be comforted,' Mat. v. 4.

5. Fifthly, That we may get this weeping and mourning, let us work this tender affection upon our own hearts. The soul hath a faculty to work upon itself. Therefore let us shame ourselves for our own deadness, dryness, and spiritual barrenness this way, that we can yield no sighs, no tears for God, for his church and glory. Let us reason thus with our souls: If I should lose my wife, or child, or my estate, this naughty heart of mine would weep and he grieved; but now there is greater cause of mourning for myself and the church of God, and yet I cannot grieve. Augustine saith he could weep for her that killed herself out of love to him, but he could not weep for his own want of love to God. We have many that will weep for the loss of friends, wealth, and such like things, but let them lose God's favour, he in such an estate there is but one step between them and hell, they are never grieved nor moved at it. Therefore, seeing they do not weep for themselves, let us weep for them. Can we weep when we see a man hurt in his body, and ought we not much more for the danger of his soul? Therefore let us work this sorrow upon our hearts. Now, we are to receive the sacrament, which is a feast, and therefore must be eaten cheerfully. The passover was a banquet, and therefore to be eaten with joy, but withal it was used to be eaten with sour herbs. So must it be in this blessed banquet which God hath provided for our souls. There must be sorrow as well as joy. It is a mixed action, and therefore it must be eaten with sour herbs, presenting to the eyes of our

mind the object of the old Adam; thinking upon the vileness of our nature, that have such filthy speeches, disobedient actions, such rebellious thoughts in us. Great need have I of the mercy and favour of God to look upon such a defiled soul as I am. And also, having in the eyes of our soul Christ crucified, look upon Christ, which is crucified in the sacrament, sacramentally. What was that which broke the body of Christ? Was it not sin? That sin which I so often cherish, this pride, this envy, unbelief, and hypocrisy, this covetousness of mind was that which put Christ into such torment. It was not the nails, but my sins. The sacrament must work upon our hearts so as to work grief in us. We must weep as the people did for Josiah, according as God hath promised we should do. It is said, Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced by their sins, and weep and mourn for him as one that mourneth for his only son.' So then, the sacrament is not only a matter of joy and thanks, but a matter of sorrow. Therefore, if we would joy in the sacrament, let us first be humbled for sin, and then joy in it afterwards.

Obj. But here it might be objected, Are we not bid for to rejoice always? and always to be thankful? 1 Thes. v. 16. Then how can these agree? for weeping and mourning are contrary to thanksgiving and joy.

Ans. To this I answer, that the estate of a Christian in this life is a mixed estate, both inward and outward; his outward estate and the inward disposition of the soul is mixed. Therefore, having this mixed estate, our carriage must be answerable; as we have always cause of mourning and rejoicing both from that in us and from without us, therefore a Christian ought to rejoice always, and in some measure to mourn always. As, for example,

A Christian hath cause of mourning within him when he looks upon his sinful nature and the sins which he doth daily commit, yet notwithstanding, at the same time, there is cause of joy, and great reason to bless God, when he considers that God hath pardoned his sins in Christ. Thus the apostle did, Rom. vii. 24; when he looked upon himself and his own vileness, he cries out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!' yet for all this, at the same time he rejoiceth and blesseth God: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord, who hath freed me from the law of sin and of death.' Thus, you see, we have always in respect of ourselves both cause of joy and mourning, therefore we must do both. So have we in like manner continual causes both of joy and sorrow from without us, if we look to the church of God: of joy, in regard there is a God in heaven who

hath an eye to his church, who pitieth it and tendereth it as the apple of his eye; that takes to heart the afflictions of it; that will be glorious in the midst of the troubles of his people, by upholding, comforting, and turning all to the best for them;—of sorrow also, in respect of the miseries under which the church of God doth groan, of which we are bound to take notice, and so to weep with them that weep, Isa. xxii. 12; Amos vi. 6; Rom. xii. 15. You see the rare mixture of joy and sorrow in a Christian, whereby he is made capable of this great privilege, as neither to be swallowed up of grief, because that his sorrow proceeds from a heart where there is cause of joy, nor to lose himself in excessive joy, because he always sees in himself cause of sorrow. Now, as it is to be seen in other mixtures that there is not at all times an equal quantity or portion of each particular thing to be mingled, but now more of the one, and at another time more of the other, according as the cause doth vary, so is it in this mixture of joy and sorrow for ourselves and for others; sometimes joy must abound with the causes of it, and sometimes sorrow with its causes doth superabound. It will be worth our inquiry, therefore, to know when to joy most, and when to weep most, which we shall know by God's call in outward occasions, and by the spirit of discretion within us, which will guide us. For God hath given his children a spirit of discretion, that will teach them when to joy and when to weep most. As God calls to mourning now in these times that the church of God is in misery, as he calls for sighs for the afflictions of Joseph, so the spirit of discretion within us doth tell us what to do.

Quest. Yet here may be a question, How shall we know when to cease and leave off mourning? for the soul is a finite thing, and cannot dwell upon one action always, because it hath many things to do; and therefore it cannot always mourn nor always rejoice.

Am. To this I answer, that we have mourned enough, and discharged our duty sufficiently therein, when we have overcome our hearts, and brought them to a temper of mourning, and have complained before God, spread the ill of the times before him, and entreated pity from him, having poured out ourselves in prayer, though short, yet effectual. When we have this done, then we have discharged our duty in mourning, and may turn to other occasions as God doth require of us; for when we have mourned and wept, then we must look upon causes of rejoicing and thanksgiving. We must always remember so to mourn and weep that yet notwithstanding, looking upon God's blessing upon us both in kingdom, state, and our own particular persons, we may be excited to thankfulness; for we must not always be

sullen, looking upon the evil, but casting our eyes upon the good things we do enjoy, we must provoke ourselves to be thankful. Even as men that have their eyes dazzled will look upon some green colour to recover their sight again, so when we have wrought upon our souls and brought them to mourn, then to help and raise them up, we ought to look upon causes of joy and thankfulness. We have cause of thankfulness when we consider that many churches in France and other places are invaded by enemies, oppressed with cruelty, and deprived of liberty, while yet we enjoy the liberty and free passage of the gospel, being freed from the destruction of war and pestilence, which devoureth so many that it makes the land to mourn. He continueth to us liberty to hear the word, and gives us many blessings which others have not. Nay, we have cause to bless God for freeing us from that terriblest judgment of all judgments,—which makes both church and commonwealth to mourn,—because he doth not suffer us to fall into the hands of man, but takes us into his own hand to correct. It is God's infinite mercy that he doth not humble us by our enemies, but takes us into his own hand. Therefore let us not provoke him, lest he give us up to the hands of our merciless enemies, which is a terrible judgment. We had better an hundred times meet him by repentance, and cast ourselves into his hands, for then we have only to deal with a merciful God; but when we are to deal with merciless men that scorn the gospel, then we have both God and them to deal with, which doubles our affection.

Therefore let us mourn, seeing we have cause, for ourselves and the estates of others; but yet let us be thankful, for if we would be more thankful for God's benefits, we should have them longer continued. For, as prayer begs blessings, so thanksgiving continues them. As the best way to obtain good things is prayer and mourning, so the best way to preserve them is thanksgiving and rejoicing. So, then, we have plainly seen that Christians should not always be dumpish and look sourly, but they must as well rejoice and be thankful, as mourn and weep.

Quest. 1. But here, ere I proceed, I must answer some cases of conscience. As, first, What shall we say to those souls that cannot weep for the sins and miseries of the church, and therefore complain for the want of it?

Secondly, What shall we say to that soul that can weep, but more for outward than for spiritual things?

Sol. 1. To the first I answer briefly, that we must not speak friar-like of tears, and never know from whence they come. But when we speak of weeping, we must always understand that tears are no further good than when they spring from sorrow and love within, than when they proceed from inward hatred to sin, and from fear and love to the church of God. If this be in a man, the matter is not much for tears. There may be weeping without true sorrow, as there was in Esau for the blessing, Gen. xxvii. 38; and so the Jews, they could weep and howl upon their beds when there was a famine, yet there was no sound sorrow in them.

And, on the contrary, there may be true sorrow without weeping, yea, and such may it be that there can be no weeping, because their sorrow may be so great that it is rather an astonishment than a weeping. In a fresh wound in the body, at the first there is not such pain felt nor the blood seen, because the part is astonished only; so the soul for a time may be in such an astonishment and grief that there may be no expression of tears. Again, the soul doth follow the temperature of the body. Some are of a more easy constitution to shed tears than others, so that there may be more grief where there are fewest tears.

But to come to the question more directly, we ought to think our estates not so good as they should be, if we cannot at one time or other weep for the sins and miseries of the church. If we can shed tears for outward things at one time or other, and cannot weep for spiritual, it is a bad sign; for certainly, one time or other ordinarily God's children express their sorrow for their sins, and the estate of the church, by tears. They either have tears for spiritual respects, or else they mourn that they cannot mourn, grieve that they cannot grieve, and desire that they might mourn and that they could weep. They wish with Jeremiah that their head were a fountain of tears, they wish they might have their bodies to answer the intent of their soul, that so they might largely express outwardly their inward grief. As Jeremiah feared he should not have tears enough, therefore wished that his head were a fountain of tears, so they desire, Oh that I could mourn, and that I could weep!

Sol. 2. But what shall we say to those that can weep for other things? Shall they be condemned for hypocrites?

1. I answer, No; for a torrent may run faster for the present than a continual current; so on the sudden there may be tears and grief for outward things, but yet grief for sin is more because of the continuance thereof. For sin is a continual cause of sorrow. Whereas sorrow for outward things is but

on a sudden, as it was in David when he cried, ‘Oh my son Absalom, my son Absalom!’ 2 Sam. xviii. 33. What ado is here on the sudden for Absalom! but yet he wept for his sins more, because that was a continual grief. So in a Christian, there may be some sudden passion, when he may seem to weep and grieve most for outward things, but yet his grief for sin and the misery of the church is more, because it is a continual grief.

2. Again, Spiritual grief comes from spiritual causes. Tears for sin, and for the church of God, do issue merely from spiritual grounds; whereas in natural grief for outward things, we have both the Spirit and nature that make us grieve. Now when both these meet together, they carry the soul strongly, as in a stream. So that there must needs be more tears and grief for outward things. As when the windows of heaven were opened from above, and the foundations below were broken up, there must needs follow a great flood, Gen. vii. 11; so when we have the Spirit from above, and our nature below, there must of necessity be a great grief for outward things. But yet in these cases, a little of spiritual sorrow is better than a great deal of natural, for spiritual grief fats the soul. As the river Nile runs through Egypt, and fats the land, so this heavenly water of tears and grief fattens the soul, and makes it fit for all holy services. They are both good, but one less than the other. Natural grief is allowable, which if a man have not, he is in a reprobate sense; for the apostle reckons this up as a great sin, that in the latter days men should be without natural affection. So then we see, that for this reason also there may be a great store of grief and tears for outward things.

3. Again, Let them that grieve that they cannot more grieve, know and comfort themselves, that they have the Spirit of God within them, which is an everlasting spring that will in time overcome all carnal and worldly respects whatsoever, and make the heart in a fit temper of weeping and grieving for spiritual respects.

Use. Well, if this be thus, what shall we think of the jovial people of the world, who are so far from this sorrow, that—when a man shall come and ask them when they wept for their sins, when they did ever mourn and send up sighs to God for their swearing, lying, profanation of God’s Sabbath, for the wrong they have done to others, or for any of their sins— the time was never yet wherein they ever shed a tear for sin, or had a sigh, groan, or mourning for sin? In what estate are we born in? All children of wrath, and heirs of damnation. But when got you out of this state? You have ever lived in jollity. Therefore as yet you are as you were born, a child of wrath. Do ye

think to reap, and never sow? to reap in joy, and never sow in tears? God puts all his children's tears in a bottle; but thou sparest God a labour, because thou never weepst. There are a company that engross all jollity and mirth, as if they had no cause to weep, whoso language yet when any man hears, and observes their courses and living in gross sins, he may quickly judge that they of all others have most cause to weep, though there be none more free from mourning, and though they seem to be the only men of the world. But I say to such, go weep, howl, and lament for your sins; for your peace is not yet made with God. Therefore never rest till thou hast got an assurance from heaven that thy sins are forgiven thee. Many people are angry because ministers tell them of this, but surely we must be damned if we do not.

Therefore, as any would hope for comfort, and have God to wipe away their tears from them in another world, let them work upon their hearts here, to shed tears for their own sins first, and then for the sins of the time; for their own first, I say, for a man must first be good in himself before he can be good to others; and then let their grief extend to their brethren even beyond the seas, to the forlorn estate of the church there.

Now the last thing that is noted in Josiah's weeping, is the sincerity of it. 'Thou hast wept before me that is, sincerely, before God. He sinned before him, and is humbled before him. There is nothing hid from his sight, not only open sins, but he knows the very thoughts of our hearts: therefore let us weep before him without hypocrisy. No matter whether the world see it or no; but let us weep before God, as the prophet saith, Jer. xiii. 17, 'My soul shall weep in secret for you, and mine eyes shall weep, and drop down tears in the night season.' Let us weep in secret before God; for this is without hypocrisy. Now follows the issue of his weeping and humbling of himself.

'I have even heard thee also,' saith the Lord.

In which words is set down God's gracious acceptance of Josiah's humiliation; which was not without his special observation. 'For I have even heard thee,' saith the Lord: so that it seems Josiah did utter some words of grief, because God saith, 'I have heard it. And we may the rather think so, because usually God's children do in their prayers add words unto their tears, as David and good Hezekiah did. Howsoever then his prayer was not a distinct prayer of a composed tenor of speech; yet it was a prayer, because that with these tears he did send up sighs, and groans, and uttered broken words from a broken heart. There was such a language in his heart that God did understand, for God understands the language of his own Spirit in the

hearts of his children. The Spirit knows what we mean, as Rom. viii. 25, 27. God hath an ear to hear our desires, our sighs and groans; for tears have the weight of a voice, they speak for us. Where there is true grief, many times there cannot come a composed tenor of speech; for a broken heart expresseth itself more in sighs, groans, and tears, than in words. Though we do not utter distinct words in a form of prayer, yet he hears our sighs and groans: his ears are open to the cries of his children. So we learn from hence, for our comfort against all Satan's temptations,

Doct. G. That God takes a particular notice, and understands the prayers we make unto him: he hears the groans of his children. So David saith, 'My groaning is not hid from thee,' Ps. xxxviii. 9. So the prophet says, Ps. cxv. 18, 19, 'He will fulfil the desire of them that hear him; he will also hear their cry, and will save them yea, he knows our thoughts long before. This must needs be so.

Reason 1. First, Because he is gracious and merciful; he is a God hearing prayers.

2. Because of the relations which in his love he hath taken upon himself, to be a Father. So that when a man shall, by the Spirit of adoption, call God Father, there is such a deal of eloquence and rhetoric in this very word, it works so upon the bowels of God, that he cannot choose but hear. Even as a child, when he speaks to his father, and calls him by this name, this word father doth so work upon him that he cannot but hear. So it is with God; when he hears us call him Father, he cannot but hear us.

8. Because of his nature and love, which is above the love of an earthly father. Though a mother should forget, and not hear her child, yet the Lord will hear us.

And likewise this is his promise: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me,' Ps. l. 15.

4. Again, God cannot basely esteem of our prayers, because they are the motions of his own Spirit. Oh, but they are broken prayers. It is true; but the Spirit understands them and makes intercession for us, with sighs and groans that cannot be expressed; and none can understand them but the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26, 27.

G. Again, God cannot but hear our prayers, because they are offered up in the name of a mediator. They are perfumed with the incense and sacrifice of his Son. Therefore he cannot but hear them.

7. Again, God must needs hear our prayers, because they are made according to his will. When we pray for ourselves, and for the church of God, it is according to God's will. So then, if we consider these respects, God cannot but hear our prayers.

Obj. But some will object, God doth not hear me: I have prayed a long while, and yet he hath not given me an answer.

Am. 1. I answer, God doth always hear, though he seemeth not to hear sometimes, to increase our importunity. Christ heard the woman of Canaan at first; but yet, to increase her importunity, he gave her the repulse and denial, and with the same, inward strength to wrestle with him.

Am. 2. Again, God seems not to hear, because he delights in the music of his children's prayers. Oh how he loves to hear the voice of his children! As a father to hear the language of his child, though it be none of the best; so it is sweet music in God's ears to hear the prayers of his children. He will have prayers to be cries. Therefore he defers to hear; but in deferring he doth not defer, for he increaseth our strength, as in Jacob's wrestling, that we might cry after him, wrestle with him, and offer violence unto him again.

Ans. 3. And sometimes, indeed, he will not hear us, because, it may be, there is some secret Achan in the camp, or some Jonah in the ship; some sin, I mean, in the heart unrepented of; for in this case we may come before God again and again, and he not hear us. This is the reason why God hears not many Christians, because they have not made a thorough inquisition into their own estates, found out their sins, and humbled themselves for it. Thus we see for what reasons God defers to hear our prayers.

Use 1. If this be so, that God doth hear us, let us make this use, to be plentiful in prayers, and lay up a great store of them in the bosom of God, for this is that will do us the most good. He hears every one in due time. We do never lose a sigh, a tear, or anything that is good, which proceeds from his own Spirit, but he will answer abundantly in his own time. For he that gives a desire, and prepares our heart to pray, and gives us a Mediator by whom to offer them up, will doubtless accept of them in his own Son, and will answer them. The time will come when he will accept of nothing else, and we shall

have no other thing to offer up. What a comfort will it then be, that we have in former times, and can now call upon God! The day is coming when goods will do us no good, but prayers will. What a comfort then is it to a Christian, that he hath a God to go to, that hears his prayers! Let all the world join together against a Christian, take away all things else and cast him into a dungeon, yet they cannot take away his God from him. What a happiness is it to pray! We can never be miserable so long as we have the Spirit of prayer. Though we were in a dungeon with Jeremiah, or in the whale's belly with Jonah, yea, though in hell, yet there we might have cause of comfort.

Let us therefore be ashamed of our barrenness in this duty, and observe whether God hear our prayers, or else how can we be thankful? There be many that pray, because their consciences do force them to some devotion, and therefore they slubber over a few prayers that their consciences may not smite them, but they never observe the issue of their prayers, whether God hears them or not; whereas God is a God hearing prayers, and the child of God doth esteem of nothing but that which he hath from God, as a fruit of prayer, and therefore accordingly he doth return thanks. God will have his children beg all of him. As some fathers will give nothing to their children, but they will have them first ask it of them, so God will give us nothing but what we pray for. And though he doth exceed to give us more than we ask, yet he looks that we should return thanks in some measure proportionable to the benefit received. Therefore let us observe how God hears our prayers, that so we may be suitably thankful. This will strengthen our faith in evil times when we can thus plead with God. Hear, Lord! Heretofore I came before thee, though weakly, yet with a broken heart, and thou didst hear me then. Thou art still a God hearing prayer, therefore, Lord, look upon my estate now and help me. Seeing, then, God hears our prayers, let us think of this glorious privilege, that we have liberty to go to the throne of grace in all our wants. The whole world is not worth this one privilege. We cannot command the prince's ear at all times; but we have a God always to go to, that will hear us. What a wretched folly is it therefore of those that, by their sins, bring themselves into such a condition that they cannot have God to hear them.

Quest. But how shall we make such prayers as God will hear?

Ans. I answer first of all, Would we be in such an estate that we may enjoy this blessed privilege, to have God's ear ready to hear?

1. First, Then hear him. If we will have God to hear us, then let us hear God, as Josiah did. When he heard the word read, his heart melted. For 'he that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be abominable,' saith God, Prov. xxviii. 9.

And is it not good reason, think we, for God not to hear us, when we will not hear him? Prov. i. 24, 25, 'Because I have called, and you have refused; when you are in misery, and shall out of self-love cry to me to be delivered, then I will refuse to hear you,' saith the Lord. Therefore let all profane persons, that will not hear God, know a time will come, that though they cry and roar, yet he will not hear them.

2. Secondly, If we will have God hear our prayers, they must proceed from a broken heart. Prayers be the sacrifice of a broken spirit. Josiah had a tender and a broken heart, and therefore God could not despise his prayers. So David pleads with God: Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifice of God is a broken and a contrite spirit.' So holy Bernard saith, 'I have led a life unbefitting me; but yet my comfort is, that a broken heart and a contrite spirit, Lord, thou wilt not despise.' God will hear the prayers and tears of relenting hearts.

3. Thirdly, To strengthen our prayers we must add to them the wings of love, faith, hope, and earnestness, as Josiah did here. Out of love to his country his prayers were joined with weeping, and he wrestled with tears. Oh! the prayers that have tears with them cannot go without a blessing.

4. Lastly, If we would have God to hear us, let us have such a resolution and purpose of reformation as Josiah had; for his prayers were joined with a purpose of reformation, which he afterwards performed in so strict a manner, that there was never such a reformation among all the kings of Judah as he made. To this purpose David saith, 'If I regard wickedness in my heart, God will not hear my prayer,' Ps. lxxvi. 18. If we have but a resolution to live in any sinful course, let us make as many prayers as we will, God will not respect them. God regarded good Josiah, because he had no purpose to live in any sin against him.

If we come with a traitorous mind unto God, with our sins in our arms, we must look for no acceptation from him. When a man comes to a king to put up a petition unto him, and comes with a dagger in his hand to stab him, will the king accept of this man's petition? So, do we think that God will hear our prayers when we bring a dagger in our hand, to stab him with our sins? If we will not leave swearing, lying, pride, covetousness, and the like, if we have

not covenanted with our own hearts, but still go on in sin, we shall never go away with a blessing. Josiah reformed himself; therefore God saith, 'I have also heard thee.' Thus if our prayers issue from a heart rightly affected, as good Josiah's was, then we shall speed as he did; for God did not only hear his prayer, but see how he rewards, him with an excellent blessing; to be taken home to heaven from the troubles of this life: which we shall in the next place speak of.

IV. The Saint's Refreshing

Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.—2 Chron. XXXIV. 28.

It is for the most part the privilege of a Christian, that his last days are his best; and 'though weeping be in the evening, yet joy comes in the morning,' Ps. xxx. 5; though he do begin in darkness, yet he ends in light. Whereas, on the contrary, the wicked begin in jollity and light, but end in darkness; yea, such a darkness as is 'utter darkness,' Mat. viii. 12—by Peter called the 'blackness of darkness,' 2 Pet. ii. 17—the preparations whereunto are, God's outward judgments in this life inflicted upon the impenitent and rebellious, wherein God many times puts a sensible, visible difference betwixt the godly and the wicked; as betwixt Lot and the Sodom-mites, Noah and the adulterous world, Moses and the Israelites with him, from Korah, Dathan, and his company, the Egyptians and the Israelites at the Pied Sea; and in this text, betwixt this good king and his people. He must not see all the evil that God was to bring upon his wicked and rebellious subjects. Oh the happiness of holiness, which is sure to speed well in all storms whatsoever; because on all the glory there is a defence, as Isaiah speaks, Isa. iv. 5. Light is sown for the righteous, Ps. xcvi. 11; and whatsoever his troubles be, yet his last end shall be blessed. 'Let me die,' saith Balaam, 'the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' Num. xxiii. 10. Such honour have all his saints, such honour had this good king Josiah; being removed from hence that he might not see the evil to come. Though he were taken from earth, yet it was for his good, that he might be gathered into heaven, and make a royal exchange.

The words contain a promise of a reward, and great favour unto good king Josiah, that he should die, and be gathered unto his fathers; and that

which is more, the manner considered, that he should 'die in peace;' the ground whereof is shewed unto him: 'Because thine eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.' God's promises are of three sorts. First, Such as he made upon condition of legal obedience: 'Do this and thou shalt live.' Secondly, When we are humbled upon sight of our sins, then he propounds another way, and promises that if we believe in Jesus Christ our surety, who hath made satisfaction for us, then we shall live. This is the grand promise of all, the promise of life everlasting, and pardon of sin. Thirdly, There are promises of encouragement unto us, when we are in the state of grace. As a father, who means to make his son an heir, doth give him many promises of encouragement, so God deals with his children, when they are in the covenant of grace.

There are, I say, promises of particular rewards to encourage them, as they are sure of the main and great reward, namely, everlasting life. Therefore Josiah being an heir of heaven, God did propound a promise of encouragement unto him, by way of favour, to shew that his good works were not unregarded. In general here,

Doct. 1. First, We may observe God's gracious deal tug with his children, that he takes notice of every good thing they do, and doth reward them for it, yea, in this life. There is not a sigh but God hears it, not a tear but he hath a bottle for it. Most men spare God a labour in this kind. He promiseth 'to wipe away all tears from our eyes,' Rev. xxi. 4, but they will shed none. Yet the least tear shed, and word spoken in a good cause, goes not without a reward from God; not so much as a cup of cold water, but he rewards. Which must needs be so:

Because God looks upon the good things we do, being his own works in us, as upon lovely objects, with a love unto them; for though Josiah had said nothing, yet his deep humiliation itself, was as it were a prayer, that cried strongly in the ears of God, that he could not but reward it. So that partly because God looks upon us as lovely objects, he loving the work of his own Spirit, and partly because they cry unto God, as it were, and pluck down a blessing from heaven, they cannot go unrewarded.

Use. This is matter of comfort, that God will not only reward us with heaven, but will also recompense every good thing we do, even in this world; yea, such is his bounty, he rewards hypocrites. Because he will not be beholding to them for any good thing they do, nor have them die

unrewarded, he recompenseth them with some outward favours, which is all they desire. Ahab did but act counterfeit humiliation, and he was rewarded for it, 1 Kings xxi. 27-29. So the Scribes and Pharisees did many good things, and had that they looked for. They looked not for heaven, but for the praise of men. This they had, as Christ tells them,

‘Verily, I say unto you, you have your reward,’ Mat. vi. 5. God will be beholding to none; but whosoever do anything that is good, they shall have some reward, whether they be good or bad. If the conscience of a man did judge well, he might come to God with boldness, not to brag of good works, but out of an humble heart saying, ‘Remember me, O Lord, as I have dealt with thee.’ So good Hezekiah did: ‘Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth,’ Isa. xxxviii. 3. When we labour in all our actions to please God, we may with boldness approach to the throne of grace, and say with Peter, Remember, Lord, ‘Thou knowest that I love thee,’ John xxi. 15. If there were no other reward but this, that we have a privilege to go to God with boldness, our conscience not accusing us, it were enough. What a shame is it, then, that we should be so barren in good works, seeing our labour shall not be unrewarded of the Lord! Oh then let us take counsel of the apostle: 4 Finally, my brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,’ 1 Cor. xv. 58. He hath a reward for every cup of cold water, for every tear. Every good deed we do hath the force of a prayer to beg a blessing; yea, our very tears speak loud to God, although we say nothing. But to come to particulars.

‘Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers,’ &c.

Here we see this word behold, a word serving to stir up attention, set before the promise, which was formerly set before a threatening, ‘Behold, I will bring evil upon this place,’ &c. Behold is as necessary before promises as threatenings. For the soul is ready to behold that which is evil, and by nature is prone to dejection, and to cast down itself. Therefore there need be a ‘behold’ put before the promise, to raise up the dejected soul of Josiah or others, and all little enough. Christians should have two eyes, one to look upon the ill, the other upon the good, and the grace of God that is in them, that so we may be thankful. But they for the most part look only upon the ill that is in them, and so God wants his glory and we our comfort.

‘Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.’

Doct. 2. Mark here the language of Canaan, how the Spirit of God in common matters doth raise up the soul to think highly of them.

Therefore it is that the Holy Ghost sweetens death with a phrase of 'gathering.' Instead of saying, Thou shalt die, he saith, 'Thou shalt be gathered.' How many phrases have we in Scripture that have comfort wrapped in them, as there is' in this phrase, 'Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.' I will not speak how many ways peace is taken in Scripture. 'Thou shalt die in peace;' that is, thou shalt die quietly, honourably, and peaceably. And thou shalt not see the misery that I will bring upon the state and kingdom. Thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers, which is meant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all the faithful patriarchs.

Doct. 3. Only observe, it is a very sweet word, and imports unto us, that death is nothing but a gathering, and presupposeth that God's children are all scattered in this world amongst wicked men, in a forlorn place, where they are used untowardly, as pilgrims use to be in a strange land. Therefore we had need be gathered, and it is a comfort to be gathered. But from whence shall he be gathered? He shall be gathered from a wicked, confused world; and to whom shall he go? To his Father. His soul shall go to their souls, his body shall be laid in the grave with theirs. As if he had said, Thou shalt leave some company, but go to better; thou shalt leave a kingly estate, but thou shalt go to a better kingdom.

Doct. 4. The changes of God's children are for the better. Death to them is but a gathering. This gathering doth shew the preciousness of the thing gathered; for God doth not use to gather things of no value. Josiah was a pearl worth the gathering. He was one of high esteem, very precious. So every Christian is dearly bought, with the blood of Christ. Therefore God will not suffer him to perish, but will gather him before the evil days come. As men use to gather jewels before fire comes into their houses; or as husbandmen will be sure to gather their corn, before they will let the beasts come into the field; so saith God to him, I will be sure to gather thee before I bring destruction upon the land. We are all by nature lost in Adam, and scattered from God, therefore we must be gathered again in Christ. For all gathering that is good is in him; for he is the head of all union that is good. And this is to be wrought by the ordinances of God, by the means of the ministry, which is appointed unto that end, to gather us, as Mat. xxiii. 37, Christ speaks to Jerusalem, 'How often would I have gathered you together,

as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but you would not.' Christ would have gathered them unto himself, by his word, but they refused.

All the gathering of a Christian in this life is a gathering to Christ by faith, and to the communion of saints by love, 1 Thes. iv. 17; and the more he doth grow in grace, the more near communion he hath with Christ. Then after this gathering by grace, there comes by death a gathering to Christ in glory. For the soul goes for ever and ever to be with the Lord. After this comes a higher degree of gathering at the day of judgment, when there shall be a great meeting of all saints, and the soul and body shall be reunited together, to remain for ever with the Lord. Let us then think of this, that whatsoever befalls us in the world, we shall be sure to be gathered, for death is but a gathering. For from whence goes Josiah? From a sinful world, a sinful estate, a wretched people, unto his fathers, who are all good, nay, to God his Father. We are all here as Daniel in the lion's den, as sheep among wolves; but at death we shall be gathered to our fathers. It is a gathering to a better place, to heaven; and to better persons, to fathers, where we shall be for ever praising the Lord, never offending him, loving and pleasing one another. Here Christians displease one another, and cannot be gathered together in love and affection, but there they shall be gathered in unity of love for ever.

Use. This serves, first of all, to comfort vs in departure of friends, to render their souls up with comfort into the hands of God. We know they are not lost, but sent before us. We shall be gathered to them, they cannot come to us. Therefore why should we grieve? They are gathered in quietness and rest to their fathers. This should also make us render our souls to God, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and Redeemer. From whence go we? From a sinful world and place of tears, to a place of happiness above expression. Why should we be afraid of death? It is but a gathering to our fathers. What a comfort is it to us in this world, that we shall go to a place where all is good, where we shall be perfectly renewed, made in the image of God, and shall have nothing defaced? Let this raise up our dead and drowsy souls. Thus we shall be one day gathered. The wicked shall be gathered together, but a woeful gathering is it. They shall be gathered like a bundle of tares, to be thrown into hell, there for ever to burn. They are dross and chaff, never gathered to Christ by faith, nor to the body of the church by love; and therefore they are as dross and chaff, which the wind scatters here, and shall for ever be scattered hereafter, Ps. i. 4. They are, as Cain, vagabonds in regard of the life of grace here; and therefore shall be for ever scattered from

the life of glory hereafter. They shall be gathered to those whom they delighted in, and kept company with, whilst they were in this world. They loved to keep company with the wicked here, therefore they shall be gathered to them in hell hereafter. This is sure, thou shalt live in heaven or hell afterwards, with those whom thou livedst with here. Dost thou live only delighted in evil company now? It is pity thou shouldst be severed from them hereafter. If thou be gathered to them in love and affection here, thou shalt be gathered to them in hell and destruction hereafter. It is a comfortable evidence to those that delight in good company, that they shall be with them in heaven for ever.

‘Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren,’ 1 John iii. 14. Anti on the contrary, those that are brethren in evil here, may read in their own wicked courses and conversation what will become of them hereafter. They are all tares, and shall be gathered together in a bundle, and cast into hell fire for ever.

‘And thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.’

Here is a reward, not only to die, but to die in peace. Josiah goes the way of all flesh; he must die though he be a king. This statute binds all. All are liable to death. ‘And thou shalt be gathered, or put in thy grave in peace.’ This doth declare that he should be buried; the ground whereof is out of Gen. iii. 19, ‘Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.’ From earth we came, and to earth we shall return. The earth we carry and the earth we tread on shall both meet together. In that God doth here promise it to Josiah as a blessing, we may hence learn,

Doct 5. That burial is a comely and honourable thing, and that we ought to have respect unto it, partly because the body of a dead Christian is a precious thing. They are temples of the Holy Ghost, members of Christ, and therefore ought to have the honour of burial. Partly because it shews our love and affection to the party buried, for it is the last kindness we can do unto them. Again, we ought to have respect to burial, to shew our hope of the resurrection, that though the body be cast into the earth, yet it shall rise; though it be sown in dishonour, yet it shall rise in honour. So we see that for these reasons burial is honourable. Therefore it is said of the faithful in Scripture, that they were buried, to shew how honourable a thing it is; and indeed it is an honour, specially for fathers, to be buried by their friends and children, and carried by them into their graves. For to be buried like a beast is a judgment to wicked men.

Quest. But what then shall we say to all those that are not thus buried, whose bodies are given to be torn by wild beasts, or burnt to ashes, or flung into rivers, as antichrist useth to deal with many saints?

Ans. I answer, that in this case faith must raise itself above difficulty; for though it be a favour and blessing of God, to have Christian burial after we are dead, yet Christians must be content to go without this blessing sometimes, when God calls them to the contrary, as when we cannot have it upon good terms, with peace of conscience, or with God's love. In this case a burial in regard of God's favour is not worth the naming. Therefore let all Christians be content to put their bodies, life and all, to hazard; not only to be willing to want burial when we are dead, but to sacrifice our lives and whatsoever else for God, as many saints have been martyred, and their bodies burnt to ashes. Yet God will gather together the ashes of the dead bodies of his children; for 'right precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,' Ps. cxvi. 15. And is it not better to want this with God's favour, than to have the most honourable burial in the world on evil terms? For what saith the Spirit of God? 'Happy and blessed are they which die in the Lord,' Rev. xiv. 13; not happy are they that die in pomp, and are buried in state, but happy are they that die in the Lord. Therefore when we may not have it, although it be a comely thing, yet if we have God and Christ, we have all that is good. Therefore it is no matter what becomes of our bodies after we are dead; for though we be flung into the sea, burnt to ashes, yet both sea and earth must give up all the dead, as it is Rev. xx. 13. Therefore as for our bodies, let us be willing that God may have them, who gave them; and if he will have us to sacrifice our lives for him, let us do it willingly.

'And thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.'

Obj. How is this? for we read, in the succeeding chapter of Josiah, that he died a violent death; he was slain by the hands of his enemies. Is this to die in peace?

Sol. I answer, the next words do expound it. He died in peace, 'because his eyes should not see the evil that God would bring upon the land afterwards;' as if he had said, Thou shalt not see the ruin of the church and commonwealth. So, though Josiah were slain by idolaters, by Pharaoh and his chariots, yet he died in peace comparatively with a worse state of life. For though he died a bloody death by the hands of his enemies, yet he died in peace, because he was prevented by death from seeing that which was worse

than death. For God may reserve a man in this life to worse miseries than death itself.

From hence we learn this instruction,

Doct. 6. That death may be less miserable than the ill which a man may live to see in this life; or, that the miseries of this life may be such as that death may be much better than life, and far rather to be chosen. We may fall into such miseries whilst we do live, that we may desire death, they being greater than it. The reason hereof is, because that a sudden death, in some respects, is better than a lingering one. One death is better than many deaths, for how many deaths did Josiah escape by this one death! It would have been a death to him if he had lived to see the ruin of the commonwealth, the church of God, and his own sons carried into captivity, to have seen them slain, their eyes plucked out, the temple of God plucked down, and idolatry set up.

We ought then to be careful how to avoid a cursed and miserable estate after death. All the care of wicked men is to avoid death. But they may fall into such an estate in this life that they may wish death, as an heathen emperor once did, who complaining said, 'I have none will do me so much favour as to kill me.' All the desire of atheists is, that they may live. Thou base atheist, thou mayest fall into such an estate as is worse than death, and if that be so terrible, what will that estate be after death? An atheist in this life desires life, Oh that I might not die! But in hell thou wilt desire, Oh that I might die! The time will come that thou shalt desire that which thou canst not abide to hear of now. What desperate folly is it therefore to redeem life with base conditions; not to give it for the gospel when we are called to it. In this case, that base life which we so stand upon, will cost us the loss of our soul for ever in hell, when we shall desire to die.

'Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace.' The Lord saith, he 'will gather.' So we see,

Doct. 7. Our times are in God's hand; as David saith, 'My time is in thy hand,' Ps. xxxi. 15. Our times of coming into the world, continuing in it, and going out of it, are in God's hand. Therefore he saith, 'Thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace.' God hath power of death. Our going and coming is from God; he is the Lord of life and death.

Use. This is a comfort unto us while we live in this world, that whilst we live we are not in our own hands, we shall not die in our own time; neither is it in our enemies' hands, but in God's hand. He hath appointed a certain time of our being here in this world. This should tie us to obedience, and to die in hope and faith; because when we die we are but gathered to our fathers, to better company and place than we leave behind us.

Again we see here that men may outlive their own happiness, that at last life may be a judgment unto them, because they may see that which is worse than death. How many parents live to see the ruin of their own families! the undoing of their children by their own miscarriage! We see God takes away Josiah, because he will not have him live, as it were, beyond his happiness. We see how tenderly affected God is for the good of his children. He pities them when they are in misery, knows what they are able to hear, and will lay no more upon them than he gives them strength to endure. God knew that Josiah was tender-hearted, and melted at the very threatenings, which if he could not endure to hear against his country, could he ever have endured to have seen the miseries upon his people and country? Surely no. Therefore God will rather gather him to his fathers.

How this is a wonderful comfort, that many times God will not let us see too great matter of grief. Let us then imitate God, and deal so one with another as God deals with us—the husband with the wife, and the wife with the husband, and the like. Let us not acquaint them with such things as may make them more grieve than is fitting, or they are able to hear. God would not have Josiah to see the misery he brought upon his country, because he knew that he was tenderly disposed, that a little grief would soon overcome him. So let us beware of causing any to grieve, or to let them know things which they are not able to bear.

Again, Seeing this is a grief to a kind and loving father, yea, worse than death, to see the ruin of his child, this should teach all those that are young, to take care that they give no occasion of offence to those that are over them, for to grieve; which will be worse than death unto them. It would have been worse than a death unto Josiah to have seen the ruin of his children. So for those children which have been cherished by their parents in their nonage, it will be worse than death to them in their age to see their children lewd and come to ruin, whereby they bring so much sooner the grey head of their father to the grave in sorrow. These offend against the sixth commandment, which saith, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Let us then rather revive

and comfort the heart of those that have been good unto us, and not kill them, or do that which is worse than death unto them.

‘Neither shall thy eyes see the misery I will bring upon this people.’

Doct. 8. Here we learn again that it is the sight of misery which works the deepest impression. It is not the hearing of a thing, but the sight of it, which affecteth most deeply; as in the sacrament, the seeing of the bread broken, and the wine poured out, works a deep impression; and because God knew Josiah’s heart would break at the sight of the misery, therefore he tells him, ‘Thine eyes shall not see the evil that I will bring upon this place.’ The sight is a most working sense, to make the deepest impression upon the soul. What shall be our great joy and happiness in heaven, but that we shall see God for evermore? Sight is a blessing upon earth, both the eyes of the body wherewith we see, and the eyes of the soul—that is, faith—which makes us see afar off, till in heaven we shall see him face to face. So that sight makes us both happy and miserable.

Use 1. How wretched, then, is the estate of them that shall see themselves, with their own wicked eyes, sent to hell, with the creature they delighted in. That which the eyes see, the heart feels. There are many atheists, whose whole care is to preserve life. They would live, although they live the life of a dog. But the time will come, that thou wilt more earnestly desire death than life. Thy eyes shall see, and thy body feel, and thy conscience too, that which is worse than a thousand deaths. Thou shalt then die a living death. The worm of thy conscience shall gnaw thee for ever, and shalt see and feel the tormenting fire which shall never be quenched. That which the wicked nourish now to follow their humour, never caring to please God, the day will be when they shall desire to avoid it; and that which they labour to avoid most now, the time will come when they shall most desire it. Death is the king of fears. It is terrible. But then look beyond death: what is behind that? Thou shalt see at the heels of it hell and eternal damnation.

Use 2. This should teach us also how to understand the promise of our life. It is a promise and a favour of God to be desired. It is a prayer with condition, if God see it good; else God may give us long life, to see and feel a world of misery. Therefore such promises are to be desired conditionally: if God see it good for us.

Doct. 9. Again, The Holy Ghost saith here, ‘Thy eyes shall not see the evil I will bring upon this place.’ Hence we learn, that those which be dead in

the Lord, are freed from seeing of any evil or misery. The godly shall see no misery after death. If this be so, then they do not go into purgatory after death, as the papists hold. The Holy Ghost saith, Josiah is taken away from seeing any evil to come. Then sure they do not fall into such misery after death, which is worse than death. True, say the papists, such excellent men as Josiah do go to heaven immediately. Ay, but the Holy Ghost saith by Isaiah, lvii. 1, that 'the righteous are taken away from the evil to come.' It is spoken of the whole generation of righteous men. Therefore it is a sottish thing for them to hold that any of them shall see purgatory, when God saith the righteous are taken away from seeing any evil to come.

Doct. 10. And as it is against them in this, so here is another conclusion against popery, that takes away their invocation of saints: for the righteous go to heaven, and cannot see or know our wants and miseries; yea, they are taken away, because they should not see the miserable estate that befalls their posterity. Then if they do not know our wants, how can they hear and help us when we pray, seeing it is a part of their happiness not to understand our miseries? For if Josiah, from heaven, could have seen the desolation and misery that befell his country afterwards, it would have wrought upon him. But Josiah was taken away, that he should not see it. Therefore, why should men spend that blessed incense and sacrifice of prayer, unto those that cannot hear? But put case, they could hear some; yet can they hear all that pray unto them? A finite creature hath but a finite act and limited power. How can one saint give a distinct answer and help to perhaps a thousand prayers, as the virgin Mary hath many thousand prayers offered her? How can she distinctly know, and give a distinct answer to every prayer?

'Thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace, neither shall thy eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.' Let us learn here a mystery of divine providence in his death; for there is a mystery of providence, not only in great matters, as election and predestination, but in ordering of the common things of the world. How many excellent mysteries are here wrapt together in this death of Josiah! As, first, it is said that he died in peace, whereas he died a violent death, and was slain by the hands of his enemies. His death was both a mercy and a correction: a correction for his error in being so hasty in going to war with Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and yet it was a mercy, because it prevented him from seeing the evil to come, and so likewise brought him sooner to heaven. It is a strange thing to see how the wisdom of heaven can mingle crosses and favours, corrections and mercies together; that the same thing should be both a mercy to Josiah to be taken away, and yet a correction

also for his error, in going, to fight against Necho, king of Egypt, as we see 2 Chron. xxxv. 23. We may have mercies and afflictions upon us at the same time, as God, by the same death, corrected Josiah's folly, and rewarded his humility.

Mark here again another mystery, in the carriage of divine providence: how he brings his promises to pass strangely above the reach of man; as here, he having promised Josiah that he should die in peace, one would have thought that Josiah should have died in pomp and state. No. Thou shalt die in peace, although thou be slain by the hand of thy enemies; thou shalt come to heaven, although it be by a strange way. Thus God brings his children to heaven by strange ways, yea, by contrary ways, by afflictions and persecutions. Paul knew he should come to Rome, although it were by a strange way; though he suffered shipwreck, and was in great danger, as we may see Acts xxvii. 2, seq. God hath strange ways to bring his counsels to pass, which he doth so strangely, as we may see his own hand in it.

Again, Here we may see another mystery in divine providence, concerning the death of Josiah, in that he was taken away being a young man, but thirty-nine years old, who was the flower of his kingdom, and one upon whom the flourishing estate of such a kingdom did depend. Now, for such a gracious prince to be taken away in such a time, and at such an age, when he might have done much good, a man would hardly believe this mystery in divine providence. But 'our times are in God's hand,' Ps. xxxi. 15. His time is better than ours. And therefore he, seeing the sins of the people to be so great, that he could not bear with them longer,—for it was the sins of the people that deprived them of Josiah. It was not the king of Egypt who was the cause of his death, but the sins of the land—those caused God to make this way, to take away their gracious king.

Use. Here we may admire the wisdom of God, who doth not give an account unto us of his doings, why he suffers some to live, and takes away others; why he suffers the wicked to live, and takes away his own. We can give little reason for it, because it is a mystery; but God best knoweth the time when to reap his own corn.

'Neither shall thy eyes see all the evil I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the land.'

Doct. 11. Here the Holy Ghost doth insinuate unto us that whilst Josiah was alive, God would not bring this judgment upon the land, but after his

death, then it should come upon them. So here we learn this comfortable point of instruction, that the lives of God's children do keep back judgment and evil from the place where they live, and their death is a forerunner of judgment. Their life keeps back ill, and their death plucks down ill. While thou art alive, I will bring no evil upon this place, but when thou art gone, then I will bring it down, saith God. The reasons of this are,

Reason 1. Because gracious men do make the times and the places good where they live. It is a world of good that is done by their example and help. While they live the times are the better for them.

Reason 2. And again, they keep back ill, because gracious men do bind God by their prayers. They force, as it were, a necessity upon God, that he must let the world alone. They bind his hands, that he will do nothing while they are in it; as to Lot in Sodom, 'I can do nothing while thou art gone, saith the angel,' Gen. xix. 22. They stand in the gap, and keep God from pouring down the vials of his wrath. But when they are gone, there is nothing to hinder or stop the current of divine justice, but that it must needs have his course. As when men have gathered their corn into their barns, then let their beasts, or whatsoever else go into the field, they care not; and as when the jewels are taken out of a rotten house, though the fire then seize upon it, men regard not. So when God's jewels are gathered to himself, then woe to the wicked world, for then God will break forth in wrath upon them. Woe to the old world when Noah goes into the ark, for then follows the flood. Woe to Sodom when Lot goes out of it, for then it is sure to be burned. Luther prayed that God would not bring war upon the people in Germany all his time, but when he died, the whole land was overspread with war. So, before the destruction of Jerusalem, God did gather the Christians to a little city called Pella, near Jerusalem, then came Titus and Vespasian and ruined the city of Jerusalem! So there are many gracious parents that die, after whose death comes some miserable end to their wicked children, but not before. God takes away the parents out of the world, that they might not see the ruin of their children. So then we see that it is clear, that good men keep back judgment from the places where they live.

What should we learn from hence?

Use 1. This should teach us to make much of such men as truly fear God, seeing it is for their sakes that God doth spare us. They carry the blessing of God with them wheresoever they go. As Laban's house was blessed for Jacob's sake, Gen. xxx. 27, and Potiphar's for Joseph's sake, Gen.

xxxix. 23, so the wicked are spared and fare the better for the saints who live among them. But what is the common course of wicked men? To hate such with a deadly hatred above all others, because their lives and speeches do discover the wickedness of theirs, and because they tell them the truth, and reprove them.

Therefore it was that Ahab could not endure the sight of Micaiah, that holy prophet, who without flattery spake downright truth, 1 Kings xxii. 8, seq. So it is now beyond seas and elsewhere. They labour to root out all the good men. But what will they get by it? Surely it will be a thousand times worse with them than it is; for if they were out, then woo to the land presently.

Use 2. This should also teach us to pray to God to bless those that are good. Is it not good for us to uphold those pillars whereby we stand? What madness is it for a man to labour to pull down the pillar whereby he is holden alive? As Samson, pulling down the pillars of the house, brought death upon himself, so godly men, the pillars of this tottering world, which uphold the places whereby they live, being once shaken, all the whole state falls. Therefore let us not be enemies to our own good, to hate the godly; for it is for their sakes the Lord shews mercy to us, and refrains to pour out his judgment upon the wicked world. And when the best gathering of all gatherings shall come, that the elect of God shall be gathered together, then comes the misery of all miseries to the wicked. So we see this point is clear, that the godly, while they are alive, keep back ill and bring much good. For doth God continue the world for wicked men? Surely no. For what glory and honour hath God from such wicked wretches? Do they not swear, lie, live filthily, and abuse his members? Is it for these that God doth continue the world? Surely no; but for the godly's sake are judgments deferred, and the world is continued.

Use 8. If this be thus, well may we lament the death of those that are good. For when they are gone, our safety is gone. 'They are the chariots and horsemen of Israel,' 2 Kings ii. 12. Therefore well may we bewail their loss. 'Well might Jeremiah lament for the death of Josiah, for together with the breath of Josiah the life of that state breathed out; together with him, the flourishing condition of Jerusalem died, and lay buried with him as it were in the same grave.

See here again how God correcteth too much resting on the arm of flesh. They blessed themselves under Josiah, as if no evil should come near

them; as appears, Lament, iv. 20, ‘The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live.’ There is no greater wrong to ourselves, and to others on whom we rest so much, than to secure ourselves so much on them as to neglect serious turning to God.

‘Neither shall thy eyes see all the evil I will bring upon this place.’

This is the ground why he should die in peace, ‘Because he shall not see all the evil I will bring upon this place.’ Here we see that the judgment which God threatened to bring upon the church and commonwealth is set down by this word evil.’ ‘Thine eyes shall not see all the evil I will bring upon this place.’ But who sends this evil. It is an evil brought by God. Thou shalt not see the evil ‘I will bring,’ &c. It was not God that brought it properly, but Nebuchadnezzar, who carried his sons into captivity. Howsoever, God had a hand in it. ‘For is there any evil in the city and God hath not done it?’ saith the prophet, Amos iii. G. But we must distinguish between evil. There is,

1. The evil of sin; and 2. The evil of punishment.

First, The evil of sin; and this God doth not bring, for it is hateful unto him. Then the evil of punishment, which is twofold:

(1.) Either that which comes immediately from God, as famine, pestilence, or the like; in which punishments we are to deal with God alone.

(2.) Or else, the evil that comes from God, but by men, which he useth as instruments to punish us, and this is by war and cruel usage.

Now thus Josiah is taken away from this greatest evil we can suffer in this life; to have God correct us by the hands of men. For when we have to deal with God, the labour is easier to prevail with him, as David did, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. But when we have to deal with merciless men, then we have to deal with the poisoned malice of men, besides God’s anger. Now the evil that comes from God is chiefly,

The ill which seizeth upon the soul after death; or else, the evil which seizeth upon the whole man, both soul and body, both in this and after this life.

Thus God is said to bring evil, not the evil of sin, but the evil of punishment.

Doct. 12. Hence we learn, that the evils which we suffer, they are from the evil of sin. It is sin that makes God to bring evil upon the creature. If we look upward to God, there is no evil in the world, for in that consideration all things are good so far as he hath a hand in them. Therefore, whatsoever the creature suffers, it comes from the meritorious evil, the evil of sin. It comes from God, but through the evil of sin provoking him.

Quest. If any man ask, How can God, which is good, bring that which is evil?

Sol. I answer, We must know that the evil of punishment is the good of justice. All the evil that he doth is good, as it comes from him in his justice punishing, because it doth good to them that are punished, either to cause them return, or if they will not, to shew the glory of his justice in condemning them. It is the good of justice, and it is not always in God only permitting or suffering such a thing for to be done; but it is in him as an act, having a hand in it. Therefore God saith, 'Ashur is the rod of my wrath;' so that in all punishments God hath a hand, whether it be upon the body or soul.

Use. This serves for direction unto us, To begin where we should begin; in all our afflictions to go to heaven and make our peace with God, and not go to secondary causes. For all evil of punishment comes from him. Let us, if we fear evil, make our peace with God by repentance and new obedience; and then he will overrule all secondary causes so as to help us. Go not in this case to the jailor, or to the executioner, but go to the judge. Let us make our peace in heaven first, and then there will be soon a command for our ease. Yea, Christ can command the wind and sea to be still, the devil himself to be quiet, if our peace be made with him.

Therefore let us learn this lesson, and not fret against the instrument whereby God useth to correct us. David had learned thus much when Shimei railed upon him: It is God that hath bid him, therefore let him alone,' 2 Sam. xvi. 11. So holy Job saith, 'It is God that gives, and God that takes away,' Job i. 21. He doth not only say, God gives, but God takes away. Oh but it was the Chaldeans that took it away. Ay, but it is no matter for that, God gave them leave. Therefore let us carry ourselves patiently in all troubles,

submitting ourselves under the mighty hand of God, from whom we have all evil of punishment.

Obj. Again, Here we have another mystery of divine providence. For it may be objected. What! will God bring evil upon his own church and people? upon the temple and place where his name is called upon, and that by idolaters. Where is divino justice now?

Sol. I answer. Hold thy peace, take not the balance out of God's hand. He knows what is better for us j- than we ourselves. We must not call God to our bar, for we shall all appear before his. God useth servants and slaves to correct his sons; worse men than his people to correct his people. It is his course so to do, when they of his own sin against him. For evil men many times make evil men good, when they are used as instruments to correct them; as here God useth wicked men to make his children good. So God makes a rod of Ashur, to make his evil children better. He useth slaves to correct his sons, because it is too base a service for the angels or good men to do. Therefore he useth the devil and his instruments to do it. Wherefore let us not call into question God's providence; for when he will punish his people, he can hiss for a worse people; for Egypt, or Ashur, or the like. So if he will punish England, he can hiss again for the Danes, or Normans, to punish his own people. Let us not boast we are God's people and they idolaters. No; God can hiss for a baser people to punish his own servants. It is the will of God so to dispose, and the will of God is summa justitia, the height of justice. God will have it so. Let us make our peace with him, and not demand why he doth thus and thus.

'And so they brought the king word again.' I will but touch this in a word, and so make an end.

Here we see that the messengers deal faithfully with Josiah. They brought the direct message which the prophethess did bid them, which was good for himself, but doleful for his estate. He was a gracious man, and God gave him gracious servants.

Doct. 18. For God will give good men faithful servants, that shall deal faithfully with them. As for the wicked, God will give them such servants that shall humour them to their own ruin. If they have a heart not desirous to hear the truth, if they be Ahabs, they shall have four hundred false prophets to lead them in a course to their own ruin. But Josiah had an upright heart,

desiring to know the truth. Therefore God gave him a faithful prophetic to deal truly with him, and faithful messengers to bring the true answer.

‘Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people great and small,’ &c.

Which words shew what good king Josiah did upon the receipt of this message. As soon as ever he heard it, he did not suffer it to cool upon him. But when his spirit was stirred up, he did as a gracious king should do, he sent and gathered all the elders of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, both great and small, and they went up to the house of the Lord, and there read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

Here, first, we see that Josiah gathered, as it were, a parliament and a council; as also, in both Josiah and the people, we may behold an excellent and sweet harmony of state, when all, both king and priests, Levites and people, did meet amiably together. This was an excellent time, when there was such an harmony between king and people, that he no sooner commands but they obeyed him.

But more particularly we learn,

Doct. 14. That the care of the commonwealth and of the church is a duty belonging to the king, that the reformation both of church and commonwealth belongs unto the prince. There is a generation which think that the king must only take care for the commonwealth. But they have also power to look to religion. We see Josiah doth it, he is the keeper of both. Josiah hath a care of religion, and it doth become his place. He is a head, and it is befitting his relation. He is a father, not only to look to the temporal state, but to the church.

The Donatists in Augustine’s time did ask, What had the emperor to do with the church? But it was answered that the emperor could not rule the commonwealth except he govern the church, for the church is a commonwealth. So that we see, as a chief right, the ordering of the matters of religion belongs to the care of the prince. But there are two things in religion: first, intrinsical, within the church, as to preach, administer the sacraments, and ordain ministers. These he ought not to do. But for those

things that are without it, these belong unto him. If any of those that are placed in church or commonwealth, do not their duty, it is fitting for him to correct. He ought to set all a-going without, and to remove abuses, but not to meddle with the things within the church aforesaid, as to execute the same, but to oversee and govern their execution, and those persons whose proper office it is to execute them.

This observe against the usurpation of the pope, and see the supremacy of king Josiah, that he is supreme over all; not only over temporal persons, but over evangelical persons. For there was an high priest at that time and the Levites, but none were above king Josiah.

Quest. Ay, but this was under the law, say the papists.

Sol. 1. I answer, that this is a rule in divinity, that the gospel doth not take away or dissolve the laws of nature and reason. Therefore if the supremacy belonged to the prince then, surely now much more. Therefore saith one, We give respect to the emperor as next to God; to God in the first place, and then to the emperor. The ministers have power over the prince for to direct him and give him counsel, but yet they are not above him. A physician doth give directions for his patient. Is he therefore above him? So a builder giveth direction for the building of the king's house. Is this any supremacy? So the minister may give direction and counsel to the prince; but hath he therefore any superiority above the prince? Surely no.

Sol. 2. In the second place, here we see who it is that called this parliament. It was king Josiah. He was the first mover in calling of this council, for he was the head; and had it not been a strange thing to have seen the foot move before the head? The head must first give direction before any of the members can move. Therefore it is only in the authority of the king to gather a council, and none must gather a public assembly without authority from the king.

The calling of assemblies belongs to the prince. If it be a general council, then it must be by the emperor; if it be a national council, then by the king or prince of that nation; if provincial, then first from the king or princes, as first movers of it, and so to others. As the heavens, and these celestial bodies over the earth, first move, and then all other afterward, so kings ought first to move, and then all to follow.

Use 1. If this be so, we see how the pope wrongfully takes this right of calling councils to himself, which properly belongs to the emperor; for we know that for a thousand years after Christ the emperor called councils, if any were. But of late years the pope, encroaching upon the emperor, hath usurped this right of calling them, whereas you see no assemblies ought to be gathered without the authority of the prince.

Though fasting be an excellent thing, yet public fasting must not be without the consent of the king. Let Christians have as much private fasting as they will, thereby to humble themselves, but public fasts must not be without the consent of the king; for great matters are to be done by great motions. Here is a great matter of gathering a council. Therefore the head and body and all join together. As it is when the body is to do some great thing, all the members of the body stir together to do it, so it is with the commonwealth. When great matters are in hand, all must be joined together, as here king, priests, Levites, and all the people, both great and small, joined together for to prevent the judgment threatened.

But what must we do if things be amiss? I answer, Take the right course; that is, go to God by prayer, and entreat him who hath the hearts of kings in his hands, to incline and stir up the hearts of princes for to reform abuses. Well, but what did the king do when he had gathered all the elders and inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem into the house of the Lord? They went up thither to fast, and pray, and read the book of the law.

Reformation makes all outward things fall into a good rule, but they are to be called only by the authority of the prince, and when a fit time and occasion requires.

The papists brag much of the Council of Trent; but if ever there was a conspiracy against Christ, it was in that council; for the parties that had most offended, and were most accused, and should have been judged, were the judges; and the Holy Ghost, which should have been in the council, and should have been their judge, him they excluded, and received a foul spirit of antichrist sent unto them, in a cap-case from Rome, whence they had all their counsel. Was not this a goodly council?

Again, In that Josiah gathered a council in time of public disorder and public danger, here we learn that it is not only lawful, but many times necessary, to gather assemblies and councils for reformation of abuses, both in church and commonwealth, which otherwise cannot be abolished. So

councils are good to make canons, rules, and to prevent heresy; yea, much good may be done by gathering of them, if they meet to a good end, for the good of the church, and the glory of God; for God who is willing and able to perform the good will be strongly amongst them. For if Christ by his Spirit hath promised to be in that assembly, 'where two or three are gathered together' upon good grounds, and to good ends, how much more will he be, when two or three hundreds are so gathered together? But this must be done by the consent of authority, otherwise it would be an impeachment to government. So much briefly for this text, and for this time.

The Spiritual Favourite at the Throne of Grace

O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.—Neh. i. 11.

In the ninth verse the holy man minds God of his promise made to his people, that if they should ‘turn unto him, and keep his commandments, and do them, though they were cast out to the, utmost parts of heaven, yet he would gather them thence,’ &c., ver. 9. I will touch a little on them, [on the] two verses, and then come to that I mean to dwell on, from the words read.

‘If you turn unto me, and keep my commandments.’ There is no promise of mercy but to those that turn. The Scripture is peremptory in denial of mercy to such as go on in their sins. Heaven could not brook the angels themselves, having sinned; and neither such, nor such ‘shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ Yet how many are there that bless themselves that it shall go well with them, though they cast off all God’s yokes and divine bonds, that might bow them to better courses, as if words were but wind; when we see here God made his word good against his own dear people, ‘If ye sin, I will scatter you to the farthest parts of the world,’ ver. 8. We see in the former verse, ver. 7, a proud, presumptuous sinful disposition may slight God, and the messengers of the word and all, now when we come to threaten; but when God comes to execute, will he shake it off then? Will swearers and blasphemers and filthy persons shake off the execution as they can the threatenings? God saith, none that are such shall enter into heaven, ‘but his wrath shall smoke against them, and shall be as a fire that shall burn to hell,’ against such persons as ‘bless themselves’ in wicked courses, Deut. xxix. 20; and when God comes to the execution, they desire ‘the mountains to fall upon them,’ Rev. vi. 16. There are none more presumptuous against the threatenings, and none more base and fearful when it comes to execution. As we see in presumptuous and profane Belshazzar, that was quaffing in ‘the bowls of the temple,’ and scorning religion and God, when there comes a handwriting on the wall, ‘his knees knock together and his joints tremble,’ Dan. v. 6. So let there be any evidence of execution, and we see all the tyrants in the book of God, and that have been in the world, that

have trifled at religion, of all men they are most disconsolate and fearful, as we see in Belshazzar and others.

I beseech you therefore take heed. God will seal all his threatenings with executions in due time, as he did to his own people. What is the reason we should promise ourselves more immunity than they had?

‘If ye turn and keep my commandments, and do them.’ Here are three conditions. ‘Though you were cast to the utmost parts of the world, I will gather you thence,’

‘If you turn.’ The holy man Nehemiah puts God in mind of his promise, and his argument is from the like, and indeed from the less to the greater. Because God would rather of both, perform his promises than his threatenings, because mercy is his own proper work. Now, as he had been just in punishing his people, so he would be merciful in restoring of them again; therefore he saith, ‘Return and keep my commandments and do them, and though ye were scattered to the utmost parts of the earth, yet I will gather you thence.’ And he did gather them thence upon their repentance; he did perform his promise at length.

Beloved, the full accomplishment of this yet remains; for this people to this day, since the death of Christ, since they drew the guilt of that sacred blood on them, they are scattered about the earth to every nation, and have not a foot of land of their own, but are the scorn and hissing of nations. Notwithstanding, this promise will be performed. Upon their repentance, God will bring them again. As St Paul calls it a kind of a resurrection, the conversion of the Jews, so it is true of us all. Though we were scattered as dust, as we shall be in the grave ere long turned to dust, God will gather the ashes; he will gather all those parts of ours. Even as his power gathereth his people together, so his power at length will gather us all. We have his promise for the one as well as the other.

Therefore let us comfort ourselves with the performance of this promise, for the performance of the grand promise of the resurrection. Indeed, the grand promise of the resurrection is the ground of the performance of all other promises. As you have it in Ezekiel, concerning the dry bones: saith God, ‘I will clothe these dead bones with flesh and skin,’ &c., ‘therefore I will restore you again,’ Ezek. xxxvii. 1, seq. God that will restore our dust and bring our bodies together, that were scattered here and

there, he will restore us out of our sickness and trouble, if it stand with his glory and our good.

Now, after the argument that he useth to persuade God from his word of threatening and promise, he comes to the argument from their relation.

‘These are thy servants.’

Though sinful servants, yet they are thy servants. ‘These are thy people.’ Thou hast no other people in the world but these, and ‘thou art their God.’ He pleads from former favours. ‘Thou hast redeemed them by thy great power and strong hand.’

It is a good argument to plead with God for former favours: because ‘there is no shadow of change in him,’ James i. 17; he is always like himself; he is never drawn dry. And it is a great honour to go to him for new favours upon former, because he hath an infinite supply. We may draw so much from men as they have not afterwards to make good, but we cannot honour God more than to go to him with a large faith, to fetch large favours from him. The more he gives, the more he can give, and the more he is willing to give. ‘To him that hath shall be given,’ Mat. xiii. 12. We cannot honour God more than to go to him upon former favours and with enlarged desires. ‘Thou hast redeemed us, and been gracious to us before,’ Ps. cvii. 2.

We may much more take this argument in our mouths, and press the majesty of God. ‘Thou hast redeemed us,’ not out of Egypt or Babylon, the land of the north, but ‘with the blood of thy Son,’ from hell and damnation; and therefore thou canst redeem us from this petty misery, from these enemies. We may allege that grand favour to all other petty redemptions, whatsoever they are. He that hath given us Christ, that ‘hath not spared his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things else?’ Rom. viii. 32. He that hath been so large and bountiful as to give us his own Son, that gift to admiration— ‘So God loved the world,’ John iii. 16—how cannot we plead with him for all other favours whatsoever, whether they concern the life of grace or glory, or our present condition while we live in this world? We may plead it much more I say, ‘Thou hast redeemed us.’ But these things I will not press further now.

In the eleventh verse he comes to press it still, and repeats that which he had said before, ‘Lord, I beseech thee, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants that desire to fear thy name.’

‘Let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants.’ It is a prayer; and thou art ‘a God hearing prayer.’ They be thy servants, and thou regardest thy servants. Here are but a few petitions in this large request: ‘remember,’ ‘be attentive,’ and ‘give me favour.’ The most of the prayer is spent in a preparative considering the attributes of God, and in confession and strong reasons from the word, of promises and threatenings, and from their relation; and then he makes good the relation, ‘We are thy servants, because we desire to fear thy name.’

To show that indeed: ‘It is an excellent skill and art in prayer, to have strong arguments. Then the suit comes off easily, as in Ps. xc. It is a prayer of Moses, the man of God; and yet the least part of the psalm is prayer: ‘Teach us to number our days,’ &c., ver. 12. That is all the petition. Though the petition be short, yet it is efficacious, when the heart is warmed and strengthened with strong reasons before; when the heart is elevated and raised with the consideration of the majesty and the truth of God; and when the heart is strengthened with strong convincing reasons, that God will hear when we press him with his word; I say, when the heart is thus raised and warmed, all the petitions come easily off.

Therefore, it is an excellent thing, beloved, to study the Scriptures, and to study all the arguments whereby holy men have prevailed with God in Scripture; and to see in what case those arguments were used. They are of use and force to prevail with God.

It is a pitiful thing now, for Christians under the glorious light of the gospel, to come to God only with bare, naked petitions (if they come from a true heart, they have their force that God should regard them), and have not reasons to press God out of his own word. They cannot hind God with his own promise, nor with arguments that he hath been bound with before. Let a child but cry to the father or mother, there is relief presently for the very cry. But if it be not one that is a child, but is of grown years, the father looks for arguments that are moving to press him with. So here, Nehemiah he presseth God with moving and strong arguments, and he repeats and forceth them. He doth not only allege them, but enforceth them: ‘O Lord, I beseech thee, let thine ear be attent to the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants that desire to fear thy name.’

He desireth God to be ‘attentive.’ He presseth God; and indeed he doth it to warm his own heart, for when we have humbled our heart low enough, and broken it with the consideration of our own unworthiness, and then

warmed it with the consideration of God's goodness, and strengthened it with the consideration of God's promise and truth, then we are sure of a gracious success.

'Let thine ear be attent to the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants.'

How did they know that they were thine?

Because there was no other people in the world that knew God but they. And he knew that the saints, wherever they were, had a spirit of prayer, and would remember the case of the church. Therefore he saith, remember 'my prayer and the prayer of thy servants.' For if 'the prayer of one righteous man prevaieth much,' James, v. 16, much more the prayer of many. If there had been but ten righteous in Sodom, Sodom had been preserved. Now this he allegeth to God, 'remember the prayer of thy servant,' of mine, and the prayer of thy servants. As Tertullian, an ancient father, saith very well, 'When men join together, they offer a holy kind of violence to God'. Prayer is a kind of wrestling and contending with God, a striving with him. 'Let me alone,' saith God to Moses, Exod. xxxii. 10. It is a binding of him with arguments and promises of his own, and it is so forcible, that he desires, as it were, to be let alone. Now, if the prayer of one be a wrestling, and striving, and forcing of him, as it were, against his wall, that he said, 'Let me alone,' as if he could do nothing except he gave over praying, what are the prayers of many, when there is a multitude of them?

Therefore we may look for a comfortable issue of our prayers and humiliation that is performed at this time. The desires of so many Christian souls touched with the Spirit of God, and with the case of the church, which God doth tender, cannot be ineffectual. It must needs draw plenty of blessings from heaven. I will not enter into the commonplace of prayer, having spoken of it upon another occasion; but surely you see the holy man Nehemiah stood so much upon it, that he hoped to speed, because he and others prayed: holy Daniel, and others with him. It was such a gracious messenger to send to heaven for help and for all good, that Daniel, though it cost him his life, that he should be cast into the lion's den, he would not omit it for his life. Take away prayer, and take away the life and breath of the soul. Take away breath and the man dies; as soon as the soul of a Christian begins to live he prays. As soon as Paul was converted, 'Behold he prayeth,' Acts ix. 10. A child, as soon as he is born, he cries, and a Christian will not lose his prayer for his life, as we see in holy Daniel. For what is all the comfort that he hath, but that that is derived from God? and God will be sued unto for all

the favours he bestows. Whatsoever is from his favour, it comes as a fruit of prayer for the most part. Though he go beyond our desires many times, yet ordinarily, what we have if we be his children, we have it as a fruit of prayer. Therefore, I beseech you, let us be stirred up to this duty, as we see Nehemiah here: ‘Remember the prayer of thy servant,’ &c.

And when we pray to God, let us press him, as we see here, ‘Be attentive,’ verse 6, and here again, ‘be attentive.’ He presseth upon God. It is no sinful tautology to come again and again. God loves to hear the same song again and again. This music is not tedious but pleasing to him. And this pressing is for us to warm our hearts; perhaps one petition will not warm them, and when they are warmed by a second, let us labour to warm them more and more, and never give over till we have thoroughly warmed our hearts. ‘Be attentive, be attentive to my prayer;’ and if mine will not prevail, be attentive to the prayers of others; let the prayers of all prevail—‘the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants.’

But how doth he make it good, they are thy servants?

‘They desire to fear thy name.’

Empty relations have no comforts in them: to profess one’s self a servant, and not to make it good that he is a servant. We must make good the relation we stand in to God, before we can claim interest in the favour of God by our relation. Servants, and Christians, and professors—here are glorious titles; but if they be empty titles, if we cannot make them good when we come to God with them,—we cannot say we have any interest in God from empty titles,—it is rather an aggravation of our sin.

God will be honoured in all those that come near him, either in their obedience, or in their confusion. Therefore here the holy man did not think it enough to say, ‘Thy servant, and thy servants, but who desire to fear thy name.’

He goes to make it good that he was the servant of God, not from any outward thing, but from his inward disposition, ‘the fear of God,’ which I will not now stand to speak largely of. God requires the heart; and religion is most in managing and tuning the affections, for they are the wind that carries the soul to every duty. A man is like the dead sea without affections. Religion is most in them. The devil hath brain enough, he knows enough, more than any of us all. But then he hates God. He hath no love to God, nor no fear of

God, but only a slavish fear. He hath not this reverential fear, childlike fear. Therefore let us make it good that we are the servants of God, especially by our affections, and chiefly by this of fear, which is put for all the worship of God. It is put instead of those conditions spoken of verse the 9th, 'If you turn to me, and keep my commandments, and do them,' then I will make good my promise. Now, saith he, taking up the same strength of argument, 'We desire to fear thy name.' As if he should have said, we turn to thee and obey thy commandments, and desire to do them. It is all one. 'We desire to fear thy name,' for those that fear God will turn to him; and to desire to obey his commandments and to do them, it is all one as to do them. If a man should do them, and not from the fear of God, all were nothing but a carcase of obedience. I will not stand longer on that.

How doth he make it good that he feared the name of God?

He makes it good from this, that he had good desires. 'We desire to fear thy name.' We desire it for the present, and for the time to come; whence we will observe two or three things shortly, as may be useful to us. First of all, out of this, that this desire to fear the name of God is brought as an argument to prevail in prayer, we may observe that,

Those that will prevail with God in prayer, must look to the bent of their souls for the time to come, and for the present.

'Regard thy servants that desire to fear thy name.' For to come to God without such a frame of soul as this, to desire to please God in all things for the present, and for the time to come, it is to come as God's enemy; and will God regard his enemies? When one comes with a purpose to live in any sin, without a desire for the time to come, to regard all God's commandments, he comes as God's enemy, he comes as it were with his pistol to shoot at God, he comes with his weapon. Who will regard the petition of a man that comes to wound him at the same time? When a man comes to God with a purpose to sin, he comes to wound God at the same time, as an enemy, and is he like to speed? For what are our sins, but that that makes us enemies to God? They are opposite to him as can he, they make us hateful to God. Therefore we must be able to say with good Nehemiah, when we come to God, to make it good that we are servants indeed, 'We desire to fear thy name.' As Jeremiah tells them, Jer. vii. 10, 'Will you steal, and oppress, and commit adultery, and yet stand before me?' Will you do this and this villany, and stand before me? 'What hast thou to do,' saith God, Ps. 1. 10, seq., 'to take my name into thy mouth, and hatest to be reformed?' If we hate to be

reformed, and do not desire to serve God for the time to come, what have we to do to take his name into our mouths, especially in the holy exercise of prayer? Ps. lxxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.' If a man do but regard to live in iniquity for the time to come, the Lord will not hear his prayer. Therefore, if we will be able to prevail with God in our petitions, we must say with holy Nehemiah, 'We desire for the time to come to fear thy name.' I beseech you, let us remember it.

And then, to omit other things, 'we desire to fear thy name,' we see that Religion especially is in holy desires.

The greatest part of Christianity is to desire to be a sound Christian with all his heart. Religion is more in the affections of the soul than in the effects and operations. It is more in the resolutions and purpose of the soul, than in any effects we can yield to God. There is much desire in all our performances. Therefore saith the holy man here, 'We desire to fear thy holy name.'

Why are desires such trials of the truth of grace?

Because they are the immediate issues of the soul. Desires and thoughts, and such like, they are produced immediately from the soul, without any help of the body, or without any outward manifestation. They show the temper and frame of the soul. Thereupon God judgeth a man by his desires; and that which he desires, if it be a true desire, he shall have and be partaker of. The godly man desires to serve God all the days of his life, and for ever he shall do it. A wicked man desires to offend God if he might live everlastingly. God looks upon him as his desire is. He shall not always sin here; but because he hath an infinite desire of sin, he shall be punished in hell eternally. God looks upon him as he desires. God values men by their desires.

But how are the truth of these desires known?

I will name a few signs. The truth of those desires may be tried thus:

1. If they be constant desires and not flashes; for then they come from a new nature. Nature is strong and firm. Art is for a turn to serve a turn. When men personate a thing, they do it not long. Creatures that are forced to do so and so, they return to their own nature quickly; but when a man doth a thing naturally, he doth it constantly. So, constant desires argue a sanctified frame of soul and a new creature. They argue that the image of God is stamped

upon the soul. Thereupon we may know that they are holy desires, that they spring from a holy soul, if they be constant, if they be perpetual desires, and not as a torrent that is vented for the present on a sudden, and then comes to nothing after. They are constant.

2. And likewise, if these desires be hearty, strong desires; and not only strong, but growing desires—desire upon desire, desire fed with desire still, never satisfied till they be satisfied. Strong and growing desires argue the truth of desires; as indeed a child of God hath never grace enough, never faith enough, never love enough, or comfort enough, till he come to heaven. They are growing desires more and more. The Spirit of God, that is the spring in him, springs up still further and further, till it spring to everlasting life, till it end in heaven, where all desires shall be accomplished, and all promises performed, and all imperfections removed. Till then they are growing desires still. ‘We desire to fear thy name,’ and to please thee in all things.

3. Again, True desires, they are not only of the favour of God, but of graces for the altering of our nature; as Nehemiah here, he desires not the favour of God so much as he desires to fear God’s name. Now when desire is of graces, it is a holy desire. You have not the worst men but would desire, with Balaam, ‘to die the death of the righteous,’ &c., Numb, xxiii. 10, that they might enjoy the portion of God’s people. But to desire grace, that is opposite to corrupt nature as fire and water, this is an argument of a holy principle of grace in us, whence this desire springs, when we desire that that is a counter poison to corrupt nature, that hath an antipathy to corruption. Therefore, when a man from the bottom of his heart can desire, Oh that I could serve God better! that I had more liberty to serve him! that I had a heart more enlarged, more mortified, more weaned from the world! Oh that I could fear God more! And of all graces, if it be a true desire, it is of such graces as may curb us of our sinful delights, and restrain us of our carnal liberty, and knit us near to God, and make us more heavenly-minded. The desire of those graces show a true temper of soul indeed.

4. True desire is carried to grace as well as glory, and the desire of heaven itself. A true spirit that is touched with grace, with the Spirit of God, it desireth not heaven itself so much for the glory, and peace, and abundance of all contentments, as it desires it, that it is a place where it shall be freed from sin, and where the heart shall be enlarged to love God, to serve God, and to cleave to God for ever, and as it is a condition wherein he shall have

the image and resemblance of Jesus Christ perfectly upon his soul. Therefore we pray, 'Thy kingdom come;' that is, we desire that thou wouldst rule more and more largely in our souls, and subdue all opposite power in us, and bring into captivity all our desires and affections; and let 'Thy kingdom come' more and more. 'Let thy will be done by us,' and in us more and more, 'in earth as it is in heaven.' Here is a sweet prayer now serving to the first petition, the hallowing of God's name, when we desire more to honour God, and to that purpose that he may rule in us more and make us better. These desires argue an excellent frame of soul; as we see in Nehemiah, 'our desire is to fear thy name.'

5. True desires are likewise to the means of salvation, and to the means of salvation as they convey grace, as sincere milk; as you have it, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.' Where a man hath holy desires of any grace, and hath them in truth, he will desire those means whereby those graces may most effectually be wrought in his heart. Therefore he will hear the word as the word of God. He comes not to hear the word because of the eloquence of the man that delivers it, that mingles it with his own parts. He comes not to hear it as the tongue of man; but he sees God in it. It is the powerful word of God, because there goes the efficacy of the Spirit with it to work the graces he desires.

Therefore a man may know by his taste of divine truth whether he desire grace. He that desires grace desires the means that may convey grace, and especially so far as they convey grace, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.' You cannot still a child with anything but milk. He desires no blending or mixing, but only milk. So a true Christian desires divine truths most, because the Spirit of God is effectual by them to work grace and comfort in him. I will not enlarge myself in the point.

Use. The comfortable observation hence is this, that weak Christians that find a debility, and faintness, and feebleness in their performances, hence they may comfort themselves by their desire to fear God, and to worship God, and to serve him, if their desires be true. Therefore, in Isaiah xxvi. 8, the church allegeth it to God, 'In the way of thy judgments have we sought thee,' &c. 'The desire of our souls is towards thy name.' They bring it as a prevailing argument to God. So when we come to God, 'The desire of our souls is toward thy name.' Lord, our endeavours are weak and feeble, but 'the desire of our souls is to thy name,' and 'thou wilt not quench the smoking flax,' Mat. xii. 20. Therefore we come to thee with these weak and

poor desires that we have. 'The Lord will fulfil the desires of them that fear him,' Ps. cxlv. 10, if they be but desires, if they be true, and growing, and constant desires, and desires of grace as well as of happiness, as I showed before.

The reason why God accepts them is partly because they spring from his own Spirit. These desires they are the breathings of the Spirit. For even as it is in places where fountains and springs are digged up, they are known and discovered by vapours; the vapours show that there is some water there, some spring, if it were digged up. So these desires, these breathings to God for grace and comfort, these spiritual breathings, they show that there is a spring within and Spirit within, whence these vapours and desires come. Therefore they are accepted of God, because they spring from his own Spirit.

And because they are jointed to heavenward, to show that a man is tamed; for it is put here instead of turning, 'Turn ye to me, saith the Lord,' ver. 9; and he answereth here instead of turning, 'My desire is to fear thy name,' because, when the desire is altered, then the frame of the soul is altered, a man is turned another way. The desire is the weight of the soul. What carries the soul but desire? Now, when the soul is carried another way than before, it argues an alteration of the frame; therefore it pleaseth God to accept of them.

I beseech you, let us often enter into our own souls, and examine what our desires are, which way the bent of our souls is; what cause we would have to flourish and prevail in the world, Christ's or antichrist's; for God esteems us by the frame of our desires. 'Who desire to fear thy name.'

'And prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day.'

Now he comes to his petition, 'Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day.' He doth not capitulate with God for particular matters much—for he knew he had to deal with an all-wise God,—but he commends his petition in general, 'Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant,' &c. He was to attend the king, and he was in his attendance to mind the state of the church, for the re-edifying the walls and gates of Jerusalem. Now saith he in general, 'Prosper thy servant.' He leaves it to God how and in what manner, being to deal, as I said, with an infinite wise God; only he prays in general, 'Prosper thy servant this day.'

He comes again with his relation of ‘servant,’ to teach us alway when we come to God to look in what relation we stand to him, whether we be true servants or no, what work we do for him, in what reference we do what we do; whether we do it to please him as servants or no. I said something of the relation of servant before. I will add a little here, because he repeats it four or five times in this short prayer.

In all our services we should look to God; for our aim in our works show what they are, whether they come from servants or no. As the stamp upon a token makes it, if there be a good stamp on it; it is not the matter that makes it current. A stamp on silver makes it current as well as gold, though the metal of gold be better. So when things are done, because God commands them, to please God, as a service to him, this makes it good that we are servants indeed, that the relation is good. When we go about the service of the church or country, or place we live in, to think I do God service here, and do it as a service to God, who will be honoured and served in our service to others, herein I am a good servant. Though the matter of my service be a common, base, and mean matter, yet it hath a stamp upon it. It is God’s will. God hath placed and planted me here, and he will be served of me in this condition at this time, though the matter of it be an ordinary thing. I know it may help the good of the church. It hath reference to the will of God and the good of the church. Thus if we do what we do with an eye to God in the place where he hath set us, that we do it as to him, we are God’s servants, whatsoever the work is.

And let us remember oft to think of it, to bring it in our prayers. ‘Master,’ say they when they were ready to be drowned, ‘dost thou not care that we perish?’ Mark iv. 38. They put him in mind of the relation they were in to him. So when we can put God in mind of our relation—‘Father, we are thy children ‘Lord, we are thy servants’—it will strengthen our faith and hope of all good. Will a master suffer his servant to miscarry in his service? Surely God will never turn away true-hearted servants that have served him a long time. It puts us in mind of our duty, and serves to strengthen our faith; for as it is a word of service on our part, so it is a promising word of all good from God. Doth he expect that masters should be good to their servants because they have a Master in heaven? and will not the great Master of heaven be good to his servants? You see how he follows the relation.

‘Prosper thy servant this day.’

What is included in this word ‘prosper?’

It includes not only success, which is the main upshot of all, but all that tends to good success. 'Prosper thy servant this day;' that is, direct thy servant this day how to do and to carry himself. And likewise assist thy servant. When thou shalt direct him, assist him by thy strength, direct him by thy wisdom, prosper him with thy grace, give him good success in all. It includes direction, and assistance, and good success. In that he saith, 'prosper thy servant,' it includes these things.

First of all, that in ourselves there is neither direction, nor wisdom, nor ability enough for success. We have not power in ourselves to bring things to a comfortable issue. So it enforceth self-denial, which is a good disposition when we come to God in prayer.

2. And then again, to attribute to God all, both wisdom, and strength, and goodness, and all. Here is a giving to God the glory of all, when he saith, 'Prosper thy servant this day.'

3. Then in the third place, here is a dependence upon God; not only acknowledging these things to be in God, but it implies a dependence upon God for these: 'Prosper me, Lord.' I cannot prosper myself, and thou who art the Creator hast wisdom, and strength, and goodness enough. Therefore I depend upon thee, upon thy wisdom for direction, and upon thy strength for assistance. I depend upon thy goodness and all for a blessed issue. Here is dependence.

4. Again, in the fourth place, here is a recommendation of all by prayer; a recommendation of his inward dependence upon God for all. Now, Lord, 'prosper thy servant.'

So that when we come to God for any prosperity and good success, let us remember that we bring self-denial, and an acknowledgment of all excellency to be in God, to guide, and direct, and assist, and bless us. And remember to depend upon him, to cast ourselves on him, to bring our souls to close with the strong, and wise, and gracious God, that God and our souls may close together. And then commend all by prayer 'to cast ourselves and our affairs, and to roll ourselves,' as the Scripture saith, and all upon God, Ps. lv. 22; and then we shall do as the holy man Nehemiah did here, we shall desire to good purpose that God would 'prosper us.' Indeed, 'it is not in man to guide and direct his own way,' Jer. x. 23. We are dark creatures, and we have not wisdom enough. And we are weak creatures. We have no strength. We are nothing in our own strength. And for success, alas! a thousand things

may hinder us from it. For success is nothing but the application of all things to a fit issue, and foreseeing all things that may hinder, and a removing of them. Now who can do this but God?

One main circumstance that besiegeth and besets a business may hinder an excellent business. Who can see all things that beset a business? all circumstances that stand about a business? Who can see all circumstances of time, and place, and persons, that are hindrances or furtherances? It must be an infinite wisdom that must foresee them; man cannot see them. And when men do see them, are there not sudden passions that come up in men, that rob them of the use of their knowledge? that though they know them before, yet some sudden passion of fear or anger may hinder the knowledge of a man, that he is in a mist when he comes to particulars. When he comes to apply the knowledge that he had before, he knows not what to do. So that unless God in a particular business give success, who is infinitely wise and powerful to remove all hindrances, there will be no success.

As it is in the frame of the body, it stands upon many joints; and if any be out of tune, the whole body is sick. And as it is in a clock, all the wheels must be kept clean and in order, so it is in the frame of a business. There must all the wheels be set a-going; if one be hindered, there is a stop in all. It is so with us in the affairs of this world. When we deal with kings and states, if all the wheels be not kept as they should, there will be no success or prosperity. Nehemiah knew this well enough; ‘prosper thou therefore.’

He meant not to be idle when he said this, ‘prosper thou;’ for he after joined his own diligence and waited. Therefore join that. If we would have our prayers to God and our dependence upon him effectual for prosperity and success, be careful to use the means as he did. He stands before the king, and observed how he carried himself, to see what words would come from the king, and then he meant after to put in execution whatsoever God should discover.

Use. It should teach us to make this use of it, when we deal in any matter, to go to God to prosper it, and give success, and direction, and assistance, and a blessed issue. For God, that we may always depend upon him, he keeps one part in heaven still. When he gives us all likelihood of things upon earth, yet he reserves still the blessing till the thing be done. Till there be a consummation of the business, he keeps some part in heaven. Because he would have us sue to him, and be beholding to him, he will have us go up to heaven. Therefore, when we have daily bread, we must pray for

daily bread, because the blessing comes from him. Our bread may choke us else. We may die with it in our mouths, as the Israelites did. But when we have things, we must depend on him for a blessing; all is to no purpose else.

Let us learn by this a direction to piety and holy walking with God; in all things to pray to God for a blessing. And to that purpose we must be in such a condition of spirit as we may desire God to prosper us; that is, we must not be under the guilt of sin when we come to God to prosper us. And we must be humble. God will not prosper a business till we be humble. As in the case of the Benjamites, when they came, they were denied the first, second, and third time. Till they prayed and fasted, and were thoroughly humbled, they had their suit denied, Judges xx. 36, seq. If the cause be never so good, till we be humbled, God will not prosper it, because we are not in frame for the blessing; if we had it, we would be proud. God in preventing mercy and care, will grant nothing till we be humbled. Therefore let us see that we be humble, and see that the matter be good that we beg God to bless and prosper us in, or else we make a horrible idol of God. We make (with reverence be it spoken) a devil of God. Do we think that God will give strength to an ill business? This is to make him a factor for mischief, for the devil's work. We must not come with such 'strange fire' before God, to transform God to the contrary to that he is; but come with humble affections, with repentant souls for our former sins. And let the thing itself be good, that we may come without tempting of him; let the cause be such that we may desire God's assistance, without tempting of him, as we do when it is good and when we come disposed. Then come with a purpose to refer all to his service. Lord, if thou wilt bless me in this business, the strength and encouragement I have by it, I will refer it to thy further service. Let me have this token of love from thee, that I have a good aim in all, and then I am sure to speed well.

'Prosper now thy servant.'

It is an excellent point, if I had time to stand on it. I beseech you, let it have some impression upon your hearts.

What is the reason that God blasts and brings to nothing, many excellent endeavours and projects? Men set upon the business of God, and of their callings, in confidence of their wit and pride of their own parts. They carry things in the pride and strength of their parts. Men come as gods to a business, as if they had no dependence upon him for wisdom, or direction, or strength. They carry things in a carnal manner, in a human manner, with

human spirits. Therefore they never find either success, or not good success. Let us therefore commend all to God: 'Prosper thy servant.' Before he went about the business, holy Nehemiah he sowed prayers in God's bosom, and watered the seed with mourning; as it is in this chapter, he mourned and prayed. When this business was sown with prayers, and watered with tears, how could he but hope for good success! He mourned and prayed to God, 'Hear thy servant.'

Now when we deal with things in a holy manner, we may, without tempting God, trust him. That which is set upon in carnal confidence and pride, it ends in shame; when men think to conceive things in wit, ay, and in faction and human affections, God will not be glorified this way. God will be glorified by humble dependent creatures, that when they have done the business, will ascribe all to him. 'Not unto us, but to thy name give the praise,' Ps. cxv. 1. The direction and assistance and blessing was thine. Saith God in Isa. 1., towards the end, ver. 11, 'Go to now, ye that kindle a fire, walk in the light of your own fire: but be sure you shall end in sorrow.' You will kindle a fire of your own devices, and walk in the light of your fire; you will have projects of your own, and be your own carvers: but be sure you shall lie down in darkness and discomfort, you shall lie down in sorrow.

A proud unbroken heart accounts these poor courses. It is but a course of weak and poor spirits to pray and fast, and humble themselves to God, and to fear God. Alas! what are these? These are weak courses. I hope we have stronger parts and means to carry things. So they have a kingdom in their brain. What is the issue of these vain men, when God discovers all their courses to be vain at length, to be wind, and come to nothing? 'Prosper now thy servant,' saith he.

Let us learn this lesson likewise. If we come to God in a particular business, that we are not so confident in, to be pleasing to God, yet in general to submit ourselves, 'Lord, prosper thy servant;' go before thy servant; let me deal in nothing against thy will; direct me what is for thy glory; and not to prescribe or limit God. 'Prosper thy servant this day.'

'And grant him mercy in the sight of this man.'

He comes more particularly to this request, 'Grant me mercy in the sight of this man.' We see that A king is a great organ or instrument to convey good things from God, the King of kings, to men.

Therefore he prays that God would give him favour in the sight of the king. For a king is the first wheel that moves all other wheels, and as it were the sun of the commonwealth, or the first mover that moves all inferior orbs. Therefore in heavenly wisdom he desires God to give him favour with him; for if he had that, the king could turn all the inferior orbs to his pleasure. Indeed, it were a point worthy enlarging, but that it is not so seasonable for this time, the time being already spent. You see what great good God conveys by kings and princes. And when God means to do good to a church or state, he raiseth up ‘nursing fathers and nursing mothers,’ Isa. xlix. 23. He will raise up both kings and subordinate Nehemiahs, excellent men, when he hath excellent things to do.

But the main thing here intended, which I will but touch, is, that considering they stand in such a subordination to God as to be instruments to convey so much good or so much ill as they may, as it is said of Jeroboam, they either cause others to sin or to worship God, therefore we should do as good Nehemiah: he prays that he might find favour in his sight.

A wise and holy prayer! He begins at the head; he goes to the spring of all good. Prayer is the messenger or ambassador of the soul. Being the ambassador of the soul, it goes to the highest, to the King of kings first; to the Lord of lords first. It goes to the highest mover of all, and then desires him to move the next immediate subordinate mover, that is, the king, that he may move other orbs under him, that things may be carried by a gracious sweet course to a blessed issue. Therefore the observation hence is this, that when we have to do anything with great men, with kings, &c., however, begin with the King of kings, and do all in heaven before we do it in earth; for heaven makes the laws that earth is governed by. Let earth conclude what it will, there will be conclusions in heaven that will overthrow all their conclusions. Therefore in our prayers we should begin with God, and desire him with earnest and fervent entreaties that he would set all a-going, that he would set in frame these inferior causes. And when we have gotten what we would in heaven, it is easy to get in earth. Let us win what we desire in heaven at God’s hands, and then what an easy thing is it to work with princes and other governors in state when we have gotten God once! Hath not he ‘the hearts of kings in his hand as the rivers of water,’ Prov. xxi. 1, to turn this way or that there way? As a skilful man derives water by this channel or by that, as he opens a vent for the water, so God opens a way to vent the deliberations and determinations of kings and princes, to run this way or that, to this good or that, as he pleaseth. Therefore considering that there is an

absolute dependence of all inferior things from God, when we have to do with kings or great men, let us always begin with prayer.

As Jacob, when he was to deal with Esau, he falls down and prays first; and when he had gotten of God by prayer, God, that makes 'even of enemies friends,' he turned Esau's heart of an enemy to be a friend. And God put into Jacob's heart a wise course to effect this, as to offer a present, and to give him titles, 'My lord Esau,' &c., Gen. xxxiii. 4. God, when he will effect a thing amongst men, and hear the prayers that are made to him for the favour of men, he will put into their hearts such ways whereby they shall prevail with men, as Jacob did with Esau. So Esther, before she goes to Ahasuerus, she got in heaven first by prayer. When she had obtained of God by prayer, how placable and sweet was Ahasuerus to her! So we see in other places of Scripture, when holy men have been to deal with men, they began with God.

I beseech you therefore learn this point of Christian wisdom. If you would speed well,—as we all desire to speed well in our business,—especially those that have public employments, [this must be the course] that they would pray to God, that hath the hearts of kings and princes in his government and guidance, that he would make them favourable; and not to think to carry things in a violent course, for then God doth not usually give that good success; but to carry things in a religious course to the King of heaven, and then to know in what terms to stand in all inferior things as may stand with the will of God in heaven.

If so be there be a dependence of all inferiors to God, then we must not offend God, and go against conscience, for any, because he is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' He doth not set up authority against himself, to disarm and disable himself. He never went to set up gods under him, to make him a cipher; that he should make them gods, and God a man, or nobody, to alter all the frame of things. He never meant to set up any ordinance to nullify and make himself nobody. Therefore, I say, we ought to pray to God for kings, that so in our obedience we may be sure to do nothing against conscience for any creature. We must do all things that possible can be, that may procure the favour, and ingratiate us, because it is in vain to pray unless we use all possible means to win their favour; but if it cannot be upon good terms, then 'whether to obey God or man, judge ye,' Acts v. 29. And as the three young men, 'we take no thought to answer in this matter; our God can defend us if he will,' Daniel iii. 16. And as Esther said, 'If I perish, I perish,' Esther iv. 16. When things are clear, we are to be resolute, yet reserving due respect to

God's ordinance and to his lieutenant upon earth; I say, always reserving due respect, and using means to win favour, and also to use prayer.

Holy Nehemiah, he prays here; and together with that, he attends upon the king. As good Jacob observed Esau, so all good means must be used, or else God will not bless our proceedings.

Remember that all inferior governors whatsoever, they are subordinate and dependent, and therefore they must be regulated by a superior. They are limited, they are dependent, they are derivative. They are dependent upon God; they are derived from him. Therefore, as the apostle saith that 'servants must obey their masters in the Lord,' Eph. vi. 5, so we must obey and do all 'in the Lord.' That limitation must be always added; but reserving that, it is a good thing to pray that there may be favour from the king, because it is of much consequence to bring business to a good issue. And with prayer, there must be a using means to get favour, always with this liberty, to do it so far as we can with preserving a good conscience.

As they have a distinction among civilians, there is a parting with a thing cumulative and privative: cumulative, that is, when we part with a thing so as that we reserve the propriety; privative, when we give away the propriety and all. Now, so God parts with nothing below, as to strip himself; but cumulative, he derives authority to others, but reserves the propriety to himself. Therefore we must obey them in him, and with this limitation, as it may stand with his favour.

To draw to a conclusion in a word. You see here that any good Christian may be a good statesman in one good sense. What is that? A good Christian hath credit in heaven, and he hath a spirit of prayer, and his prayer can set God on work; and God can set the king on work; and he can set his subjects on work. Now, he that can prevail with God to prevail with the gods upon earth here, surely such a man is a profitable man in the state. And you know, God he can alter all matters, and mould all things: it is but a word of his mouth. And what God can do, prayer can do; for prayer binds God, because it is the prayer of faith; and faith, as it were, overcomes God. Now, prayer is the flame of faith, the vent of faith; and faith is a victorious, triumphant grace with God himself. If it be any, it is Christians that can prevail with God for a blessing upon a state. Then certainly there is no good Christian but is of excellent service in the state. Though in particular perhaps he hath not policy, and wisdom, and government, yet he hath God's ear to hear him, and he can

pray to God that God would make the king and other subordinate magistrates favourable.

You see what great good a good man may do in a state. 'The innocent man delivers the land,' as it is in Job xxii. 30. And the 'poor wise man delivers the city,' as it is in Eccles. ix. 15. A few holy, gracious men, that have grace and credit in heaven above, they may move God to set all things in a blessed frame below. And surely if this holy means were used, things would be better than they are; and till this be used, we can never look for the good success and issue of things that otherwise we may hope for.

Divers things might be spoken of the doctrinal part. I will give you but a word of it. That God hath our hearts in his government, more than we ourselves. I speak it to inform our judgment in a point of doctrine, whether God foresee and determine of things below upon foresight, which way they shall go; or whether he foreordain that they shall go this way, because he directs them thus: that is to make God, God indeed. He determines that these things shall be, because he determines, in the series and order of causes, to bring things to pass, and to guide kings, and princes, and magistrates, and all, this way. Again, whether God hath set all men at liberty, in matters of grace especially, that they may apply grace at their liberty, which way they will; and in foresight, which way they will apply their liberty, to determine thus or thus of them. This is to make every man's will a god, and to divest God of his honour, as if God could foresee the inclination of the creature, without foresight that he meant to incline it this way or that way.

Can God foresee any entity, any thing that hath a being in nature or grace, without foresight to direct it this way or that way? We cannot. This is to make him no God. We see God hath the hearts of kings in his power, and that is the ground of prayer for grace to them. Why should we pray for them, if they could apply their own will which way they would? Why should we give thanks for that we have liberty to do this way or that way? It stops devotion, and petition, and thanksgiving, to say that the creature hath liberty to apply itself, and God, seeing it would apply itself thus, determined so. Oh no. We must go to God. He hath set down an order and course of means; and in the use of those means, desire him to guide us by his good Spirit, to enlighten our understandings, to guide our wills and affections by his Holy Spirit, because our hearts are in his government more than our own. If it were needful to prove it, I could prove it at large. If there had been such a liberty, good Nehemiah would never have made this prayer. But God doth

strangely put thoughts and guide all, even of himself, as we may see excellently in the story of Esther. I will give you but that example and instance. What a strange thing was it that Ahasuerus could not sleep; and when he could not sleep, to call for the book, and then that he should read of Mordecai, and thereupon to advance Mordecai. All this tended to the good of the church: it was a strange thing. And so in other things. It is a strange thing that God should put little thoughts and desires into great persons, and then follow it with this circumstance and that; and so bring things to pass. All this is from God. Except we hold this, that God rules all without, and especially the hearts of men, where it is his especial prerogative to set up his throne, we shall never pray heartily or give thanks. And if we do pray and give thanks, he will put thoughts into governors' minds, strange thoughts and resolutions for the good of the church, that we could never have thought of, nor could come otherwise, but from the great God of heaven and earth. We shall see a strange providence concur to the good of all. But I must leave the enlargement of these things to your own thoughts and meditations.

The Successful Seeker

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.—Ps. XXVII. 8.

In the former verse, David begins a prayer to God, ‘Hear, O Lord; have mercy upon me, and answer me.’ This verse is a ground of that prayer, ‘Seek ye my face,’ saith God. The heart answers again, ‘Thy face, Lord, will I seek;’ therefore I am encouraged to pray to thee. In the words are contained, God’s command and David’s obedience.

‘Seek my face; thy face, Lord, will I seek.’ God’s warrant and David’s work answerable, the voice and the echo: the voice, ‘Seek my face;’ the rebound back again of a gracious heart, ‘Thy face, Lord, will I seek.’

‘When thou saidst.’ It is not in the original. It only makes way to the sense. Passionate speeches are usually abrupt: ‘Seek my face;’ ‘thy face, Lord, will I seek.’ The first thing that I will observe from the encouragement is, that,

Obs. God shows himself to his understanding creature.

God begins you see, ‘Seek my face.’ He must open his meaning and show himself first. God comes out of that hidden light that he dwells in, and discovers himself and his will to his creature, especially in the word. It is our happiness now, that we know the mind and meaning of God. What is the ground of this? What need God stoop thus?

There is the same ground for it as that there is a God. These things go in an undivided knot, God: the reasonable, understanding creature; and religion, that ties that creature to God; a discovery of God what that religion shall be.

For in the intercourse between God and man, man can do nothing except he hath his warrant from God. It is extreme arrogance for man to devise a worship of God. Do we think that God will suffer the creature to serve him as he pleaseth? No. That were to make the creature, which is the servant, to be the master. It belongs to the master or lord to appoint the service. What master or lord will be served according to the liberty and wisdom and will of his servant? And shall the great God of heaven and earth

be worshipped and depended upon as man pleaseth, or from any encouragement from himself? Shall not he design his own worship? He that singles out his own work makes himself master in that.

Therefore God begins with this command, 'Seek my face;' and then the heart answereth, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' God must first discover his mind, of necessity, to the creature.

Scriptures might he forced hence to show the duty owing from the creature, man, to God. For the creature must have a ground for what he doth. It must not be will-worship, infringing, &c. It is a rule, it weakens the respect of obedience that is done without a cause. Though a man doth a good deed, yet what reason, what ground have ye for this? And that we may do things upon ground, God must discover himself; therefore he saith, 'Seek my face.'

It may be objected that everything proclaims this, to seek God. Though God had not spoken, nor his word, every creature hath a voice to say, 'Seek God.' All his benefits have that voice to say, 'Seek God.' Whence have we them? If the creature could speak, it would say, I serve thy turn that thou mayest serve God, that made thee and me. As the prophet saith, the rod and chastisement hath a voice. 'Hear the rod, and him that smiteth,' Micah vi. 9. Everything hath a voice. We know God's nature somewhat in the creature, that he is a powerful, a wise, a just God. We see it by the works of creation and providence; but if we should know his nature, and not his will towards us—his commanding will, what he will have us do; and his promising will, what he will do for us—except we have a ground for this from God, the knowledge of his nature is but a confused knowledge; it serves but to make us inexcusable, as in Rom. i. 19, seq., it is proved at large. It is too confused to be the ground of obedience, unless the will of God he discovered before; therefore we must know the mind of God.

And that is the excellency of the church of God above all other people and companies of men, that we have the mind and will of God; what he requires of us by way of duty to him, and what he will do to us as a liberal and rich God. These two things, which are the main, are discovered; what we look for from God, and the duty we owe back again to God, these are distinctly opened in the word. You see here God begins with David, 'Seek ye my face.'

Indeed, God is a God of order. In this subordination of God and the creature, it is fit that God should begin. It is God's part to command, and ours to obey. This point might be enlarged, but it is a point that doth but make way to that that follows, therefore I will not dwell upon it.

Again, in this first part, God's command or warrant, 'Seek ye my face,' you see here,

Obs. 2. God is willing to be known. He is willing to open and discover himself; God delights not to hide himself. God stands not upon state, as some emperors do that think their presence diminisheth respect. God is no such God, but he may be searched into. Man, if any weakness be discovered, we can soon search into the depth of his excellency; but with God it is clean otherwise. The more we know of him, the more we shall admire him. None admire him more than the blessed angels, that see most of him, and the blessed spirits that have communion with him. Therefore he hides not himself, nay, he desires to be known; and all those that have his Spirit desire to make him known. Those that suppress the knowledge of God in his will, what he performs for men and what he requires of them, they are enemies to God and of God's people. They suppress the opening of God, clean contrary to God's meaning: 'Seek my face;' I desire to be made known, and lay open myself to you.

Therefore we may observe by the way, that when we are in any dark condition, that a Christian finds not the beams of God shining on him, let him not lay the blame upon God, as if God were a God that delighted to hide himself. Oh no; it is not his delight. He loves not strangeness to his poor creature. It is not a point of his policy. He is too great to affect such poor things. No; the fault is altogether in us. We walk not worthy of such a presence; we want humility and preparation. If there be any darkness in the creature, that he finds God doth not so shine on him as in former times, undoubtedly the cause is in himself; for God saith, 'Seek my face.' He desires to open himself. But it is a point that I will not be large in.

We see hence likewise, that Obs. 3. God's goodness is a communicative, spreading goodness.

That is peculiar to God and to those that are led with the Spirit of God, that are like him; they have a communicative, diffusive goodness that loves to spread itself. 'Seek ye my face.' I am good in myself, but I desire to shine on you, to impart my goodness to you.

If God had not a communicative, spreading goodness, he would never have created the world. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were happy in themselves, and enjoyed one another before the world was. But that God delights to communicate and spread his goodness, there had never been a creation nor a redemption. God useth his creatures, not for defect of power, that he can do nothing without them, but for the spreading of his goodness; and thereupon comes all the subordination of one creature to another, and all to him.

Oh that we had hearts to make way for such a goodness as God would cast into us, if we were as we should be. God's goodness is a spreading, imparting goodness. It is a common distinction. There is the goodness of the fountain and the goodness of the vessel, that is our goodness, because we contain somewhat in us that is good. The goodness of the creature, that is but the channel or the cistern; but the goodness of God is another manner of goodness, the goodness of the fountain. The fountain begs not from the river; the sun borrows not light from the candle; God begs not goodness from the creature. Ours is a borrowed goodness, but his is a communicative goodness: 'Seek my face,' that I may impart my goodness. The sun delights to spread his beams and his influence in inferior things, to make all things fruitful. Such a goodness is in God as is in a fountain, or in the breast that loves to ease itself of milk.

I note it, that we may conceive aright of God, that is more willing to bestow good than we are to ask it. He is so willing to bestow it, that he becomes a suitor to us, 'Seek ye my face.' He seeks to us to seek him. It is strange that heaven should seek to earth, and yet so it is.

Quest. Whence comes this in God, the attribute of goodness, the spreading goodness in his nature, that he desires to impart and communicate himself?

Ans. There is no envy in God. He hath none above him, and therefore he labours to make all good. There is a mystery in it; but if some be not good, the fault is in themselves. As it is a prerogative in him to make some more and some less good, so there is a fault in them; that I am no better, it is my own fault. The prerogative belongs to God. We must not search into that. But every man may say, I might have been better and more enlarged; I did not seek his face, that he might take occasion to enlarge himself towards me. Would we he like our heavenly Father? Let us labour to have large affections, to have a spreading goodness.

Two things make us very like God, that much concern this point: to do things freely of ourselves, and to do them far. To communicate goodness, and to communicate it far to many. The greater the fire is, the further it burns; the greater the love is, the further it extends and communicates itself. There are none more like God than those that communicate what good they have to others, and communicate it as far and remote as they can to extend it to many. Our Saviour Christ, you see what a world were beholding to him; heaven and earth were beholding to him. And the nearer a man comes to Christ, the more there is a kind of self-denial, to do good to others. Saint Paul had a great measure of Christ in him. He was content to be bestowed for the good of the church; the care of all did lie upon him, 2 Cor. xi. 28. A public mind is God's mind; a public mind is a mind that loves to do good freely and largely to others. Therefore God saith, 'Seek my face,' that I may have better opportunity to empty my goodness to you. 'Seek my face that is, seek my presence. The face is the glass of the soul, wherein we see the mind of a man. 'Seek my face;' that is, seek my mind, seek my presence, as we shall see afterward. I will speak no more of that point, God's warrant or command, but go on.

'My heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Here is the work and obedience, 'My heart said unto thee,' &c. David's heart was set in a good and sanctified frame by God; it was between God and his obedience. The heart is between God and our obedience, as it were an ambassador. It understands from God what God would have done, and then it lays a command upon the whole man. The heart and conscience of man is partly divine, partly human. It hath some divinity in it, especially if the man be a holy man. God speaks, and the heart speaks. God speaks to the heart, and the heart speaks to us. And oftentimes when we hear conscience speaking to us, we neglect it; and as St Augustine said of himself, 'God spake often to me, and I was ignorant of it'. When there is no command in the word that the heart directly thinks of (as indeed many profane careless men scarce have a Bible in their houses), God speaks to them thus; conscience speaks to them some broken command, that they learn against their wills. They heed it not, but David did not so. God said, 'Seek ye my face;' his heart answers, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

The heart looks upward to God, and then to itself. 'My heart said.' It said to thee, and then to itself. First, his heart said to God, Lord, I have encouragement from thee. Thou hast commanded that I should seek thy

face. So his heart looked to God, and then it speaks to itself, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' It looks first to God, and then to all things that come from itself.'

'My heart said.' It said of that point, concerning the thing thou saidst, 'Seek my face.'

'My heart said to thee.' David saw God in all his commandments: 'Thou saidst to me, Seek my face; my heart said to thee.' I know the command is from thee; I have to deal with thee in the command and encouragement, and in the warrant. I look not to the words, but to thee; the authority and strength of them comes from thee.

'My heart said to thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Between the answer of David and God's command and warrant, the heart comes to think seriously upon the command, and then to enjoin the duty. This is to be considered, because there is no knitting of these two together but by the heart, the serious consideration of the heart. When God saith, 'Seek my face,' he answers, 'I will seek thy face.' How comes this return? The soul considers the ground of the return before the return. A man, when he doth anything, he doth it from the principles of a man. A holy man, when he doth a thing, he doth it from the principle of a holy man; and what is the principles and foundation of the practice of a holy man? A sanctified understanding to tell him what God hath said, and what he hath promised, and wherein God hath discovered himself.

Well, when the heart knows that once, the heart hath enough from heavenward, it hath enough from heaven. God hath said and promised it. Then the heart, by a work it hath of itself, speaks to itself, and to the whole man, to seek God. The heart will not stoop without reason, the heart of an understanding man; but when it sees the command first, 'Seek my face,' then it answers, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' So that this command of God, and this encouragement and warrant from God, 'Seek ye my face,' it was in David's heart, it was written, and set, and grafted in his heart; and then his heart being awed with the command of God, God hath said thus, the heart goes again to God; thou hast said thus, Lord, 'thy face will I seek.'

See the depth of David's speech, when he saith, 'Lord, thy face will I seek.' It came from his heart root, not only from the heart, but from the heart, grounded upon the command and encouragement of God. 'Seek my face.' There is the ground; the heart digesting this thoroughly, this- is God's

command; I understand it, and understand it from God; I see the authority from whence it comes. Therefore I will stir up myself, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' I shall have occasion to speak somewhat of it afterwards, in the next thing, his obedience. Therefore I go on.

'Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.'

Here is his return again to God, that he will seek the face of God. I will seek thy face in all my necessities. Then will I seek to thee; and in all thine ordinances I will seek to thee, whereinsoever thy presence is discovered. Thy presence is in all places, especially in thine ordinances; thy presence is in all times, especially in the time of trouble and need. In all times of need I will seek to thee; in all exigencies I will seek unto thee; and in all thine ordinances wherein I may find thee. I know I may meet with thee there; thou givest thy people meetings in thine ordinances. It is thy walk; therefore thy face, Lord, will I seek, where I may be sure to meet thee, in thine own way and ordinances. So much for the meaning.

'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Here is, first of all, an application, and obedience from application. They be words of particular application. 'Thy face will I seek.' God had given him a ground, 'Seek ye my face.' His heart makes the application, 'Thy face I will seek,' applying the general encouragement to himself in particular. So that you may observe hence that,

Obs. The ground of all obedience, of all holy intercourse with God, is a spirit of application.

Applying the truths of God, though generally spoken, to ourselves in particular, It is spoken here in the plural number, 'Seek ye my face;' but the general implies the particular, as London is in England. 'Seek ye my face,' all ye that are the people of God. But I am one of them: what though I be not named? That tenet in popery is against sense. When a man is condemned by the law, is his name in the law? It is against such a fact; he is a malefactor: and so the particular is included in the general, 'Seek ye my face.' David knew that; reason taught him that, and not religion.

1. Now the ground of application of divine truths to ourselves in particular is this, that the truth of God (setting aside some circumstantial things that arise sometimes to particular persons, that sometimes limit the

command to one person, or the promise to one person, cut off those distinctions), all comfortable truths agree to God's people in all ages, while there is a church in the world. All truths are eternal truths, die not as men do. David is dead, and Moses is dead; but this truth is not dead, 'Seek ye my face.' Paul is gone, and Peter is gone. We are the Davids and the Moseses, and the Peters, and the Pauls now. Those truths that were good to them are good to us. Whatsoever was written before was written for our comfort, Rom. xv. 4. There is an eternal truth, that runs through all ages of the church, that hath an everlasting comfort. God hath framed the Scriptures not to be limited to the times wherein they were written, as the papists idly speak, Bellarmine and others; as if they were occasional things; that the Scriptures were written by such and such men, and concerning only those times. But the Scriptures were written for all times, and it concerns all times to apply all truths to themselves, setting aside those circumstances that are applied to particular men, which are easy to discern. In Heb. xiii. 5 that that was said to Joshua, Josh. i. 5, the apostle applies it to the church in his time, and to all: 'Be not afraid; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.' It is a general truth. 'And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness,' that whosoever believes as Abraham is a son of Abraham, Rom. iv. 5. These truths are universal, and concern every one, as well as any. And so many other places of Scripture. 'The promise of the blessed seed,' the believing of it runs from the beginning of the world, in all ages to the coming of Christ. All other promises were but an enlargement of that, that was the mother promise. That is the ground of application, that the general truths agree to all the churches. The truth of God is the portion of every child of God. He may claim every promise, and ought to follow the direction of every command.

The reason is, because all the church of God are heirs alike—heirs of the promise, children of Abraham, heirs of salvation. They have interest in Christ alike, 'in whom all the promises are yea and amen;' in whom all the promises have their making and their performance. And by reason that there is an indifferent equality, in regard of the main things, of all the children of God, they have interest alike in all the benefits by Christ: in all truths, in all substantial duties to God, and all favours from God. That is the ground of the equity of application.

2. But if you will have the ground of the necessity of it, nature will show that. For the truths are food. If food be not taken, what good doth it do without application? The word of God is a sword: what will a sword do if it hangs up in a man's chamber? or if it be not used when the enemy

approacheth? The application of the sword of the Spirit gives the virtue to it. It is to no purpose else. Divine truths are phisic. If it be not applied, what use is there of phisic?

There is a necessity, if we will obey God, of a spirit of application. There is nothing that will do good but by application, neither in nature nor in grace. There must be a virtual application at least. The heavens work upon the earth. There is no application bodily, the heavens are too high. But there is a virtual application; there comes light in, and influence to these inferior bodies. Therefore we say the sun is in the house, and in the place we are in, though there be only his influence there. But there must be application of divine truth to the soul. It must be brought near the soul before the soul can move. There is a necessity of application from a principle of nature to make it our own.

Now as in nature there is a power in the soul to work out of the food that that is good for every member, which we call a digestive power and faculty, that applies and assimilates the meat and nourishment we take to every part; there be fibrae, sucking veins, that suck out of the meat strength for this and that purpose; so there is in the soul of every Christian and holy man: there is a spiritual sucking; there is a drawing digestive spirit, that digests and draws out nourishment out of the book of God, that is fit for him; that he can say, This is mine, this is for me. I want comfort and strength and direction, here it is. I want light, here it is. I am weak, here is supply for it. So there is a digestive power by the Spirit of God in every Christian, to suck and to draw out of the word that that is fit for all purposes and turns; and he can apply the word upon every occasion: as, if it be a command, he obeys it; if it be a threatening, he trembles at it; if it be comfort, he rests in it; if it be a direction, he follows it likewise. He applies it answerable to the nature of the word, whatsoever it is. His heart is moulded answerable to the word, by reason of the Spirit of application.

3. As there is a ground of the application of the word, and a necessity of it, so there is a principle of application; that is, the Spirit of God in the hearts of the children of God, teaching their spirits to draw wholesome truths fitting to themselves; and none but the children of God can do it, that have the Spirit of God. They cannot apply the word of God aright. False application of the word of God is the cause of all mischief sometimes, when those that apply the law should apply the gospel; and on the contrary, when those that should apply the law, sinful, secure persons, apply the gospel.

Many times poor distressed persons, that comfort belongs to— ‘Oh comfort my people,’ Isa. xl. 1—they apply the law that belongs not to them. In that case false application is the ground of mischief. Therefore the Spirit of God is the principle of application of divine truths, according to the exigence and estate of God’s people.

Use. Therefore we should be stirred up to beg the spirit of application, to maintain our communion and intercourse with God, that we may apply every thing duly and truly to ourselves and our own souls. All is to no purpose else, if we do not apply it, if it be not brought home to our souls and digested thoroughly in our hearts. We must say, This is from God, and this belongs to me; when we hear truths unfolded, to say of ourselves, This concerns me, and say not, This is a good portion and a good truth for such a one and such a one, but, Every one take out his own portion, this is for me. God saith, ‘Seek my face; thy face, Lord, will I seek,’ with a spirit of application.

If we do not—as indeed it is the fault of the times to hear the word of God loosely—we care not so much to hear the word of God, as to hear the gifts of men. We desire to hear fine things, to increase notions. We delight in them, and to hear some empty creature, to fasten upon a story or some phrases by the by. Alas! you come here to hear duties and comforts, if you be good, and sentences against you, if you be naughty. We speak God’s threatenings to you that will wound you to hell, except you pull them out by repentance. It is another manner of matter to hear than it is took for. ‘Take heed how you hear,’ saith Christ, Luke viii. 18. So we had need, for the word that we hear now shall judge us at the latter day. Thereupon we should labour for a spirit of application, to make a right use of it as we should.

Therefore those humble souls that are cast down in the sight and sense of their sins, they must apply the sweet and blessed comforts of the gospel, such as are contrite in spirit: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,’ Ac., Mat. xi. 28. Those on the other side, that go on in a course of sin, and wall not be reclaimed, let them consider what Moses saith, Deut. xxix. 20, ‘If a man go on and bless himself, my wrath shall smoke against such a man, and burn to hell.’ I will not remove my wrath from him, till by little and little I take my good Spirit from him, and let him go with some temporal comforts, and then bring him to hell. ‘I will curse him in his blessings.’ He shall have blessings, but he shall be cursed in all that he doth;

and all things shall be in wrath and anger that shall burn to hell. Such like places, let such men apply to themselves. There is no comfort at all to men that live in sin wittingly and willingly. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer,' Ps. lxvi. 18. If a man despise the ordinance of God, hearing and good means, 'his prayer shall be abominable.' 'He that will not hear the law, his prayer is abominable,' Prov. xxviii. 9. The applying of these things would make men bethink themselves, and turn to God, when he considers what part of the word belongs to him, and makes a right application.

If we make not a right application of God's truths, this mischief will come of it.

(1.) IF we dishonour God and his bounty. Hath God been so bountiful, as to give us so many instructions and such promises? and shall not we make them our own? What is the end of the ministry but to spread before us the unsearchable riches of Christ? They are yours, if you will take them. When you have not a spirit of application, and are not in case to take them, they are lost: God's bounty is discredited.

(2.) The devil rejoiceth when he seeth what excellent things are laid open in the church of God, in the ministry, what sweet promises and comforts, but here is nobody to take them and lay hold on them; like a table that is richly furnished, and there is nobody comes and takes it. It makes the devil sport, it rejoiceth the enemy of mankind when we lose so great advantage, that we will not apply those blessed truths and make them our own. There is no greater delight to Satan, than for us to refuse those dainties that God hath provided for us. What can rejoice an enemy more, than to see courtesies refused? He sees that all the Scripture is for comfort to poor distressed souls; and when they refuse their comforts and set light by them, as they tell Job, 'Settest thou light by the consolations of the Almighty?' Job. xv. 11, then Satan, the enemy of mankind, and especially the enemy of our comfort, since he hath lost all comfort and all hope of it himself, he rejoiceth to see us in this condition comfortless. Therefore let us lay claim to the promises by a spirit of application.

(3.) Again, We are injurious to ourselves, we rob our own souls. The want of this makes Christians be discouraged and droop as they do. When they are cast down, all comfortable truths belong to them, yet they put them off: This is not for me and those in my case. When God saith he will come and dwell with a humble heart, This is not for me. This spirit of peevishness

and forwardness is that that keeps them long from that comfort that they might enjoy. What! to be in the midst of comforts and to starve; for a man to be at a feast and to starve, because he hath not a spirit to digest and to take that that is fit for him!

We detest, and deservedly, those misers that, in the midst of all their abundance, will not spend sixpence upon themselves. What a spirit of baseness is this, in the midst of spiritual contentments and refreshings, when God offers to feed our souls with the fat things of his house, to say, Oh no! this belongs not to me; and cherish a peevish froward spirit that puts all away. Why do we not labour to be in such a condition that we may be cherished? and that we may have satisfaction? to be truly hungry and poor in spirit, that we may be filled and satisfied, and not to go on thus stubbornly? There is a proud kind of modesty. Oh, this belongs not to me; I am unworthy. If we will hearken to our own misgiving hearts in the time of temptation, we shall never answer God and say, 'Lord, thy face will I seek.' Therefore let us labour for a spirit of supplication, I will not enforce that point further.

Now from this spirit of application, from this general 'Seek ye my face,' comes obedience; for it is a speech of obedience.

'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

I will seek by thy strength and grace; for when God utters a general command to his children, there goes with that command a secret virtue, whereby they are enabled to seek him. There came a hidden virtue with this 'Seek my face,' when David's spirit was raised by God to think of it. Together with the thought of this 'Seek my face,' there was a virtue enabling his soul to return back to God, to say, 'Lord, thy face will I seek.' So though David said, 'I will seek thy face,' yet there was a spiritual virtue that enabled him. God must find us before we can seek him. He must not only give the command to seek his face, but together with the command, there goes a work of the Spirit to the children of God, that enableth them to seek him.

In the covenant of grace, God doth his part and ours too. Our part is to seek God, to please him and walk before him. They are all one; I need not be curious in particulars. Now this was not a speech of self-confidence, but a speech of the Spirit of God, that went with the command to him.

This is a great encouragement, by the way, to hear good things, and to come to the congregation. We hear many great things, high duties, but we are not able to perform them. It is true, but the gospel is the ministry of the Spirit; and together with the duty there goes the Spirit to enable us to the duty. ‘Stand up and walk,’ saith Peter to the poor lame man, and there went an enabling virtue to raise him, Acts iii. 6. ‘Arise,’ saith Christ to Lazarus, and there went a divine virtue to make him rise, John xi. 48; and here, ‘Seek my face,’ there went a divine virtue to make him seek, which those that contemn the ordinances of God want, because they will not attend upon the ordinances. So much for that.

Now I come to his obedience.

‘Thy face, Lord, will I seek.’

This obedience ariseth from application, and his obedience hath these qualifications:

1. It was present. As soon as he heard God’s will, as soon as his heart did think of the word, he puts not off. The Spirit of God and the works of it, are not slow in the children of God; but when they hear their duty, there is a spirit presently, ‘Thy face will I seek,’ before the heart grow cold again.

2. Again, This return and answer, as it was present, so likewise it was a pliable obedience: ‘Thy face will I seek.’ It is a speech of a ready, cheerful, pliable heart. Where the Spirit of God works, it makes not only present and quick, but cheerful and pliable. For the Spirit of God is like fire, that softens the hardness of the heart, that naturally is like iron, and makes it pliable. God’s people are a voluntary people, as it is Ps. cx. 3; a people of devotion, of readiness of will, and cheerfulness; a free-hearted people, a people set at large. They are led with a royal spirit, a spirit above their own; and that makes that easy and pleasant to them, that otherwise is difficult and impossible to nature.

When Isaiah’s lips were touched with a coal from the altar—that is, he had somewhat from the Spirit of God to encourage nature—then ‘Here I am, Lord; send me,’ Isa. vi. 8. He detracted the business before, and put it off as much as he could. The Spirit of God makes pliable, as we see in the Acts. They cared not for suffering whips or anything, because they were made pliable to God’s service; they accounted it an honour to suffer anything for God’s sake, Acts v. 41. The obedience that is good is pliable and cheerful.

God would have things in the church done by such people. The very building of the tabernacle was done by such voluntary people, that brought in as God moved their hearts. Oh, beloved, a Christian knows what it is to have a royal spirit, a free spirit. David knew it. When he had lost it by his sin, he prayed that he might have a free spirit, a cheerful spirit, in the service of God, and in his particular calling, for sin darkens and straitens the soul. 'Thy face will I seek.' His heart was weary and pliable now, as God would have it.

So should our hearts be; and they will be so, if we have the Spirit of God, ready and cheerful. God hath none to fight his battles against Satan and the kingdom of darkness, but voluntaries. All God's people are voluntaries. They are not pressed soldiers; I mean, not against their wills, in that sense. Indeed, they have press-money in baptism, to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil; but they are not pressed, they are voluntaries. They know they serve a good general, that will pay them abundantly; therefore they labour to be voluntary. It is a good saying, 'There is no virtue in men that do things against their wills; for that is virtue and grace that comes from a man from his own principles, from cheerfulness: 'God loveth a cheerful giver.' I might enlarge this, but I do but take it as it may strengthen the point. Our obedience to God, it must be pliable, and cheerful, and voluntary.

3. Again, Obedience, if it be true, it is perfect and sincere, looking to God: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' We must eye God in it, and God's commandment, and not have a double eye. We must not look to our own selves. It must be perfect obedience; that is, opposite to that which is hypocritical. That is the best perfection. For the perfection of degrees is not to be attained here, but this perfection of soundness is to be laboured for; as we see here it was a sound obedience: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' I will not seek thy favours and blessings so much as thy face. It was perfect obedience, as perfection is opposed to unsoundness.

4. It was likewise a professed obedience before all the world, in spite of Satan: 'Thy face will I seek.' Let the devil and the world do what they can; let others do as they will; but as Joshua saith, 'If you will worship other gods,' if you will fall away, do; 'but I and my house will serve the Lord.' What if his house will not serve the Lord? If my house will not serve the Lord, I will. So we should all be of Joshua's mind, 'I and my house will serve the Lord,' Josh. xxiv. 15, let the world go which way it will. In blessed St Paul's time, Oh, saith he, 'There are many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, who are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is damnation,

who mind earthly things,' Philip, iii. 18. What doth Paul in the mean time? Oh, but 'our conversation is in heaven.' We swim a contrary way. We care not to let the world know it. Our conversation is another way. So our obedience must not only be present, and pliable, and perfect, but a professed obedience: that is, to break through all the oppositions of the devil and the world; with an invincible resolution to break through all difficulties, and scandals, and examples of great persons, and of this and that, if we will go to God, and say truly, 'Lord, thy face will I seek.' Let other men seek what they will: let them seek the face and favour of others; 'Thy face will I seek.' Thou shalt be instead of all to me, as indeed he is.

5. Again, As it is a professed, so it is a continued, a perpetual obedience. He is resolved for the time to come. 'Thy face will I seek:' not only now, and then turn my back upon thee afterwards; but I will seek thy face, till I see thee in heaven. I see thy face in thine ordinances, in the word, in thy people; where two or three be gathered, thou art among them, Mat. xviii. 20. I will see thy face as I may, till I see it in heaven. So here is a perpetual resolution: 'Thy face I will seek.'

6. Lastly, There is one thing more in this obedience and answer to God's command, that his answer to God is an answerable answer; that is, the answer and obedience is suitable to the command. God's command was, 'Seek my face.' His answer is, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' So the point is, that Obs. Our obedience to God must be proportionable to that that is commanded.

It must not be this or that devised by men. When the Lord's eye is on you in this place, and gives you a charge to do thus, the obedience must be suitable. When he saith, 'Seek my face,' we must obey: 'Thy face, Lord, will we seek.' Therefore it may, in some poor sense, be compared to an echo. We return obedience in the same kind. The Spirit of God teacheth the children of God to do so, to answer God in all the things he doth. I know not a better evidence of a child of God, than this answering spirit. How shall I know that God loves me? I love him again; therefore I know he hath loved me first. It is an undoubted argument. How shall I know that God hath chosen me? I choose him: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and what is there in earth in comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. It is an undoubted argument: Shall I be able to single out God, to be instead of all to me? and hath not he chosen me first? Can there be anything in the current, that is not in the spring before? It is impossible. I know God; I look on him as my father: certainly he hath

shined on me first. I have said to him, 'Thou art my God;' certainly he hath said before, 'Thou art my servant.' If I say to him, 'Thou art my God,' certainly he hath said before, 'I am thy salvation.' He hath begun. For this is the order: God begins. He saith, 'Seek my face;' then if we have grace to return answerable obedience to God, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' When thou biddest me, Lord, I will love thee, I will choose thee, and delight in thee; thou shalt be my God. If we have this returning spirit hack again, we cannot have a better argument that God loves us, than by answering God's course.

This is that that St Peter hath in 1 Peter iii. 21. That that doth all in baptism, it is not 'the washing of the filth of the body,' but the *ἐπερώτημα*, 'the answer,' or the demand 'of a good conscience;' but 'answer' is better. The answer of a good conscience cleanseth in baptism. What is that?

In baptism, dost thou believe, saith the minister, in God the Father Almighty? I do believe. That was the answer. Dost thou believe in God the Son? I do believe. Dost thou believe the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting? I do believe. Dost thou renounce the devil and his works? I renounce them. That is the answer of a good conscience. Where that is from the heart, there God hath spoken to that heart before, and there is obedience to purpose. 'Thy face will I seek.' It is that that brings comfort, not the washing of the water. It is not the eating of the bread, and drinking the wine, and hearing the word of God: when there is not the answer of a good conscience, when we say we believe, and we will do this, to do it indeed, Lord, 'I will believe;' I will go out of the church with a purpose to practise what I hear. Here is the answer of a good conscience, when we mingle what we hear with faith, and labour to practise it, or else it will do no good.

Our obedience must be suitable and answerable, as I said before: if it be a direction, to follow it; if it be a command, to obey it; if it be a threatening, to fear it; if it be a comfort, a promise, to rest upon it. Let there be a suitability of obedience to the word thereafter as the word is. Let us have a spiritual desire to these things, to imitate the holy man of God, as we desire to share in his comforts.

I will follow this point of the answerableness of obedience a little further, and then come to the particular of seeking.

Let our obedience be every way answerable first. Let the heart think what God saith, what God commands and promiseth; let the heart take the

word of God the second time and ruminare on it, and go over it again. Let us look into the word, and see what is commanded, and what is promised, and then let the heart go over it again. And then upon that allege it to God.

(1.) Put case a man be in trouble, Lord, thou hast commanded, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee,' Ps. 1. 15. Let the heart think of it and go over that encouragement. It is rather an encouragement than a command. Though indeed God lay a command on us to be good to our own souls, it is a duty to love ourselves. Therefore he commands us to go to him, to seek his face, as though we wronged him by disobedience, when we injure ourselves by our peevishness, as indeed we do. God loves us better than we love ourselves. Let us think of the command and invitation; thou hast commanded me, Lord, and encouraged me to come; I am now in trouble, experience teacheth me. I come to thee. Thou hast said, 'He that sitteth in darkness, and seeth no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord,' Isa. 1. 10. I am in darkness, and see no light now, I trust in thy name. Let the heart think of the promise, and then allege it to God, and come with an obedient answer, and cast itself upon him, and trust in him.

(2.) We are in want, perhaps, and see no issue, no supply. Think of God's gracious promise, 'I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,' Hob. xiii. 5. I come to thee and claim this promise; I am in covenant with thee, &c.

(3.) So we should take the promise. Thou hast said, 'At what time soever a sinner comes to thee with a repentant heart, thou wilt forgive his iniquities; and though his sins were as scarlet, thou wilt make them as snow, and white as wool,' Isa. i. 18. My soul thinks of that command, and I come to thee.

Thou hast bid all that are weary and heavy laden in soul, that are troubled in conscience with the sense of their sins, to come unto thee. My heart thinks of thy command and invitation, I come to thee; I am weary and heavy laden. First, let us think of the encouragement, that is our warrant, and then yield present obedience. And then what will be the issue? What will spring from it when the heart and obedience join with the command, that there is a meeting, that they concentrate the heart and obedience? God bids the heart obey. The heart saith, I do obey. When these meet, the issue must be exceeding comfortable. It cannot be otherwise, when the obedient heart meets God in his command, in his promise.

In all perplexity of business, 'commit thy way to the Lord, and he shall establish thy thoughts,' Prov. iii. 6, and other places. Lord, I commit my ways

to thee; establish my thoughts and designs agreeable to thy will, because thou hast bid me commit my ways to thee.

In the hour of death, let us commend ourselves to God, 'as to a gracious and merciful Creator,' 1 Pet. iv. 19. Lord, I commend to thee my soul, who art the Creator of my soul and the Redeemer of it. Here is an obedience answerable. What can be the issue of it but comfort?

Therefore let us learn by the example of this blessed man, that when he had but a hint from God, 'Seek ye my face,' answers, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Faith will see light at a little crevice. When it sees an encouragement once, a command, it will soon answer: and when it sees a promise, half a promise, it will welcome it. It is an obedient thing, 'the obedience of faith,' Rom. xvi. 26. It believes, and upon believing, it goes to God. As the servants of the king of Assyria, they catch the word presently, 'Thy servant Benhadad,' 1 Kings xx. 32; so faith, it catcheth the word.

To put God in mind, it is an excellent thing with the prophet, whosoever penned the 119th Psalm, whether David, or some other, 'Remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust,' ver. 49. As it is Neh. i. 8, 'Remember, Lord.' He puts God in mind of his promise; and so it is good often to put God in mind. Lord, thou hast made such and such promises. I know thou canst not deny thyself. If thou shouldst deny thy word, thou must deny thyself. Thy word is thyself. 'Remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust.' If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me, for thou hast given me this promise and this command. This is an excellent way to deal with God, as it were, to wrestle with him. 'By thy promise thou hast quickened me,' Ps. cxix. 50. When I was dull and dead-hearted, then I thought on such and such a promise. I allege that promise, and apply it by a spirit of faith, and that quickened me.

And indeed, as I said, God hath made us fit to answer him, and we should study in all things to return unto him by his Spirit. Whatsoever God doth, the heart should return back again—love for love, knowledge for knowledge, seeking for seeking, choosing for choosing. He begins with us, he chooseth us, he loves us, he seeks us; and we, if ever we intend to be friends with God, and to entertain a holy communion, as all that shall be saved must do, we should labour to have our hearts to return to God, what we find from

God first. 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' To come more particularly to this seeking, which is the particular of the obedience and of the application.

'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Seeking implies that our happiness is out of ourselves. It implies that there is somewhat in ourselves, in the application to which there must be some happiness. Therefore we go out of ourselves to seek. It is a motion, and it is out of an apprehension of some want; a man seeks out of some want, or out of some loss, or out of some duty. Either he hath loss, and therefore he seeks; or else he wants, and therefore he seeks; or else he owes respect and duty, and therefore he seeks. It is somewhat without a man that moves his seeking.

God need not seek the creature; he hath all fulness in himself. Indeed, his love makes him seek for our love, to be reconciled to him. But the creature, because his happiness is out of himself in communion with God, the fountain of all good, he must seek.

Christians must be seekers.

This is the generation of seekers, Ps. xxiv. 6. All mankind, if ever they will come to heaven, they must be a generation of seekers. Heaven is a generation of finders, of possessors, of enjoyers, seekers of God. But here we are a generation of seekers. We want somewhat that we must seek. When we are at best, we want the accomplishment of our happiness. It is a state of seeking here, because it is a state of want; we want something always.

But to come more particularly to this seeking the face of God, or the presence of God.

The presence of God, and the face of God, where is it to be sought for?

(1.) Know that first for a ground: The presence of God it is everywhere. But that is not the thing here purposed.

(2.) There is a face and presence of God in everything, in every creature. Therefore every creature hath the name of God; sometimes a rock: because God is strong, so a rock is strong. So likewise a shield; as a shield defends, so God defends us. There is some resemblance of God in the creature. Therefore God hath the name of the creature. But that is not here meant.

(3.) The presence of God meant here is, that presence that he shows in the time of need, and in his ordinances. He shows a presence in need and necessity, that is a gracious presence to his children, a gracious face. As in want of direction, he shows his presence of light to direct them; in weakness he shows his strength; in trouble and perplexity he will show his gracious and comfortable presence to comfort them. In perplexity he shows his presence to set the heart at large, answerable to the necessity. So in need God is present with his children, to direct them, to comfort them, to strengthen them, if they need that.

(4.) And in the issue of all business there is a presence of God to give a blessing; for there is a presence must be even to the end of things. When we have all we would have, yet God must give a blessing. So you see there is a presence of God answerable to the necessity of man, as it hath reference to this place.

‘Thy face will I seek,’ to direct me by thy heavenly light when I know not what to do, as Jehoshaphat said, ‘We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee,’ 2 Chron. xx. 12. And so in weakness, when we have no strength of our own, then go to God, to seek the face of God, that he would be present with us. So when we are comfortless, go to God that comforts the abject, ‘the God of all comfort;’ go to him, for his presence, for help. And when we are troubled in our hearts about success, what will become of such and such a business; go to God, that gives success and issue to all. Thus we see a presence of God answerable to every necessity of man.

(5.) There is a gracious presence of God likewise in his ordinances. That is the chief presence, next to heaven, the presence in God’s ordinances; that is, in the unfolding of the word, in the administration of the sacraments, in the communion of saints. Indeed, in the ordinances God is graciously present. ‘Where two or three are gathered together, I will be in the midst of them,’ Mat. xviii. 20. Therefore in Rev. i. 12, seq., it is said, ‘that Christ walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;’ that is, in the midst of the church. There is a gracious presence of Christ in the midst of the candlesticks. He takes his walk there. Christ hath a special presence in his church in the ordinances; and that David aims at here too, not only, I will seek thy face in trouble and necessity, when I need anything from thee, but ‘Thy face will I seek in all thine ordinances,’ to enable me for the other. For it is in vain for a man to think to seek God in his necessity and exigence, if he seek not God in his ordinances, and do not joy in them. So you see where

the face and presence of God is to be sought; in necessities of all kinds, and in the ordinances.

Now, in our seeking the presence or face of God, there is four or five things that I will touch the heads of.

[1.] First of all, seeking implies observance. Seek my face; that is, observe me, respect me as a God. 'Thy face I will seek,' I will be a follower of thee; as in English an 'observer' is a follower, a creature. It is a proud word; as if man could make a man of nothing. And indeed they are creatures in that kind, they are raised of nothing. To seek a man is to observe him. There is a notable place for it, Prow xxix. 26, 'Many seek the ruler's favour.' In the Greek translation, the Septuagint, the word is, to observe and respect a man, which is translated seeking. Many observe the ruler; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord. You see those that think to rise by the favour of such or such a man, they will be his followers, as I said, and observe him; they study men; as those that rise by favour that way, they study not books so much as men, what may delight such a man, what he respects. Surely they will serve him at every turn. A base atheist makes a man his god. That he may rise, he will deny God and the motions of conscience, and honesty, and all to observe the face of a great man whom he hopes to rise by. But a true Christian observes the great God. The greatest preferment comes from him. So it signifies to 'observe.'

In Ps. lxii. 11, there you shall see the ground of observation is, that power belongs to God. 'I have heard once, nay, twice.' He heard it twice by the meditation of it, by going over it in his heart again. I have heard once, nay, twice; that is, I thought again and again on it; that is, hearing of it oft. "We may hear a truth a hundred times, that is, by meditating of it. 'I have heard once, nay, twice, that power belongs to God;' that is, riches and power to advance a man. Atheistical men think all belongs to the creature, but power belongs to God. That is one thing that is meant by seeking, diligent observing of God, and respect to him and his will and commandments in all things.

If so be that a person of great place should say, Observe me, and I will prefer you, I hope men would be ready enough, they need no more words. Here is the atheism of our hearts. God saith, I will do all good for you. The greatest preferment is to be the child of God here, and the heir of heaven after. What preferment is there to that of Christianity! And he saith, Seek my face, observe me, respect me, let the eye of your souls be to me, as it is in the

Psalm, 'As the eyes of a maid are toward the hand of her mistress,' Ps. cxxiii. 2. The obedience of a servant is toward the eye of the commander, so the obedience of a Christian is toward the eye of God, to see what God commands. We should be more serviceable to God. It is an argument of the atheism of our hearts, to take more encouragement from a mortal man that can raise us and do us a pleasure, than from God himself. But to let that go, that is the first branch, 'Seek my face,' that is, observe me.

[2.] Then seek my face; that is, depend upon me. To seek God's face, is to depend upon him for all. It argues dependence. For him that we observe, we observe him for something. We depend upon him to be our raiser and maker. So seek my face, seek my countenance and favour; depend upon me, and it shall be sufficient for you.

[8.] Then, in the third place, 'Seek my face;' that is, seek my favour and (price. Favour appears and shines in the face. 'Seek my face,' observe me, depend on me; for what? For my favour. What is that? It is all. If we have the grace of God, we have all. For the grace of God is in every thing that is good to us. If we have the graces to salvation, they come of free grace: every good gift is the grace of God. Children are the grace of God. So, if we have the grace of God, we have all for our good. We have all in the spring of good, which is the grace and favour of God. As men, if they be graced from a great person, they study not this and that particular thing. They think, I have his favour, and that favour of his is ready for all exigences. And therefore, in way of compliment, they say, I seek not this or that, but your favour.

The favour of God, it is a storehouse, and spring, and fountain, better than life itself; as the psalmist saith, 'The loving-kindness of the Lord is better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 8. When life fails, the favour of God never fails. Life will fail, and all earthly comforts; but the favour of God is better than life itself; it is everlasting and eternal. In Psalm iv. 7, you see how worldly, atheistical men rejoice when their corn and wine and oil increase. And 'who will show us any good?' who? It is no matter who; any good, any hope of preferment, it is no matter what way; and it is no matter what, any good; and let them but show it and we will work it out, we have wit enough. Oh, saith he, but your wit I stand not upon, nor your courses; but, 'Lord, let thy face shine upon me, lift up the light of thy countenance,' and that shall be instead of all honours and preferments. So in seeking we must observe God, and depend upon him; and for what? For his favour especially; for the face and favour of God. Let me have a good look from thee, O Lord; let me have thy

favour and love. For other things I leave them to thy wisdom, thou art wise enough; only let thy face shine on me.

Oh this favour and face of God, it is a sweet thing, this presence of God! What is heaven but the presence of God there? Let God be present in a dungeon, it will be a paradise; let God be absent, paradise it is as a hell or dungeon, as it was to Adam; after he had sinned, he ran to hide himself. What is hell but the want of God's presence? God's face and favour is not there. What makes hell in the heart of a man? God is not there, but leaves the heart to its own darkness and confusion. Oh therefore, the face and favour of God, seek that especially!

[4.] Again, To seek the face of God is to pray to him, to put this in execution in prayer. Everywhere in Scripture it is all one to pray and to seek God's face. It is called the spirit of prayer; which because I have spoken of at large out of another scripture, I will now say nothing of it.

[5.] Likewise, in the next place, to seek the face of God is to attend upon the presence of God, wheresoever he reveals himself: to attend upon the word and ordinances is to 'seek the face of God.' It is said that Cain went from the face of God when he went from the worship of God in his father's house; he went out from God, Gen. iv. 16. Where God is worshipped, there God is present; and when we leave the place where God is worshipped, we leave God's presence. God is more especially present there, therefore seeking the face of God is to attend upon God's ordinance: 'I will seek thy face;' that is, wheresoever there is any presence of thee I will seek thee.

Christ when he was lost, he was found in the temple. That hath a literal sense, but it is true in a spiritual sense. If we lose Christ, and have not comfort from Christ, we shall find him in the temple. The sweetest presence of his Spirit is there. His body is in heaven, and his Spirit is his vicar in the world. If we want comfort and direction from Christ, we shall meet him in the temple. There he gives us sweet meetings by his Spirit; there we have the comfort, and direction, and spiritual strength that we wanted before we came. There is the best meeting. As in the Canticles, Christ goes into the 'garden of spices.' He goes among his children, that are as a watered garden, and as so many plants of righteousness and beds of spices. He delights to be there. Christ is in the communion of saints in the ordinances, therefore 'thy face will I seek,' especially in the tabernacle, and temple after; especially in the church and communion of saints, there thy face will I seek. Thus we see

the unfolding of this promise of a gracious, obedient, respective heart: ‘Thy face will I seek.’ I will add no more, but come to the use of it.

Use. And in the first place, by way of direction, that we may seek the face of God—that is, observe him, and depend upon him, and enjoy his favour, and meet with him in his ordinances—we must first get The knowledge of God [and of] ourselves.

1. Get the knowledge of God, for they that know him will seek to him. They that know his riches, his power, his sufficiency, in a word, his all-sufficiency for all things, they will seek to him. And they that know themselves, that know their wants, their inability to supply those wants, and know the greatness of those wants, and that they must be supplied, they will out of themselves. They that have nothing at home will seek abroad. The knowledge of these two therefore, of the great God, the all-sufficient God; and of ourselves, the insufficiency of ourselves every way, either for direction, or for protection, or for comfort in distress, or for strength in duty to go through business, or for issue when we are about anything; ‘they that know that the way of man is not in man,’ as Jeremiah saith, x. 23, they would certainly out of themselves. Therefore let us grow in the knowledge of God and of ourselves, of our own wants and necessities.

And especially know God now in Christ. For there is enmity between the nature of God and the nature of man, of sinful man; but that Christ hath taken our nature now and made it lovely to God, and God lovely to us. Christ Immanuel, God and man, ‘God with us,’ hath made God and us friends. Therefore now we must go to God in that Immanuel, in Christ, that ladder that joins heaven and earth together. See God’s face shining in Christ, his gracious face, and this will encourage us to go to God together with our wants. Go not to absolute God, a God without a mediator; for then God is ‘a consuming fire,’ Heb. xii. 29.

2. In the next place, when we go to God, and seek to God, be sure to seek his favour and grace in the first place. If we want any particular thing, protection or direction or comfort in distress, go not for that in the first place, but let us see in what terms God and we are; let us be sure that reconciliation and peace be made. For if we seek to God in our particular wants, and have not made our peace before, but have sought to other gods, to men, and to our shifts, God may say, You seek to me! Go to the gods you have served, to the great men you have served, to the riches you have trusted unto, go to your shifts. Therefore, first, make peace and reconciliation with

God before you seek other things. If a man have offended a great person, he doth not go and seek particular favours, till first he have made peace and taken up the quarrel. Let us take up the quarrel between God and us, by repentance and a promise of new obedience; get reconciliation that way, and then seek for particular favours after.

For what if God give you particular favours, if they be not from his grace and favour, what will they do us good? "What will all that a reprobate wretch hath do him good? "What will his favours, his riches, and honours and preferments do him good when he dies, when he shall conflict with the anger of God? when he shall see hell before him and see heaven shut? He seeth he hath all, from a general providence and as a reward for his care in this world. God answereth him with a civil enlargement for his civil obedience, but he hath his reward. Heaven he hath not, he cared not for it. What will all do without the love of God in Christ? Therefore I beseech you, let us first seek the favour and mercy of God in Christ.

And then for particular things go to him as the exigence is; for in God there is a supply for all turns, and that is the ground of seeking; for our seeking it must be a wise seeking. Now it were not wise, unless there were a supply in God for every want, whatsoever it is. If the creature could do anything without God, we should upon good ground make that God. If anything could raise us without God, I mean, to comfort, we might seek to them, and make them God upon good reason; but what can they do? In anger, God may let a man enjoy favours, as the fruits of his displeasure, but what can they do without him? They can do nothing. Therefore it must be the supreme cause, the highest cause, the great wheel that turns every little inferior wheel in the world. They turn with the great wheel of divine providence and goodness; therefore go to him as the first cause...

3. Again, In seeking the favour of God, we must search our consciences, to come with pure and dean hearts to God to seek him. If we regard 'iniquity in our hearts, God will not hoar our prayers,' Ps. lxi. 18. We come to God with a purpose to offend him. If we come not with a purpose to leave our sins, why do we come? God will not regard our prayers. We must come with pure consciences to God, as it is excellently set down, Ps. xxiv. 3, 'Who shall ascend into thy hill, O Lord? who shall stand in thy holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' And then he saith after, 'This is the generation of them that seek him,' those that have clean hands and a pure heart. Thou hast foul hands; thou art a briber, a corrupter; thou hast an impure heart;

thou art a filthy creature; thou hast lived in such and such sins; cleanse thy hands and thy heart. 'This is the generation of them that seek him.' If a man seek the pure and holy God with an unclean heart and unclean hands; if he be corrupt in his hands and in his heart, that is the fountain, he may seek God long enough before he find him, and if he see God, it is in anger.

4. Again, If we would seek the face and favour of God, let us study the word hard. Study the promises, as I said before, bind him with his own word. Thou hast said thus, I allege thy own word. Jacob, when he wrestled with God, Gen. xxxii. 24, then he saw God; he called the place Peniel, that is, the face of God, because of seeing God. Upon wrestling, when the heart by faith wrestleth with God by the promise—4 Lord thou hast done this; though I feel no comfort, yet I will rest upon thee—that place will be Peniel; the face of God will be there, God will show himself.

And let the extremity be what it will, seek God in extremity; allege the word of God in extremity. What word have you for extremity? 'In the mountain God will be seen,' Gen. xxii. 14. His face will be seen in the mount; that is, when there is no other help whatsoever. 'God is a present help in trouble,' Ps. xlvi. 5. 'He is the 'God that comforteth the abject,' 2 Cor. vii. 6, that none else can comfort; 'and he that is in darkness, and sees no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord,' Isa. 1. 10. And 'though I were in the valley of the shadow of death,' if the Lord be with me, 'I will trust in him,' Ps. xxiii. 4. 'And though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee,' saith Job, Job xiii. 15. In extremity seek God then, and find out words and promises then, as the Scriptures is large in that kind; for then there is most need of seeking God. Lord, if thou help not now, none can help.

And this is the difference between a true child of God and another. In the time of extremity, Saul seeks to the witch; but David seeks to God, as here, 'Lord, thy face will I seek.' Many things upbraided David, no question, with his sin and the affliction he was in. Thou seek God! Thou hast offended him, and now thou endurest some sign of his displeasure. A heavy case, beloved, sometimes, especially in the time of extremity. Then conscience saith, I am in extremity, and withal God follows me with such and such sins. A guilty conscience meets me in my prayers to God and upbraids me, Thou hast done so and so; that if there be not faith, and a word of God to lay hold on in extremity, what will become of the poor soul? It is swallowed up. No question David was now in pangs, and many things offered to thrust him off, and he might say, 'I have many things to discourage me,' yet 'thy face, Lord,

will I seek,' for deliverance out of trouble and for pardon of sin. Set the promise of God and the pardon of sin above all extremity whatsoever. God is the God of all and above all, he is 'the God of comfort.' If comforts be wanting, he can make them anew. In the want of means, and when means are against us, let us seek to God. Jonah in the whale's belly, that was a creature that might have consumed him with heat, 'when he was in the belly of hell, he called unto God,' Jonah ii. 2. If a man be as low as hell, if he have a command to come, and a promise, it will fetch him thence. Therefore allege the promises and the word.

What a miserable taking are they in, that in extremity have no acquaintance with God's word—with the promises or good examples—that have stored up nothing! Alas! they are in the midst of a storm naked; in the midst of war and opposition disarmed; they lie open to all assaults. Therefore, as you love your own souls, gather grounds of comfort, treasure up promises and holy truths, that in extremity you may say with David, upon good ground, Lord, thou hast said thus and thus; and in this extremity I come to thee. 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Break through all fears and discouragements whatsoever; allege the command of God, and the promise of God, and the encouragements of God. My discouraged heart saith thus, and Satan saith thus; but, Lord, thou sayest thus, 'Seek my face.' Shall not I believe and obey God more than the devil or mine own lying false heart? Therefore, except we will betray our souls to temptations, and betray the comforts that we have, let us seek God in all extremities.

I desire you to remember these directions, and be encouraged to seek to God. Join the seeking in extremity, with the seeking him in his ordinances. If we do not seek him in his ordinances, in the time of peace, let us never think he will be so familiar with us in the time of trouble. If we be not acquainted with him in his ordinances in prosperity, in extremity he will be far off. Therefore 'seek the face of God' now, in all his ordinances. That is the way to have provision of strength against all other extremities whatsoever. It is a great comfort in extremity to one that hath sought God in his ordinances before. Foolish atheistical men seek not the wisdom of God in his ordinances. God cries to them and they regard it not. But then they cry to God, and God will not answer them, but 'laugh at their destruction,' Ps. xxxvii. 13. And as it is in Zechariah, you cry, 'and I will not hear, because I cried and ye would not hear,' vii. 11. "When God speaks and we regard it not, we shall cry and he will not regard it. Therefore, as we desire his presence in the evil day, let us labour to hear him now. Let us search his will,

what he requires of us, and what he will do for us, and labour to be armed with obedience against the time of distress.

And let us seek him betimes. Now presently seek the favour of God, you that are young. 'In the morning early will I seek thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 1. In the morning of your years, in the morning of the day, it is good to seek God, before the heart be possessed with other business, that he may bless all our affairs. Seek his face, that his blessing, and direction, and strength may be upon all. Let us set upon things in his wisdom and strength, and hope on his blessing.

And in the morning of your years, early, put not off. For here is the mischief. If we seek not God early, betimes, the heart will be hardened, and will grow worse; to-morrow we shall be more unfit than to-day. Then those that seek in their sickness, and at the hour of death, that is self-love. It is grace to seek God for himself, out of old acquaintance and love. But to seek him in sickness only, and to neglect his ordinances, it is merely self-love. As a malefactor that carries himself ill in prison, and then seeks the judge's face at the bar; when God arraigns a man at the bar, then to seek him, it comes from self-love. But that obedience we owe to God is to seek him out of a new nature, out of love of God's goodness and grace. When we seek him in extremity, not out of the love of grace, but to escape the danger of hell and damnation, such seeking seldom proves good. Many make a great show of repentance and turning to God, many of those prove false. He that is good in affliction only is never good. Therefore put not off seeking God's face, by prayer and the use of all good means.

Many men first settle their estates, and then send for a physician, and the divine last of all, when they are sick. Oh but seek God first, and above all things in the world, or else we have adulterous, idolatrous hearts, to make the face of man our idol, or health our idol. We should seek God's face above all.

The Scripture sets him out sweetly to us. Therefore one way to encourage us to seek to God, is to present to our souls God, under those sweet terms. He is a rock in the midst of the waves; he is a habitation in the midst of a storm: 'Thou art our habitation,' Ps. lxxi. 3. He is called a hiding-place, he hath the shadow of his wings to cover us; let us fly under the shadow of his wings. He is presented sweetly to us in Christ. Therefore let us have recourse to him upon all occasions; and now, now that we may be familiar with him, that we may be acquainted with him now, in the days of our youth, and he will know us in age and sickness. If we be not acquainted

with him now, he will not acquaint himself with us then. Therefore seek his face now, and above all things seek it.

And can we have more encouragement? There was never any that sought the face of God that went away sorry. It is said of some good emperors, that never any man went sorry out of their presence; either they had the grant of their suits or good words. God sends none sorry away. There are none that come into the presence of God but they are the better for it. They go away more cheerful and more satisfied. Their consciences are quieted when they pour out their souls to God. There is 'the peace of God which passeth understanding, preserves their soul,' as it is Philip, iv. 7. 'In nothing be careful: but let there be thanksgiving for favours received, and let your requests be made known to him; and the peace of God shall preserve your hearts and minds,' Philip, iv. 6. You shall not despair and be over much cast down, peace will preserve you.

And if we do not seek the face of God now, when we may enjoy his presence, we shall never see his face in glory hereafter. We must now be acquainted with him, or else we shall not when we would. Therefore, as we may enjoy the presence of God in his ordinances, so in all our affairs let us seek his face and blessing. Let us have what we have, and do what we do, in his blessing and assistance, and not in the strength of wit and shifts. Let us do what we do by divine strength, and in confidence of his blessing. That that we do by his strength we may expect his blessing on; we cannot do so by our shifts. Let us inure ourselves in these courses, and we shall find much peace; and by long acquaintance with God we shall be able to commit our souls to him; we shall be able to look him in the face at the hour of death. He that looks God in the face often in prayer, and seeking him, may look death in the face. These things may be made effectual if your hearts be prepared, as the Scripture phrase is.

And because I mentioned preparing: that is a word in Scripture that is set before seeking. Rehoboam did not thrive, he did not 'prepare his heart to seek God,' 2 Chron. xii. 11. Jehoshaphat was blessed of God, 'he prepared his heart to seek the Lord,' 2 Chron. xx. 3. Therefore let us come prepared to seek God, prepare our hearts to seek him. Think, When I go to the congregation, I go to seek God's face; therefore come in humility and subjection. And in all the courses of our lives, let all of us prepare, and set our hearts in frame to seek God in all things; and let us set upon nothing that we cannot depend on him for assistance, and look to him for a blessing. And

when we cannot enjoy his favour and blessing in anything, we were as good be without it as have it.

This is the way to have our wills in all things. Christ, the truth itself, hath left us this one sweet promise, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God,' Matt. vi. 33. He speaks there of seeking our own good. What is the best thing we should seek for? 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God,' of grace, and of glory; the favour of God, and the fruit of his favour, grace. Seek those best things in the first place. What then? It is the way to have all things else, as far as they are for our good. But we would have more. We think if we seek to God, and depend upon God's divine principles and rules, it is a way to beggary and disgrace. Oh no. It is the way to have our own desire in all things, as far as it is for our good. Let us seek first the kingdom of God, that God may rule and reign in us, and we shall reign in the kingdom of God. For] other things, God will bring it to pass I know not how, they shall be cast upon us. He that is full for heaven and happiness, God will make him full for the world, and successful, as much as he sees fit to bring him to heaven. If God see anything that would hinder him, he must leave that to his wisdom.

Therefore let us labour to be able from truth of heart to return to the commandment and promise of God, this sweet and gracious answer of the holy man David, when God saith generally or particularly, 'Seek my face,' 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

A Rescue From Death, With a Return of Praise

Fools, because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted, &c.—Ps. CVII. 17, &c.

This Psalm containeth some passages concerning God's particular, sweet providence; not only to the church, but to other men; for he that created all things, even the meanest creature, must have a providence over all things; his providence must extend itself as large as his creation. For what is providence but a continuance of creation: a preservation of those things in being that God hath given to have a being. The prophet here of purpose opposeth the profane conceits of them that think God sits in heaven, and lets things go on earth, as if he cared not for them. It was the fault of the best philosophers to ascribe too much to second causes. The psalmist here shows that God hath a most particular providence in everything. First, he sets it down in general, and then he brancheth it out into particulars, especially four, wherein he specifieth God's providence.

The first instance is of those that 'wander in the wilderness hungry and thirsty;' ver. 4, 'They cry, and God regards them.'

The second is in ver. 10, 'They that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in iron, they cry, and the Lord heareth them.'

The third is in the words of the text, 'Fools for their transgressions are afflicted; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.' He instanceth in sickness, the most ordinary affliction, and shows that God hath a most particular providence oven in that.

The fourth is in ver. 23, 'Those that go down into the sea, they see' experiments of God's particular providence.

Since the fall, the life of a man is subject to a wondrous many inconveniences, which we have brought on us by our sins. Now in this variety it is a comfortable thing to know God's care of us in our wanderings and imprisonments, in our sickness, &c. But to omit the other three, and to come to that that is proper to the place, that is, the instance of God's providence in sickness.

‘Fools, because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted,’ &c.

In these words you have,

First, The cause of this visitation, and of all the grievance he speaks of: ‘transgression and iniquity.’

And then the kind of this visitation: ‘sickness.’

And the extremity, in two branches: ‘Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;’ and secondly, ‘They draw near to the gates of death.’

And then the carriage of the affected and sick parties: ‘They cry unto the Lord in their distress.’

And the remedy, of the universal and great physician: ‘He saves them out of their distress.’

And the manner of this remedy: ‘He sent his word and healed them;’ his operative and commanding word, so as it works with his command.

Lastly, the fee that this high commander asks for; all the tribute or reward that he expects is praise and thanksgiving. ‘Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wondrous works for the children of men,’ &c.

So you see this Scripture contains several passages between God and man, in misery and in deliverance. In misery:—God afflicts man for his sin. The passage of man to God is, ‘He cries to God.’ God’s passage back again is his ‘deliverance,’ and then his return back again must be ‘thanksgiving.’ So here is a double visitation, in justice God correcting sin; and then a visitation in mercy, upon their crying and praying, God restores them; and then man’s duty, ‘thanksgiving.’ But to proceed in order.

‘Fools, because of their transgressions,’ &c.

Here you have first the quality of the persons set down.

‘Fools.’

We must understand by 'fools,' wicked fools; not such fools as are to be begged, as we say; that are defective in their naturals, but the 'wise fools' of the world. They are the chief of fools. However in the courts of men they be not found fools, yet they are fools in God's esteem, who is wisdom itself. Those that think themselves wise, that are conceitedly wise, they are these fools here.

In the phrase of Scripture and the language of the Holy Ghost, every sinner is a 'fool.' It were a disgraceful term if any man should give it; but let no man stumble at it. It comes from the wise God that knows what wisdom is, and what is folly. If a fool shall call a man 'fool,' he doth not regard it; but if a wise man, especially the 'God of wisdom,' call a man 'fool,' he hath reason to regard it. Who can judge better of wisdom than God, who is 'only wise'?

Why are wicked men fools? and God's children, so far as they yield to their lusts?

In divers respects.

1. First, For lack of discerning in all the carriage and passages of their lives. You know a fool is such a one as cannot discern the difference of things, that is defective in his judgment. Discerning and judgment, that especially tries a fool, when he cannot discern between pearls and pebbles, between jewels and ordinary base things. So wicked men are defective in their judgments. They cannot discern aright between spiritual and heavenly things, and other things. All your worldly fools, he hunts after and placeth his happiness in things meaner than himself; he takes shadows for substances.

2. A fool is led with his humour and his lust, even as the beast. So there is no wicked man that shakes off the fear of God, 'which is true wisdom,' Prov. i. 7, but he is led with his humour, and passion, and affection to some earthly thing. Now a man can never be wise and passionate, unless in one case, when the good is so exceeding that no passion can be answer-able; as in zeal in divine matters. That will excuse all exorbitant carriage otherwise. When David 'danced before the ark,' a man would think it had been a foolish matter, except it had been a divine business, 2 Sam. vi. 14. When the matter is wondrous great, that it deserves any pitch of affection, then a man may be eager and wise; but for the things of this life, for a man to disquiet himself and others, to hunt after a 'vain shadow,' as the psalmist saith, after riches and honour, and to neglect the main end of a man's life, it is extreme folly. A

man that is passionate in this respect cannot be wise. All fools are passionate, and wicked men have their affections set deeply on somewhat else besides God. Because passion presents things in a false glass, as when a man sees the sun through a cloud he seems bigger. When men look on things in the judgment of the Scripture, and the Spirit of God, and right reason, but through affection, things appear to them otherwise than they are, and themselves afterwards see themselves fools. Take a worldling on his deathbed, or in hell. He sees himself a fool then. When his drunkenness is past; when he is come to himself and is sober, he sees that he hath caught, all his lifetime, after shadows. Wicked men that are carried with their lusts to earthly things, they cannot be wise. Therefore the 'rich man' in the gospel, is called a 'fool,' Luke xii. 20; and in Jer xvii. 11, he speaks of a man that 'labours all his lifetime, and in the end is a fool.' Is not he a fool that will carry a burden, and load himself in his journey more than he needs? And is not he a spiritual fool that 'loads himself with thick clay,' as the prophet calls it, Hab. ii. 6, and makes his pilgrimage more cumbersome than he needs? Is not he a 'fool' that lays the heaviest weight on the weakest? that puts off the heaviest burden of repentance to the time of sickness, and trouble, and death, when all his troubles meet in a centre, as it were, and he hath enough to do to conflict with his sickness?

3. Again, He is a 'fool' that will play with edge tools, that makes a sport of sin. He is a 'fool' that provokes his betters; that shoots up arrows and casts up stones, that shall fall on his own head. He that darts out oaths and blasphemies against God, that shall return back upon his own pate, Ps. vii. 16. Many such fools there are. 'God will not hold them guiltless,' Exod. xx. 7.

4. He is a 'fool' that knows not, or forgets his end. Every wicked man forgets the end wherefore he lives in the world. He comes here into the world, and lives, and is turned out of the world again, and never considers the work that he hath to do here,' but is carried like a 'fool,' with affections and passions to earthly things, as if he had been born only for them. A wise man hath an end prefixed in all that he doth, and he works to that end. Now there is no man but a sound sanctified Christian, that hath a right end, and that works to that end. Other men pretend they have an end, and they would serve God, &c.

They pretend heaven, but they work to the earthward; like moles, they dig in the earth. They work not to the end they pretend to fix to themselves. All men, how "witty soever they are otherwise, in worldly respects, they are

but ‘fools.’ As we say of owls, they can see, but it is by night: so wicked men are witty, but it is in works of darkness. They are wise ‘in their own generation,’ among men like themselves. But this is not the life wherein folly and wisdom can be discerned so well. It will appear at the hour of death, and the day of judgment. Then those will be found wise that are wise for eternity; that have provided how it shall go with them when all earthly things shall fail them; and those will be ‘fools’ that have only a particular wit for the particular passages of this life; to contrive particular ends and neglect the main. They are penny wise and pound foolish. Ahithophel, a witty wise man, his ‘counsel was an oracle, yet he was not wise to prevent his own destruction, 2 Sam. xvi. 23.

5. He is a madman, a ‘fool,’ that hurts and wounds himself. None else will do so. Wicked carnal men, they wound, and hurt, and stab their own consciences. Oh, if any man should do them but the thousandth part of the harm that they do themselves every day, they would not endure it. They gall and load their consciences with many sins, and they do it to themselves. Therefore it is a deserved title that is given them. God meets with the pride of men in this term of folly. For a wicked man, above all things, is careful to avoid this imputation of ‘fool.’ Account him what you will, so you account him a shrewd man withal, that can overreach others, that he is crafty and wise, he glories in the reputation of wisdom, though God account him a fool, and he shall be found so afterward; and to abate the pride of men, he brings a disgraceful term over their wit and learning, and calls them fools.

Use 1. This should abase any man that is not a right and sound Christian, that the ‘God of wisdom,’ and the Scripture—that is, God’s word—esteems of all wicked men, be what they will, to be ‘fools,’ and that in their own judgments, if they be not atheists, if they will grant the principles they pretend to believe.

Let this, therefore, be an aggravation in your thoughts when you are tempted to commit any sin. Oh, besides that it is a transgression and rebellion against God’s commandment, it is ‘folly in Israel,’ and this will be ‘bitterness in the end.’

Use 2. Is he not a ‘fool’ that will do that in an instant, that he may repent many years after? Is he not a foolish man, in matter of diet, that will take that that he shall complain of a long time after? None will be so foolish in outward things. So when we are tempted to sin, think, Is it not folly to do

this, when the time will come that I shall wish it undone again, with the loss of a world if I had it to give?

Use 3. And beg of God the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, to judge aright of things, the 'eye-salve of the Spirit of God, to discern of things that differ,' Rev. iii. 18; to judge spiritual riches to be best, and spiritual nobility and excellency to be best; and to judge of sinful courses to be base, however otherwise painful. Let us labour for grace. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' Prov. i. 7. Those that do not fear the Lord, they have no wisdom.

Use 4. And pass not for the rain censures of wicked men. Thou art hindered from the practice of religious duties, and from a conscionable course of life. Why? Perhaps thou shalt be accounted a fool. By whom? By those that are fools indeed, in the judgment of him who is wisdom indeed, God himself. Who would care to be accounted a fool of a fool? We see the Scripture judgeth wicked men here to be 'fools.'

We must not extend it only to wicked men, but even likewise God's children, when they yield to their corruptions and passions, they are foolish for the time: in Ps. xxxviii. 5, 'My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness;' and in Ps. lxxiii. 22, 'So foolish was I and ignorant,' &c.

Therefore, when any base thought of God's providence comes in our mind, or any temptation to sin, let us think it 'folly;' and when we are overtaken with any sin, let us befool ourselves, and judge it, as God doth, to be foolishness. This is the ground and foundation of repentance. So much for the quality of the persons here described, 'fools.'

I come to the cause.

'Because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities.'

Transgression especially hath reference to rebellion against God and his ordinances in the first table. Iniquity hath reference to the breach of the second table, against men; and both these have their rise from folly. For want of wisdom causeth rebellion against God, and iniquity against men. All breaches of God's will come from spiritual folly.

Why doth he begin with transgressions against the first table, and then iniquities, the breach of the second?

Because all breaches of the second table issue from the breach of the first. A man is never unjust to his neighbours, that doth not rebel against God's will in the first table; and the foundation of obedience and duty to man, it riseth from man's obedience to God. Therefore the second table is like the first: that is, our love to our neighbour is like to our love of God; not only like it, but it springs from it. For all comes from the love of God. Therefore the first command of the first table runs through all the commandments. 'Thou shalt honour God;' and honour man, because we honour God. A man never denies obedience to his superior, to the magistrate, &c., but he denies it to God first; a man never wrongs man, but he disobeyes God first. Therefore, the apostles lay the duties of the second table in the Scriptures upon the first. St Paul always begins his epistles with the duties to God and religion, and when he hath discharged that, he comes to parents, and masters, and children, and servants, and such particular duties; because the spring of our duty to man is our duty to God, and the first justice is the justice of religion to God. When we are not just to give God his due, thereupon come all breaches in our civil conversation and commerce with men. For want of the fear of God, men do this: as Joseph said, 'How shall I do this, and offend God?' Gen. xxxix. 9; and Abraham, he had a conceit they would abuse his wife, 'Surely the fear of God is not here,' Gen. xx. 13. Therefore he thought they would not be afraid to do anything. He that fears not God, if opportunity serve, he will not be afraid to violate the second table. He that fears God, he will reason, 'How shall I do this,' to wrong another in his name and reputation, or in his estate, and sin against God? For I cannot sin against man, but I must first sin against God. That is the reason he sets it down thus, transgressions and iniquities.

See an unhappy succession of sin, that where there is transgression there will be iniquity; when a man yields to lust once, presently he breaks upon God's due, and then upon man's. One sin draws on another. As we see David giving way to one sin, it brought another; so the giving way to transgression, neglecting the word of God and duties of religion, presently another follows, neglect of duty to men.

Use. Take heed of the beginnings of sin. There are degrees in Satan's school from ill to worse, till we come to worst of all; and there is no staying. It is like the descent down a steep hill. Let us stop in the beginning by any means. As we would avoid iniquity, let us take heed of transgression.

'Are afflicted.'

He means, especially, that affliction of sickness, as appears by the words following.

Doct. Sin is the cause of all sickness.

‘Fools, for their transgressions and iniquities, are afflicted.’ For God’s quarrel is especially against the soul, and to the body because of the soul.

I will not dwell on this point, having spoken of it at large on another text, 1 Cor. xi. 31.

Use 1. The use that I will make of it now, shall be, first of all, if sin be the cause of all sickness, let us justify God and condemn ourselves: complain of ourselves, and not of God. ‘Wherefore doth the living man complain,’ Lam. iii. 89, and murmur and fret? Man suffereth for his sin. Justify God, and judge ourselves. ‘I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him,’ Micah vii. 9. Judge ourselves, and we shall not be judged,’ 1 Cor. xi. 81.

2. Then again, is sin the cause of sickness? It should teach us patience.

‘I held my tongue, because thou, Lord, didst it,’ Ps. xxxix. 2. Shall not a man be patient in that he hath procured by his own evil and sin?

3. And search ourselves; for usually it is for some particular sin, which conscience will tell a man of; and sometimes the kind of the punishment will tell a man. For sins of the body, God punisheth in the body. He pays men home in their own coin. ‘What measure a man measureth to others shall be measured to him again,’ Mat. vii. 2. If a man have been cruel to others, God will stir up those that shall be so to him; therefore we should labour to part with our particular transgressions and iniquities. It is a general truth for all ills whatsoever, as well as this of sickness. Therefore we should first of all go to God by confession of sin. It is a preposterous course that the atheistical careless world takes; where the physician ends, there the divine begins; when they know not what to do. If diseases come from sin, then make use of the divine first, to certify the conscience, and to acquaint a man with his own mercy. First, to search them, and let them see the guilt of their sins, and then to speak comfort to them, and to set accounts straight between God and them, as in Ps. xxxii. 4—an excellent place—David ‘roared; his moisture was turned into the drought of summer.’ What course doth he take? He doth not run to the physician presently, but goes to God. ‘Then said I.’ It was an

inward resolution and speech of the mind. Then I concluded with myself, 'I will confess my sin to God, and thou forgavest my iniquities and sins,' Ps. xxxii. 5. So body and soul were healed at once. Divinity herein transcends all other arts; not only corrupt nature and corrupt courses, but all other. For the physician he looks to the cause of the sickness out of a man or in a man; out of a man, and then especially in contagious sickness, he looks to the influence of the heavens. In such a year, such conjunctions and such eclipses have been; he looks to the infection of the air, to subordinate causes, to contagious company, and to diet, &c.. And then in a man, to the distemper of the humours and of the spirits. When the instrument of nature is out of tune, it is the cause of sickness. But the divine, and every Christian,—that should be a divine in this respect, —goes higher, and sees all the discord between God and us. There is not that sweet harmony there; and so all the jars in second causes come from God as the cause inflicting; from sin, as the cause demeriting. The divine considers those two alway. The physician looks to the inward distemper and the outward contagion; and this is well, and may be done without sin. But men must join this too, to look into conscience, and look up to God, together with looking for help to the physician, because we have especially to deal with God.

I would this were considered, that we might carry ourselves more Christian-like under any affliction whatsoever. What is the reason that people murmur, and struggle, and strive, 'as a bull in a net,' as the prophet speaks, Isa. ii. 20, when God hampers them in some judgment? They look to the second causes, and never look to clear the conscience of sin, nor never look to God, when indeed the ground of all is God offended by sin.

'Fools for their transgressions are afflicted.'

We by our sins put a rod into God's hand—'a rod for the fool's back,' as Solomon saith, Prov. xxvi. 3; and when we will be fools, we must needs endure the scourge and rod in one kind or other. Those that will sin must look for a rod. It is the best reward of wicked and vain fools, that 'make a jest of sin,' Prov. xiv. 9—as the wise man saith, 'They cast firebrands, and say, Am I not in jest?' Prov. xxvi. 18—that rail and scorn at good things; that swear and carry themselves in a loose, ridiculous, scandalous fashion, as if God did not eye their carriage; and yet 'Am I not in jest?' Well, it is no jesting matter. Sin is like a secret poison; perhaps it doth not work presently. As there are some kind of subtile poisons made in these days,—wherein the devil hath whetted men's wits,— that will work perhaps a year after, so sin, if

it be once committed, perhaps it doth not kill presently, but ‘there is death in the pot,’ 2 Kings iv. 40. Thou art a child of death as soon as ever thou hast committed sin; as Salvian saith well, ‘Thou perishest before thou perish’. The sentence is upon thee. Thou art a dead man. God, to wait for thy repentance, prolongs thy days; but as soon as thou hast sinned without repentance, thou art a ‘child of death.’ And as poison, that works secretly a while, yet in time it appears; so at last ‘the fruit of sin will be death.’ Sin and death came in together. Take heed of all sin; it is no dallying matter.

‘Their soul abhors all manner of meat.’

This is one branch of the extremity of the sickness, the loathing of meat; for God hath put a correspondency between food that is necessary for man and man’s relish. For man being in this world to be supported, the natural moisture being to be supplied and repaired by nourishment, as it is spent by the natural heat which feeds upon it; therefore God hath put a sweetness into meat, that man might delight to do that which is necessary; for who would care for meat if it were not necessary? Therefore, being necessary, God hath put delightful tastes in meats, to draw men to the use of them, to preserve their being for the serving of him. Now when these things savour not, when the relish of a man is distempered that he cannot judge aright of meats, when the palate is vitiated, there must needs follow sickness. For a man cannot do that that should maintain his strength; he cannot feed on the creature; therefore the psalmist setting down the extremity of sickness, he saith, ‘Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.’ This the great physician of heaven and earth sets down as a symptom of a sick state, when one cannot relish and digest meat. Experience seals this truth, and proves it to be true.

You see, then, the happiness of epicures, how unstable and vain it is, whose chief good is in the creature! God by sickness can make them disrelish all ‘manner of meat;’ and where is the summum bonum then of all your belly-gods, your sensual persons?

Again, In that he saith, ‘Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat,’ it should teach us to bless God not only for meat, but for stomachs to eat. It is a blessing common, and therefore forgotten. It is a double blessing when God provides daily for our outward man, and then gives a stomach to relish his goodness in the creature. Sometimes a poor man wants meat, and hath a stomach; sometimes a rich man wants a stomach, when he hath meat. They that have both have cause to bless God, because it is a judgment when God takes away the appetite, that men ‘abhor and loathe all manner of meat.’

Therefore, if we would maintain thankfulness to God, labour to thank God for common blessings. What if God should take away a man's stomach? We see his state here: he is 'at the gates of death.' Therefore thank God that he maintains us with comforts in our pilgrimage; and withal, that he gives us strength to take the comfort of the creature.

We see here again one rule how to converse with them that are sick. Blessed is he that understands the estate of the afflicted and sick, not to take it ill to see them wayward. It comes not from the mind, but from the distemper of the body. As we bear with children, so we must bear with men in those distempers, if they have food and yet loathe it. You see how it is with men in that case, 'their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.' It should teach us to sympathise with those that are sick, if we see them in these distempers.

The next branch of the extremity is, 'They draw near the gates of death.'

Death is a great commander, a great tyrant; and hath gates to sit in, as judges and magistrates used to 'sit in the gates.' There are things implied in this phrase.

1. First, 'They draw near to the gates of death;' that is, they were 'near to death;' as he that draws near the gates of a city is near the city, because the gates enter into the city.

2. Secondly, Gates are applied to death for authority. They were almost in death's jurisdiction. Death is a great tyrant. He rules over all the men in the world, over kings and potentates, and over mean men; and the greatest men fear death most. He is 'the king of fears,' as Job calls him, Job xviii. 14; ay, and the fear of kings. Yet death that is thus feared in this life by wicked men, at the day of judgment, of all things in the world they shall desire death most; according to that in the Apocalypse, 'they shall desire death, and it shall not come to them,' Rev. ix. 6. They shall subsist to eternal misery. That that men are most afraid of in this life, that they shall wish most to come to them in the world to come— Oh that I might die! what a pitiful state are wicked men in!—Therefore it is called the 'gate of death.' It rules and overrules all mankind. Therefore it is said 'to reign,' Rom. v. 21. Death and sin came in together. Sin was the gate that let in death, and ever since death reigned, and will, till Christ perfectly triumph over it, who is the King of that lord and commander, and hath 'the key of hell and death,' Rev. i. 18. To wicked men,

I say, he is a tyrant, and hath a gate; and when they go through the 'gate of death,' they go to a worse, to a lower place, to hell. It is the trap-door to hell.

3. Thirdly, By the 'gate of death' is meant not only the authority, but the power of death; as in the gospel, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' Mat. xvi. 18: that is, the power and strength of hell. So here it implies the strength of death, which is very great, for it subdues all. It is the executioner of God's justice.

Use. If death hath such a jurisdiction, and power, and strength, let us labour to disarm it beforehand. It is in our power to make death stingless, and toothless, and harmless; nay, we may make it advantageous, for the 'gate of death' may become the gate of happiness. Let us labour to have our part and portion in Christ, who hath the 'key of hell and death,' who hath overcome and conquered this tyrant: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 'Thanks be unto God, who hath given us victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57, that now we need not fear death; that though death have a gate, yet it is a gate to let us into heaven, as it is a door to let the wicked into hell. So much for that.

In the next place, we come to their carriage in their extremity.

'They cried to God in their trouble.'

This is the carriage of man in extreme ills, if he have any fear of God in him, to pray; and then prayers are cries. They are darted out of the heart, as it were, to heaven. It is said, 'Christ made strong cries,' Heb. v.77. In extremity, prayers are 'cries.' Hence I observe briefly these things.

Doct. That God suffers men to fall into extreme ills, even to the pates of death; that there is but a step between them and death.

Why?

Reason 1. To wean them perfectly from the world. To make them more thankful when they recover; for what is the reason that men are so slight in thanksgiving? Usually the reason is, they did not conceive that they were in such extreme danger as they were.

2. Likewise he suffers men to fall into extreme sickness that he may have all the glory, for it was his doing. There was no second cause to help here, for

their soul ‘abhorred all manner of meat, and they were even at the gates of death.’ Now, when all second causes fail, then God is exalted. Therefore he suffers men to fall into extremity. The greater the malady, the more is the glory of the physician.

The second thing is this, as God brings his children into extremity, so God’s children in extremity they cry to him.

Extremity of afflictions doth force prayers: ‘In their affliction they will seek me early.’ When all second causes fail, then we go to God. Nature therefore is against atheism. As one observes, that naturally men run to God in extremity—‘Lord, succour me’—so, especially in the church, in extremity, God’s people cry to God; and as afflictions, so particularly this of sickness of body drives men to God. God should not hear of us many times, unless he should come near us by afflictions, and deep afflictions.

‘Out of the deep have I cried,’ Ps. cxxx. 1. God brings us to the deep, and then we cry. Our nature is so naught, that God should not hear of us, as I said, unless he send some messenger after us, some affliction to bring us home, as Absalom dealt by Joab when he ‘fired his corn.’ In the gospel, Christ had never heard of many people, had it not been for some infirmity. But blessed are those sicknesses and infirmities that occasion us to go to God, that makes us cry to God. It was the speech of a heathen, ‘We are best when we are weakest’. Why? As he saith very well, ‘Who is ambitious, voluptuous, or covetous for the world when he is sick, when he sees the vanity of these things?’

This should make us submit more meekly unto God, when we are under his hand, when we are his prisoners by sickness, when he casts us on our sick beds, because God is working our good, he is drawing us nearer to him.

‘Then they cried to him.’

So we see, then, that prayer it is a remedy in a remediless estate, when there is no other remedy; and this is one difference between a child of God and another. In extremity, a carnal man that hath not grace, he hath not a spirit of prayer to go to God; but a child of God he cries to God. He had acquaintance with God in the time of health. Therefore he goes boldly to God as a father in the time of extremity. God’s children can answer God’s dealing; for as he brings his children to extremity, when there is no second cause to help, so they answer him by faith. In extremity, when there is

nothing to trust unto, they trust him; when there is no physic in the world that can charm the disease, they have a spirit of faith to answer God's dealing in the greatest misery, as Job saith, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15.

For God is not tied to second causes, and therefore if he have 'delight in us,' and if he have any service for us to do, he can recover us from the 'gates of death,' nay, from death itself; as we see Christ in the gospel raised from the dead—and at the resurrection he will raise us from death— much more can he raise us from the 'gates of death,' when we are 'near death.'

Therefore, considering that prayer is a remedy in all maladies, in a remediless estate, let us labour to have a spirit of prayer, and to be in such a state as we may pray.

What state is that?

1. First, Take heed of being in league with any sin. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer,' Ps. lxxvi. 18; nay, he will not hear others' prayers for us. Oh what a pitiful state is it when God will not hear us nor others for us. 'Pray not for this people,' saith God to Jeremiah, 'and if Noah, Daniel, and Job stood before me, they should but deliver their own souls,' Ezek. xiv. 14. If a man be in a peremptory course of sin, and will not be reclaimed, but is like the 'deaf adder, that will not be charmed,' Ps. lxxviii. 4, God will not hear prayers for him. Will God hear a rebel when he comes to him for mercy, and is in a course opposite to God's will? As if a traitor should come to sue for pardon with a dagger in his hand, which were to increase the treason; so when a man comes to God and cries to him, and yet purposeth to live in sin, and his conscience tells him that he offers violence to God by his sins, and lives in rebellious courses, God will not hear his prayers.

2. Again, If we would be in such a state as God may accept us when we come to him, let us hear God when he cries to us. He cries to us in the ministry of the word: 'Wisdom hath lift up her voice,' Prov. i. 20; and this is God's course. He will hear us when we hear him. 'He that turns his ear from bearing of the law, his prayer shall be abominable,' Prov. xxviii. 9. Those that do not attend upon God's ordinances, that will have a kind of devotion private to themselves, and avoid the public ordinance, that fear perhaps they shall bear somewhat that would awaken their conscience, and they would not 'be tormented before their time,' Mat. viii. 29, let them consider—it is a

terrible speech of Solomon—‘He that turns his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be abominable.’ Let us take heed. It is a fearful thing to be in such an estate, that neither our own prayers nor others, shall be regarded for us; and let any man judge, if we will not bear God speak to us, is it fit that he should bear us speaking to him?

And before I leave the point, let me press it a little further. At this time we have cause to bless God for the deliverance of the city. Oh, but let all that have the spirit of prayer, that have any familiarity with God, improve all their interest in heaven at this time. Do we not conceive what danger we are in? what enemies we have provoked? What if we be free from the sickness, are we not in danger of worse matters than the sickness? ‘Is it not worse to fall into the bands of our enemies?’ 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Have we not great, provoked, cruel, idolatrous enemies? Therefore let us jointly now, all cry to God, and importune him, that he would be good to the State; that as he hath given us a pledge of his favour in delivering us from the plague, so he would not be weary of doing good unto us, but that he would still make it a token of further favours and deliverances hereafter; that as he delivered us in former times, in ’88, and magnified his mercy to us, so now he would not expose us to the cruelty of idolatrous enemies, ‘whose mercies are cruel,’ Prov. xii. 10. Let us stir up ourselves. Security and carelessness always foreruns one destruction or other.

Prayer will do a great deal more good now, than when trouble hath overtaken us; for now it is a sign it comes from a religious seeking of God, then it comes from self-love. There is a great deal of difference when a malefactor seeks to the judge before the time of the assizes, and when he seeks to him at the present time; for then it is merely out of self-respect, and not respect to him. If we seek to God now, he will single and mark out those that mourn for the sins of the time, and pour out their spirits to him in prayer, that he would still dwell and continue the means of salvation amongst us; when God, I say, ‘comes to gather his jewels,’ Mal. iii. 17, he will single and call out them as peculiar to himself.

Therefore let us in all our prayers put in the church. Things do more than speak. They cry to us to cry to God earnestly. Put case we be not in trouble ourselves, our prayers will be the more acceptable. Before trouble come, it is the only way to prevent it, as it is the only way to rescue us when we are in trouble.

I come now to the remedy.

‘He saved them out of their distress.’

God is a physician, good at all manner of sicknesses. It is no matter what the disease be, if God be the physician. Though they be as these ‘at the gates of death,’ he can fetch them back. Herein God differs from all other physicians.

First of all, he is a general physician. He can heal a land, a whole kingdom, of sickness, of pestilence, and as it is in 2 Chron. vii. 14.

Then he is a physician of body and soul, of both parts. And then he is not tied to means.

Other physicians can cure, but they must have means. Other physicians cannot cure all manner of diseases, nor in all places, but God can cure all. ‘He saved them out of their distress.’

Other physicians cannot be alway present, but God is so to every one of his patients. He is a compassionate, tender, present physician.

Use. Which should encourage us in any extremity, especially in sickness of body, to have recourse to God, and never to despair though we be brought never so low. He that can raise the dead bodies can raise us out of any sickness. Therefore let us use the means; and when there is no means, trust God, for he can work beyond means and without means.

‘They cried to the Lord, and he saved them out of their distress.’ It was the fruit of their prayers.

Doct. There was never any prayer from the beginning of the world made to God successsfully.

What, should I speak of prayer! Our very breathings are known to God, when we cannot speak, our sighs; as it is Ps. xxxviii. 9, ‘My groans and sighs are not hid from thee.’ God hath a ‘bottle for our tears,’ Ps. lvi. 8, and preserves our sighs and groans. There is nothing that is spiritual in us but God regards, as in Rom. viii. 20, ‘We know not what to ask, but the Spirit of God stirreth up in us sighs and groans that cannot be expressed.’ And God hears the voice of the sighs of his own Spirit.

Let us also be exhorted from this issue to ‘cry unto the Lord;’ for there was never any man did sow prayers in the breast and bosom of God, but he received the fruit of it. He is a God ‘hearing prayer.’ He will not lose his attribute. Nay, further, mark, the instances in this psalm are not made only of men in the church, but likewise of men out of the church, of men that have not the true religion. They pray to God, as creatures to the Creator; and though God have not their souls, yet he will not be beholding to any man for duties. If Ahab do but hypocritically fast, Ahab shall have outward deliverance for his outward humiliation; and these men mentioned in the text, if they call to God but as creatures, and not to idols, God will regard them in outward things, and deliver them. God will not be in any man’s debt for any service to him, though it be outward.

And do we think that he that regards ‘dogs’ out of the church, will neglect his children in the church? He that regards heathen men when they pray to him in their extremity, and delivers them to show his overflowing bounty and goodness, will he not regard his own children, that have the spirit of adoption, of supplication, and prayer; that put up their suits and supplications in the mediation and sweet name of Christ? Will he not regard the name and intercession of his Son and of his Spirit, the Holy Ghost, stirring up prayers in them, and the state of his children, being his by adoption, since he regards the very heathen?

Nay, more than so, ‘God hears the very young ravens,’ Job xxxviii. 41, and spreads a table for every living thing; and will not suffer them to die for hunger, but provides for them, because they are his creatures. And will he not for his children, those that he hath taken to he so near him, to be heirs of heaven and happiness? Let us, I say, be encouraged to cry unto the Lord upon all occasions. If God be so good as to deliver sinful men,—that have nothing in them but the principles of nature,—when they fly to God in prayer, as the author and preserver of nature, much more will he hear his own children. ‘He will give his Spirit to them that ask him’ Luke xi. 13.

Obj. But here may an objection be made, I have cried long! I am hoarse with crying! I have waited a long time! I have been a long time sick, or annoyed with some particular trouble! and God seems, as it were, to stop his ears, to harden his heart against me, to shut up his bowels of compassion and pity, therefore I were as good give over as continue still crying and not be heard.

Ans. I answer, there is no one duty almost, more pressed in Scripture than ‘waiting and watching to prayer.’ Wait still. Hath not God waited thy leisure long enough, and wilt not thou wait on him?

A patient, when he feels his body distempered by physic, Oh, he cries out, partly for the physic, and partly for the sickness, that trouble him both together, and make civil war in his body, yet notwithstanding the physician wisely lets it work. He shall have no cordial, nor nothing to hinder it; he lets it go on till the physic have wrought well, and carried away the malignant matter, that he may be the better for it, and [in] that, he is a loving and tender physician. Yet so God, when we are in trouble, it is as physic. We cry, but God he turns the glass as the physicians do. Nay, this time shall be expired. It shall work so long. Till thy pride be taken away, thou shalt be humbled thoroughly; till thou be weaned from thy former wicked pleasures; till thou be prepared to receive further blessings. Therefore they cry and cry, and God defers to hear the ‘voice of his children.’ In the mean time he loves to hear the ‘cry of his children,’ and their prayer is as ‘sweet incense;’ yet he defers still. But all is for the patient’s good. Be not weary of waiting. It is a great mercy that he makes thee able to continue crying, that thou hast the Spirit of prayer; that thou canst pour out thy soul to God. It is a great mercy, and so account of it.

Perhaps thou hast not cast out thy Jonah, thy Achan; that there is some particular sin unrepented of; and thou criest and criest, but thy sin cries louder. Thy pride or thy oppression cries, thy wicked course cries. Thou criest unto God, and there is another thing cries in thee, that cries vengeance as thou doest for mercy. Therefore search out thy Achan; cast out thy beloved sin; see ‘if thou regard iniquity in thy heart,’ if thou regard any pleasing, or profitable, or gainful sin; and never think that God will hear thee till that be out, for it will outcry thy prayers.

The next thing is the manner of God’s cure.

‘He sent his word and healed them.’

What word?

His secret command, his will.

Let such a thing be, as in the creation, ‘Let there be light,’ &c. Besides his word written, there is his word creating, and preserving things created;

and so here, restoring them that were sick, 'He sent his word and healed them;' and so at the resurrection, his word, his voice shall raise our bodies again. It is a strange manner of cure for God to cure by his word, by his command. It shows that God hath an universal command of all things in the world, in heaven and earth, over devils, and over sicknesses; as it is said in the gospel, 'He rebuked the sicknesses,' Mat. xvii. 18. He can rebuke the agues, the plague, and the pestilence, and they shall be gone by his word, as the centurion said, 'I have servants under me: and I say to one, Come, and he cometh; and to another, Go, and he goeth,' Mat. viii. 8, seq.; so thou hast all things under thee, thou art God; and if thou say to a disease, 'Come, it cometh;' and if thou say, 'Go, it goeth.' God 'sent his word of command and healed them.' It is but 'a word of God' to heal, but 'a word of God' to strike. He is the 'Lord of hosts.' 'If he do but hiss,' as the prophet saith, 'for the fly of Egypt,' Isa. vii. 18, if he do but call for an enemy, they come at his word; as we see in Pharaoh's plagues, the flies and frogs, all things, obey his word.

There is a secret obedience in all things to God, when his will is that they shall do this or that. Why doth the sea keep his bounds, whereas the nature and position of the sea is to be above the earth? It is the command of God, that hath said, Let it be there, and 'hither shall thy proud waves go, and no further,' Job xxxviii. 11. I might give many instances how God doth all by his word. The devils are at his word; the whales; the sea, when Christ rebukes it, obeys.

Use. It should teach us not to displease this God, that can strike us in the midst of our sins even with a word. Let us fear this God. Put case we had no enemy in the world: God can arm a man's humours against him. He can raise the spirit and soul against itself, and make it fight against itself by desperate thoughts. He needed not foreign forces for Ahithophel and Saul, he could arm their own souls against themselves. And when he will take down the greatest giant in the world, he needs not foreign forces. It is but working of a disease, but giving way to a humour, but inflaming the spirits, and the soul 'shall abhor all manner of meat.'

Again, He gives a command, a rebuke, and they are gone presently. Therefore let us not offend this great God, that is commander of heaven and earth; let us labour to please him, and it is no matter who else we displease. For he hath all things at his command, even the 'hearts of kings as the rivers of water,' Prov. xxi. 1. When Esau sought for Jacob to hurt him, there was a

secret command God set upon him to love him. Therefore we should fear him, and all other things shall fear us. We need fear nothing, so we have a care to fear God, further than in God and for God. But not so to fear them, as to do evil for them and offend the great God, that can with a word command sickness to come, or bid it begone.

Again, In that God, when all second causes fail, can 'heal by his word,' therefore let us never be discouraged from praying. Though we see a hurly-burly and tumult in the church, though we see all Europe in combustion, and the church driven into a narrow corner, let us not give over prayer. For Christ, that with a word commanded 'the waves to be still,' and 'the devils to be gone,' and they presently obeyed him, he can still the waves of the church; he can put a 'hook into the nostrils' of his enemies, and draw them which way he please; he can still all with 'his word.' Therefore, howsoever things seem to run contrary and opposite to our desires, yet let us not give over. He that sees no ground of hope in carnal fleshly reason, let him despair of nothing. Despair shuts the gate and door of mercy and hope, as it were. You see here, when all means fail, when they were 'at the very gates' and entry of death, God fetcheth them back again. How? With physic? No. He is not tied to physic. There is difference between God and between nature and art. Nature and art can do nothing without means; but the God of nature and art can do it with his word. How made he this heaven and earth, this glorious fabric? With his word, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' &c., Gen. i. 3. And how shall he restore all again? With his mighty commanding word. How doth he preserve things? By his word. How are things multiplied? By his word, 'Increase and multiply,' a word of blessing. He doth all things with his word.

So he can confound his enemies with a word. Nay, Christ in his greatest abasement, when they came with staves and arms to take him, 'Whom seek ye?' saith he. That word 'struck down all the officers of the Scribes and Pharisees; they fell flat on the ground,' John xviii. 4, seq. Could he in his humiliation, before his great abasement on the cross, strike down his enemies with his word? What shall he do at the day of judgment, when all flesh shall appear before him? And what can he do now at the right hand of God in heaven? Let us never despair, what state soever we be in, in our own persons, or in respect of the church or commonwealth. Let us yet pray, yet solicit God, and wrestle with him; for we see here, when they were at the 'gates of death,' he fetcheth them again with 'his word.' He can fetch things again

when they are at destruction, as it were. When man's wit is at a loss, that he knoweth not what course to take, God with a word can turn all things again.

'Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.'

You see that God, the great physician, he is good at all diseases. He is never set at anything, for he can create helps and remedies, of nothing. If there be none in nature, he can create peace to the soul. In the midst of trouble of conscience, God can make things out of nothing, nay, out of contraries. You see here what this great physician hath done. He fetched them 'from the gates of death, when their soul abhorred all manner of meat;' and what doth he require for all this great cure? Surely the text tells us he looks for nothing but praise.

'Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,' &c.

In which words you have these circumstances considerable, together with the substance of the duty:

First, The persons who must praise God: 'Oh that men would praise the Lord.'

And then the duty they are to perform: 'to praise God,' to 'sacrifice to God,' to 'declare his works'—one main duty expressed by three terms.

The third is for what they should praise him: 'for his goodness.' It is the spring of all, for all particular actions do come from his nature. His nature is goodness itself, and indeed all other attributes are founded on goodness. Why is he gracious, and merciful, and long-suffering? Because he is good. This is the primitive attribute.

And then another thing for which we must praise him: 'for his wondrous works for the children of men.'

Fourthly, The manner how this should be done: 'with rejoicing and singing,' as the word signifies, 'declare his works with rejoicing.' For as all holy actions must be done joyfully and cheerfully, so especially praise: 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. ix 7, much more a cheerful thanksgiver, for cheerfulness is the very nature of thanksgiving. It is a dead sacrifice, of

thanksgiving, it is a dead sacrifice else. These are the many things considerable in these words,

First of all, of the persons.

‘Oh that men would praise the Lord.’

The blessed psalmist, whosoever he were, directed by the Spirit of God, he would have all men to praise God; not only those that participate and have interest in the favour, but the beholders also of the goodness of God to others. For here he that was not interested in these favours for his own particular, yet he praiseth God for the blessings to others; and he wisheth that God might have praise from them.

For we are all of one society, of one family, we are all brethren; therefore we must praise God for his blessings and benefits on others: and not only for ourselves, but we must wish that all would do so; and specially we must ‘praise God’ for ourselves, when we have part of the benefit. For shall others ‘praise God’ for us, and shall not we for ourselves? Shall the churches of God abroad ‘praise God’ for his great deliverance of this city—as there is no church in the world that hears of it but is thankful for it—and shall not we for ourselves? Shall the angels in heaven ‘praise God,’ and sing for the redemption of the church by the blood of Christ, ‘Glory to God on high, peace on earth, good will to men?’ Luke ii. 13,14; and shall not we, that have interest in the work of redemption? for Christ is not a mediator of redemption to angels. He hath relation to them in another respect. Yet they out of love to God and the church, and a desire to glorify God, they ‘praise God’ for this; and shall not we much more for ourselves? We must praise God ourselves, and desire that all would do so, as he saith here, ‘Oh that men would praise the Lord,’ &c.; and in some other psalms he stirs up all the creatures, ‘hail, and snow, and wind,’ and all to praise God.

How can these ‘praise God’?

," They do it by our mouths, by giving us occasion to praise him. And they ‘praise him’ in themselves; for as the creature groaneth, Rom. viii. 23, that none knows but God and itself; they groan for the corruption and abuse that they are subject unto, and God knows those groans. So the creature hath a kind of voice likewise in praising of God. They declare in their nature the goodness of God, and minister occasion to us to praise God. Therefore the psalmist being desirous that God might be praised for his ‘goodness and

mercy,' he stirs up every creature, Ps. ciii. 20, seq., even the very angels, insinuating that it is a work fit for angels.

The children of God have such a love and zeal to the glory of God, that they are not content only to praise God themselves, but they stir up all. They need not to wish angels to do it, but only to show their desire. Oh the blessed disposition of those that love God in Christ!

What shall we think then of those wretched persons that grieve that the 'word of God should run and have free passage, and be glorious,' 2 Thes. iii. 1, and that there should be a free use of the sacraments and the blessed means of salvation? They envy the glory of God, and the salvation of people's souls. What shall we say to those that desire to hear God dishonoured, that perhaps swear and blaspheme, themselves, or if they do not, yet they are not touched in their hearts for the dishonour of God by others? This is far from the disposition of a Christian. He desires that all creatures may trumpet out the praise of God, from the highest angel to the lowest creature, from the sun and stars to the meanest shrub; only devilish-spirited carnal men take delight to blaspheme God, that can strike them with his word and send them to their own place, to hell, without repentance, and can hear him dishonoured without any touch of spirit. A child of God desires God to be glorified from his very heart-root, and is grieved when God is dishonoured any kind of way. So much briefly for the first.

Now what is the duty this holy man wishes?

'That men would praise God. And sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare his works.'

Out of the largeness of his heart he expresseth the same thing in many words, therefore I shall not need to make any scruple in particularising of them, because there is not so much heed to be given in the expressions of a large heart as to be punctual in everything.

First, He begins with praise.

'Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord,' &c.

It is a duty, as I said before, fit for angels. Fit! Nay, it is performed by them. For it is all the work they do. It is the only work that was religious, that Adam did in paradise, and that we shall do in heaven with God. Therefore

we are never more in heaven than when we take all occasions of blessing and 'praising God.' We are never in a more happy estate.

It is a duty therefore we should aim at, and the rather, because it is the fruit and end of all other duties whatsoever. What is the end of all the good we do, but to show our thankfulness to God? The end of our fruitfulness in our place? That others may take occasion to glorify God. What is the end of our hearing? To get knowledge and grace, that we may be the better able to praise God in our mouths and in our lives. What is the end of receiving the sacrament? Nay, what is the duty itself? A thanksgiving. What is the end of prayer? To beg graces and strength that so we may carry ourselves in our places as is fit; that so we may not want those things without which we cannot so well glorify God. So the end of all is to glorify God.

It is the end that God intended in all. He framed all things to his own praise in the creation. Why hath God given man reason here upon the stage of the world? To behold the creatures, Rom. i. 19, 20, that seeing in the creature 'the wisdom of God in ordering things,' 'the goodness of God' in the use of things, and the 'power of God' in the greatness of things, the huge, vast heaven and earth, he might take occasion to glorify and magnify this God, to think highly of him, to exalt him in our thoughts; that his creatures, heaven and earth, be so beautiful and excellent, what excellency is in God himself!

And as the end of creation, so in redemption, all is for his glory and praise. In Eph. i. 6, how sweetly doth Saint Paul set forth the end of it: 'To the glory of his rich mercy and grace.' To be merciful to sinners; to give his own Son; for God to become man, not for man in that estate as Adam was in innocency, but for sinners; for God to triumph over sin by his infinite mercy: here is the glory of his grace shining in the gospel. All is for the glory and praise of God there.

And for particular deliverances, in Ps. 1. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' His deliverances of us in the passages of our life is, that we may glorify him, by taking notice in imminent dangers of some of his attributes, when there is no means of deliverance, of his power and goodness, &c. In Rev. iv. 10, the elders are brought in praising God for the work of creation; and then in the fifth, ver. 12, for 'redemption,' 'Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us.' So indeed the work of creation, redemption, and the particular passages of God's

providence, and protection, and preservation, they are matter of praise in heaven and earth among God's people.

Now to name a few helps and means to perform this duty the better.

If we would stir up ourselves to praise God, let us consider our own unworthiness. As in prayer there must be a humble heart—for a man will not seek abroad if he have somewhat at home: poverty of spirit and humility of heart makes a man pray—so it is the humble soul that 'praiseth God,' that sees no desert in itself. This is one way to help us to 'praise God,' to see nothing in ourselves why God should so regard us, as 'to give us our lives for a prey,' Jer. xxi. 9, to set his love on us, and to follow us with good; nay, we have deserved the contrary, that God should leave us and expose us to misery, rather than to watch over us by his providence. What is in us? 'It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves,' Ps. c. 3; and he made us again when we were sinners, when we were worse than nought. Therefore, to humble us, we must consider our own unworthiness. He that knows himself unworthy of any favour, he will be thankful even for the least, as we see in Jacob, 'I am less than the least of all thy favours,' Gen. xxxii. 10. Therefore he was thankful for the least. So we see here in the text. These men are stirred up to 'praise God.' They saw no other help, no worthiness in themselves. They were at the gates of death, in a desperate estate; 'Oh that such men would praise God.' Indeed, such men are fittest to 'praise God,' that can ascribe help to nothing but to God, to no second causes.

Therefore, in the next place, as a branch of the former, if we would praise God, dwell not on the second causes. If God use second causes in any favour he bestows on us, either in keeping us from any ill, or bestowing any good, consider it as a means that God might dispense with; that he might use if he would, or not use. See God in the second causes; rise from them to him. Art thou healed by physic? Use physic as a means, but see God in it. But if God hath cured thee without physic, without ordinary means, then see him more immediately doing good to thee without the help of second causes. That is one way to help us to praise God, to see him in every favour and deliverance. For what could second causes do, if he should not give a blessing? Especially praise him when he hath immediately done it, as he can. Did not he make light before there was a sun? He is not tied to give light by the sun; and he made waters before he made the clouds. He is not tied to the clouds. Therefore especially 'praise God' when we have deliverance we know

not how, without means, immediately from the goodness and strength of God.

Again, If we would 'praise God' for any favour, consider the necessity and use of the favour we pray for, as these men here; they were at death's door, and 'loathed all manner of meat.' Alas! they had died if God had not helped them. If thou wouldst bless God, consider what a miserable state thou shouldst be in if thou hadst not that favour to praise God for. If thou be to bless God for thy senses, put case thou shouldst want thy sight, what a miserable case thou shouldst be in! So for any of the senses that a man wants, whereby he should glorify God, and take the comfort of the creature, put case a man should want his taste, as these men here—

'their soul abhorred all manner of meat'—alas! what a miserable case is it to want a relish and taste of the comfort that God hath put into the creatures; put case we should want the meanest benefit we enjoy, how uncomfortable would our lives be!

This spark of reason that God hath given us, that we have understanding to conceive things, which is the engine whereby we do all things as men, and are capable of the grace of God, what a miserable thing were it if God should take away our wits, or suspend the use of them?

But especially in matters of grace, if God had not sent Christ to redeem the world, what a cursed condition had we lain in, next to devils?

Again, If we would praise God, let us every day keep a diary of his favours and blessings: what good he doth us privately, what positive blessings he bestows upon us, and what dangers he frees us from, and continues and renews his mercy every day; and publicly what benefit we have by the state we live in. Oh what a happy state is it that we live in peace, that we enjoy such laws, 'that every man may sit under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree,' Micah iv. 4, and enjoy the comforts of life, when all the world about us are and have been in combustion! We should keep a register of God's blessings. Oh that we could learn to have such exact lives! It would breed a world of comfort, and we should have a less account to make when we die.

Every day labour to be humbled for our sins, specially such as break the peace of our consciences, and never give our bodies rest till our hearts have rest in the favour of God; and together with matter of humiliation, daily

observe how God bestows new favours, or else continues the old; that notwithstanding our provocation and forgetfulness of him, he strives with us by his goodness. This is a blessed duty that we should labour to perform.

And then when we have done this, let us rouse up all that we are, and all that we have within us, to praise God. Ps. ciii. 1, 'My soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name.' What have we within us to praise God? Let us praise God with our understanding, to conceive and have a right judgment of God's favours, of the worthiness of them and our own unworthiness, and then a sanctified memory. 'Forget not all his benefits,' Ps. ciii. 2. Forgetfulness is the grave of God's blessings. It buries all. And then there is in us the affection of joy and love to God to taste him largely, and then all within us will be large in the praising of God. And our tongue likewise, though that be not within us, it is called our 'glory,' Ps. xvi. 9 and Ps. lvii. 8; let us make it our glory in this, to trumpet out God's praise upon all occasions. All that is within us, and all that we are, or have, or can do, let it be all to the glory and 'praise of God.'

To draw to a conclusion, with some general application of all that hath been spoken, and then in particular to the present occasion.

You know how God hath dealt of late with this city, and with ourselves indeed; for we are all of one body politic, and however God visited them, yet it was our sins also that provoked him. We brought sticks to the common fire. A physician lets the arm bleed, but the whole body is distempered. God let the city bleed, but the whole kingdom was in a distemper. So that it was for our sins as well as theirs. We all brought, I say, something to the common flame, and God afflicted us even in them. God hath now stayed the sickness almost as miraculously as he sent it. It was a wonder that so many should be swept away in so short a time. It is almost as great a wonder that God should stay it so soon. And what may we impute it unto? Surely as it is in the text. 'They cried unto the Lord.' God put it into the hearts of the governors of the State to appoint humiliation and 'crying to God,' and therefore since God hath been so merciful upon our humiliation, it is religiously and worthily done of the State, that there should be a time to 'bless God.'

Again, God did it with a word, with a command. It was both in the inflicting and delivery, as it were, without means; for what could the physician do in staying the plague? Alas, all the skill in the world is at a loss in these kinds of sicknesses! It comes with God's command. It is God's arrow more especially than other sicknesses. God sent it by his command, first to

humble us for our sin; and now he hath stayed it with a word of command, that from above five thousand a week it is come to three persons. 'God hath sent his word and healed us.'

It was a pitiful state we were in before; for indeed it was not only a sickness upon the city, but a civil sickness. The whole state was distempered; for as there is sickness in the body when there is obstruction, when there is not a passage for the spirits and the blood from the liver, and from the heart, and from the head, these obstructions cause weakness, and faintings, and consumption. So was there not an obstruction in the State of late? Were not the veins of the kingdom stopped? Was not civil commerce stayed? The affliction of this great city, it was as the affliction of the head, or of the heart, or of the liver. If the main vital part be sick, the whole is sick; so the whole kingdom, not only by way of sympathy, but it was civilly sick, in regard that all trading and intercourse was stopped; it was a heavy visitation. And we have much cause to bless God that now the 'ways of this Sion' of ours 'mourn not;' that there is free commerce and intercourse as before; that we can meet thus peaceably and quietly at God's ordinances, and about our ordinary callings. Those that have an apprehension of the thing, cannot choose but break out in thanksgiving to God in divers respects.

1. First of all, have not we matter to praise God that he would correct us at all? He might have suffered us to have gone on and been 'damned with the wicked world;' as it is 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'We are therefore chastened of the Lord, that we should not be damned with the world.' It is his mercy that he would take us into his hands as children, that he would visit us at all.

2. Another ground of thanksgiving is this, that since he would correct us, he would use this kind of correction, that he would take us into his own hands. Might he not have suffered a furious, bloody, dark-spirited, devilish-spirited enemy to have invaded us? to have fallen into the hard hands of men acted with devilish malice? David thought this a favour, even that God would single him out to punish him with the plague of pestilence, that he might not 'fall before his enemies,' 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. The mercies of God are wondrous great when we 'fall into his hands.' He is a 'merciful God.' He hath tender bowels full of pity and compassion. But the very mercies of wicked idolaters 'are cruel.' There was a mercy, therefore, in that, that God would take us into his own hands.

3. In the third place, We see when he had taken us into his own hands, how he hath stopped the raging of the pestilence, and hath inhibited the

destroying angel even in a wondrous manner; that the plague, when it was so raging, that it should come to decrease upon a sudden. God was wondrous in this work. Is not here matter of praise?

4. Then again, It is a mercy to us all here that he should 'give us our lives for a prey;' as God saith in Jeremiah to Baruch, 'Wheresoever thou goest, thou shalt have thy life for a prey,' Jer. xxi. 9. Might not God's arrow have followed us wheresoever we went?

Whither can a man go from this arrow, but that God being everywhere, might smite him with the pestilence? Now, in that he hath watched over us, and kept us from this noisome contagious sickness, and hath brought us altogether here quietly and freely, that so there may be intercourse between man and man in trading and other calling, this is the fourth ground of 'praising of God.'

5. And that it did not rage in other parts. In former time God scattered the pestilence more over the kingdom. It is a great matter to bless God for. I beseech you, let us say with the same spirit as this holy man here, 'Oh that men, therefore, would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for the wonders that he doth for the children of men!'— for his goodness, that he would rather correct us here than damn us; for his goodness, that he would not give us up to our enemies; for his goodness, that he stayed the infection so suddenly, and that he stayed the spreading of it further; for his goodness unto us in particular, that he hath kept us all safe.

What shall we do now but consecrate and dedicate these lives of ours; for he gives us our lives more than once, at the beginning. There is never a one here but can say by experience, God hath given me my life at such a time and such a time. Let us give these lives again to God, labour to reform our former courses, and enter into a new covenant with God. This is one part of thanksgiving, to renew our covenant with God, to please him better; and indeed, in every thanksgiving that should be one ingredient. Now, Lord, I intend and resolve to please thee better. Whatsoever my faults have formerly been, I resolve by thy grace and assistance to break them off. Without this, all the other is but a dead performance.

Now, briefly, by way of analogy and proportion, to raise some meditations from that that hath been delivered concerning the body, to the soul; for God is the physician both to soul and body.

If God with his word can heal our bodies, as the psalmist saith here, much more can he with his word heal our soul. There are many that their bodies are well, thanks be to God, but how is it with their souls? Here you have some symptoms to know their spiritual state; and oh that people were apprehensive of it! Have you not many that their 'soul loatheth all manner of meat,' and they 'draw near the gates of death?' Their souls are in a desperate state. They are deeply sick. How shall we know it? Their soul 'abhorreth all manner of wholesome meat.' How many are there that relish poets and history, any trifle that doth but feed their vain fancy, and yet cannot relish the blessed truth and ordinances of God? Where is spiritual life when this spiritual sense is gone, when men cannot relish holy things? If they relish the ordinance of God, it is not the spiritual part of it, so far as the Spirit toucheth the conscience, but something that, it may be, is suitable to their conceit, expressions, or phrases, or the like. But it is a symptom and sign of a fearful declining state when men do not relish the spiritual ordinances of God, which should be, as it were, 'their appointed food;' when they do not 'delight to acquaint themselves with God,' in hearing of the word, and reading, and the like. Let such, therefore, as delight not in spiritual things, know that their souls lie gasping; they are at the 'gates' of spiritual death. All is not well. There is some fearful obstruction upon the soul that takes away the appetite. The soul runs into the world over much. They cloy themselves with the world. When men cannot relish heavenly things, they are ate up with the delight and joy of other things, pleasures, and profits.

Let them search the cause, and labour for purging, sharp, things that may procure an appetite.

Let them judge themselves, and see what is the matter, that they do not delight more in heavenly things; let them purge themselves by confession to God, and consideration of their sins, and labour to recover their appetite. For it is almost a desperate estate, 'they are at the gates of death.'

Especially now when we come to the communion. What do we here, if we cannot relish the food of our souls? Let us examine if we desire to taste the love of God, and to be acquainted with God here. If not, what shall we do in these spiritual distempers?

Desire of God, cry to God, that he would forgive our sins and heal our souls by his Holy Spirit, that he would make us more spiritual, to relish heavenly things better than we have done before, that as the things that are

heavenly are better in their kind than other things are, so they may be better to our taste.

A man may know the judgment of his state when he answereth not the difference of things. What the difference is between the food of life and ordinary food; what the difference is between the comforts of the Holy Ghost and other comforts; between the riches and pelf of the world and the riches of the Spirit; the graces of God, that will cause a man to live and die with comfort; the true riches, that make the soul rich to eternity: there is no comparison. Beg of God this spiritual relish to discern 'of things that differ,' Heb. v. 14, that we may recover our appetite. God by his word and Spirit can do it, not only the word written, but the inward spiritual word written in our hearts. Desire God to join his Spirit with his word and sacraments, and that will recover our taste and make us spiritual, that we shall relish him that is both the feast-maker and the feast itself. He is both the meat and the provider of the banquet.

For whence is it that all other things are sweet to us? deliverance from trouble and sickness? Because it is a pledge of our spiritual deliverance in Christ. The deliverance from hell and damnation, what comfort can a man have that knows not his state in grace, in the enjoying of his health, when he shall think he is but as a 'sheep kept for the slaughter?' He knows not whether he be in the favour of God or no.

Therefore let us come and renew our faith in the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ, of whom we are made partakers in the sacrament. For if we believe our deliverance from hell and damnation by the body of Christ broken and his blood shed, then everything will be sweet. When we know God loves us to life everlasting, then everything in the way to life everlasting, even daily bread, will be sweet, because the same love that gives heaven gives daily food, and the same love that redeems us from hell redeems us from sickness. Therefore let us labour to strengthen our faith in the main, that we may be thankful for the less. And as we enter into new covenant with God, so labour to keep it; in Lev. xxvi. 14, seq., everything avengeth the breaking of God's covenant. When we make covenant to serve him better for the time to come, and yet break it, God is forced to send his messenger. He sends sickness to avenge his covenant. Considering that he hath lately so avenged it, let it make us so much the more circumspect in our carriage. So much for this time and text.

The Saint's Comforts: An Exposition Upon Psalm CXXX

Ver. 1.

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O God.—

This psalm is a pithy psalm, and therefore is called a psalm of degrees. Other reasons the Jews give of this title, but they agree not. Some will have it that these psalms were sung upon the fifteen stairs that went up to the temple. Some call them thus, for that they say they were sung with an extraordinary high voice. But in these difficulties, *Melius est dubitare de occultis, quam litigare de incertis*. All historical truths are not necessary to be known, for Christ did many things that were not written, John xx. 80.

The author is not named. However, we may assure ourselves the Spirit of God indited it, setting down, first, the state of the writer, ver. 1; secondly, his carriage in that estate: 'He prayed, being in depths,' ver. 2; thirdly, the ground of his prayer, which was God's mercy, ver. 3; his own faith, hope, and patience; his waiting, is simply laid down, ver. 5, and comparatively, ver. 6; and fourthly, an application to the whole church, ver. 7, from his own experience of God's mercy and sufficiency.

Out of the first part, concerning the state of the writer of this psalm, let us observe these particulars, following in their order: first, that the children of God do fall into depths; that is, into extremity of misery and affliction, which are called 'depths;' because as waters and depths, so these, do swallow up and drown the soul, and because they do compass about the soul, burying it in great, terrible, continuing deep dangers; and these depths of a Christian are either outward or inward. The outward troubles and depths are those of the body. These God's children are afflicted with, as Jonah was when he was in the bottom of the sea, Joseph in prison, and Paul in the dungeon; and these are like the man of God to the Shunamite, 1 Kings xvii. 18, they do but call our sins to remembrance. But the inward spiritual troubles are the great depths; that is, trouble of mind for sin that lies upon us, causing us to doubt of our estate, to feel God's wrath, to fear rejection and excluding from God's presence. This is the soul of sorrow; other outward sorrows being but the carcase of sorrow. 'The spirit of a man will bear his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. In such an estate, in regard of

the extremity of the burden of the sins of the whole world laid on him, was our head, Christ Jesus, making him sweat ‘drops of blood,’ Luke xxii. 44; and when he was on the cross, when he cried with strong cries and tears, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Mark xv. 34. But why is this thus, that the Prince of our salvation should be in such a depth of misery? I answer, because it was requisite that salvation should be repaired by the contrary means to that whereby it was lost. It was lost by lifting up. Adam would be like a god; and Christ he regained us by abasing himself. The Son of God must become man, and a man of sorrows; and as the head was, so the members have been and must be, Rom. viii. 29, ‘for we are predestinated to be like the image of his Son,’ and so to pledge him in the same cup wherein he drank deep to us. In this plight we find David often, though a man after God’s own heart, Ps. vi. 2, 3, Ps. lxxxviii. 2, &c., Ps. xl. 12; and Jonah, a prophet, Jonah ii. 2, &c.; and Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 13; and Job especially, Job vi. 4. But why is this thus, seeing our head, Christ Jesus, hath suffered for us? I answer, we must suffer,

Reason 1. First, That we may know what Christ suffered for us by our own experience, without which we should but lightly esteem of our redemption, not knowing how to value Christ’s sufferings sufficiently, which is a horrible sin, Heb. ii. 3.

Reason 2. Secondly, By our sufferings we know what a bitter thing sin is, Jer. ii. 19, as by the ill consequences thereof: for without the taste of God’s wrath, we find nothing but sweetness and pleasure in sin; and therefore, we have so much sense of God’s wrath as to humble us, but shows not the extremity of the depth of sin, lest we should sink down into despair.

Reason 3. Thirdly, By our afflictions and depths, we manifest God’s power and glory the more in our deliverance: for the greater the trouble is, the greater is the deliverance; as the greater the cure is, the greater credit the physician gets.

Reason 4. Fourthly, Many times, by less evils, it is God’s manner to cure greater; and thus he suffers us to feel wrath, to cure us of security, which is as a grave to the soul; as also to cure spiritual pride, that robs us of grace, dealing with us as he did with the Israelites. He would not cast out all the nations from before them, but left some that might be employed in hunting and destroying the wild beasts, which might else multiply against the children of Israel. And thus God dealt with Paul, gave him to be vexed by a base

temptation, lest he should be lifted up with spiritual pride, through the abundance of revelations, 2 Cor. xii. 7.

Reason 5. Fifthly, These depths are left to us, to make us more desirous of heaven; else great men, that are compassed about with earthly comforts, alas, with what zeal could they pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' &c.? No; with Peter they would rather say, 'Master, it is good for us to be here,' Mark ix. 5; and therefore, it is God's usual dealing with great men, to suffer them to fall into spiritual desertions, to smoke them out of the world, whether they will or not.

Reason 6. Sixthly, God works by these afflictions in us a more gentleness of spirit, making us meek and pitiful towards those that are in depths, which was one cause of Christ's afflictions: he suffered, that he might help and comfort others. He suffered Peter to stumble, that when he was converted, he should 'strengthen his brethren,' Luke xxii. 32.

Use 1. Hence therefore we learn not to pass a rash censure on ourselves or others that are in such depths as this holy man was in; for the afflicted soul no sooner tastes of this bitter fruit, but presently breaks out into complaints.

'Never was any thus afflicted as I,' thinking it impossible that there should be greater crosses, than it feels; when indeed the draught that Christ our head did drink to us, was far beyond the apprehension of mortal man, and therefore much more beyond his power to undergo. Let us beware how we censure others that are afflicted, for God's ends are hid. It may be God sends afflictions to manifest some excellent graces which lie in him, unknown both to the world and himself; and so he set Job as a flag of defiance against the devil, bidding him do his worst. He should find him upright, and a just man; and therefore we should rather take notice of affliction as a sign of some excellent grace with which God hath furnished such; for God will not call out any of his to suffering, but he will get himself honour thereby.

Use 2. In the second place, note this doctrine against the profane persons that tush at religion, and make a mock at the dejected condition of those that are good, because they seem despised, afflicted, and forsaken. They, alas! are ignorant of God's ways and works. It were much safer for them to consider their own ways, and to reason, if God deals thus with his dearest ones, with the 'green trees,' what shall become of those that are his

enemies, that are ‘dry trees?’ If such troubles arise to the godly, even from God’s love to them, what shall defend the wicked when the vials of God’s wrath shall be poured down upon them, when they shall ‘call to the rocks and mountains to hide, cover, and defend them?’ Rev. vi. 16. If the ‘righteous hardly be saved, where shall the ungodly appear?’ 1 Peter iv. 18. And to conclude, know that the afflictions of the children of God are far better than the pleasures of sin.

Doct. 2. In the second place, observe we, though Christians fall into depths, yet God upholds them that they sink not down into them without recovery. Thus it was with our Head. Though he on the sudden apprehended not the presence of God, so as he thought himself forsaken, yet he could even at the worst say, ‘My God.’ Thus also Jonah, ii. 4, ‘I said I was cast out of thy sight; yet will I look towards thy holy temple.’ So Ps. xxxi. 22, and Ps. cxviii. 5 and 6 verses.

Reason 1. For the Spirit of God is in them, and where it is, it is stronger than hell, yea though the grace be but as a grain of mustard seed.

Reason 2. Again, As there are depths of misery in a Christian, so in God there are depths of lore and of wisdom.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Faith, where it is, unites the soul to Christ, and to God through him, and draws down divine power—to lay hold on the almighty power of God by true and fervent prayer,—at whose rebuke the waters of affliction flee away, Ps. lxxvii. 10; and so the stronger the faith is, the stronger is the delivery, for it is of a mighty power, enabling us to wrestle with God, as Jacob did. Thus when we lay hold on God, and God on us, what can drown us?

Reason 4. Fourthly, It is the nature of God’s working to be by contraries: in his works of creation, making all things of nothing; in his works of providence, he saves by little means from greatest dangers. That he might bring us to heaven, he suffers us to go down even into hell, to see our worst estate, to humble us; and it may therefore be a cause why many men lie long in afflictions, even because they come not low enough to see their sins and need of help. In glorifying our mortal bodies, he first brings them to the grave, that they may rot and corrupt, and so be refined and moulded anew.

Use 1. This should teach us a note of difference between those that are God’s children and those that are not. Those that are his, when they are in

danger, go to him. They have ever that hold by faith, as to say, 'Yet God is good to Israel,' Jer. xxxi. 1. Others seek to escape by desperate undoing of themselves, as Saul, and Judas, and Ahithophel, for all his strong natural parts; and indeed such are in most danger of such courses of all other; for God will tread on such for their pride. Contrarily he mingles comforts, in the worst estate that his children are in, with griefs, one to humble them, the other to support them from despair; and so he sets them on a rock that is higher than they.

Use 2. Secondly, It should teach us in all extremities how to carry ourselves. We should take heed of the stream of grief, striving against it, as we desire a note of our good estate; take heed how we think that God forsakes us. It is an imputation unbefitting him that never forsakes his. Take heed of judging ourselves by sense. Is meat sour because one that is sick doth not relish it? No. The fault is in his indisposition. So in such desertions, be sure thou retainest thy anchor of hope, though contrary to hope; and therefore in the next place,

Use 3. We should answer God's dealing by our dealing. He works by contraries; we should judge by contraries. Therefore, if we be in misery, hope and wait for glory, in death look for life, in sense of sin assure thyself of pardon, for God's nature and promises are unchangeable; and when God will forgive, he lets us see our troubles; and therefore with resolute Job say, 'Though he kills me, I will yet trust in him,' Job xiii. 15. But to come particularly, I will set down cures of such depths as may arise from several causes; and these depths are either imaginary or real. Christians sometimes think themselves to be in depths when indeed they are not, but it is only imaginary, raised it may be from a melancholy distemperature of the spirits, which also distempers the reasonable working of the mind; raising as false and feigned conceits of their souls as it doth in many of their bodies; and yet these conceits have real effects, as in Jacob, who sorrowed as truly for Joseph as if he were dead indeed. Therefore for the avoiding hereof be not alone; a friend and good company are made for such times. For the devil sets on men in such case most when they are alone, and the strongest are then too weak for him; and believe not thine own fancy, but rather believe those that can discern us better than we ourselves can. We know how men have been deceived thus, and therefore when we are advised thus by friends, and counselled, let us suspect that it is a motion of the devil or a fancy of thine own that thus troubles thee.

There is another depth that is imaginary, arising from mistaking of rides, concluding because they have not so much grace as others, have not so much subduing and prevailing power over sin, therefore they have no grace at all, they are damned hypocrites and the like. Little do they think that perfection is not attainable here, but is reserved to the blessedness of that other life hereafter. Little do they look to the imperfections of the best saints of God, and the great depths that they have been in; and indeed they know not what the covenant of grace requires, nor perfect fulfilling of the law by our own persons, for that was the end of the law. But the covenant of grace requires sincerity with growth; and this is the only perfection which we can look for here.

Another depth also there is, which ariseth from the taking of the motions of the devil for those of his own corrupt nature. The baseness and unreasonableness of them makes them think they cannot be God's children, and have such detestable motions within them. Let such know that such shall be cast upon Satan's score. And it is a sign rather that such are none of the children of the devil, who, if they were, would suffer them to rest in quiet without vexing them.

Again, some men fall into another depth, which ariseth from an apprehension of God forsaking them. To such I give this advice, that they judge not of themselves by their distemper, for a sinful conscience puts a veil sometimes between God and us, hiding his favour; which nevertheless may be as great to us then as at any other time, and it may be intended by God to drive us to him by scourging us from our wicked ways and sins, which formerly we lived in. By faith therefore pull off the vizard from the face of God; judge not according to present appearance, but by God's nature and his promises, who hath said he will be with us for ever, that no temptations shall be above measure, 1 Cor. x. 13; judge by his nature who is unchangeable; and thus did the Canaanitish woman see Christ's loving nature under his frowning look, who doth as Joseph, hide his love and person from his brethren out of a increase of love, not out of any ill intent. Again, in such a case let us be sure we trust others that are our friends rather than ourselves. I mean in time of temptation, whereas others can better discern of our health by our spiritual pulses than we ourselves, who then are blinded; and in such cases there is the trial of faith and love.

There is another sort of depths, and these are before conversion; and thus was Paul troubled, 'Lord, what shall I do?' and thus was Manasseh. Let

such consider the commandment, to humble them and cast themselves on Christ and his promises, considering the end of Christ's coming was to save and seek such as are lost.

Use 4. And if any one shall find himself already escaped such depths as are formerly mentioned, let him take comfort to himself, as being thereby evidently proved to be the child of God; for that is utterly impossible, that nature should overcome such difficulties, and to that end let him reason after this sort, God's children go to him in depths. I go only to him in depths, therefore I am God's child; for to have the spirit of prayer to go to God in time of trouble, it is a work of the Spirit; a natural man hath it not, Job xxvii. 9, 10.

Use 5. Hence therefore, in the next place, note a sure sign of the true religion, namely, to be able to support men in danger and in spiritual troubles. This is verified in ours, as the subtle Jesuit will acknowledge, while they hold that reposing ourselves merely on mercy and favour in Christ, and not on man's good works, is the safest way. Why, therefore, they live by their uncomfortable rules; and when they die, fly for succour to these, which in their lifetime they despise.

Use 6. Moreover, let this be a ground to encourage us never to give over God's cause. He hath said he will not leave us though we be in depth of our sins, if we belong to him, and therefore much less will he leave us in that work which he himself sets us about. He was with Daniel among the lions, with Moses in the bulrushes, with the 'three children' in the fire, with his church through 'fire and water.'

Use 7. Lastly, Let us therefore be sure to keep God our friend, that he may own us; else when we cry he will not hear us, Prov. i. 28. Acquaint we ourselves with him, as it is in Job xxii. 21, in prosperity, and he will be our refuge, &c.

Doct. 3. In the third place, observe we that afflictions stir up devotions; for prayers in time of afflictions are cries. *Oratio sine malis est avis sine alis*; for what allays worldly joy, and embitters it, but affliction? Now we know that it is the worldly afflictions that quenches our zeal and makes us cold. Affliction is a purgation opening the soul, causing it to relish and to affect spiritually, and to see the wants and necessity of supply, and so procures longing and earnest hungering, Hosea v. 15. 'In their affliction they will seek me early,' and therefore, Ps. cvii. 6, it is said they cried to the Lord in their

trouble. Now crying supposes want and sense of misery and ardency. Thus were Christ's cries called 'strong cries and indeed weak afflictions many times makes men rather pettish and fro ward, as Jonah, than ardent in feeling relief; and therefore,

Use 1. Let us interpret God's dealings with a sanctified judgment. He is a wise physician, and knows when strong or gentle physic is most requisite. Sometimes God by great afflictions doth manifest great graces, but so as notwithstanding they may be mingled with a deal of corruption; and it is God's use that hereby his graces may be increased, and the corruption allayed, to bring down the greatest cedars, and to eclipse the greatest lights.

Use 2. Secondly, Let us oppose desperations by all means, by prayer, by crying; and if we cannot speak, by sighing; if not so, yet by gesture, especially at the time of death, for God knows the heart. For then it stands upon eternal comfort. And therefore let us do anything to show our faith fails not. "We must know that every one shall meet with these enemies, that would cause us to despair if they could, for this life is a warring and striving life. We shall have enemies without and within us that will tigh against us.

Doct 4. In the next place, observe by the example of this holy man, that prayers are to be made only to God, who knows our wants, supports us and binds us up; and it is only Christ that doth this. None can love us more than he that gave himself for us. He is our eye whereby we see, our mouth whereby we speak, our arms whereby we lay hold on God; and therefore it is an intolerable unthankfulness to leave this 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and to dig to ourselves cisterns that will hold no water,' Jer. ii. 18; to leave Christ, and run to saints and angels, and the like, See.

Ver. 2.

'Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.'

Mark here his constancy and instancy in prayer by his ingemination; and this he doth not to work upon God, as if he were hard to be entreated to mercy, but to waken up his own heart, and to entreat of God a more inward and clear communion, communicating increase of grace; so as God's children are not satisfied with small portions of grace. And this did Daniel, Dan. ix. 18, 19. O Lord, hear, forgive, hearken, do, defer not!

His ardency shows into what an exigent he was brought; and indeed the Lord regards lukewarm prayers no more than lukewarm persons, so as he will spue them out. Prayers must be like incense. It must be fired with zeal.

Quest. But some will ask, How shall we come to make our prayers fervent?

Ans. I answer, consider of our wants, and our necessity of supply, of our misery in our want,- of our hope to prevail by prayer; and these will edge our affections in prayer. Consider also how these times, and the estate of the church do sympathy with thy particular depths. The church abroad is in great depths; and if we will have proof that we are fellow-members, that we are children of that mother, let us labour for a fellow-feeling of their miseries, and make them our own; and to that end in our prayers allege the depths and pray, 'Help thou, Lord, for vain is man's help,' Ps. lx. 11. For extremity itself is a good argument to a father to help his children. Allege also the insolency of the enemies. "Why should the heathen say, Where is our God?" Ps. lxxix. 10. There is no church but useth more helps of humiliation than we do, which foretells a great judgment; for God cannot endure this lukewarmness. Therefore call upon God with fervency, else will he cast us into such extremities as shall force tire into us. He that is poor doth naturally speak supplications.

Direct. 2. Secondly, Look that we always be in such an estate as God may hear us. If we be not within the covenant with God, our prayers shall turn to sin.

Direct. 3. Thirdly, Take heed of wilful neglect of God's word. He that turneth his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be abominable, Prov. xxviii. 9. Some cry down preaching and cry up prayer, making opposition between duties where none is. Dost thou think God will hear thee, and thou wilt not hear him? Prov. i. 28.

Direct. 4. Fourthly, Take heed of double dealing with God. This is hateful to God, and therefore David, till he dealt plainly with himself by condemning himself, his prayers were but roaring as a beast taken in a snare and [that] cannot get out, roars for pain and despite, Ps. xxxii. 3.

Direct. 5. Take heed, in the next place, of allowance of any sin, though never so little; and though it be only entertained in heart, the Lord will not

hear our prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18. For shall we think that God cares for our prayers when we make covenant with his enemies?

Direct. 6. Take heed also of unmercifulness and cruelty. God would not hear the Israelites. Their hands were full of blood, Isa. i. 15. God will rather have no sacrifice than no charity. Let us take heed of these things, and let us come boldly to the throne of grace while he holds out his sceptre to us.

But against this a man may object and say, that he is a wicked wretch, and his prayers shall but increase sin.

To such I answer, let them offer their prayers in obedience to God's commandments, who commands them to pray, and he will respect the very 'groans' of his Spirit within. Elias was a man subject to the like infirmities; yet God heard his prayer, James v. 17. Where God's Spirit stirreth up, man's spirit is stirred up; and where Christ joins to offer the prayers to his Father as in his own name, why should we vilify that which God highly esteemeth? Let God have his sacrifice. He knows how to accept of that which is good, and to pardon that which is amiss. He will second his beginnings, and will enlarge the heart more and more. Though in the beginning, prayer may be dull and untoward, it shall end in fulness, and therefore let these spiritual depths be so far off from hindering us from prayer, as that rather it should encourage us to pray. For it may be one end why the Lord suffers us to fall into depths, to the end that we may be stirred up to come to him; that thus we may glorify him, and he glorify his mercy in hearing our prayers and granting our requests. For sure it is, he that hath not a heart to pray when he is in depths, shall never come out of them; and let such as do come to him know, that however God is not present to sense, but rather seemeth to hide himself, yet he is most near to such as, with Mary, cannot see him for their tears and griefs, it with her in humility they seek after him.

Ver. 3.

If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

These words are a removal of hindrances of prayer, following God with an humble confession of that which is evil, which is ever better than a proud boasting of that which is good; and thus preventing a secret objection, which God and a guilty conscience may make, that he was a guilty wretch. To which he answers by way of confession, "Truth, Lord! yet if thou shouldst mark iniquities, none could abide it. Whence in general we may observe,

Doct. 1. That, sin hinders and discourages the soul from prayer; for the conscience will object, and the soul will upbraid us, telling us we are sinners. God, he is holy, and how can we think he will hear us then, where there is no faith? The soul must needs sink. This estate was David's, Ps. li. 14, 15. Sin and a guilty conscience had almost sealed up his lips; and thus was the publican, who durst not lift up his eyes to heaven; and thus will our estate be, especially if we yield to sins against conscience; like Adam, we shall run from the presence of God to hide ourselves, though our former estate and conversation with God were never so inward and familiar. Therefore let us look to our souls as we desire to appear with comfort before the throne of grace, for consciousness of the remainder of sin hinders boldness in prayer in the best.

Doct. 2. In the second place, the way to get out of misery is first to get discharged from sin; for sin is the beginning and cause of all misery. Therefore the sons of Jacob, when they were handled roughly by Joseph, presently the thought of selling Joseph into Egypt came into their minds, as the cause of all their trouble, though the fact was many years before; and the widow, when her son died, presently called to mind her sin: 'O thou man of God, why comest thou to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?' 1 Kings xvii. 18. If therefore we will remove the misery, let us remove sin first. Thus David began with desiring pardon, Ps. cxliii. 2, then prayer for deliverance, for misery follows sin, even as the shadow doth follow the body.

Doct. 3. Thirdly, We may observe from the general, that the way to purge and take away sin is by confession; thereby clearing God and laying load on ourselves. The way to cover our sin is to uncover it by confession. The way for God to spare us is, not to spare ourselves. And this God requires, not for himself, as if he were not able to be merciful but by this means, but to the end that 'we may glorify him,' as Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to God,' Josh. vii. 19. Secondly, God will have it a way to mercy, because he hath so decreed it; and in the third place, that thereby there may be wrought in our souls a greater shame for sin. And this confession must be serious, thorough, humble, with grief, shame, and hatred. Every 'Lord, have mercy,' is not enough, for many deceive themselves this way, misapplying the promises, that Christ will not 'break the bruised reed,' that he looks at the desire. Alas! these belong to such as are not lazy, that are plain dealers with themselves, that will not spare themselves; that by reading, hearing, meditation, conference, and all other duties, will not give over till they have found out the bottom of their iniquity hidden in their heart. And

let only such apply them, and not those to whom they do not belong. Thus much in general. Now, to come to some particulars; and first, let us observe out of this interrogation, having the force of a strong affirmation,

Doct. 4. That the best men in the estate of grace are sinners; some may be sine crimine, but not sine peccato; for in every man there are two principles: one of good, another of evil, the old man and the new. In all there is a 'combat between flesh and spirit.' Christ is not a mediator for such as are already perfect; for mediation needs not be, where all is friendly. And therefore there must be some enmity that must make God's children stand in need of the perpetual intercession of Christ, who is a high priest for ever. And the servants of God have acknowledged thus much, Ps. cxliii. 1, 'Answer me in thy righteousness,' not mine. I will not have a quarrel with thee; thou art righteous, I am sinful. I may be just in mine own eyes, but in thy sight no man shall be justified. We acknowledge thus much in our daily prayers, while we still pray 'Forgive us our trespasses.' Though we profit every day never so much, yet, like leaking ships, we gather that which will drown our souls at length if we repent not; for as it is Isa. lxiv. 6, 'Our best performances are as filthy rags.' Isa. vi. 5, 'I am a man of polluted lips.' Dan. ix. 20, 'While I confessed my own sins.' The papists themselves imply so much, for else why teach they the doctrine of doubting? If we be perfect, it is a sin to doubt of salvation, for thereby we deny God to be just. If they be perfect, what need they force the doctrine of penance, or of going to saints to be their mediator? And when they are upon the rack of conscience, the best of them will renounce then their dreams of perfection. From this observation, therefore, we learn, that no man can perfectly fulfil the law; and secondly, that there can be no justification by works. Only, that that must make us just must be perfect. Our best works are imperfect.

Doct. 5. In the next place, we may observe that community of offenders is no ground of lessening or diminishing of sin. A formal Christian, it is his trick to wrap himself up in general confessions. We are all sinners; and if God should deal with us as we deserve, we were damned; but come to reckon with him for his particular sins, then he is all in a chafe. He cannot be a saint, and the like speeches, tending to the defence of his course. The psalmist is not of this nature. He argues otherwise: neither Adam nor Abraham could stand, how much less shall I, poor worm! David, he aggravates his sin while he tells us that he was conceived and born in sin. But men now-a-days, contrarily, 'You must bear with me; it is my natural disposition; I cannot do otherwise.' Yet do I not deny but to the dejected

sinner this may be used as a comfort; for while they see the mass of corruption within them, they presently conceive worse of their estate and condition, as if none were so ill, or in as ill a case as they. Such should be stayed by considering it is the general estate of all men, only the difference is, some see their sins more than others do; and thus Solomon useth it, 2 Chron. vi. 80, 'If any man sinneth against thee, as there is no man that sinneth not;' and God himself useth it as an argument to move him to mercy. 'The imaginations of man's heart are evil continually, therefore my Spirit shall not always strive with flesh,' Gen. vi. 3.

Doct. 6. In the next place, observe that God opens the heart and eyes of his children to see and feel "hat sin is, and keeps their eyes open, and their consciences continually tender. The wicked are blind in most heinous crimes of all. David he complains of this, that his sin was ever before him, Ps. li. 3. And God threatens this, Ps. 1. 21, 'I will set them before thee;' and the reasons hereof are,

Reason 1. First, To make our judgments conformable to his in hatred of sin; for we being his children, it is fit we should be of his image, and like to him.

Reason 2. Secondly, To make us apprehend mercy the more dearly, and thereby glorify him in it the more.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because he would have us beg of him to cover our sins from his eyes, that it may be covered from our eyes; for the best cannot shake off the sense of sin, be it ever so burthensome. But God keeps it in our minds to humble us the more thoroughly.

Reason 4. Again, God's children have a new life which is sensible of the least thing that is contrary to itself; and those that are in most perfect life are most perfect in the sense of sin, though never so small, though but motions. Where the sun shines most clear, then motes are most easily seen; and therefore the best Christians do complain most of corruptions, for they see more than others do. Hence, therefore, we may know our estate, whether we are still-born or have life. If we have life, we have light, and can see and discern between good and evil. Some are still-born, yet think they live. Thus are many, thinking themselves unblameable in conversation, yet in heart full of pride; and like the Pharisees, count well of themselves, nothing knowing what belongs to the Christian warfare. Others are more bold, and their very lives bewray they think not of sin, but are bold in their courses, proud in

speech and carriage, contemptuous of others and the means of salvation, contented with a little, and think anything enough. But the worst of all are those that think indeed of sin, but it is to defend it and maintain it by translation and recrimination. They will be sure to repay double, to those that tell them of their courses in friendly manner.

Quest. But how shall we come to be sensible of sin?

Direct. 1. First, Let us have the picture of the law in our hearts, seeing all ill and the degrees thereof; also learn us to desire to avoid sin, so to endeavour to flee all occasions thereof, though never so small; and to take up all occasions of doing good; and doing good spiritually from judgment, affection, faith; and consider the extent of the law, reaching to the least thought.

Direct. 2. Secondly, Bring ourselves continually into the presence of God. Human frailty appears in nothing more, than when it is brought to the light; opposites being compared illustrate one another. Consider therefore in whose presence we are, what we are, what God is, what we have done, what he commandeth; and then, with Job, we shall abhor ourselves in dust and ashes, though formerly we defended ourselves, Job xlii. 6.

Direct. 3. And because God is invisible, bring ourselves to that which is divine; hear we the word often unfolded, and we shall, with the unbeliever, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 'be convinced, and falling down shall confess God's power with it.'

Direct. 4. Furthermore, Let us converse with those that are better than ourselves; for the image and likeness of God is seen in his children. It is the custom of many men to converse with the worst company, that they may appear to be the best; and thus do they increase an overweening self-conceit in themselves.

Direct. 5. Let us also use to go to places visited with God's corrections; for seeing misery, the conscience retires to itself, considering of the ways of sin, and how the devil pays those that serve him. And this use we ought to make of objects of misery, to see God's correcting hand, else do we provoke God, Isa. i. 3-5, 'who curseth such;' Jer. v. 3, and branding them with the brand of king Ahaz, 'this is Ahaz.' And while we delight ourselves with pleasing worldly objects, our eyes shut against sin, but corrections and punishments makes them see and discern. All Christ's admonitions could not

make Judas see his sin of covetousness, which the weight of a burdened conscience afterward so wrought, as could not be pacified. Let us look therefore on the afflictions of other men, of our own persons and estates, and know the least crosses comes not without a just cause.

Direct. 6. Lastly, Let us pray to God to give us tender hearts; not to deliver us up to a hard impenetrable heart, and to spiritual judgments, but to keep us continually sensible of our sins and least infirmities.

Doct. 7. In the next place, out of the manner of delivery of this speech, we may gather thus much, that sin once truly felt is ever unportable, none can stand under it. There are three impotencies in sinners: first, they cannot see sin: Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors.' Secondly, when the Lord causes them to see their sins, they cannot justify themselves; and then, in the third place, they cannot bear the burden of them; for death, the wages thereof, none can bear or endure; nay, God himself cannot endure sin, Amos ii. 13—nay, the wounded conscience, which is but a part of the wages thereof in this life, none can endure—but is 'pressed under them as a cart loaden with sheaves.' Christ he could not endure them, but had such sense of them as if he had been quite forsaken: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And angels could not bear the burden, but were thrown down to hell thereby, and so angels of light became angels of infernal darkness. Adam could not endure it, till Christ raised him up by the promise of the blessed seed; and therefore much less can we since the fall, as it appears in Cain, Saul, Ahithophel, Judas. The earth could not bear Korah and his company, and neither would it bear us if we had our due. Sin is a debt we cannot answer: Job ix. 3, 'We cannot answer one of a thousand.'

Use 1. This therefore confutes the papists, who say that Christ hath endured the great punishments; but there are other lighter punishments, which tee also must undergo, as purgatory and the like; to whom we say the wages of the least sin is death. That which the angels could not satisfy for, how shall we weak creatures.

Use 2. Secondly, This may put a just defence into the mouths of careful Christians. Let others term them by what names of scorn they list, such have good ground for what they do. They know what sin is, and have felt the sting thereof; and what they do, they do it in love to their souls. As for them that scorn, they know there is more cause to pity them than envy their estate. Though they can outswagger and outface sin now, which none could undergo heretofore, and though they can with a grace and authority, as they

think, censure those that are careful, and themselves swear and profane the holy name of God, showing thereby a heart full of unbelief and of irreverence,—which is more odious than the sin of swearing, —yet there is a time coming, when God will set their sins in order before them, in such manner that they shall melt away in the sense of the multitude and greatness of them, without hope of relief; when they shall see nothing but vengeance and death before their eyes, and without all manner of hope they shall die.

Quest. But how comes it to pass, will some say, that many nevertheless seem to bear their sins well enough, and live and die without tears?

Ans. I answer, The estate of such may be dangerous, for Christ is not sweet till sin be bitter. But God is infinite in wisdom, not presently burdening every sinner, nor comforting those that shall desire it. For then who would not be good, and who would be ill? And if evermore comforts were present, what need were there of faith? And therefore, this is most especially true at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall be blown away as chaff, Ps. i. 4-6; when there will be a guilty conscience, watching devils, and an angry God. Where shall the wicked then appear? And there must be a hell hereafter, that men may then feel what now they will not believe.

Use of direction. Wherefore let us learn to submit ourselves to the correcting hand of God, saying, 'It is thy mercy we are not consumed,' Lam. iii. 22; considering that this light affliction is nothing to that we deserve, or that Christ suffered for us, or that the damned suffer in hell, or to that joy we have laid up for us in heaven; and therefore as it is in Micah vii. 9, 'Let us bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him.'

Secondly, Let us justify God. We have deserved affliction. He hath dealt justly with us: Nell. ix. 31, seq., 'Righteousness belongeth to him, but to us shame and confusion of face,' Dan. ix. 7.

Thirdly, Let us moderate our censure of those that are dejected and out of heart, through sense of sin: Prov. xviii. 19, 'A wounded spirit, who can bear?' Impute it not therefore to melancholy, or despair and madness, or as Eli unadvisedly did, to drunkenness, when he reprehended Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 14; for can we think it strange, when God sees sin in his children, that he causes them to see it, and that when they see it they should show it in their outward gestures? No; it is no light burden, that a man may run away with.

Ver. 4.

But there is forgiveness with thee.'

This verse contains a blessed appeal. God hath a court of justice, and a tribunal of mercy. If God should examine in justice what we have done, we could not stand: 'but there is mercy or forgiveness with the Lord,' Therefore it is an appeal from the throne of justice to the mercy-seat; and yet this is not so properly an appeal but it admits of limitations. For, first, appeals are used in aid of those that are innocent. Now we by nature are all unclean. Again, appeals are grounded for the most part upon discovery of insufficiency, or of violent indirect courses in the managing of the cause. This can no ways be attributed to God, who is not rigorous nor insufficient, or swayed by indirect means; for he accepts the person of none. Again, an appeal is from an inferior court to a higher. But here it is not so, for we appeal from God to God; from God armed with justice, examining by law, to God a father armed with love, looking upon us in the comfortable promises of the gospel; from Sinai to Sion, from Moses to Christ. And in this appeal, as in others, the former sentence of the law, whereby we are 'cursed,' is utterly disannulled, so as 'no condemnation is to those that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1. But this belongs to such (as it is in other appeals) who must see themselves condemned, before they can have the benefit of this appeal. There is no flying to mercy unless we find ourselves in need. But to come to some observations. In the first place, we may see by this example that the soul of a Christian apprehends God according to its estate, to comfort itself, and therefore beholds him as a forgiving God. And therefore the children of God, when they are at the lowest, they recover themselves with something they find in God's nature and promise, and to that end have a spirit of faith to trust and rely upon God; and those that have it not, sink lower and lower.

Doct. 1. Here we may observe, that the Christian soul, once stung with sin, flies to the free mercy of God for ease. Let a sinner be in Haman's estate, tell him of all pleasures, whatever they be, he cares not; nothing but pardon delights his soul. David, a king, a prophet, a man after God's own heart, Acts xiii. 22, beloved of his people, wonderfully graced, yet being troubled with his sin, could not stand. He respects not his outward privileges, prerogatives, majesty, and the like. No; he is the blessed man to whom God imputes no sin, Ps. xxxii. 1. And this is the reason why so much is attributed still to the blood of Christ, everywhere, in the Scripture; because the soul once pricked, finds no ease nor cure but in it principally, yet not excluding the other merits and obedience of Christ. And David, when he would raise up his soul to

praise God, describes him to be a God ‘forgiving sin and healing infirmities,’ Ps. ciii. 8; and therefore we should, when our consciences are burdened, go as Joab did and catch hold on the horns of the altar, to the mercy of God. There live and there die. And though the conflict be never so great, we shall at length find that, as Jacob, we shall be children of Israel, and such as shall prevail with God, and that for our depth of misery, he hath a depth also of mercy; and this mercy will appear either in preserving us from sin, before we are fallen into it, or rescuing us from it if once we be fallen into it.

Quest. But how comes it, may some say, that God forgives? Doth he it without satisfactions?

Ans. I answer, No.

Quest. How then is it done, seeing he hath decreed that without blood shall be no remission? Heb. ix. 22.

Ans. I answer, This is done in Christ.

Quest. But why is he not mentioned here, nor in the Old Testament neither?

Ans. I answer, He was laid down to us in the Old Testament, in types and promises; for what other was the paschal lamb but ‘the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world,’ by sprinkling our hearts with his blood? He was the priest that, before he could open an entrance into the holy of holies for us, must first shed blood and offer sacrifice. What signified the ark with the law covered within it, the mercy-seat upon it, and over them two cherubim covering one another, but Christ our ark covering the curses of the law, in whom is the ground of all mercy? ‘which things the angels desire to pry into,’ 1 Pet. i. 12, as into the pattern of God’s deep wisdom. And whereas any prayed in the temple they looked towards the mercy-seat, what meaneth it other than that, whenever we do pray to God, we should behold Christ, through whom God appears to be merciful and gracious? What signified the temple, towards which they looked when they prayed, 2 Chron. vi. 38, Dan. vi. 10, but that we in our prayers should evermore have reference to our temple Christ Jesus? And being thus assured, we may safely pass the flaming fire of God’s justice. If there were any other to be trusted besides Christ, there would be no peace of conscience. The sinner would argue, I am a creature, my sin is infinite; no creature can satisfy, they are not infinite; angels cannot stand; it must be an infinite majesty that must satisfy, and it must be

with blood. Now, Christ by his blood hath obtained eternal redemption for us, and therefore none but Christ, none but Christ! He is God-man, making God and man at one. It is his nature, and it is his office. So as God is just as well as merciful; for as it is Rom. iii. 24th and 25th verses, 'God the Father hath proposed or set forth Christ' in types and figures 'to be a propitiation,' alluding to the mercy-seat, 'to declare his righteousness and justice, that he may be just in punishing-sin,' that is in Christ; 'and a justifier of the sinner that believes in Christ Jesus,' because he accepted of Christ's satisfaction, so as his mercy devised a remedy to satisfy his justice. Thus much in general; now to come to particulars. First, take it exclusively, and we may observe,

Doct. 1. That only God can release a guilty conscience; only he can speak peace to a soul in distress. Ministers indeed have keys to open and shut heaven; but they use them only ministerially, as they find persons disposed, but Christ independently. Now, then, whereas man assumes this prerogative to himself, as the popes were wont to do, giving indulgences, it is no other than to set them in the place of God. 'I, even I, forgive sin,' saith God, Jer. xxxi. 84. None can quiet the conscience but one that is above the conscience, which is God, who is only the party offended; though there be also an offence against men. This ought to comfort us, that we have to do with a forgiving God, Neh. ix. 31. There is none like to him, to whom it is natural to remit and forgive sin. It is his name: Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'Forgiving iniquities, transgressions, and sins,' all manner of sins; sins against knowledge and against conscience; with him is plentiful forgiveness.

Doct. 2. Secondly, Observe that as God only forgives sin, so he ever forgives sin. It is always his nature, as the fire always burns; as he is Jehovah, he is merciful. John i. 29, Christ he is 'the Lamb of God,' that doth take away the sins of the world. It is a perpetual act; as we say the sun doth shine, the spring doth run. He is, Zech. xiii. 1, that 'fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness.' Mercy is his nature, and forgiveness is an effect of his mercy.

Obj. Therefore it is no satisfying objection that the distressed soul will be ready to make, that God was merciful to David and Peter, but how can he be to me, miserable sinner? For God, as he forgave Peter, Paul, David, so he forgives now. He is a fountain of mercy never drawn dry. He is unchangeable; and therefore we are not consumed, Mal. iii. 6; and Christ is the same 'yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' The consideration of this should be as a perpetual picture in our hearts.

Doct. 3. Thirdly, Hence we may gather, that God's mercy is free, and from himself. Though in us is sin and iniquity, yet in thee is mercy; and therefore God saith, I do not this for your sakes, but for mine own sake, Ezek. xxxvi. 22. Yet must not this be understood so as if it were freely and only from God the Father, excluding Christ. But therefore it is, in that we shall stand in need of no satisfactory merits of our own. Away therefore with popish doctrines of satisfactions by our own works. The holy man saith not, with thee is justice to take my works as satisfaction for my sin. No; though this holy man were a gracious man, yet mercy is all his plea. And if the question be, how the sinner stands free from punishment and entitled to all good, it is from forgiveness, which is from God's mercy, grounded on Christ's satisfaction. All is laid upon him, Isa. liii. 5. He was wounded for our transgressions; he bore our sorrows; he was made sin for us, that knew no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. The nature of man will hardly stoop to this divine truth. But the Spirit teacheth us to rely on the free forgiveness of God in Christ; and therefore Christ and his apostles bid such 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' We may think this an easy lesson. But hereafter, when God shall open our sins and lay them upon our consciences, they will then tell us fearful things. There is no hope! thou must be damned! Against such times lay up grounds of comfort; and let this text be a haven to resort to. It is true, 'if thou markest what is done amiss, who can stand? but there is mercy with thee that thou be feared.'

Doct. 4. Fourthly, We may from hence observe, that the best Christian and most gracious man alive needs forgiveness of his sins; for where the conscience is enlightened it will discover what corruption it finds, and so the necessity of being delivered. So 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate;' that is, such as I am, have need of an advocate; and one reason may be, because indeed such see in their sins much more ingratitude than others, for they sin against the knowledge of God's love to their souls in forgiving former sins; and then to fall into sin again, it is as broken bones, Ps. li. 8. And the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 20, speaking to the believing Corinthians, 'I beseech you to be reconciled to God;' for Christ was made sin for us; for you, and for me. Even we sin daily, and stand in need of reconciliation. We must daily pray, 'Forgive us our sins,' yea, the best of the disciples must do it. If we come not with this petition, 'our sins are written with a pen of iron, and with the claw of an adamant,' Job xix. 24.

Doct. 5. Fifthly, This mercy and forgiveness is general to all that cast themselves on his free mercy. It is Satan's subtilty to persuade us at the first,

that sin is nothing; but when it is committed and cannot be recalled, then he tells us it is greater than can be pardoned. No. The gospel is the power of God to salvation to all that do believe. Let none despair. It is a greater sin than the former. *Dens non est desperantium pater, sed iudex.* God's pardon is general, to all persons, that repent of all sin, whereby he frees them from all evil. He pardons all persons: Manasses the sorcerer, Cornelius, Zaccheus, persecuting Paul. The parable of the lost sheep, the lost groat, the prodigal son, testifies it. God offers it freely, 'Why will you die, O house of Israel?' Jer. xxvii. 13. He complains when it is neglected: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you together!' Mat. xxiii. 37. 'He threatens' because men will not hear, and 'he pardons all sins.' There is no disease above the skill of this Physician. He healeth all thy sins and all thy infirmities, Ps. ciii. 1-3. Yea, if it were possible that the sinner against the Holy Ghost could repent, there were hope in Israel concerning this! He hath pardon for sin long lived in. 'At what time soever a sinner repenteth, he will blot out his wickedness,' 2 Chron. xx. 9. What though they be never so enormous? God's thoughts are not as ours, Isa. lv. 8. Conscience may be overcharged with sin. We may play the harlot with many lovers; yet return to me, saith the Lord, Jer. iii. 1. He that bids Peter forgive seventy-seven times, shall not he have plenteous redemption? What proportion is there between the sin of a creature, and the mercy of an infinite Majesty? He frees from all ill, from all punishment. His forgiveness is perfect. Though we be as red as crimson with sin, he will make us white as snow, Isa. i. 18. He removes our sins from his presence as 'far as the east is from the west,' Ps. ciii. 12.

Quest. But some will say, Why corrects he then his children?

Ans. I answer, not from revenging justice, for he is our Father; and what he does, it comes from love, and is mingled with love and moderated with love to our strength, and are turned by love to our good. When he follows us with prosperity, he is our alluring Father; and when he corrects us, he is our correcting, not punishing, Father, Heb. xii. from 3d to the 12th. Yet let not this be sinisterly taken. It is spoken only to the humble heart, that is broken with sin, which is the sixth general observation; there must be first sight of sin, then sense of misery, then confession of sin and begging pardon, or else none is granted. For God bestows pardon so as may be most for his glory and our comfort. What glory can he reap by pardoning those that will sin, 'because grace may abound,' Rom. vi. 1, and so 'will turn the grace of God into wantonness?' Jude 4. And what comfort can we have of the pardon of our sins till we see our sins, and feel what it is to want pardon? Sight of sin

and mercy are inseparable. Sometimes the sense of pardon is delayed, to make us hunger after it; sometimes it follows suddenly after sight of sin, as it did to Matthew and Zaccheus, Mat. xi. 28. But one must go before the other: first, must the wind of the sight of God's anger come breaking and rending the rocky hard hearts that are within us; then comes the soft still voice speaking peace to the humble soul. The reasons may be, first, to set an edge on our prayers for forgiveness, else who would care for it. Secondly, to make us highly to esteem forgiveness of sin. The promises are sweet to the dejected soul, as a pardon is to the condemned person. Thirdly, that God might have the more glory and thanks. When we find the bitterness of sin, as it is Jer. ii. 19, to be sweetened by God's mercy, then 'My soul, praise thou the Lord; and all that is within me, praise his holy name.' He forgives all my sin, and heals all my infirmities, Ps. ciii. 1, 2, 3. And, lastly, because our sins unrepented keep good from us, and us from the fountain of all good, and must be removed before there can be any way for mercy.

This therefore justifies those ministers that in these days of the gospel do enforce the law; and people must not be offended thereat, but suffer their consciences to be laid open, that the word may come close and home to them; and secondly, they must use the means, to come to a sense and feeling of their sin. To which end let us make sin as odious and dangerous in our eyes as we can. It is odious to God. To us it is poison and leprosy though we cherish it, and hate ministers and friends for touching it. It is abomination to God. It thrusts him out of our hearts, and puts in the devil, God's arch enemy. It causes us to prefer base pleasure, fading profits, before the favour and mercy and love of God. Must not this needs be hateful to God? But then how much more intolerable are those sins that bring neither profit nor pleasure, but causes us to thrust out God, even because we will? But this is not all, for as it is abominable to God, so it is dangerous to us; for whence comes judgments? Whence is it that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven? Rom. i. 18. Whence is sickness, disgrace, troubles? All these are the fruits of sin. Nothing makes us miserable but sin. Take a man when he lies a-dying. Ask him what troubles him? Oh! he cries out of sin, of the wrath of God. He feels not sickness, even as the gout is not felt by one that hath a fit of the stone upon him. Let us think of this in time; let us shame the devil, shame ourselves. But is this all? No. Judas saw his sin and confessed, yet was he never the better. He wanted that which should make his repentance perfect. He wanted faith to lay hold on pardon. A poor man is fit for treasure, but unless he lay hold on treasure, he shall never be rich.

Therefore faith and repentance are ever joined in the gospel. Repent and believe the gospel, as was said to the jailor. So Christ saith, 'Come to me,' Mat. xi. 28. Christ came to satisfy for all sin, to cure all diseases, but they must first come to him, and say, 'Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean,' Mat. viii. 2; and to such as these I may say, as they said to the blind man, 'Be of comfort, for Christ calls thee,' Mark x. 49.

'That thou mayest be feared.'

Fear in this place is taken for the spiritual worship of God, arising from a reverential fear mingled with love. 'Fear God and keep his commandments,' Eccles. xii. 13, is the whole duty of man. So that these words being considered with the former, brings this observation to our consideration.

Doct. That God's goodness, forgiveness, grace, and mercy, is a means to stir up his children to all duties; and therefore we are commanded to do all things in fear: to 'work out our salvation with fear,' Philip, ii. 12, eat and drink with fear; and in Jude 12, the wicked are branded with this, 'that they eat without fear.' So as whatever we do, we must do it in fear, showing the reverence of God continually, and jealousy over ourselves, lest we should stop the light of God's countenance from us.

Quest. But it will be said, How is it then said 'that we should serve him without fear,' 1 Cor. xvi. 10, being redeemed from our enemies?

Ans. I answer, There is a twofold fear: one a slavish fear, whereof that place is meant. We should serve him without fear of damnation, of punishment, and of judgment. But the fear that we speak of here is a fear of reverence and love, that stirs us up to worship him.

Quest. But how doth it stir to duty? may some say.

Ans. I answer, first, it stirs up faith in our hearts. Hope of forgiveness will cause us to cast ourselves into their arms whom we have offended. Where no hope of mercy is, there follows nothing but fear, causing us to fly away; even as we see proclamation of pardon to rebels causes them to come in, but the contrary makes them run away. Again, sense of forgiveness works more love. David's murder, Paul's persecution, Peter's denial, caused abundance of love. Where many sins are forgiven, there will be much love, Luke vii. 47; and where much love is, there will be obedience to all God's

commandments, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law,' Rom. xiii. 10. Contrarily, desperation is the ground of all sin. This is the ground of all hate. The devils they hate God. Because they know there is no remedy left for them, therefore they cannot endure the remembrance of him. Contrariwise, as it is Ps. lxxv. 2, 'Unto thee shall all flesh come.' Why? 'For thou hearest prayer.' Again, fear and forgiveness are joined in the new covenant. 'I will put my fear in thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from me,' Jer. xxxii. 40; and Christ, to all his, is both king, priest, and prophet. He comes to all by water as well as blood. He is become righteousness, wisdom, and holiness, 1 Cor. i. 30. Again, a Christian he will, by reason, enforce this on himself, as Paul did, 2 Cor. v. 15. Christ died for us; therefore must we live to him, and not to ourselves.

Use 1. This therefore should cause us to take heed of all thoughts of despair. Let it be enough that we have broken the law; let us not pull a greater sin on us by denying the gospel, the mercies and truths of God. Let us by any means take heed, for Satan will join with guilty consciences, speaking with cursed Cain, 'My sin is greater than can be pardoned,' Gen. iv. 13. No article of our creed is so much opposed by him, as that of the forgiveness of sin by Christ's merits, which is the very life and soul of a church. All the former articles of the creed are perfected in this, and all the following articles are effects hereof.

Use 2. Secondly, This doctrine furnishes an answer to the papists, who lay scandals on the doctrine of free justification by the merits of Christ, without our own works; saying that we nourish thereby carelessness in a Christian life, whenas the Scripture, and the Spirit of God in the hearts of those that are truly regenerate, do reason quite contrary. 'There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared not that we may live as we list, for whom God forgives, he first truly humbles; whom he washes, he gives hearts to keep themselves clean; so as with the burnt child, they dread the fire ever after. No; it is themselves that overthrow good works, while they ground them on false grounds. For either they do them to satisfy God's wrath, which is slavish, or to merit by them, which is a token of a hireling; and most of their works are such, as if God should ask them, 'Who required them at their hands?' Isa. i. 12, they could never be able to answer. They, while they talk of good works, in the mean time overthrow faith and love, which should be the ground of a good work. What can they do more than a Cain or a Judas, or the wickedest man alive.

Secondly, We may hence gather a ground of discerning our estate, whereby we shall know whether God's mercy and forgiveness belong to us or not; for it is impossible, where there is no inward worship of God in the heart, where there is no fear and jealousy of sin, where there is no conscience of swearing, blaspheming, and such abominations, that ever such yet had any true taste of God's mercy and forgiveness. Let them not take comfort by the example of the thief on the cross, that cried for mercy and had it; for there is a time of grace, and there are some sinners, as those that flatter themselves in a course of sin, thinking to repent when they will, against which the wrath of God will smoke, Deut. xxix. 20. Therefore let not such soothe up themselves. Those that have their sins forgiven do fear God. Such fear not God, and therefore their sins are not forgiven. Many shall say in that day, 'Lord, Lord,' to whom Christ will profess, 'he never knew them,' Mat. vii. 23; and therefore let us never assure ourselves of forgiveness, farther than we find in us a hatred of sin. For a man to live in a course of known sin, it stops the current of God's mercy; who will wound the 'hairy scalp of such as despise the patience and long-suffering of God,' Rom. ii. 4. While we have time, therefore, and are young, before lusts settle themselves in us, serve the Lord with fear; deny him not the service due to him. If we do, it is just with God to take us away suddenly, or to deliver us over to an impenetrable hard heart; and when we die, that God should take away from us our senses, or to give over our consciences to such a horror and trembling fear, as shall not suffer us to come so near as to have any hope of mercy, but die in despair. Let us pray, therefore, against a careless heart, and say to him, Lord, thou earnest to redeem and set me free from the works of the devil! Lord, deliver me from the power of sin and of my own corruption. For we may assure ourselves, he that never discerned this hatred of sin in him, never asked pardon from his heart; and he that never asks it shall never have it.

Use. Let us in the next place learn thereby to go the right way, to work assurance of forgiveness: first, learn to see our misery; then, get persuasion that there is a remedy; then, get knowledge thereof; and then beg it. It is a preposterous course that many men take. They will change their ill courses, but without confession or acknowledgment of sin; and therefore they turn indeed, but it is from one sin to another: from being dissolute they will become covetous, and so change to the worse; for they change not from right grounds; not from love to God and hatred of sin, but ever from the love of one reigning sin to another. For all such, and all other, that either find their sin, or think not of it, this Scripture is of excellent use; and we may speak of it as St Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 10, speaks of all the Scripture, 'It is profitable

for doctrine,' teaching us what we are by nature since the fall; wherein we may have remedy of our misery; how and in what manner to attain the remedy. It is profitable for 'reproof' of the doctrine of justification by works; and it is profitable for 'correction' of our lives, teaching us to avoid despair, and yet withal to avoid security. It is profitable for 'comfort' to all those that are dejected by sin, by considering the mercy of God in Christ, which is more and greater than sin in us, if we have faith to lay hold on it; so that we may say with St Augustine, Ego ad mini, unde to damnare poles me, sed non amisisti wide til salrare potes me.

Ver. 5.

I wait for the Lord, yea, my soul waiteth.

These words do show the estate and disposition of the holy man after his prayer. Though he had formerly sense of mercy and pardon, yet he waits for more full and sweet apprehension thereof. In them we may observe, first, though God be exceeding gracious, yet there is matter of waiting, so long as we live here on earth, for he gives not all the fulness of his blessing at once. Though he may give taste of pardon of sin in present, yet not presently deliverance out of danger. 'The light of the righteous shineth more and more unto the perfect day,' Prov. iv. 18. There is no day that is perfected in an instant; and the reasons hereof may be,

Reason 1. First, To force us to search our souls, whether we be fit for blessing; whether we be thoroughly humbled, and have thoroughly repented or not. Thus dealt he with Jonas, and thus with the children of Israel for Achan's cause.

Reason 2. Secondly, It may be a means to stir us up to more earnestness in seeking; to make us like the woman of Canaan, more earnest the more she was repelled.

Reason 3. Thirdly, He gives us occasion of waiting, to show the truth and soundness of his graces in us; otherwise should we have no means to try how the grace in us would serve us in time of need.

Reason 4. Fourthly, Hereby God doth endear those favours that we want, that it may come the more welcome to us, and we be the more thankful for it. Thus God dealt with this holy man; and thus doth he with his church. For while we live here we are always children of hope; not miserable,

because we have a sweet taste of what we hope for, and not perfectly happy, because we want fulness. Before Christ they hoped for his coming in the flesh; since Christ, we look for his 'second coming in glory;' in grace we look for glory; and when our souls are in glory, they look for the redemption of the bodies, and for the day of restoring of all things. 'How long, Lord, how long?' Rev. vi. 10. Else would this life be heaven to us; and we should not desire or pray, 'Lord, let thy kingdom come.'

Use. And for use, This should whet in us our desires and prayers for our heavenly estate; and not make our heaven here on earth, but desire earnestly the full harvest, by considering how excellent the first-fruits of glory in this life are; and with the creature, Rom. viii. 19, 'wait, and expect, and long, and groan for the time of the dissolution of all things and make this a note to discern of our estate; for it is a certain infallible token of a good frame of spirit in us, if we can long for that better life in the fulness, that we have here; that we can desire to be with Christ. Furthermore, note this as a difference between the estates of the wicked and the godly. The wicked must look for worse and worse continually. His best is here, and while he hath this world; but the godly, their worst is here, their best is to come.

The Church's Complaint and Confidence

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thine hands.—Isaiah LXIV. 6-8.

The words are part of a blessed form of prayer prescribed to the church long before they were in captivity. It begins at the 15th verse of the former chapter, 'Look down from heaven; behold from the habitation of thy holiness,' &c. The blessed prophet Isaiah was carried with the wings of prophetic spirit over many years, and sees the time to come, the time of the captivity; and God by his Spirit doth direct them a prayer, and this is part of the form. For God in mercy to his people, as he foresaw before what would become of them, so he vouchsafes them comfort beforehand, and likewise he prescribes a form of prayer beforehand. It is very useful to use forms. The 102d Psalm, it is a form of pouring out the soul to God when any man is in misery, as you see in the preface. But that by the way. These verses are a part of a form prescribed for the pouring forth an afflicted soul; 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness,' &c. The words they are, First, An humble confession of sin.

And first, of the sins of their nature, of their persons themselves, 'We are all as an unclean thing.'

And then, of the sins of actions: 'all our righteousness is as filthy rags.' And then, in the third place, a confession of the sin of non-proficiency, of obduration, and senselessness, that notwithstanding the corrections of God, they were little the better: 'There is none that calleth upon thy name, or that stirs up himself to take hold of thee.'

In the second place, there is an humble complaint of the miserable estate they were in by their sins: 'We all fade as a leaf; our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away: thou hast hid thy face from us, and consumed us, because of our iniquities.' The complaint is set forth in these four clauses.

And then an humble supplication and deprecation to God, in ver. 8, and so forward. 'Now, Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, thou art the potter; we are all the work of thy hands,' &c. These be the parcels of this portion of Scripture.

'But we are all as an unclean thing,' &c.

Here is, first, an humble confession. And first, observe in general what afflictions will do, especially afflictions sanctified. That which all the prophetic sermons could not do, that which all the threatenings could not do, affliction now doth. Now when they were in captivity and base estate, they fall a humbling themselves. So the prodigal, nothing could humble him but afflictions. 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,' Ps. cxxxvii. 1. All the denunciations of judgments before they came to the waters of Babylon could not make them weep. One affliction will do more than twenty sermons. When God teacheth and chastiseth too, when together with teaching there is correction, then it is effectual. And this is the reason of God's course; why, when nothing else will do, he humbles his people with afflictions, because he cannot otherwise teach them.

Affliction withdraws that which is the fuel of sin; for what doth our sinful disposition feed on? Upon pleasures, and vanities, upon the honours of this life, and riches, &c. Now when affliction either takes these things away, or embitters them if we have them, then that which sin carried us to, and that we fed our own base earthly lusts with, being gone, when a man is stripped of these, he begins to know himself what he is, he was drunk before. I deem a man in prosperity little better than drunk. He knows neither God, nor himself, nor the world. He knows it not to be as a vain world. He knows not himself to be vanity, to be an empty creature, except he consist [stand] in God, and make his peace with him. He knows not God to be such a holy God, and such an angry God for sin. But when affliction comes, and withdraws and strips him of those things that made him fierce against God, then he begins to know God, and to tremble at the judgments of God when he begins to smart. He begins to know himself to be a madman, and a fool, and a sot. He did not know himself before in his jollity. And then he knows the world indeed as a vain world. Blessed be that affliction that makes us know a gracious and good God, and the creature to be a vain creature, and ourselves out of the favour of God to be nothing. You see what afflictions will do.

God doth use to break men, as men use to break horses. They ride them over hedge and ditch, and over ploughed lands, uneven grounds, and gall them with the spur and with the bit, and all to make them tractable; and then afterward they ride them gently and meekly, and rather so than otherwise. So God is fain to carry his children over ploughed lands; he is fain to break them in their wickedness, to bring their ways upon their heads; he is fain to gall them, and humble them every kind of way, that they may carry him, that he may bring their spirits under him, that he may lead them in the ways that lead to their own comfort.

Use. Let us never murmur, therefore, at God's hand, but willingly yield at the first. What doth a stubborn horse get, but the spur and stripes? And what doth a man get, that stands out when God comes to humble him by affliction, and intends his good? Nothing but more stripes. To come to the parts.

'We are all as an unclean thing,' &c.

Here, first, you see there is an humble confession. I will not enlarge myself in the point of humiliation, but speak a little, because this is the day of humiliation: the occasion is for humiliation. All this is to bring us low, to humble us, to make us know ourselves. Without humiliation, Christ will never be sweet unto us, and the benefit of health, &c., will never be precious to us. I mean by humiliation, when God humbles us, and we humble ourselves; when we join with God. When God's humbling of us and our humbling of ourselves go together, then mercy is sweet, and favour and protection is sweet, when God pours his judgments on others, and spares us.

Now humiliation, it is either real (or inward), or verbal.

Real humiliation indeed, that is, our humbling ourselves by fasting, especially when it is joined with reformation of our wicked ways, or else it is a mockery of God, as it is in Isa. lviii., 'to hang down the head for a while,' and in the mean time to have a hard heart, to shut up our bowels to our brethren; but that is a real kind of humiliation, when we think ourselves unworthy of the creatures, of meat or drink, of any refreshing, for this humiliation of fasting is a kind of profession, though we speak not so, that we are unworthy of these things. But all is nothing, without inward humiliation of the soul. Verbal humiliation is in words, as we shall see after in confession; and it must come from inward humiliation of spirit.

Use. Therefore, considering it is here the first disposition of God's people, let us labour to work upon ourselves those considerations that may make us humble. I will name a few.

1. First, To bring ourselves to the glass of the law. Examine ourselves how short we have been of every commandment.

2. But especially bring ourselves to the gospel. We hope to be saved by Christ; and have we mourned for our sins 'as one mourneth for his first-born?' Zech. xii. 10. Our sins have wounded Christ. Have we preferred Christ, in our thoughts, above all the things in the world? Have they all been dung to us? Have we had that blessed esteem of the gracious promises of the gospel, and the prerogatives therein set forth, that they have been so precious to us, that we have undervalued all to them, as St Paul did? A base esteem of the gospel is a great sin: 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. ii. 3. Put case we be not enemies to the ministry and to holiness of life, expressed in the gospel, as many cursed creatures are; yet a base esteem and undervaluing in our thoughts is a thing punishable. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Have we walked worthy of the dignity we are called to by the gospel? Have we carried ourselves so in spiritual things, as to rule our base lusts? Have we been careful of private prayer, to offer ourselves to God as priests? Are we not pressed in St Paul's epistles, 'to carry ourselves worthy of our profession?' Eph. iv. 1; and have we done so? Let us bring our carriage, and see how proportionable it is to God's advancing of us in these glorious times of the gospel, and this will bring us on our knees.

We are ashamed of a little unkindness to men. But when we consider how unkind we have been to God, that thought not his dear Son, and heaven and happiness, too much for us; besides other favours, that he protects, and clothes, and feeds us every day, and yet we have not been answerable: these considerations would humble us, proportionable to our carriage to men. Can we be ashamed to offer an unkindness to men, and are we not ashamed, cannot we be abashed with this, that we have carried ourselves so towards God? It comes from atheism and infidelity of heart, that either we believe not these things to be good, or else that we have not our part and portion in them. Could we ever be so dead and dull-hearted else?

3. Again, That we may be humbled, let us call to mind, now in this day of humiliation, our special sins. We may soon know them. Our consciences and our enemies will upbraid us for them, and we are loath to hear of them

above all, either by the ministry or by our friends. We wish, above all, that the preacher would not speak of them, and fret if he do; and our hearts run upon them above all. So let us search our false hearts, which way they run; and now, in the day of our abasement, let us think what would lie heaviest on our conscience, if God should take us now with sickness or sudden death. Let us think with ourselves, What is the sin that would afflict me most? that would stagger me most? that would shake my faith most? whether it be filthiness, or profaneness, or swearing, or injustice; and whether have I made satisfaction or no? Let me examine, if God should strike me with his arrow now, what sin would rob me of my comfort, and make me afraid to yield my soul to God? Now think of it. This is the way to be humbled. You may now bring yourselves to consider of that that at other times you will not give yourselves leisure to do. What are days of fasting for, but to give ourselves leisure, that we may not think of meat, and drink, and business? These days should be days of rest, that we may think of that which concerns our souls. Take the advantage when thou retest from thinking of other business. Think with thine own soul, what will lie heaviest upon thy soul. This is required to humiliation. This real humiliation that is outward, it is a protestation of the inward; and verbal humiliation is but an expression of what we do inwardly.

There are two things wondrous necessary, before the soul can be in the right frame it should be in.

First, The soul must apprehend deeply what distance it hath from God, what alienates it from God, before it can be wise; and it must be estranged from that before ever it can come to couple and join with God. When the soul apprehends what separates it from God, and conceives as it should do of that, then it will be the readier to apprehend God; and then all duties will come off easily. Therefore let us first of all work upon our own souls to be humbled, and by all the helps that can be.

4. And to help it, consider now at this time how uncertain our life is. We know not who may be stricken next. And consider what the dangerous issue is, if we humble not ourselves here before God humble us in our graves. Let us help humiliation by all that may be; for where this is, all will follow easily. A man will go out of himself to God when he is abased in himself, and sees no comfort in heaven or earth but in God; that there is nothing to be stuck to in the world, but all is vanity, and he may be stripped of life and of all these comforts ere long. When a man is abased, faith and obedience will come off easily. What is the reason that Christ is not relished more, and that

many fall off? They were never deeply humbled. According to the depth of humiliation is the growth of holiness of life and the height of faith. All graces rise higher as the soul is more deeply humbled. The more we descend deeply in digging and rending up our hearts, the more the word of God sinks into the 'good ground' that suffers the plough to rend it up and to cut off the weeds. The more deeply we are humbled, the more the fruits of God's word appear in our hearts and lives, the more fruitful is our conversation. All comes indeed upon the truth of our humiliation; and when that is not deep and true, all the rest is shallow and counterfeit. There[fore] we should work it upon our own hearts.

5. And labour to be humble and low in all the powers of our souls; to have humble judgments, to think of ourselves as God thinks of us. God thinks of us as sinners; God and Christ think of us that we are such as must deny all in us before we be fit for heaven. Let us judge of ourselves as he that must be our judge doth and will judge of us ere long. Labour to have low judgments of ourselves; what we are in ourselves, empty of all good, defiled with all ill.

And this will breed poverty of spirit in our judgments. Then let us labour for humility in our affections; to bring ourselves more to God; to stoop to him in fear and reverence; and humility in our obedience and conversation to God and to men every way. Let humility spread itself over all the parts and powers of the soul and body, and over our whole lives. I cannot stand further upon that.

Now, here is verbal humiliation, that is, by confession, expressing our humiliation by our words; as the people of God do here by confession, laying open our sins that God may cover them. What we hide God will never cure; therefore we should take heed that now we are to deal with God, we lay open the bottom of our souls to him; let not the iron be in the wound. You know a chirurgeon can heal nothing if the iron or poisoned arrow stick there. If there be corruption in the stomach, it must up. If it be ill-gotten goods, it will not digest, up it must all to God. For men, except there be scruples that a man cannot free his conscience, there is no necessity, though great conveniency; but between God and thy soul open all by confession, and give not over till thou hast brought pardon to thy heart of that sin thou hast confessed. Every slight confession is not enough, but it must be a resolved, downright confession, without guile of spirit, as it is in Ps. xxxii. 4. This is the course that David takes there. Until he dealt roundly with his soul, without

guile, 'his moisture was as the drought of summer.' He was in some dangerous disease that could not be cured. And do we look to be preserved from falling into sickness? or if we be sick, to be cured? We must begin the cure in our souls; lay open the wound to God: 'I said, I will confess my sin, and thou forgavest me.' He begins with confession. So all persons that either fear or are under any judgment, let them begin with laying open their souls to God. When the soul is healed, he will heal the body presently after, for he lays sickness upon the body for the soul; and when the wound is healed, the plaster will fall off of itself. Therefore let us lay open our sins by confession, and shame our souls all that we can.

This is the way to give glory to God. Let us join both together, our own ease and glory to God. When we have laid open our souls to God, and laid as much against ourselves as the devil could do that way—for let us think what the devil would lay to our charge at the hour of death and the day of judgment, he would lay hard to our charge this and that—let us accuse ourselves as he would, and as he will ere long. The more we accuse and judge ourselves, and set up a tribunal in our hearts, certainly there will follow an incredible ease. Jonah was cast into the sea, and there was ease in the ship; Achan was stoned, and the plague was stayed. Out with Jonah, out with Achan, and there will follow ease and quiet in the soul presently; conscience will receive wonderful ease. It must needs be so, for when God is honoured conscience is purified. God is honoured by confession of sin every way. It honours his omniscience; that he is all-seeing, that he sees our sins and searcheth the hearts. Our secrets are not hid from him. It honours his power. What makes us confess our sins, but that we are afraid of his power, lest he should execute it? And what makes us confess our sins, but that we know there is 'mercy with him that he may be feared,' Ps. cxxx. 4, and that there is pardon for sin? We would not confess our sins else. With men it is confess and have execution, but with God confess and have mercy. It is his own protestation. We should never lay open our sins but for mercy. So it honours God; and when he is honoured, he honours the soul with inward peace and tranquillity. We can never have peace in our souls till we have dealt roundly with our sins, and favour them not a whit; till we have ripened our confession to be a thorough confession. What is the difference between a Christian and another man? Another person slubbers over his sins; God is merciful, &c.; and he thinks if he come to the congregation, and follow the minister, it will serve the turn. But a Christian knows that religion is another manner of matter, another kind of work than so. He must deal thoroughly and seriously, and lay open his sin as the chief enemy in the world, and

labour to raise all the hatred he can against it, and make it the object of his bitter displeasure, as being that that hath done him more hurt than all the world besides; and so he confesseth it with all the aggravations of hatred and envy that he can.

But to come more particularly to the confession here spoken of: 'We all are as an unclean thing,' &c.

'We all.'

We see here holy men themselves confess their sins, and rank themselves among sinners in their confessions. So we learn hence this,

That we in our confessions (in our fastings especially) ought to rank ourselves among the rest of sinners, and not to exempt ourselves from other sinners. Perhaps we are not guilty of some sins that they have been guilty of. God hath been merciful to us and kept us in obedience in some things. But, alas! there is none of us all but we have had a hand in the sins of the times. The best of all conditions are guilty of them. Therefore we have cause to rank ourselves among others, as he saith here, 'We are all as an unclean thing;' and as Daniel, he makes a confession of the sins of all, 'we are all of us guilty.'

How are we all guilty?

(1.) We are all guilty in this respect, we receive some taint and soil from the times we live in. Either our zeal is weakened; we do not grieve so much for the sins of the times; and who is not guilty in this respect? We do not grieve and lament as we should; as St Paul tells the Corinthians, they should have been sorry and humbled, 1 Cor. v. 6. They were guilty of the sin of the incestuous person, because they were not humbled for it. We are thus far guilty at least, the best of us, that we do not sorrow for the common sins. Alas! how many sins are there that everybody may see in the times in all ranks! In pastors, what unfaithfulness, and in governors and in places of justice; what crying of the poor and men oppressed; and in all ranks of people we see a general security; we see filthiness and hear oaths, 'for which the land mourns,' as Jeremiah saith, Jer. xxiii. 10. These and such like sins provoke God and solicit the vengeance of God; and will have no nay till they have pulled down vengeance. Who hath been so much humbled for these sins as he ought? Perhaps ourselves are not personally guilty of them. But are they not our sins, so far as we are not abased for them, and oppose them,

and repress them as we should in our places and standings, whether we be ministers or magistrates? Thus far we are guilty all. Therefore the prophet might well say, 'We all are as an unclean thing,' &c.

(2.) Then again, there is great sympathy in the hearts of good men. They are full of pity and compassion; and therefore they join themselves with others, partly knowing that they are guilty in some degree with others, and partly because they are members of the same body politic and ecclesiastical. They live in the same church and commonwealth. Therefore all join their confession together. 'We all are as an unclean thing,' &c.

Use. Let us make this use of it, every one of us to be humbled. Do not every one of us bring sticks to the common fire? Do we not add something to the common judgment? If there be two malefactors that have committed a trespass, one of them is taken and used in his kind; he is executed. Will it not grieve the other? He will think, was it not my case? I was a wretched sinner as well as he. If there be divers traitors, and the king is merciful to one, and the other he executes, will it not grieve him that is spared, if he have any bowels of good nature, besides goodness in other kinds? Will he not think, it was my own case? There was no difference between me and them, only the mercy of the king? So the best of us may think, have I not a corrupt nature, and for the sins of the times, am not I soiled with them? Others have been stricken; might not the same arrow have stricken me? Certainly this consideration, that we bring something to the public sins, it will make us humbled for the public, as the church here confesseth, 'We are all as an unclean thing,' &c.

To come to the particulars of the confession.

'We are all as an unclean thing.'

Here is a confession of their persons. Their persons were tainted. We are all a tainted seed and generation in nature. What the wickedest is wholly, the best are in part. Therefore it is no error that we should say so and so of ourselves in our confessions; as Saint Paul saith of himself, 'I am sold under sin,' Rom. vii. 14. One would wonder that he should confess so. Alas! blessed man, he felt that in part that others in the state of nature are wholly. So we are all filthy. The best, as far as they are not renewed, are as other men are.

'Unclean.'

It is a comparison taken from the leprosy, or some other contagious disease. Those that were tainted of them were separated from the congregation seven days, or some set time. So it is with sin, especially the sins of this people. They had sinned grievously, and were severed from their land; not seven days, but seventy years, the leprosy and filthiness of their sins and lives was such.

Indeed, sin, especially the sin of nature, it is a leprosy, contagious, pestilential; and as a leprosy it spreads over all the parts and powers of body and soul. Take a man that is not changed; he hath a leprous eye, full of adultery; he hath a leprous, uncircumcised ear. Ask him how he judgeth of discourses and sermons. He relisheth nothing but that which is frothy and vain. Plain, substantial, solid discourses, either in hearing or reading, will not down with him. He hath a leprous judgment. His eyes, and ears, and tongue are defiled and corrupt. He is vile and abominable in his speeches. He is uncircumcised in all. All are unclean. All his powers are defiled by nature.

All the washings in the law did signify this, the corruption and defilement of our natures, which needs another washing which they typified, a washing by the blood and Spirit of Christ. 'Christ came by water and blood,' 1 John v. 6, both in justification and sanctification. 'There is a fountain opened for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in,' Zech. xiii. 1. All those washings shewed a defilement spiritually, that needed a spiritual washing. This sin is a leprous, contagious sin; therefore by nature we may all cry as the leper, 'Unclean, unclean.' The best of us may take up that complaint as far as we are not renewed. A leprous man defiled the things that he touched. So it is with sin, till it be forgiven; we defile everything. A proud man, especially when he is set out in his bravery, he thinks himself a jolly man, a brave creature. Alas! he is a filthy creature; not only in himself, but in everything he puts his hand unto. He taints and defiles everything, even civil actions. He sins in eating and drinking; not that they in the substance of them are sins, but he stains everything; for he forgets God in them; he forgets himself exceedingly; and he returns not thanks to God. So in moral, civil actions, much more in religious. He defiles himself in everything. He is defiled to all things, and all things are defiled to him. This is our state by nature, 'We are all as an unclean thing.'

Use. This should enforce a necessity of cleansing ourselves in the blood of Christ; that is, in the death of Christ, who hath satisfied the justice of God. Our natures are so foul in regard of the guilt and stain, that the blood

of God-man, that is, the satisfactory [satisfaction-giving] death of God-man, was necessary to breed reconciliation and atonement between God and us. 'And the blood of Christ, which by the eternal Spirit offered himself, must purge our consciences,' &c., Heb. ix. 14. Our consciences will not otherwise be pacified and cleansed in regard of guilt, but will clamour and cry still, much less will God be appeased. Neither God nor conscience will be pacified, but by the blood of him who by the eternal Spirit offered up himself; and then it will in regard of the guilt and stain, then God and conscience will both be appeased. Therefore in Zech. xiii. 1, 'There is a fountain opened for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in.' And 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin,' 1 John i. 7. Blood is of a defiling nature; but the blood of Christ cleanseth because it is a satisfactory blood. He died, and was a sacrifice as a public person for us all.

Then again, considering that we are all defiled, besides this cleansing from the guilt of sin, let us get our natures cleansed by the Spirit of Christ more and more. We are all defiled.

Use. And take heed of those that are defiled; take heed of sinners. Who would willingly lie with a leprous person? Yet notwithstanding, for matter of marriage and intimate society there is a little conscience made; men converse with leprous company, they join in the most intimate society with those that are leprous in their judgments. The life of nature we know, and are careful to avoid what may impair it; but it is a sign we have not the life of grace begun in us, because we do not value it. If we had, we would be more careful to preserve it, and to take heed of contagious company. Who would go to the pest-house, or to one that hath 'Lord, have mercy upon us' on the door? None but a madman. He might do so. And surely those that join with swearers and drunkards and filthy persons, and go to filthy places and houses (as many do, the more shame for them), they think they have no souls nor no account to make, they go to these places and infect themselves. It is a sign they have no life of grace; all companies are alike to them. Is this strength of grace? No. They have no life of grace, they have nothing to lose; for if they had the life of grace, they would preserve it better.

Sin is a filthy thing, more filthy than the leprosy, nay, than the plague itself; for the plague or leprosy makes but the body loathsome, but the sin that we cherish and are loath to hear of makes the soul loathsome. The one makes unfit for the company of men; but the other, sin and corruption and lusts, unfit us for the kingdom of God, for heaven, for life or death.

Therefore it is worse. The leprosy of the body makes a man not a whit odious to God; but the leprosy of the soul makes us hateful to him. We may have more intimate communion with God in the plague than out of the plague, because God supplies the want of outward comforts; but in sin we can have no comfortable communion and society with God. Therefore this plague of the soul is many ways worse than the pestilence. But we want faith. God hath not opened our eyes to see that that we shall see and know ere long, and it is happy if we consider it in time.

To conclude this point concerning the corruption of nature. Take David's course, Ps. li. 1, seq. When sinful actions come from us, or unsavoury words, or beastly thoughts, or unchaste and noisome desires that grieve the Spirit of God, let us go to the fountain. Alas! my nature is leprous as far as it is not purged. 'I was conceived in sin, my mother brought me forth in iniquity.' The more we take occasion every day to see and observe the corruption of our nature, the less it is, and we cannot better take occasion than upon every actual sin to run to the fountain, the filthy puddle from whence all comes, and be more humble for that than for particular sins. It is a mistake in men; they are ashamed of an action of injustice, &c., but they should go to their nature and think I have a false, unclean nature, whereby I am ready to commit a thousand such if God should let me alone. I have the spawn of all sin as far as the Spirit hath not subdued it. It is a defect of judgment to be more humbled for particular sins. Nature is more tainted than any action. That sowing, breeding sin, as the apostle saith, it is worse than the action, it breeds the rest. So much for that. They confess here, 'We are all as an unclean thing 'in ourselves.

But what comes from us?

That that aggravates to the utmost a sinful state.

'All our righteousness is as filthy rags.'

He doth not say we have filthy actions, but our best actions are stained; and not one, but all. Mark how strong the place is, 'we all,' the people of God. He includes all, as Daniel saith, 'I confess my sins, and the sins of my people.' And there is no man in the church but he might have this confession in his mouth, 'we,' the people of God, and 'all we in all our actions, 'all our righteousness,' &c. So all the actions of all the righteous, the best actions of the best men, and all the best actions of the best men are defiled and stained. It is as great an aggravation as may be.

Some would have it to intend the legal righteousness, yet notwithstanding it is true of all. And when we now humble ourselves, it is good to think of all. So we may say, 'All our righteousness.' Whatsoever comes from us it is stained and defiled. As for their legal performances, there is no question of them; for, alas! they trusted too much to them. In Isaiah i. and Isaiah last, they thought God was beholding to them for them: 'Away with them, away with your new moons,' &c. They were abominable to God as 'the cutting off a dog's neck,' as it is Isaiah the last, Isa Ixvi. 3. So all their righteousness, their ceremonial performances, were abominable.

But I say we may raise it higher. It is not only true of them, but in greater matters, in our best moral performances, they are all as tainted rags.

Obj. How can this be? It is strange it should be so. The papists cry out here that we discourage men from good works. If all our righteousness be as filthy rags, why should we perform good works?

Ans. Put case a man be sick, all the meat he eats it strengthens his sickness, shall he therefore not eat at all? Yes. He must eat somewhat. There is nature in him to strengthen as well as his disease. Thy best performances are stained; wilt thou do none therefore? Yes. Though they be stained, yet there is some goodness in them. Thou mayest honour God, and do good to others. Besides the ill there is good. There is gold in the ore. There is some good in every good action. Nay, there is so much good as that God pardons the ill, and accepts the good. So though our good actions be ill, yet for their kind, and matter, and stuff, they are good, they are commanded of God. For their original and spring they are wrought by the Spirit of God; for the person, the workman, it is one in the state of grace; and for acceptance God rewards them. But it is another thing when we come before God to humble ourselves. Then we must see what stains and sins are in them. There is no good action so good, but there are wants and weaknesses, and stains and blemishes in it as it comes from us. The Spirit of God indeed is effectual to stir us up to good actions; but we hinder the work of the Holy Ghost, and do not do them so thoroughly as we should. Therefore, besides our wants and weaknesses, there is a tainture of them. Either we have false aims, they are not so direct, or our resolutions are not so strong. False aims creep in for a while, though we do not allow them; and then there are some coolers of our devotion. Our love is cold, our hatred of sin is not so strong, our prayers are not so fervent, our actions are not so carried without interruption, but are hindered with many by-thoughts. Who cannot complain of these things?

Who is not brought upon his knees for the weakness of his best actions? Nay, I say more, a Christian is more humbled for the imperfections and stains of his best actions, than a civil [merely moral] carnal person is for his outward enormities; for he turns over all his outward delinquencies, and makes the matter but a trick of youth; when a poor Christian is abased for his dulness, and deadness, and coldness, for false aims that creep into his actions, for interruptions in his duties, that his thoughts will not suffer him to serve God with that intention [intentness] that he would, but puts him off with motions and suggestions and temptations in his best performances; this abaseth him more than outward gross sins doth a carnal person. When we deal with God, 'our righteousness it is as menstruous cloths,' Isa. xxx. 22.

Know this for a ground, that there is a double principle in a Christian in all things that he doth. There is flesh and spirit; and these two issue out in whatsoever comes from him. In his good words, there is flesh as well as spirit; in his thoughts and desires; in his prayer, his prayer itself stands in contraries. So everything that comes from him it is tainted with that that is contrary. The flesh opposeth and hinders the work of the Spirit, and so it stains our good works. Therefore contraries are true of a Christian, which seem strange to another man. A Christian at the same time is deformed and well-favoured. 'He is black and comely.' I am black but yet well-favoured,' saith the spouse, Cant. i. 5; black in regard of sin, but well-favoured in regard of the Spirit of God and the acceptance of Christ. He is a saint and a sinner: a sinner in respect that sin hath spread over all parts, and a saint in respect of Christ's acceptance. 'My love and my dove.' Christ makes love to his church as if she had no defilement; but he looks on her better part; he looks on her as she is in his love, and as he means to bring her after. But the church looking upon herself as she is in herself, she is much abased. The ground of it is the imperfection of sanctification in this world. The best of our works are 'as menstruous cloths.' When we think of the corruption of the best things as they come from us, when we come to humble ourselves before God, we must down with proud styles and pharisaical thoughts, although there be somewhat that is good. Yet let us think of all the ill that may abase us.

There is a season for every thing, when we are tempted to be overcome by Satan. Then think of the good, as Job when he was tempted. 'I have done this and this; you cannot take away mine innocency,' Job xxxiii. 9. In false temptations from the world and Satan, then stand upon our innocency. But when we humble ourselves before God— 'Alas! I am dust and ashes,' I

abhor myself,' as Job and Abraham said, Gen. xviii. 27, Job xiii. 6—lay all proud apprehensions of ourselves aside; and all good works, especially in one kind, in matter of justification, 'all is dung in comparison of Christ,' Philip, iii. 8. All must be sold for the pearl, the righteousness of Christ. There is no reckoning must be had of good works by way of merit in justification and our title to heaven. What gives us title to heaven and frees us from hell? The death of Christ, the obedience and satisfaction of Christ. God by it hath redeemed us perfectly without anything in ourselves, and accepts us to life everlasting only by the righteousness of Christ. Therefore it is called God's righteousness, because it was done by Christ, it was wrought by God. Our righteousness is as 'a menstruous cloth.' It is spotted and stained and defiled. It will not do the deed. It will not satisfy conscience, much less the exact piercing judgment of God. That is the righteousness that must stay our souls in life and death, and we must oppose it to all temptations, as a satisfying thing that will set down conscience to be quiet. It must be righteousness of God-man; nothing else will do it. 'All our righteousness is as filthy rags.' That is the confession of their sinful actions.

The next thing he confesseth is senselessness. 'There is none that calls upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' There be other words between concerning the complaint of their miserable estate; but I will handle them that concern their sins first.

'There is none that calls upon thy name.'

In a word, he means that none worshipped him; because prayer is put for the whole worship of God, as indeed it may well be put for the whole, for it exerciseth all the graces of the Spirit. What one grace is not set on work in prayer? It is put for all the inward worship of God. If it be faith, prayer is the flame of faith. When there is faith in the heart there will be prayer in the mouth. The knowledge of God: prayer is grounded upon a promise. So it comes from that part of spiritual worship. Hope: hope makes a man pray. No man would pour out his supplications but to him that he hath hope in. And for love: God's love and mercy draws us into his presence; and joy and delight in the presence of God draws us to pray. We give God the honour of all his attributes in prayer; of his truth, of his goodness, of his mercy, of his presence everywhere, &c. So it sets all graces on work, and gives God the honour of all. It is the worship of God every way; for though it be an outward verbal worship of itself, yet it expresseth the worship of God inward. It gives God the honour of all.

Therefore, those that pray not, what kind of persons are they? Wretched persons. The sickness is now among us. If a man should ask now, What family is likeliest to have the vengeance of God on it?—though I speak not to censure those that have it, but I speak in God’s ordinary course— surely those that do not exercise the duty of prayer. ‘Pour out thy wrath upon those that call not upon thy name,’ Ps. Ixxix. 6. Those families that call not upon God humbly morning and evening, or that person that doth not morning and evening reverently call upon God, they are fit objects for the vengeance of God, for the plague or the like. ‘Pour out thy wrath upon the families and persons that call not upon thy name,’ insinuating that the Lord will spare us if we do call upon his name and humble ourselves. If thou wilt needs pour out thy vengeance, let it be on them that have not grace humbly to call upon thy name. Let us make conscience of this duty, except we will prove atheists, and lie open to all the vengeance of God.

‘There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.’

He represents God to us as a great person, that would bestow some benefits, and is ready to turn away himself; yet none lays hold of him or desires him to stay. So, saith he, there is none that lays hold on God, to keep him that he should not go away. Therefore, when he saith, ‘None calls upon thy name, or stirs up himself to take hold of thee,’ he means there are none that pray earnestly. Incense was to be burnt, or else it cast no sweet smell. Our prayers must have fire and zeal in them. Our prayers must be cries that must pierce heaven. ‘Out of the deep have I cried unto thee, Lord,’ Ps. cxxx. 1. We must stir up ourselves; we must waken ourselves to waken God. Indeed, before we can waken God we must waken ourselves.

‘There is none stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.’

Insinuating that if we would lay hold of God he will be stayed. To speak a little more particularly of this. God is so gracious that he will be stayed even by prayer. The way to stay God in his judgments, and to lay hold of him and keep him among us, it is prayer. Let us take notice now of the hand of God upon us; what is the means to stop his hand, that he come not among us with his public judgments? It is prayer. The way to stop God, and the angel that hath his sword now drawn over our heads, it is prayer. God so condescends that he will be stopped by prayer; as we see in Exod. xxxii. 10. He saith to Moses, ‘Let me alone.’ Moses prayed, and alleged arguments to God that he should not confound his people. ‘Let me alone,’ saith he, insinuating that prayer binds God’s hands. So powerful is prayer, that it binds

the Almighty. It makes the Omnipotent in some sort impotent. He cannot do that he would, he cannot execute his wrath; prayer binds him. When a company of Christians lay hold on him by prayer, he cannot do that he threateneth. The only way to lay hold of God is by prayer. In Ezek. xiii. 5, there is a complaint that 'none stood in the gap,' insinuating that if any had stood in the gap when the vengeance of God was coming abroad, they might have prevented the wrath. The way to stand in the gap and to keep God is to pray, and to pray heartily.

Now that God may be held by our prayers, they must be strong prayers. Every prayer will not hold God. They must be strong prayers that must bind such a Sampson that hath his strength. Therefore there must be a stirring up of ourselves. He saith here, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' So it is the duty of Christians to stir up themselves in these times.

Quest. How shall we stir up ourselves?

Ans. 1. First, By considering the danger we are in. Danger felt or feared, it will make a man lay hold. When a child feels the smart of the rod, he lays hold upon his father or his mother's hand. Strike no more! When the children of God feel the smart of his judgments, then they cry, 'Oh no more!' The cry of the child prevails with the mother, though it cannot speak oftentimes. So when in the sense of sin and misery we cry to God, we move his bowels with crying. There is no question but the serious apprehension of danger felt doth awaken the soul and stir it up. It is so also in danger feared. A danger feared, with belief, will work as if it were present; for a man that hath a spirit of faith to see that unless God be appeased with good courses, he will punish, as surely as if the judgment were upon him. Faith makes things present, both good and ill; and it makes a man sensible of things that are not yet upon him. This is the difference between a Christian and another man. Another man 'puts the evil day far off from him but a believing Christian, by a spirit of faith, sees God, except he be turned away by hearty and humble repentance, ready to seize upon him; and so he walks humbly in all his courses. So that danger felt or feared by a spirit of faith awakens and stirs up the soul to lay hold on God.

Therefore in spiritual dangers we should especially waken our souls to see in what need we stand of Christ and the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, that we may waken him and give him no rest till we find peace in our consciences.

2. Then again, that that we may stir up ourselves withal, is meditation of the necessity and excellency of grace, and of the good things we beg. The serious consideration of that will make us stir up ourselves to lay hold on God, and give him no rest till we have it. When a man thinks the 'loving-kindness of God is better than life,' Ps. Ixiii. 3, and if I have not that, my life is nothing to me. It is not only better than corn and wine and oil, but than life itself. Pardon of sin, and a heart to do good, is better than life itself, than anything in the world. If one should offer such a man this, a heart patiently to bear ill, and large to do good, and strength against temptations, he would rather have this gracious disposition than anything in the world; he had rather have the pardon of sin with the sense of God's favour than anything in the world. This will stir up a man, as we see in David, Ps. li. 1, seq., 'Mercy, mercy;' it binds God and lays hold on him, together with pardoning mercy, to have a heart enlarged with spiritual joy. There is nothing spiritual, but it is so excellent, that if we had the eyes of our spirits awakened to see them, we would bind God and lay hold of him. He should not go further till he had shined on us.

3. Therefore let us offer violence to God this way; never give him rest till we obtain. You see when the two disciples were going to Emmaus, Christ made as though he would have gone further, but they 'compelled' him, Luke xxiv. 29. Now there is a semblance as if God threatened war, and would take away the gospel. There are dangers toward. When God makes such a semblance, let us lay hold on him; let him go no further. Lord, night approacheth and affliction approacheth. Lord, stay; thou shalt go no further. Let us stop God with importunity. The consideration of danger, and the necessity and excellency of the things we beg, will make us lay hold on God.

There is an hypocrisy among men, among a company of formalists, that are the bane of the times, that God will spue out. They are as ill as a profane person in his nostrils. They think that all devotion is in prostrating themselves, which is good, and more than profane men will do, and yield a dead sacrifice to God. They will come and hear, and yield the outward act in outward humiliation. Is this to rouse thyself? Outward things are never current but when they express outwardly the inward truth. Therefore take another course, man; God cares not for the dead, empty carcase thou bringest him. Work upon thine own heart by meditation of the danger thou art in, and of the excellency of the things thou art to beg, and meditate of the majesty of God whom thou appearest before, of his goodness and truth, &c. Affect thy heart deeply with these apprehensions; let these serious thoughts

draw outward expressions of humiliation. And then it is excellent when the outward expression follows the inward impression; when there is somewhat inward that shews itself outward; when we stir up ourselves, and not to think that all devotion consists in a comely, outward carriage—which is commendable of itself—but because men usually rest in it, it is prejudicial to their soul's good. We must offer a reasonable sacrifice to God; we must love him in our hearts; we must work upon our hearts and carry ourselves so in our inward man, as that we may stir up our whole man and awaken our souls: 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name,' Ps. ciii. 1. We should stir up ourselves by speaking to our own souls, that we may waken and take hold of God.

4. This again will help it, A man should never come to pray, but he should have an answer before he hath done, either at that time or another. Never give over till thou hast an answer. This will make us stir up ourselves indeed. How do you know a prayer from a formal lip-labour? A man that prays conscionably [conscientiously] marks what he doth, and expects a return, as a man that soweth his seed. He that doth a thing with hope of issue will do it throughly. Therefore never pray to perform an empty duty to God; but mark what you pray for, if it be forgiveness of sins, or for grace, or protection, &c., and do it with that earnestness that you may hope for an issue answerable; and this going about it will make us do it to purpose. Do we think to serve God with the deed done? God hath appointed prayer for our good, and to convey blessings to us. Let us pray so as we may expect a blessing by it. Now that prayer that expects a blessing to be conveyed, it will be a prayer to purpose. It will make a man stir up himself.

'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.'

The complaint of this holy man of God may be taken up at this time of many of us now. How few are those that rouse and stir up themselves, but put off God with an empty compliment! Nay, in these times of danger, have ye not a company of idle persons that will not vouchsafe to hear the word, nor to come and humble themselves, but walk and talk offensively, as if they would dare God; or if they come here, they come not with a resolution to hear the issue of their prayers, to rouse up themselves 'to lay hold on God.' Because, as there is a great deal of atheism in regard of God, so there is much dead flesh in regard of men. Who is so pitiful of our brethren round about as he ought? We had need to stir up ourselves. The danger is present. We are beset round about, yet who is stirred up to earnest prayer? We want bowels

of compassion. Those that have hearts compassionate, it is a sign that God intends good to them. But of the most we may take up this complaint, we are dead-hearted in regard of our sins against God, and in regard of the contagion among us. A man may see it by men's discourses. There is inquiry how the sickness spreads? how many die? But men do not labour with God to make their accounts even with him; nor we are not compassionate to men: for that would be a means to stir and to rouse us up 'to lay hold of God,' to stay his hand out of love and pity and compassion to our brethren which are our flesh, though it should never seize on us. I say, I fear this complaint is too justly on many of us. I beseech you, let us labour to amend it as we tender [care for] our own salvation—perhaps that we do not regard so much, we shall ere long, but then—as we tender the health of our bodies, which we prefer before our souls, let us humble ourselves more than ordinary now.

Some devils are not driven out but by prayer and fasting, Mat. xvii. 21. So some judgments, they will not away without prayer and fasting; not only public, but private fasting and prayer. Sometimes there must be more than ordinary humiliation for some sins; for some kind of temptations there must be prayer and fasting; for some maladies prayer and fasting, and more than ordinary stirring and rousing up of ourselves to lay hold upon God. God will not be held with ordinary humiliation. That will not do it; but there must be a resolution against, and a hatred of all sin, and to please God in all things. We must do it with extraordinary humiliation now, because the judgment is extraordinary. There is ordinary humiliation and extraordinary: as there are ordinary feasts and extra-ordinary, so there is ordinary humiliation for daily trespasses; but in extra-ordinary judgments, extraordinary fasting and humiliation. As there is ordinary washing daily, but there is washing and scouring at good times. God calls for extraordinary humiliation now; not only prayers, but stirring and rousing up of ourselves. We should apprehend the danger as seizing on ourselves. This night it may seize upon us, for aught we know. It should affect us and make us stir up ourselves. This is the way to hold God by prayer; and if we hold him, he will hold the destroying angel. He hath all creatures at his command. Thus you see how we should confess the sins of our persons, the sins of our good actions, our want of calling upon God. 'There is none that calls upon thy name, that stirs up himself to take hold of thee.' Thus far proceed the branches of their sinful disposition in those times.

Now he complains likewise of the judgments of God.

‘We all fade as a leaf; our iniquities, as the wind, have taken us away. Thou hast hid thy face, and we are consumed because of our iniquities.’

The complaint hath these four branches; a little of each.

‘We all fade as a leaf.’

Wicked men are ‘as leaves;’ and worse, they are ‘as chaff.’ Godly men, because they have a consistence, and are rooted in Christ, and set in a good soil, they are ‘trees of righteousness.’ But godly men in the state of their nature, and in regard of this life, they are as leaves. Wicked men are as leaves every way, and as ‘chaff which the wind bloweth away,’ as we shall see afterwards.

‘We all fade as a leaf.’

1. He means, first, in regard of ceremonial performances that were without vigour and spirit of true devotion. There was no spirit in their legal performances. They were dead empty things. Therefore when judgment came they were as leaves. So an idle careless hearer, when judgment comes, all is as leaves. When conscience nips him, as his atheistical heart will do ere long, then he is as a leaf, all fades away. The Jews, when they were in trouble, all their legal performances faded, they were all as a leaf.

2. So it is true in regard of mortality, the vanity of health and strength. We all as a leaf fade away when God’s judgments come to nip us. Men are as leaves; as the leaves now in autumn fall, and there is a new generation in the spring; and then they fall away, and a new generation comes again; so it is with men: some are blown off, and some come on again. ‘We all fade as a leaf.’ Not to be large in the point, at this time we are all as leaves. In this city now, there is a kind of wind that nips a world of men, many hundreds in the head. It is an autumn wind that nips the leaves. Our autumn wind with us is before the time—a kind of autumn wind in the spring, in summer, that nips the leaves and takes away the vigour of health.

3. And so, as I said, for all idle performances, that have not a foundation in substantial piety, they are all as leaves. When trouble of conscience comes, they are as Adam’s fig-leaves. When God comes to search and examine, they all fall off, both in respect of our performances and in respect of our lives. We are all as leaves when God comes in judgment. This is one part of the complaint. ‘We are all as leaves.’ The like we have of Moses, the man of God,

Ps. xc. 6. When God blows upon us with the wind of his displeasure, we fall off as leaves.

Then another expression is,

‘Our iniquities, as the wind, have taken us away.’

As chaff, or things that have no solidity in them, are blown away with a puff of wind, so it is with a man if he be not a Christian, set into and gathered unto Christ. By the fall we all fell from God, and were scattered from him. Sin blew the angels out of heaven. It blew Adam out of paradise; and now Christ, the ‘second Adam,’ gathers us to him again by his word and Spirit, and so we have a solid and eternal being in him. But out of Christ, our iniquities, as a wind, and God’s judgments, blow us all away first or last. Wicked men settle on their dregs a great while, but when God’s judgment comes, it blows them in this world to this part and that part oftentimes, when it pleaseth him to exercise his outward judgments. But if he do not blow them away here, he will give them a blast that shall send them to hell, their centre. Out of Christ there is no solidity, no consistence or being for any man. Therefore, when God’s judgment comes, it blows them away in this world, and at the hour of death sends them to hell. This is the state of all. ‘Our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.’ He means here, they were blown out of Jewry to Babylon. It was a strong blast that blew them out of their own country.

May not we say, ‘Our iniquities have blown us away?’ What hath blown us from our callings and employments? Is it not the pestilence? And what brings that? Is it not our iniquities? So that we may all complain of this, ‘Our iniquities have blown us away.’

We see here he lays the blame upon their iniquities. Did not the Babylonians carry them away? Alas! they were but God’s instruments. God was displeased by their sins; his wrath blew them away. So you may see here the child of God in all judgments looks to his sins. He justifies God. He murmurs not, and says this and that. No. But, it was my sins: ‘We have sinned against the Lord,’ Lam. v. 16; Micah vii. 9, ‘I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him;’ and Lam. iii. 39, ‘Man suffers for his sins;’ and every one of us may say, ‘It is our iniquities have taken us away.’ A gracious heart justifies God and condemns itself. The children of God may complain sometimes of God’s hand, but they will never censure God’s hand. They justify God always, though they may complain of the bitterness of his

hand. Here they complain of the bitterness of the judgment. They were blown into another country, into captivity. They do not complain of God. God will have us complain; but as he will have us complain, so we must justify him and condemn ourselves; just are thy judgments.

An hypocrite thinks God is beholding to him for his outward performances, and when judgments befall him, he frets and censures God. Either he thinks there is no God, or he frets and fumes against God: he is discontented. But a Christian justifies God, and condemns himself. 'Our iniquities have blown us away.' Our sins keep good things from us.

Use. Therefore, let us now lay the blame where it is. Search out our sins, personal and particular, and complain of them. They have a hand in this plague. God is no tyrant. He delights not to confound his creatures; but sin makes him out of love with his creatures, the workmanship of his own hands. It is our sins. Therefore, let us lament the sins of the times. So far we may without hypocrisy, and ought to take to heart, and mourn for the sins of the times that we hear by others and see ourselves, and mourn for our own hearts that we cannot mourn. We must mourn for the sins of the times, as Daniel and Nehemiah, and all the blessed men of God have done. It is not the plague that hurts us. That is but God's messenger. Sin doth us more harm than all the devils in hell and all the plagues in the world. It is not outward evils we need to fear. Let us fear sin, and lay hold on God. He is the Lord of hosts. He hath all the creatures at his command. Let us get sin away, that doth all the mischief. It is that that makes bate between God and us, and then God makes a controversy between us and the creatures. It is our sins.

And that is the reason of the necessity of humiliation for our sins, because sin breeds a separation between God and us, and between the creatures and us. When God is offended, the creatures are infected. Let us see our sins; by them we infect the air: by our vain speeches, and oaths, and our filthiness. Our sins infect the air, and that breeds infection in our bodies. Our sins cry. They have a voice to cry to God, if our prayers do not outcry them. Therefore, let us cry to God to hear the cry of our prayers, and not of our sins. How many voices have crying sins! There is the voice of the people oppressed, the voice of filthiness, &c. Sins clamour in God's ears. They clamour for wages due, 'and the wages of sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23. Sin cries, though it says nothing in words. It cries in God's ears, and it will not rest till he hath poured out his vengeance. The filthiness and oaths, and atheism and profaneness, the suffering of the dishonour of his name: these sins of the

times are those that pull miseries upon us. 'Our iniquities have taken us away as the wind.' So much for that.

'For thou hast hid thy face from us, and we are consumed because of our iniquities.'

Sin makes God hide his face from us, and then 'we are consumed, because of our iniquities.' 'We melt away in the hands of our iniquities,' as the word is. Indeed, sin is a cruel tyrant. When God leaves us in the hand of our sins, he leaves us in a cruel hand. Christ came to redeem us from our sins. Our sins are they that torment us. It is very significant in the original.

'We are melted.' We melt away as wax before the fire, as snow before the sun, 'because of our iniquities,' when God gives up men to be handled as their own sins will handle them. Nations melt before the hands of sin, and kings, and kingdoms, and all. Let God give up men to delight in sin, kingdoms or persons, they melt and moulder away in the hand of their sins.

But to speak a little more of the next words.

'Thou hast hid thy face from us.'

That is, thou hast hid thy comfort from us. God hath a double face: a face that shines on our souls in peace, and joy, and comfort, when he saith to the soul, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3; and his face that shines on the outward estate, that keeps misery, and sickness, and danger from us, and bestows good things on us. And God takes away his face from us in regard of the inward man, when he gives us no peace, but leaves us to spiritual desertion. In regard of the outward man, God hides his face when he gives us up to pestilence, and war, and sickness, and miseries in this life; when he gives us up to outward desertion.

Sometimes God shines on wicked men in outward things, but he hides his face for peace of conscience; and sometimes God's children have his face shining on their conscience, but he hides his face in respect of outward things. Sometimes he shines in neither of both: as at this time he neither shined on these blessed men in outward favours, for they were in captivity, nor in the sense of his love and favour, for they were in desolation, and eclipsed every way.

The face of God, it is as the sun to the creatures. When the sun hides his face, what is there but darkness and night? What makes the night, but the absence of the sun? What makes winter, but the absence of the sun, when he grows low, and cannot heat the earth? So what makes winter in the soul, deadness, and darkness, and dulness in God's service? The absence of the face of God; God shines not on the soul. What makes night in the soul, when the soul is benighted with ignorance, that it cannot see itself, nor see the judgments of God? God shines not. 'The Sun of righteousness' shines not on that soul.

God is the Sun of the creature. He gives life to the creature. What will become of the creature, when God neither shines outwardly nor inwardly on it? As at the day of judgment, he shall take away outward comforts;—there shall be no outward shining;—and all inward comforts, they shall have no hope: he shall altogether hide his face. When God, the Fountain of all good, shall hide his face altogether from the creature, that is hell. The place where God shines not outwardly with comforts, nor inwardly, nor there shall be no hope of neither, but a place of horror and despair, that is hell, as the hell of this life is when God shines not on our souls.

Now, these holy men they complain, yet they pray: 'Thou hast hid thy face,' Ps. lxxxix. 46. Here is the conflict of faith, that sees God hide his face, and yet will follow God. It sees God ready to turn away himself, and yet it will lay hold of him, and have a glance of him. It will wrestle with him, and not let him go without a blessing. So there be degrees of God's hiding of his face. Though God seem to hide his face, and to withdraw outward comforts, and perhaps in some to withdraw his favour from their hearts inwardly. What shall they do? Droop? No. Wrestle with God as Jacob. See through the cloud that is between God and thy soul. Break thorough by faith; and with Job say, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job. xiii. 15. Let us stir up ourselves 'to lay hold on God' when he seems to turn away his face; and imitate good Jacob, never give over seeking the face of God.

How shall we seek the face of God?

1. By prayer; for that brings us to the face of God, though he seem to hide his face, as Jeremiah complains, Jer. xiv. 8, 'Why art thou as a stranger?' And yet he prays. Seek him by prayer.

2. Seek him in his ordinances. Hear the word of God. 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. God invites you to seek his face now by fasting and

humiliation. Seek his face in this ordinance. Here is the blessed Trinity, 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' Though outwardly God hide his face in some regards, yet when he offers outward liberties refuse them not. He offers his face to us now in Christ. Seek, by prayer and other means, holy communion with him still; and never leave seeking till you have got a glance of him; and stir up yourselves to lay hold on him, that he would shew his loving countenance upon you.

Those that turn their backs on God's ordinances, and in rebellion to his commandments, live in sins against conscience—can they wonder that he hides his face from them, when they turn their backs on him? Rebellious persons, that will not yield meekly to God's ordinances, and submit to his commandments, do they wonder that God takes good things from them? When we sin we turn our backs upon God and our face to the devil, and the world, and pleasures. When men turn their faces to sin, to pleasures and vanity, and their backs on God, do they wonder that he suffers them to melt and pine away? Let us do as the flowers do, the marigold, &c. They turn themselves to the sun. Let our souls do so. Let us turn ourselves to God in meditation and prayers, striving and wrestling with him. Look to him, eye him in his ordinances and promises; and have communion with him all the ways we can. Let our souls open and shut with him. When he hides his face, let us droop, as the flowers do till the sun come again. When the waters fall, the flowers droop and hold down their heads. When the sun riseth the next morning, up they go again, as if there had been never a shower. So when we have not daily comfort of spirit in peace of conscience, let us never rest seeking God's face in his ordinances and by prayer, and that will cheer a drooping soul, as the sunbeams do the flagging flowers. Then you may know that God's face shines upon you in some measure, when he gives you means and gives you hearts to use those means, and comfort in your consciences, that whether you live or die you are God's. This is a beam of that sunshine on the soul when God vouchsafes joy and comfort. A little of this will banish all fears. If you have one glimpse of his countenance, you shall not need to fear the plague, or war, or death. If he shine on you, one glance will take away all fear. Paul, when he was in the stocks, one beam of God's countenance made him sing at midnight, Acts xvi. 25. 'Let thy countenance shine on us, and we shall be safe,' Ps. lxxx. 3, let what will become of us outwardly. If God shine not on us for outward favours, if he shine on our souls and release them from fears and guilt, and speak peace to them, and say unto them, 'he is their salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3, and as he saith in the gospel, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' all will be well whatsoever shall become of us.

‘Let us seek the Lord while he may be found,’ Isa. lv. 6. Hold him before he go; let him not depart. Attend upon the means; never miss good means of seeking his face till we have got a sweet answer from heaven that he is our God.

Now follows the supplication.

‘But now, O Lord, thou art our Father,’ &c.

Here is a prayer which is a kind of holding God by the relation of a Father. This is one way of stirring up our souls, to consider the relation of a father. It stirs up bowels when a child is beaten by his father, ‘O stay, father, spare.’ It works upon the bowels. There is a world of rhetoric in this one word ‘Father.’ Why, Lord, thou art my Father. Shall I be destroyed? Let us lay hold on God by this relation that he puts upon himself; and he will not lay it aside, though we be unworthy to be sons. He doth not say, ‘Thou art our Father, and we are thy sons; because he thought they were unworthy, as the prodigal saith, ‘I am unworthy to be called thy son,’ Luke xv. 19; but instead of saying we are thy sons, he saith, ‘We are the clay, thou art the potter.’ Yet he is a Father continually; and though in Christ you cannot call him Father, yet you may by creation and initiation, being brought up in the church. Go to him with the encouragements you have, and cast yourselves upon him. There is a bond for you by creation; and there is his command. He bids you call him Father. He is a Father by creation. Look not upon this or that sin, but go to him and call him Father, as you may call him. Say, ‘Thou art my Father, thou hast given me a being in the church. Wrestle with him as you may, though as sound Christians you cannot call him Father. Be weary of your courses. Are you willing to come under God’s hands, to be sons? You are sons by creation already. Offer thyself to be of his family for the time to come, and God will give a sweet report to thy soul. Stand not out at the stove’s end. ‘Thou art our Father, Lord.’ If you have a purpose to live in sin, the devil is your father, and not God. ‘You are of your father the devil,’ John viii. 44; but if we be willing to submit, we may say, ‘Doubtless thou art our Father,’ Isa. lxiii. 16.

‘We are the clay, thou art the potter.’

Here is a resignation of themselves to God in this term, ‘thou art the potter, we are the clay.’ Indeed, we are but earthen vessels, the best of us, in regard of the bodily life we have; and we are at the liberty of God to dispose of as he pleaseth. So, before he comes to put forth this prayer to God, he

useth this resignation of themselves into the hand of God: we are as clay in thy hands, Lord, 'dispose of us as thou wilt.' Let us remember this when we come to pray to God. Use all means of abasement that can be. Lay aside all terms other than abasing terms. 'We are the clay,' Isa. lxiv. 8; and as Job saith, 'I abhor myself in dust and ashes,' Job xiii. 6. So the saints have done in all times. 'I am not worthy to be called thy son,' Luke xv. 19; and 'I am less than the least of thy mercies,' Gen. xxxii. 10. Let us lay aside proud and lofty terms, and 'cast down our crowns' at the foot of Christ, as the saints in Rev. iv. 10, cast down all our excellencies. Let us have no thought of outward excellencies—of beauty, or strength, or riches, or high dignity. When we come to God, we must come with low thoughts to the high God. Can the creature be too low in his presence?

And then come with resignation. 'We are the clay, thou art the potter.' Do with us as thou wilt. If thou dash us in pieces as a potter's vessel, thou mayest do it. That is the way to escape. That is well committed, that is committed into God's hand. Some men shift by their wits, and will not trust God with their health and strength. They 'be double-minded,' as St James saith, i. 8. They will have two strings to their bow; if lawful means will not serve, unlawful shall. No. But we 'must commit ourselves to God as to a faithful creator,' 1 Pet. iv. 19; and then see what he will do. Then it stands with his honour. 'He will look to the lowly.' 'I am the clay, thou art the potter.' Here I am; do as thou wilt. As David saith, it is a blessed estate thus to resign ourselves into God's hands. If the devil and reprobates could be brought to this, they should never come there where they are in terrors of conscience. Let us labour to practise this duty: Lord, I commit to thy hands my body and soul. I cast myself into thy bosom; do with me as thou wilt. Some that have stood out at the stave's end with temptations many years, have gotten comfort by this resignation. 'We are the clay, thou art the potter.' Thou mayest mould and break us as thou wilt. The way now to escape the plague is not altogether to use tricks of wit and policy (though lawful means must be used), but labour to get into Christ, and resign ourselves into God's hands absolutely, and say thus, 'We are the clay,' &c. Lord, thou mayest dash us if thou wilt, as thou doest many hundreds weekly. Thou mayest dash us in that fashion if thou wilt. Only we may have a desire that God would make our lives and health precious to him, that we may serve him as if we were now in heaven, and that we may have grace to make good use of all. But if God have determined and decreed to take us away, let us resign ourselves into his hands. It is no matter though the body be 'sown in dishonour, they shall be raised in honour,' 1 Cor. xv. 43. 'We are the clay, he is the potter,' let

him do what he will with our carcasses and bodies, so he be merciful to our souls. These vessels of clay, when they are turned to earth, they shall be renewed of better stuff, like the glorious body of Christ. Then our souls and bodies shall be glorious by him that took a piece of flesh and clay for us. Oh the humility of Christ! We wonder that the soul should animate a piece of clay, so excellent a thing as the soul is; much more may we wonder that the Son of God should take a piece of flesh and clay upon him; to take our nature of base earth, to make us eternally glorious as himself. Let it comfort us, though God dash our clay as a potter. Yet Christ, that took our clay to the unity of his person, our nature being engrafted into him, he will make our bodies eternal and everlasting as his own glorious body. Let us resign ourselves into God's hands, as the church here, 'Thou art the potter, and we are the clay,' and then we shall never miscarry.

God's Inquisition

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man, repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.— Jer. VIII. 6, 7.

Upon the sins of people it hath been alway God's course to send his prophets to warn them beforehand, and afterwards, upon that, to observe how they profit by that warning; and thereupon he takes occasion to proceed answerably. God usually exerciseth a great deal of patience ere he strikes. He made the world in six days, but he is six thousand years in destroying it.

In this verse, after the holy prophet had menaced the judgment of God upon them, there is set down what use they made of it. Alas! 'They spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?' And lest they should object, How do you know this? He saith here it is upon inquisition, 'I hearkened and heard.' So the words contain God's inquisition or inquiry, and then God's evidence upon that inquiry, together with a complaint. His inquiry, 'I hearkened and heard.' For we must apply these words to God. There is the same phrase, Mal. iii. 16, 'The Lord hearkened, and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him;' so here, 'I hearkened and heard.' Here is the inquiry.

Then, secondly, the evidence upon the inquiry, 'they spake not aright.' And, thirdly, the complaint upon that evidence set down.

1. First, Positively, 'They repented not of their wickedness,' which is amplified, 1. From the generality of this their impenitency, 'No man repented him;' and 2. From the cause of it: want of consideration. They did not say, 'What have I done?' If they had called themselves to account concerning what they had done, certainly they would have repented.

2. Comparatively, 'They turned to their course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.'

3. Lastly, Superlatively, preferring the skill of the poor storks and cranes, and the turtle and swallow, before the judgment of his senseless and stupid people: 'The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle, the crane, and the swallow; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' This is the sum of the words.

1. First, Of God's inquiry, 'I hearkened and heard.' Ere Sodom was destroyed, the Lord came down to see whether there was just cause or no, Gen. xviii. 21. God is most just. He will see cause for his judgments. He hath no delight in punishing. "When he judgeth, it is not out of his sovereignty, but out of his justice. He doth it not as a sovereign Lord, but as a just judge. Now, a judge must do all upon inquisition and evidence; therefore saith he, 'I hearkened and heard.' where, by the way, the gods of the earth, to whom he hath communicated his name, should learn hence, not to be rash in their judgments, but to have sound evidence before they pass sentence. 'I hearkened and heard.' To 'hearken' is more than to hoar: to apply one's self with some affection to hear a thing.

God is all ear, as he is all eye. He hath an ear everywhere. He hath an ear in our hearts. He hears what we think, what we desire. He sees all the secret corners of our hearts. Therefore, when he saith here, 'I hearkened and heard,' it is by way of condescending to our capacity.

We may learn hence, briefly, that God hath an ear and an eye to our carriage and dispositions, to our speeches and courses. If we had one alway at our backs that would inform such a man and such a man what we say, one that should book our words, and after lay them to our charge, it would make us careful of our words. Now, though we be never so much alone, there are two always that hear us. God hearkens and hears, and God's deputy in us, conscience, 'hearkens and hears.' God books it, and conscience books it. As God hath a book wherein he wrote us before all worlds, and the book of his providence for our bones, and all things that concern us, so he hath a book for our works and words. Mal. iii. 16, 'They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him,' &c. So here, 'I hearkened and heard.' God and conscience note and observe everything.

This doth impose upon us the duty of careful and reverent walking with God. Would we speak carelessly or ill of any man if he heard us? When we slight a man, we say we care not if he heard us himself. But shall we slight God so? Shall we swear, and lie, and blaspheme, and say we care not though

God hear us, that will lay everything to our charge, not only words but thoughts. 'We shall give an account for every idle word, and for every idle thought,' Mat. xii. 36, and shall we not regard it? It is from the horrible profaneness of the poisonous, rebellious heart of man, that men do not consider these things. 'God hearkens and hears.' He is at our studies; he is at our windows; he hears us in our chambers, when we are in company, when we meet together, when we take liberty to censure and detract, when we swear and revile. What if men hear not! yet conscience hears, and God hears. And when God shall lay open the book of conscience, and lay before a man all his naughty speeches and wicked works, what will become of him then for not making use of this principle, that 'God hearkens and hears'? God sees now with what minds and affections we come about this business, whether it be formally to put off God, to make it a cover for our sinful courses after, as if God were beholding to us for what we do now, and therefore might the better bear with us, though we make bold with him hereafter. He not only hears what we say, but sees our minds and purposes, nay, he 'knows our thoughts long before they are.' This is the cause why godly men have always walked so carefully and circumspectly. They knew that God's eye and ear was over them; as Enoch and Noah, it is said in this regard that they 'walked with God,' Gen. v. 21, vi. 9; and Joseph when he was tempted, 'Shall I do this,' saith he, 'and sin against God?' Gen. xxxix. 9; and shall not God see if I do this? 'Doth not he see my ways and count all my steps,' saith Job, Job. xiv. 16. So again, What makes wicked men so loose? The prophet tells, Ps. xciv. 7, they say, 'The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.' Or as it is, Job xxii. 12, &c., 'Is not God in the height of heaven? How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he sees not; and he walketh not in the circuit of the heavens.' Tush! he regardeth not; he is immured and shut up there. But to such atheists we see what the prophet answers, Ps. lxiv. 8, &c. Ye brutish, foolish people, shall he that makes others hear not hear himself? 'He that planted the ear,' he that is all ear, 'shall not he hear?' As it makes good men walk holily and reverently, to consider of this, that God is present, and present as an observer and a judge, so the want of taking this to heart makes wicked and carnal persons do as they do. So much briefly for these words, 'I hearkened and heard.'

'No man spake aright.'

But what evidence doth he give upon this inquisition? 'They spake not aright,' which is amplified from the generality of this sin. 'No man spake

aright.' The meaning is especially that 'they spake not aright concerning the judgments of God threatened.' When God had threatened judgments, he hearkened and heard what use they made of them, but 'they spake not aright.'

Quest. In how many respects do we not speak aright in regard of the judgments of God?

Ans. 1. First, In regard of God, men speak not aright when they do not see him in the judgment, but look to the creature, to the second causes; as now in the time of the plague, to look to the air and weather, and this and that, which is a good providence, and to forget him that is the chief; to kill dogs and cats, and to let sin alone; to cry out, Oh what air there is this year! and what weather it is! to talk of the second causes altogether, and to forget God: this is to talk amiss of God's judgments threatened, in regard of God.

2. Again, We talk amiss in regard of others, when we begin to slight them in our thoughts and speeches. Oh they were careless people; they adventured into company, and it was the carelessness of the magistrates; they were not well looked to; they were unmerciful persons, &c. Is it not God's hand? Put case there might be some oversight; art thou secure from God's arrow? He that struck them, may he not strike thee? This is to talk amiss of the judgment of God in regard of others; when we think that God hath singled them out as sinners above the rest; as the disciples thought of the Galileans, 'whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifice,' Luke xiii. 1. No, no, saith he; 'think not they were greater sinners than the rest;' do not add your bitter censure of the judgment of God on them, and make it heavier (there is a woe to such persons as add afflictions to the afflicted, Prov. xx. 22, Phil. i. 16): 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Is not the ripest corn cut first? God oftentimes takes those away that are fittest for him, and leaves others to the cruelty of men. Therefore by this rash judgment there may be great wrong to men, and to wrong men in our censures, it is to talk amiss of God's judgments in regard of others.

3. Again, We talk amiss of God's judgments in regard of ourselves.

(1.) When we murmur and fret any way against God, and do not submit ourselves under his mighty hand as we should.

(2.) Again, We sin against the judgments of God abroad, when we take liberty to inquire of the judgments of God abroad, and never make use of

them; as now to be asking what number die of the plague weekly, and our hearts tremble not at it, we lift not up our hearts to God, 'God be merciful to us,' 'Lord forgive our sins,' 'What will become of us?' We had need to make our accounts even. This is to talk amiss of God's judgments. It is a vein that men have naturally, to inquire after news of all sorts, be it the sharpest and bitterest that may be; though it be the destruction, and ruin, and death of other men; whatsoever it be they desire to hear it, if news. In the mean time there is no care to make use of it, which is directly that for which these men here are said to have talked amiss, 'No man spake aright.' Why? 'No man repented him of his wickedness,' &c., as we shall see afterwards. We should talk of the judgments of God to be bettered by them. We should 'learn righteousness when the judgments of God are abroad,' Isa. xxvi. 9, and the arrows that wound others we should make warning arrows to ourselves. Now when we triflingly only inquire of these things, and are not moved ourselves, we talk amiss of God's judgments.

Use. Let us labour to talk of the judgments of God, when they are abroad, as we should. In regard of God, to raise our hearts above all second causes, to see him in it. It is the hand of God, as the Scripture calls the plague, whatsoever the second causes are, whether it be the air, and the devil mingling himself oftentimes to corrupt the air, all is by God's permission and providence. We should look to the first wheel that leads the rest and sets them going. We should see God in all, and therefore speak reverently of him. And in regard of our brethren, to speak charitably of them, and think, it is the goodness of God that he hath not stricken us as he hath them. And when we speak of ourselves, when the judgments of God are on us, let us humble ourselves and justify God. We may complain, but it must be of ourselves and of our sins, that have brought judgments upon us, of our want of making use of the judgment of God upon others or upon ourselves. Lesser judgments would not servo turn; therefore God is fain to follow us with greater. Let us always justify God and complain of ourselves, and then in regard of ourselves we 'speak aright' of the judgments of God. Let us never speak of the judgments of God but with affections fit for judgments, with awful affections. 'Shall the lion roar, and shall not the beasts of the forest tremble?' Hos. xi. 10. Shall we hear God roar in his judgments, 'and hear the trumpet blown,' and not be affected? We see here how God complains, that when 'he hearkened and heard, they spake not aright.' Let us therefore make conscience of all our words. We shall, if not now, yet at the day of judgment, 'give account for every idle word,' Mat. xii. 36, for every cruel word, as it is in the prophecy of Enoch, cited in the Epistle of Jude. But especially let us take

heed of our words when we speak of God's judgments; for it is the not speaking aright of them that is here especially meant. 'I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright.' So much for the evidence. Come we now to the next clause, God's complaint upon this evidence.

'No man repented him of his wickedness.'

They did not repent of their wickedness, and the fault was general: 'No man repented.' The first yields this instruction,

Doct. That it is a state much offending God, not to repent when his judgments are threatened.

God will not suffer it long unpunished, to be impenitent when his judgments are abroad and threatened, much more when they have already seized upon our brethren. For that is the end of all his judgments, to draw us near to him, to draw us out of the world, and out of our sinful courses. When therefore we answer not, God must take another course. What is the plague and other judgments but so many messengers sent to every one of us to knock? And our answer must be, 'Lord, I will repent of my evil ways,' 'I will turn from my evil courses and turn to thee.' If we give this answer, God will take away his judgments, or sanctify them, and that is better; but when there is no answer, the messenger will not be gone; God will add plagues upon plagues till we give our answer, till we repent and turn from our wicked ways.

Now that we may do this, we must be convinced thoroughly that the courses we live in are unprofitable, dangerous, hateful courses, and that the contrary state is better. For repentance is an after-wit, and man being a reasonable creature, will turn from his way except he see groat reason why. Therefore there must be sound conviction that 'it is a bitter thing to offend God,' Jer. ii. 19. We must indeed be convinced by the Spirit of God; and the Spirit of God usually takes the benefit of affliction, affliction together with instruction. Instruction without affliction will do little good. Stripes and the word must go together, else we will not give God the hearing as we should. Therefore that we may be soundly convinced of our sins, we should desire God, especially in the hour of affliction, to help our souls by his Spirit, that we may be convinced that our courses are naught, that they are courses dishonourable to God and dangerous to ourselves; that sin defiles our souls; that it hinders our communion with God, which is the sweetest thing in the world; that sin puts a sting into all our troubles; that sin makes us afraid of

that that should be comfortable to us, of death and judgment, and God's presence; that sin grieves the good Spirit of God, that would take up his lodging in us; that it quenqueth the motions of the Spirit, that are sent as sweet messengers to us, to allure and comfort us; that sin grieves the good Spirit of God in others; that it grieves the good angels that are about us; that it gratifies none but the devil, the enemy of our salvation; that it defiles and stains our souls, wherein the image of God should shine; that it doth us more harm than all the things in the world besides—indeed, nothing hurts us but sin, because nothing but sin separates us from God; that it shuts heaven and opens hell, and so makes us afraid of death, lest death should open the gate to let us into hell; in a word, that it hinders all good, and is the cause of all ill. Let us consider of this, and work it on our hearts.

And consider withal our former courses, rip up our lives from our childhood, consider the sins of our youth, together with our present sins, that so we may the better stir up and awaken our consciences. Let us consider whether we are now in a state wherein we could be content that God should send his judgments upon us. Consider how we have been scandalous to others, how we have drawn others to sin, that the guilt of other men's sins will lie upon us. It may be we have repented, but have they? Consider the repetition of our sins, if we have not committed them again and again, and other circumstances that may aggravate them. Let us labour to work these things on our hearts, and desire the Spirit of God to convince our souls of the foulness and danger of sin. When we sin against conscience, what do we but set the devil in the place of God? We make ourselves wiser than God. We leave God's ways, as if we could find better and more profitable and more gainful courses than his. Sound conviction of this will move us to repentance.

And let us be stirred up to repent presently. Doth not God now warn you? Is it not dangerous living one hour in a state that we would not die in? May not God justly strike us on the sudden? Do but purpose to live in sin one quarter of an hour; may we not be taken away in that quarter? Is not repentance the gift of God, and are not gifts given according to the good pleasure of the giver? Wait therefore for the gales of grace, and take them when they are offered. Grace is not like the tide, that ebbs and flows, that we know when it will come again when we see it go. No. God gives the gales of grace according to his good pleasure; therefore take the advantage of the present motions of the blessed Spirit.

The longer we live in any sin unrepented of, the more our hearts will be hardened; the more Satan takes advantage against us, the more hardly he is driven out of his old possession, the more just it may be with God to give us up from one sin to another. The understanding will be more dark upon every repetition of sin, and conscience will be more dulled and deadened. Those that are young, therefore, let them take the advantage of the youth, and strength, and freshness of their years to serve God. That which is blasted in the bud, what fruit may we look for from it afterwards? Alas! when we see the younger sort given to blaspheme and swear, to looseness and licentiousness, what old age may we look for there? Again, what welcome shall we expect, when we have sacrificed the best of our strength and the marrow of our years to our lusts, to bring our old age to God? Can this be any other than self-love? Such late repentance is seldom sound. It comes, I say, from self-love, and not from any change of heart. As in the humility of wretched persons, a little before the judge comes, though they have carried themselves as rebels before, yet then they will humble themselves, not out of any hatred to their courses, but out of fear of the judge. So it may be now thou art arraigned by God's judgments); thou forsakest thy sinful courses, not out of the hatred of thy sins— for if thou couldst thou wouldst sin eternally, and that is the reason sinners are punished eternally, because they would sin everlastingly—but thou seest thou art in danger to be pulled away by God's judgments, it is not out of love to grace, it is not from any change of nature that thou desirest to be a new creature, that thou admirest grace to be the best state, but it is to avoid danger; not that thou carest for the face of God, to be reconciled to him, but to avoid the present judgment.

And what a staggering will this be to conscience, when a man shall defer his repentance till God's judgments seize upon him! We see it is false for the most part, because such persons that are then humbled, when they recover they are as bad or worse than ever they were. Therefore an ancient saith well, 'He that is good only under the cross is never good'. It conies not from any change that God works, but merely from self-love. Therefore presently let us repent of those ways that God convinceth our conscience to be evil ways; God may strike us suddenly. Those that forget God, and care not for him now, it may be just with God to make them forget themselves, to strike them with frenzy, to take away the use of their memories then; and when sickness comes we shall have enough to do to conflict with sickness, we shall have enough to do to answer the doubts of conscience. Oh, it would upbraid them! "We shall think it a hard matter then to have favour from God, whose worship we have despised, the motions of whose Spirit we have neglected

and resisted. Conscience, after long hardening in sin, will hardly admit of comfort. It is a harder matter than it is taken for. Therefore, even to-day, presently, you that are young, now in the days of your youth, now in the spring of your years, repent you of your sins before old age comes, which indeed, as Solomon describes it, 'is an ill time' to repent in, Eccles. xii. 1. Alas! then a man can hardly perform civil duties; as we see in Barzillai, he complains that in his old age he could not take the comfort of the creatures, 2 Sam. xix. 32, seq. Therefore put not off this duty till then. And all, both young and old, now when the judgments of God are abroad in the world, take the advantage; return to God, renew your covenants, make your peace now. Now this danger doth warm our hearts a little, let us strike the iron now while it is hot; let us take the advantage of the Spirit now awakening us with this danger. Our hearts are so false and so dull, we have need to take all advantages of withdrawing ourselves from our sinful courses.

And to encourage us to do it, let us consider, if we do this, and do it in time, we shall have the sweetness of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

You will say, We shall lose the sweetness of sin; ay, but 1. You shall have a most sweet communion with God. One day of a repentant sinner, that is reconciled to God, is more comfortable than a thousand years of another man that is in continual fear of death and judgment. Oh, the sweet life of a Christian that hath made his peace with God! He is fit for all conditions: for life, for death, for everything. Now by this we shall have this grace and favour of God. The Lord will say unto us by his Spirit, 'I am your salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3. And besides, you shall have his grace renewing and altering and changing you, framing you to a better course of life. And he will be so far from misliking any for their former sins, that he will give them cause to love him the more, as we see Luke vii. 47, 'She loved much, because she had much forgiven her.' Christ, we see, upbraided not any of his followers with their former sins. He regarded not what they had been formerly Zaccheus the extortioner, Mary Magdalene, Matthew the publican, Peter that denied him. We never hear that he upbraided any of them. He doth not only vouchsafe mercy to Peter repenting, but advanceth him to his former office apostolical. So sweet a God have we to deal with! Let this encourage us.

2. Again, It is the way to prevent God's judgments, as we see in Nineveh and others. Put case we repent not: we cannot go safe in the city nor anywhere, but God may meet with us, and strike us with his arrow. The only

way to prevent his judgments is to meet him speedily by repentance. This is the way, not only to turn away the wrath of God concerning eternal damnation, but outward judgments, as we see Joel ii. 12, seq., and many other places.

3. Then again, should we be stricken, if we have made our peace with God, if we have repented, all shall be welcome, all shall be turned to our good. We know the sting is pulled out. If the sting of death be pulled out, if the malignity and poison of any sickness, be it the plague or whatsoever, be pulled out, why should we fear it? It comes in love, and shall be turned to our good; and in the mean time God sweetens it. Here is a grand difference between the children of God and others. If the judgment of God light upon a repentant person, it comes from favour and love, to correct him for his former sins. It is turned to good, and in the mean time it is sweetened with love, and mixed with comfort, and moderated, as it is Isa. xxvii. 7, 'Hath he afflicted thee as I afflicted others?' No. He moderates his judgments to his children; and not only moderates them, but sweetens them with comfort. If God do correct a repentant person, he is no loser by it, nay, he is a gainer. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted,' Ps. cxix. 67. Oh the blessed estate of that person that repents and turns from his evil ways! Put if a man do not repent, but live still in sin, what a state is he in! God cares not for his prayers. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers,' Ps. lxvi. 18. And what a state is a man in, when his prayers, that should beg for blessings, and avoid judgments, and procure deliverance, are not heard, 'but shall be turned into sin!' When God, that is 'a God hearing prayer,' shall not regard his prayer, what a case is this! Yet if we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we repent not of our sins, God will not regard our prayers.

Then, besides that, there is a noise of fear in the unrepentant person's heart. Wheresoever he goes, he is afraid of the plague, afraid of sickness, afraid of death, afraid of everybody. He knows he hath his heaven here: he hath not the sting of evils pulled out, therefore he is afraid he shall go from the terrors of conscience to the torments of hell. His conscience speaks terrible things to him. What a cursed state is this? How can he look with comfort any way? If he look to heaven, God is ready to pour the vials of his wrath, to execute his vengeance on him. If he look to the earth, he knows not how soon he shall be laid there, or that the earth may swallow him up. If he think of death, it strikes terror to him. Everything is uncomfortable to an unrepentant sinner. Let all this stir us up to this duty of repentance. It is the end why God sends his judgments. First, he warns us by his word. And if we

neglect that, he sends judgments, and they seize on us. That is a second warning. And if lesser judgments will not warn us, then he sends greater, and all to make us repent. If we repent, we give the judgments their answer, and he will either remove them or sanctify them. So much for that. A word of the generality.

‘No man.’

‘No man repented of his evil ways.’ We see, then,

Doct. That generality is no plea.

‘We must not follow a multitude to do evil,’ Exod. xxiii. 2. We must not follow the stream, to do as the world doth. Will any man reason thus? Now there die so many weekly of the plague. It is no matter whither I go. I will go now into any place, without any respect to my company, &c. Will he not reason, on the contrary, Therefore I will take heed, I will carry preservatives about me, and look to my company? Self-love will teach a man to reason so. The infection is great, therefore I will take the more heed. And will not spiritual wisdom teach us, the more spreading and infectious sin is, the more heed to take? ‘When all flesh had corrupted their way, then came the flood,’ Gen. vi. 12. Generality of sin makes way for sweeping judgments that takes all away. Therefore we have more reason to tremble when the infection of sin hath seized upon all, when ‘no man repents of his wickedness.’ A man should resolve, Surely I will come out of such company, as we see Lot departed out of Sodom, and David in his time ‘was as a pelican in the wilderness,’ Ps. cii. 6. I will rather go to heaven alone, than go to hell and be damned with a multitude. Multitude is no plea to a wise man. Shall we think it a means to increase danger in worldly things? and shall we think it a plea in spiritual things? It hath been the commendation of God’s children, that they have striven against the stream and been good in evil times. ‘Redeem the time, because the days are evil,’ saith the apostle, Eph. v. 16. A carnal Christian saith, Do as the rest do; but saith David, ‘Mine eyes gush out with rivers of waters, because men keep not thy law,’ Ps. cxix. 136. Do not fear that you shall pass unrespected if you be careful to look to yourselves this way. If there be but one Lot in Sodom, one Noah and his family in the old world, he shall be looked to as a jewel among much dross. God will single him out as a man doth his jewels, when the rubbish is burnt. God will have a special care to gather Iris jewels. When a man makes conscience of his ways in ill times and ill company, God regards him the more for witnessing to his truth and standing for and owning his cause in ill times. It shows sincerity

and strength of grace, when a man is not tainted with the common corruptions. 'No man repented.'

What was the cause of all this, that they were thus unrepentant, and that generally 'no man said,'

'What have I done?'

They did not say in their hearts and tongues, 'What have I done?' They were inconsiderate, they did not examine, and search, and try their ways. Here we see,

First, That a man can return upon himself; he can search and try his own ways, and cite, and arrest, and arraign himself, 'What have I done?' This is a prerogative that God hath given to the understanding creature. The reasonable soul, it can reflect upon itself, which is an act of judgment. The brute creatures look forward to present objects; they are earned to present things, and cannot reflect. But man hath judgment to know what he hath done and spoken, to sit upon his own doings, to judge of his own actions. God hath erected a tribunal in every man; he hath set up conscience for a register, and witness, and judge, &c. There are all the parts of judicial proceeding in the soul of man. This shows the dignity of man; and considering that God hath set up a throne and scat of judgment in the heart, we should labour to exercise this judgment.

Secondly, God having given man this excellent prerogative to cite himself and to judge his own courses, when man doth not this, it is the cause of all mischief, of all sin and misery. Alas! the vile heart of man is prone to think, it may be God hath decreed my damnation, and he might make me better if he would. But why dost thou speak thus? O wicked man, the fault is in thyself, because thou dost not what thou mightst do. Hath not God set up a judgment-seat in thy heart, to deliberate of thine own courses, whether thou dost well or ill? And thy own conscience, if thou be not an atheist and besotted, tells thee thou dost ill, and accuseth thee for it. An ordinary swearer, that by atheistical acquaintance and poisonous breeding is accustomed to that sin, if he did consider, What good shall I get by this? by provoking God, who hath threatened that I shall not go guiltless, and that 'I shall give an account for every idle word,' much more of every idle oath? the consideration of this would make him judge and condemn himself, and repent and amend his ways.

Thirdly. The exercising of this judgment, it makes a man's life lightsome. He knows who he is and whither he goes. It makes him able to answer for what he doth at the judgment-seat of God. It makes him do what he doth in confidence, it perfects the soul every way.

Fourthly, Again, Whatsoever we do without this consideration, it is not put upon our account for comfort. When we do things upon judgment, it is with examination whether it be according to the rule or no. Our service of God is especially in our affections, when we joy, and fear, and delight aright. Now how can a man do this without consideration? For the affections, wheresoever they are ordinate and good, they are raised up by judgment. They are never good but when they are regular and according to judgment. When judgment raiseth up the affections, and we see cause why we should delight in God, and love him and fear him more than anything in the world, they are then an effectual part of divine worship; but else they are flat, and dead, and dull, if we waken them not with consideration. The heart follows the judgment. The brain and the heart sympathise, when we see cause and reason to love, and fear, and worship God. We must 'love God with all our mind,' that is, with our best understanding. We must see reason why we do so.

Therefore let us labour to use our understanding more this way. Is our understanding and judgment given us to plot for the world, to be judicious for the things of this life only? No; but to be wise for the main end, to glorify God, to save our souls, to get out of the corruption of nature, to maintain our communion with God every day more and more. The end of our living in the world is to begin heaven upon earth; so to live here as that we may live for ever in heaven. Whatsoever is done in order to this end is good; but nothing can be done to this end but upon due consideration. Let us improve our judgments for that end. They are principally given us, not for particular ends, to get this or that man's favour, to get wealth, &c., but to use all as they may serve the main. We know not how short a time we shall enjoy these things; and further than they serve for the main, we shall have no comfort of them ere long. Our projects should be to gain glory to God, and to bring ourselves and others to heaven. There is excellent use of this consideration. This way it is one main way to repentance. We see here, 'No man repenteth,' because 'no man said, What have I done?'

Now if we would practise this duty, we must labour to avoid the hindrances. The main hindrances of this consideration are,

(1.) The rage of lusts, that will not give the judgment leave to consider of a man's ways; but they are impetuous, commanding, and tyrannous, carrying men, as we shall see in the next clause, 'as the horse rusheth into the battle.' We see many carried to hell that never enjoyed themselves, but are always under some base pleasure. When the devil hath filled them with one pleasure, then they project for another, and never take time to say, 'What have I done?' Oh the tyranny of original corruption! If we had in our eye the vile picture of our nature, that carries us to things present, to profits and pleasures, and gives us not liberty and leisure to bethink ourselves, would we do as we do? Alas! we see some men so haunted with their lusts that they cannot be alone, they cannot sleep; and when they are awake they must have music, as that king when he massacred a world of men, he could not be quiet a whit, conscience raged so. When men follow their pleasures, they rob them of themselves. Therefore they are said in Scripture to be madmen, and fools without wit. They are so taken up with the rage of their lusts that they have not liberty to enjoy themselves, they have no time for consideration.

(2.) And then another hindrance is too much business, when men are distracted with the things of this life. They are overloaded with cares, with Martha's part, and so neglect Mary's part. This makes men toil and drudgery for the world, and never consider where they are nor whither they go, how it shall be with them when they go hence, how the case stands with them before God, whether they be gotten out of the cursed state of nature that we are all born in. They never think of this, but all the marrow and strength of their souls is eaten out with the world. Those that in their youth followed their lusts, when they come to years are taken up with the world, and slight religion. Their minds are employed how to get the favour of this man and that, and so have not leisure to consider what will become of their souls. Therefore too much distraction with the things of the world is joined with drunkenness: 'Be not overcome with the cares of this life, with surfeiting and drunkenness,' saith Christ, Luke xxi. 34.

(3.) Then, it is a secret and hard action; because it is to work upon a man's self. It is an easy matter to talk of others, to consider other men's ways. You shall have men's tongues ready to speak of other men; they do so and so. And thus they feed themselves with talking of other men, and in the mean time neglect the consideration of their own state. And again, it is a plausible thing. He that talks of other men's faults gives an intimation that he is innocent, and he had need be so. It is easy and plausible. Men glory in it. It feeds corrupt nature to talk of other men's faults, but to come home to a

man's self, that is a hard thing. It is without ostentation or applause. The world doth not applaud a man for speaking of his own faults. Men are not given to retired actions. They care not for them, unless they have sound hearts; and this being a retired action, that hath no glory nor credit with it, men are loath to come to it.

(4.) Then, again, it is not only hard and secret, but this returning upon a man's self, it presents to a man a spectacle that is unwelcome. If a man consider his own ways, it will present to him a terrible object. Therefore as the elephant troubles the waters, that he may not see his own visage, so men trouble their souls, that they may not see what they are. They shall see such a deal of malice and self-love, and fear and distrust, that they would not have others in the world to see for anything. But it is good to see it; for repentance and consideration it is physic, it is sharp but wholesome. It is better to have the physic a day than to have the sickness and disease all the year. So this consideration and repentance, though it be sharp, yet take it down, for it will prevent God's eternal judgment; as the apostle saith, 'If we would judge and condemn ourselves, we should not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. xi. 31. What an excellent thing is this, that we may keep sessions in our own souls, and so need not be called to God's assizes! Men are called to that, because they slubber over and neglect this. Men will not keep this sessions in their own hearts—which they might do not only quarterly, but daily—and thereby they make work for God. Is it not better now to unrip our consciences by consideration and repentance, than to have all ripped up then, when the devil shall stand by to accuse us, who will say, This was done by my instigation; and it is so; and our own consciences shall take part with the devil, and accuse us also? It will be little for our case to make God our judge. We might save the labour by putting conscience to its office now, to examine our ways every day, especially now, when God calls for it by his judgments. Repentance is the covenant of the gospel, and repentance depends upon this consideration. So much for that. 'No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?' But did they stay here? No; it follows, 'Every one turns to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.'

Every one hath his course, his way, whether good or evil. The course of a wicked man it is a smooth way perhaps, but it is a going from God; it leads from him. And where doth it end? for every way hath its end. It is a going from God to hell. There all the courses of wicked men end. Examine, then, where thy course begins, and where it ends; from what thou walkest, and to what; whither thy course aims; consider where thy speeches and actions are

like to end. The specification and denomination of our ways to be good or evil is especially from the end. The wicked they take their courses, smooth wide courses, the broad beaten way, where they may have elbow-room enough, though it end in hell and destruction. But the wicked and their ways are both hated of God. Otherwise it is with God's children. They may sometimes step into ill ways, but they have not an ill course; and God doth not judge a man by a step, but by his course and way. Therefore consider what is the tenor of thy life. Is thy way good? Oh, it is an excellent thing to be in a good way! for a man every day to repent of his sins, to make his peace with God, to practise the duties of Christianity in his general calling, and in his particular calling to call upon God for a blessing. Such a man's way is good; it hath a good end. Perhaps he may step out of his way by the temptations of Satan, but that is not his course. The best man in the world for a passion on the sudden may step into an ill way; as David, when he determined to kill Nabal, but it was not David's way. Therefore we see how soon he was put off with a little counsel, and how thankful he was: 'Blessed be the Lord, and blessed be thou, and blessed be thy counsel,' &c., 1 Sam. xxv. 32. His way and course was another way. And so on the other side the wickedest man in the world may set a step in a good way for a fit, a very Saul may be amongst the prophets, and speak excellently and divinely; but all this while he is out of his way. His way is a course of wickedness, to which therefore he will soon betake himself again; as it is here said of these men, 'They turned to their own courses.'

'As the horse rusheth into the battle.'

Here it is comparatively set down. If you would see how the 'horse rusheth into the battle,' it is lively and divinely expressed, Job xxxix. 19, by God himself: 'Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.' There you have an excellent description of this creature's fierceness—the wit of man hath not such expressions—and how 'he rusheth into the battle.' God, to abase wicked men, compares them here to the horse; not for that which is good in him, but for their violence in ill

courses. They rush into them ‘as the horse rusheth into the battle.’ Now, the horse rusheth into the battle, (1.) eagerly, as you see him described in the place of Job; and (2.) desperately, he will not be pulled away by any means; and then (3.) dangerously, for he rusheth upon the pikes, and oftentimes falls down suddenly dead. He regards not the pikes, nor guns, nor nothing, but rusheth on the danger. Heroin wicked men are like unto the horse, going on in their course eagerly, desperately, dangerously.

1. They go on eagerly. It is meat and drink unto them: ‘they cannot sleep until they have done wickedness.’ They plot and study it; it is their delight. They are not in their element but when they are talking wickedly and corruptly, or deceiving, or satisfying their desires, the ambition and lusts of their corrupt nature. They can no more live out of these courses than the fish can live out of the water. Therefore they go eagerly upon them.

2. And as they go eagerly, so desperately and irreclaimably too; nothing will restrain them, no thorns nor troubles that can lie in their way. Though God hedge in their ways with thorns, they break through all, Hosea ii. 6. Even as Balaam, he would go on though there wore a sword drawn before him, he was more brutish and unreasonable than his poor beast; the very sword of the angel could not move that covetous wretch to go back. So it is with every wicked man, he goes on desperately, nothing will keep him back and reclaim him. Though God take many courses to do it, by his ministers, magistrates, by the motions of his Spirit, by his judgments threatened, by judgments executed upon others, and upon themselves sometimes, yet they are so eager upon their sins, all this will not beat them off. They love their sins better than their souls; nor is it only open riotous persons that thus rush into sins, but civil rebellious persons also, that bless themselves in their ways, and it may be live as irreligiously as the other. Take a covetous or an ambitious man: he sacrificeth all to get such a place, &c. Such a man mocks Christ, as the Pharisees mocked him, notwithstanding all his good sermons and miracles. He goes on desperately, nothing will hold him. He breaks through all bars and oppositions. He cracks his conscience, grieves the good motions of the Spirit, despiseth good counsel, and will venture upon the outward breach of laws sometimes, rather than he will be defeated of his designs.

3. And as they go eagerly and desperately, so dangerously too; for is it not dangerous to provoke God? to rush upon the pikes? to run against thorns? ‘Do you provoke me to jealousy,’ saith God, ‘and not yourselves to

destruction? 1 Cor. x. 22. No. They go both together. If you provoke me to anger, it will be to your own ruin. In Lev. xxvi. 23, 'God will walk stubbornly to them as they have done to him; and he will be froward with the froward,' Ps. xviii. 26. Those that are rebellious sinners, whom no bonds will hold, no counsel, that break all laws, as the man possessed with the devil brake his chains, the time will come that when God executes his wrath he will be too good for them, the devil will be too good for them, hell will be too good for them, conscience will tear them in pieces, and the judgment of God will seize on them. The way of wicked men is a wretched, a desperate, and dangerous course. Thou art stubborn against God, and he is so against thee. He will do to thee as thou doest to him. Who are we? 'Are we stronger than God?' 1 Cor. x. 23. Careless, atheistical persons think they are. Tush! they can wind out well enough: but they will find it otherwise. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' saith the apostle. Let us lay this to heart.

We see here again how sin hath clean defaced the image of God in man.

'Man being in honour,' he would become like God. He was weary of his subordination. He would be absolute; and because he would be like God, God made him like the beast; and it is worse to be like the beast than to be a beast. For the beast in his own condition follows the instinct of nature; but to be like a beast, is for a man to unman himself, to degrade himself to a baser condition than God made him in; and when a man doth this, he is either in malice like the devil, or in licentiousness as the beast is. He is always like the devil or a beast till he be a new creature. And that our nature is come to this, we are beholding to our own yielding to Satan and his counsel. We 'rush as the horse into the battle.' Therefore let us beware of this. 'Be ye not as the horse and mule,' &c., saith David, Ps. xxxii. 9. Who would not labour to be in a better condition? to be a new creature, to be changed by the powerful ordinances and Spirit of God? So much for that briefly. Come we now to the last clause.

'Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.'

Here is another expression comparative, or rather superlative. He compares them to the stork and turtle, the crane and swallow; and prefers these poor creatures, in wisdom and providence, as going before men.

‘But my people know not the judgment of the Lord.’ There needs no great explication of the words. Judgment is directive or corrective.

The directive is the law of God; setting down God’s judicious course. This you shall do, or if you do not this you shall be punished. When we obey not God’s directive course, we meet with his corrective; for judgment is the stablishing of judgment. Judgment of correction is the stablishing of judgment of direction. God’s laws must be performed. They are not scare-crows. If we avoid the one, we shall run into the other. If we do not meet him in the judgment of his directive law, we must be met with in his law corrective—if we be good men—or destructive if we be bad men. How here, I take it, he means especially the judgment of correction, the time of visitation. It was a dangerous time, as it is now among us. They were already under several heavy judgments, as famine, &c. We see in the next verse, ‘there was no vines, no grapes,’ &c., all failed. And besides, a far heavier judgment was ready to come upon them. They were ready to be carried into Babylon, ‘and they knew not the judgment of the Lord.’

‘They knew not;’ that is, they did not make use of it; for in divinity, things are not known when they are not affected. God knoweth all things, but when he doth not affect and delight in us, he is said ‘not to know us.’ So we are said not to know, when we do not affect and make use of things.

‘They know not the judgment of the Lord.’ They were not ignorant. He had told them of vengeance; he had told them that they should be carried into captivity; but they made not that use they should of it. Therefore they are said not to know it. So the old world. It is said they did not know of the flood. Certainly Noah had told them of it. But when they made not a right use of it, but went on brutishly, they knew it not. It is all one not to know it at all, and not to make use of it. "Wicked men think they know God, and they know religion well enough; ay, but what use do they make of it in their particular course? That which we do not use we do not know in religion. If ill be discovered, and be not avoided by thee, thou art a brutish, senseless creature. Thou dost not know it, and so thou shalt be dealt with. ‘They know not the judgment of the Lord that is, they will not know it; it was affected ignorance. The words being thus unfolded, here, first, we see,

That God confounds the proud dispositions of wicked men by poor, silly creatures—the crane, the turtle, the swallow, and the like.

What their wisdom is we see by experience. In winter, to fly from hard and cold parts to those where there is a spring. They are here in the moderate season; and when the summer is gone, they go to a more moderate air, where they may live better. For the life is the chief good of such poor creatures, and their happiness being determined in their life, they labour to keep that. They have an instinct put in them by God to preserve their being by removing from place to place, and to use that that may keep life.

Now, man is made for a better life; and there be dangers concerning the soul in another world, yet he is not so wise for his soul and his best being as the poor creatures are to preserve their being by the instinct of nature. "When sharp weather comes they avoid it, and go where a better season is, and a better temper of the air; but man, when God's judgments are threatened and sent on him, and God would have him part with his sinful courses, and is ready to fire him, and to force him out of them, yet he is not so careful as the creatures. He will rather perish and die, and rot in his sins, and settle upon his dregs, than alter his course. So he is more sottish than the silly creatures. He will not go into a better estate, to the heat, to the sunbeams to warm him. He will not seek for the favour of God, to be cherished with the assurance of his love, as the poor creature goeth to the sun to warm it till it be over hot for it. Man should know what is good and what is evil. The new creature doth so. For with the change of nature there is a divine wisdom put into the soul of a Christian, that teacheth him what is good and what is evil; that he may be careful to avoid the evil; that he may discern of things that differ; that he may say, This is good for my soul, and all the world shall not scoff me out of that that I know to be good. With their profane jesting, they shall not drive me from that is good; and for courses that are ill, they shall not draw me with all their allurements. I know what belongs to the good of my soul better than so. It should be thus with Christians, to be wise for their spiritual being, as the poor creatures, the stork, and the crane, and the turtle, are to preserve their poor life here with as much comfort as they can.

God takes out of the book of nature things useful, to insert them into his divine book; because now no man shall be ashamed to learn of the creatures. Now, since the fall, man must learn of the poor creatures, and such a dunce is man, it is well for him if he can learn of the ant, and crane, and turtle; and therefore doth God take lessons out of the book of nature, and put them into his book, to teach us to furnish ourselves with divine mysteries and instructions from the creatures. And indeed a gracious heart will make

use of everything, and have his thoughts raised with them. As the prophet Jeremiah here, he shames them by the example of the creatures. But of this by the way.

The thing most material, with which I will end, is this:

Doct. That God, after long patience, hath judgments to come on people; and it should be the part of people to know when the judgment is coming.

There is a season when God will forbear no longer in this world. 'They know not the judgment of the Lord.' The meaning is not, in hell, though that may come in: that is implied in all; but 'they know not the judgment of the Lord,' that is, they know not the judgments that are coming. When judgments are coming, God opens the hearts and understandings of his people to know them; as there is an instinct in the creatures to know when there will be hard weather.

Quest. But how shall we know when a judgment is near hand?

Ans. 1. By comparing the sins with the judgments. If there be such sins that such judgments are threatened for, then as the thread followeth the needle, and the shadow the body, so those judgments follow such and such courses. For God hath knit and linked these together. All the power in the world and hell cannot unlink them, sin and judgment; judgment either correcting us to amendment, or confounding us to perdition. God, therefore, having threatened in the Scriptures such judgments to such sins; if we live in such and such sins, we may look for such judgments. Thus a wise man, by laying things together, the sins with the judgments, though he cannot tell the particular, yet he may know that some heavy judgment is at hand.

2. Again, There is a nearer way to know a judgment, when it hath seized on in part already. He that is not brutish and sottish, and drunk with cares and sensuality, must needs know a judgment when it is already inflicted, when part of the house is on fire. We see judgment hath seized now on the places where we live, and therefore we cannot be ignorant of it.

3. Again, We may know it by the example of others. God keeps his old walks. Therefore it is said, 'As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of man comes: they were eating, and drinking, and marrying, and knew not till the flood came and took them away,' Mat. xxiv. 38, 39. God will be like himself, if sinners be like themselves. He will not change, if they

change not; but will deal alike with them in his judgments, as he hath dealt with others. What ground have we to hope for immunity more than others? We may rather expect it less, because we have their examples; and so they wanted those examples to teach them which we have. In Jer. vii. 12, saith God, 'Consider, look to Shiloh, and see what I did there: so will I do to you.' So likewise the judgments on Jerusalem are a fearful spectacle for us. These and other examples may help us to judge of our condition in regard of approaching judgments.

4. Again, General security is a great sign of some judgment coming. In the days of Noah, there was a general sensual security. Notwithstanding the prophet foretold them of the deluge, they were eating, &c., and knew not till the flood came and took them away. So likewise, if we eat, and drink, and marry, and build, and be negligent and careless of making our peace with God, especially when warning is given us, it is a sign that some judgment, either personal on ourselves, or generally on the place we live in, will come upon us. There is never more cause of fear, than when there is least fear. The reason is, want of fear springs from infidelity, for faith stirs up fearfulness and care to please God: 'By faith Noah, moved with fear,' or reverence, 'budded the ark,' Heb. xi. 7. It proceeds from infidelity, not to be afraid when there is cause. Again, where there is no fear, there is no care. So the root of the want of fear is infidelity, and the spring that comes from it is carelessness, which always goes before destruction. When men care not what becomes of them: if God be pleased, so it is; if judgment come, so it is; the care is taken. 'When men thus say, Peace, peace, then cometh destruction.' It is a terrible thing for a state or a city, or a particular person, to be careless; for the life of a Christian it is a watching, as well as a warring, condition. He must be always on his guard. Therefore he must not be careless, 'and say, Peace, when God speaks no peace.'

5. Again, We may know that some judgment is coming, by the universality and generality of sin, when it spreads over all. When there is a general infection of sin, we may well fear the infection of the air. Sin hath infected the souls of men; therefore no wonder if God, in the plague, have a hand in infecting their bodies. We see here, before the prophet threatened this destruction, there was a generality of sin. In the 10th verse of this chapter, he cries out against the covetousness and false dealing of the priests and prophets, and men of all estates. And so also chapter v. ver. 4, 'The poor they were naught:' they were poor in grace and goodness, as well as in condition. Then saith he, 'I will see if there be any goodness in the great

ones: I will get me to the great men.' Ver. 5, &c., 'They have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God; but they have broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.' When poor and rich, great and small, when all are sottish and brutish, 'when all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Gen. vi. 12, as it was before the flood, then judgment must needs come. Surely generality of sin makes way for generality of judgment. As the deluge of sin made way for the deluge of water, so the overflow of sin will make way for a flood of fire. God will one day purge the world with fire.

But now for particular sins, whereby we may know when judgment is coming. These they are:

(1.) First, Injustice and formality in religion. When men are generally unjust, destruction is near; and indeed, how can a Christian soul look upon men's courses abroad in these regards, 'but he shall weep in secret,' Lam. i. 16? Is there not a general injustice? Will not men get any cause, so they have a good purse? Is not innocency trodden down oftentimes?

2. And so for religion. It is generally neglected. Indifferency and formality they are the sins of the times. Here is a sweet progress. In Queen Elizabeth's time, we began with zeal and earnestness; but now we begin to stagger whether religion is the better. We will join and put them together, that God hath put an eternal difference between, 'light and darkness.' Is this our progress after so much teaching, to put off God with formality, and deny the power?

(3.) Again, Another particular sin foreshowing judgment, is persecution of religion and religious men. When God is worshipped with conscience as he should be, what imputations are laid on it! I need not speak. The world knows well enough. Can God endure this, when conscience of his service shall go under the brand of opposition? God is much beholding to the times, when there is nothing so heartily hated as that. There are many things loathsome, as debauchery, &c. But what is so eagerly and heartily hated as the power of godliness? That which they have been known to do for conscience, bath been matter of reproach and ruin almost to many men. If a man will not prostitute his conscience to a creature, to make an idol of him, to set him highest, if he will not be buxom, and crack his conscience for a creature, he is scarce thought fit to live in the world. Will God suffer this, if these things he not amended? If anything be good in religion, the more the better, the more exact Christian the better. Exactness in other things is best. Is to be best in the best naught, when to be best in that which is not so good

carries away the commendations? In 1 Thess. ii. 16, 'The wrath of God is come on them to the utmost; God they hate and they are contrary to all men.' This is a forerunner of destruction, the spiteful opposing of goodness. God will not endure it long.

(4.) And so when men will go on incorrigibly in sin, as these here, 'they rush as the horse into the battle;' when they will not be reclaimed, it is a forerunner of destruction. Alas! the ministers of God strive with men, 'but they break off the cords,' Ps. ii. 3, and cry, 'Tush! they are silly men; shall we yield to them? We know what is for our gain, and profit, and credit in the world better than so. Let us look to that, and not be hampered in these religious bonds. No; we are wiser than so. Thus when men are incorrigible, and account the wisdom of God stark folly, it is a sign of destruction. There is an excellent place for this, Ezek. xxiv. 12-14, 'She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not out of her: she would not have her filthiness taken from her. In her filthiness is lewdness; because I would have purged thee,' with the word and the preaching of judgments, 'and thou wouldst not be purged; therefore thou shalt not be purged till thou die, until I cause my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, I will do it.' When God goes about to purge us by his word, and we will not amend our ways, we will not stoop, but 'strengthen an iron sinew, and a whore's forehead,' Jer. iii. 3. We will not be purged, nay, saith God, thou shalt not be purged till I purge thee out of the world to hell, till my fury rest on thee. I the Lord have spoken it, it shall come to pass, Isa. xlvi. 11. There is another notable place, Prov. xxix. 1, 'He that is a man of reproof,' that is, a man that is sermon-proof, that is often reprov'd and yet carries himself impudently and hardens his heart, and stiffens his neck, 'he shall suddenly be destroyed.' He doth not mean but that he had warning enough; but because after long warning he hardens his neck, he shall suddenly be destroyed, when he looks not for it, 'and that without remedy.' There is the same phrase in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 'There was no remedy,' when they did not regard God's ministers, that directed them the way to heaven, but would live in rebellion against the means of salvation. Then saith God, 'there was no remedy.' God sent his messengers betimes, and had compassion on his people. He would not have had them perish. 'They trifled with him and mocked his messengers,' accounted them weak men. They despised his word, and misused his prophets; and then the Lord's wrath rose against his people, and 'there was no remedy.' So when people are as those here in the text, that 'they rush as the horse into the battle,' that they are sermon-proof, that when every sermon they hear, as the hammer on the smith's anvil, makes them

harder and harder, as Moses speaking to Pharaoh increased the hardness of his heart, it is a sign of destruction.

Now whether it be so or no, I leave it to your particular consciences. We that are ministers tell you of your filthiness, of your profaning the name of God, and contempt of God's word. Whether have we gained upon you or no? Who hath left an oath? Who hath left his wicked courses and entered into a nearer communion with God for all our teaching? Blessed is that man. It is a sign God will not destroy him. It is a sign that in the general visitation God will regard that man. But, alas! we may almost complain with Jeremiah in his prophecy, Jer. v. 1, where he runs up and down to seek a man. Alas! they are very few. They are thick sown, but come thin up, that obey the ordinance of God. It is some comfort that men will submit to the ordinance, that they will come to hear. Some good may be learned. It is better than to keep out of the compass of God's law, as those men do that pretend they can read sermons at home, and so will teach God a course to bring men to heaven. There is hope of men when they submit to God's ordinance. But, I beseech you, how are you affected now for the present? How do you come now into the presence of God, if you will not amend and resolve to enter into a new course? He that is often reprov'd and will not come in, 'judgment will come suddenly on him without all remedy.' And it is good it should be without remedy; because it is without excuse. You cannot plead, and say that there were not prophets among you. If the heathens were hardened and given up to destruction,—'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them,' Rom i. 18, because they lived in a course of rebellion against the light of nature;—shall you, that have the light of nature, and the word of God, and the motions of his Spirit too, think to live in rebellion and not be accountable for it? It shall be easier for them that never heard of the word of God. Where God hath magnified his mercy, he will exalt judgment. Those that are lift up to heaven in privileges, shall be cast down to hell. 'Woe unto thee, Capernaum,' &c., Mat. xi. 21. The more in privileges, the more in judgment if they he abused.

(5.) Again, Another particular sin whereby we may discern a judgment coming is, unfruitfulness under the means; as the fig-tree, when it was digged and dunged, and yet was unfruitful, then it was near a curse. In Heb. vi. 8, the ground that is tilled and manured, and hath the rain falling on it, it is then 'near unto cursing' if it bring not forth. Perhaps a heathen, a pagan, if he were under the means, would be fruitful; therefore there might be hope of him. But those that are under the means, under the sunshine of the gospel,

under the influence of it, the Spirit working on their hearts; and yet they live in the sin of unfruitfulness, it makes way for judgment. 'The axe is laid to the root,' Mat. iii. 10. When men are taught, then the instrument of vengeance is laid to the root, and down they go if they bring not forth good fruit.

Sins of omission, when that all hath been taught, are sufficient to bring a man to judgment. At the last judgment, 'you have not visited me in prison, you have not relieved the poor,' &c., will be evidence enough to cast a man into hell, Mat. xxv. 48. And the like may be said of the omission of other duties. When a man is called to place, when he hath opportunity to do good, 'he hath a price in his hand, and yet hath no heart to lay it out to his power.' God hath made him a steward, and yet he is unfruitful, and labours to undermine and ruin the state of others. What can such a man look for but the judgment of God to light on him first or last? If not present judgment on his body, yet to be given up to hardness of heart, and so to hell, which is worst of all.

(6.) Nay more, decay in our first love is a forerunner of judgment, when we love not God as we were wont. In Rev. ii. 5, 'I will take away thy candlestick, because thou hast left thy first love.' Is there not such a plenty and depth in good things, especially of the gospel, whereby our sins are pardoned, and grace is given? Is there not that sweetness in them whereby to gain our love more and more? Is there not a necessity to renew our peace? Why should we decay in our love? The things of the gospel are so excellent and so necessary, that when God sees them undervalued, it is a forerunner of judgment. Let us take heed of decay in our affections. When there is no zeal for the truth, it is an ill sign.

It is a good sign for the present that God hath some blessing for us, that now in our public meetings there is regard to religion; and that, in the first place, there is some zeal for the cause of God against those that would wrong the cause of religion. We have some cause to hope in respect of that. And let every one labour to stir up the Spirit of God, and study how he may do and receive good, and be fruitful and warm in his affections, considering what excellent blessings we enjoy in the gospel. What is the glory of the kingdom we live in above popery? Our religion that we have, the sunshine of the gospel. Now the riches of Christ are unfolded; we have the key of heaven, heaven opened; what glorious times are these! The glory of the times is the manifestation of the gospel; and shall we grow in the decay of our love? Is there not cause to grow in love to the gospel, when God hath taken

it from others and hath given it to us? Now, idolatry is where true religion was; and the mass is said where God was religiously worshipped in other places and countries. Shall God so deal with us, and shall we not be in love with that truth? Since we have had the truth, what peace and plenty have we had! And if ever we lose it, it will go with other things. If God takes away the truth, away goes our peace and prosperity. He will not take it away alone. It came not alone, and he will not take it away alone. Doubtless it must needs make way for judgment, when our love to so precious a jewel as the gospel shall begin to die and decay, when we shall begin to slight and disregard it. And so for any particular man that hath had good things in him. If they now begin to decay, it is an ill sign, that God is fitting him for judgment.

Well, but what shall we do when judgments are coming? We see judgments are like to come, nay, are in part come. The plague of pestilence hath seized on us already; and then war is threatened, and that by enemies that have been foiled before. Foiled enemies are dangerous enemies, if they be proud. Now we have proud enemies that have been foiled, and idolatrous withal, and what mercy can we look for from them? God fought against them for us from heaven in some measure, and they being cruel provoked enemies, are the less likely to show any mercy. God is indeed so merciful to us yet, that he hath taken us into his own hands, rather than to give us up to the malice and fury of idolatrous enemies. But yet those that can lay things together, and consider the times, they shall see there is more cause of fear than is taken to heart.

Well, and in this case, what shall we do?

1. First, In the interim between the threatening and the execution. There are some judgments in the cloud, and the storm seems to hang over us, and the sword of the pestilence is drawn over our heads by the destroying angel, though he hath not yet stricken us in our particular. Now in the time between the threatening and the execution; oh improve it, make use of this little time; get into covenant with God; hide yourselves in the providence and promises of God; make your peace, defer it no longer.

2. And secondly, Mourn for the sins of the time, that when any judgment shall come, you may be marked with those that mourn. Take heed of the errors and sins of the times, lest, when a judgment comes, you be swept away in the general judgments. But let us rather have our part with those that mourn, that God may give us our lives for a prey.

3. And thirdly, Be watchful. Practise that duty, We have the plague to put us in mind of it, besides the threatening of dangers by enemies abroad. If we will not watch now and stand upon our guard, when will we? Let us be watchful to do all the good we can, to be fruitful, to be good stewards, to have large hearts. The time may come that we may be stripped of all, and we know not how soon. Having but a little time, let us do good in it; study all opportunities in these times; rouse up our sluggish souls. Fear, it is a waking affection. Jacob, when his brother Esau was ready to seize on him, 'he could not sleep that night.' We know not how soon the hand and arrow of God may strike us, besides other judgments. Let us shake off security, and do everything we do sincerely to God. We may come to God to make our account, we know not how soon. Let us do everything as in his presence, and to him. In our particular callings, let us be conscionable, and careful, and fruitful. Let us do all in our places to God, and not to the world, or to our own particular gain, but do it as those that must give account ere long to God. Now, God threateneth us to come and give our account; who can be secure he shall have life for a week, or for one day? We cannot. 'Our times are in God's hands,' Ps. xxxi. 15. We came into the world in his time, and we must go out in his time. But now we have less cause to hope for long life. This is to make a right use of the judgment of God, to be watchful in this kind.

And withal, let us be good husbands now in the interim. Between the threatening and the execution of the judgment, let us store up comforts from the promises of God, and store up the comforts of a good life. We shall have more comfort of the means we have bestowed wisely than of that we shall leave behind us. Thus if we do, come what will, we are prepared. Many holy and heavenly men have been visited with pestilential sickness. Hezekiah was a king, and his was a pestilential sickness; and many holy divines of late, and other Christians, have been swept away by the sickness —Junius, and other rare men of excellent use in the church. Therefore let us labour to get into the favour of God; make use of our renewing our covenant for the time to come. That is one end of fasting now, to renew our covenants, to remake them for the time to come. And then come what will, and welcome, life or death; for there is a blessing hid in the most loathsome sickness and death. If we come to heaven, it is no matter by what way, though the body 'be sown in dishonour.' We may die of a noisome disease, that we cannot have our friends near us, yet 'the body shall rise again in honour,' 1 Cor. xv. 43. What matter, saith St Paul, 'if by any means I may come to the resurrection of the dead;' by fair death or foul death, it is no matter. And if so be that God

makes not good his promise of particular protection of our bodies from contagion, &c., it is no matter. We have a general promise 'that he will be our God.' 'He is the God of Abraham,' the God of the dead as well as of the living, Mat. xxii. 32. He is a God that is everlasting in the covenant of grace, in life and death, and for ever. If we be entered into the covenant of grace, it holds for ever. And when all other promises fail, and all things in the world fail, stick to the main promise of forgiveness of sins, 'and life everlasting.'

When all things in the world will fail, we must leave them shortly, wealth and whatsoever, what a comfort is in that grand promise that God will forgive us our sins, and give us life everlasting for Christ! Therefore, when all things else are gone, let us wrap ourselves in the gracious promises of Christ, and then we shall live and die with comfort.

The Rich Poverty; or, the Poor Man's Riches

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.—Zeph. III. 12.

Before the captivity in Babylon, God sent prophets to his people, as Jeremiah; and among the rest Zephaniah likewise, who lived in the time of Josiah, to forewarn and forearm them against worse times. And as the contents of all other prophecies are for the most part these three, so of this: they are either such expressions and prophecies as set forth the sins of the people; or, secondly, the judgments of God; or, thirdly, comfort to the remnant, to God's people. So these be the parts of this prophecy: a laying open of the sins of the time, under so good a prince as Josiah was; and likewise the judgments of God denounced; and then in this third chapter especially, here is comfort set down for the good people that then lived. The comfort begins at the ninth verse.

This particular verse is a branch of the comfort, that however God dealt with the world, he would be sure to have a care of his own: 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' The whole Scripture is for consolation and comfort. When God 'pulls down,' it is that he may build up; when he purgeth, it is that he may cure and heal. He is 'the father of comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3. Whatsoever he doth, it is for comfort. Therefore he hath a special care in his prophets and ministers and ambassadors, that those that belong to him may be raised up with comfort, and not be over-much dejected and cast down. But to come to the words.

'I will also leave in the midst of thee,' &c.

In the words these three general heads:

First, God's dealings with his poor church when he comes to visit the world: 'I will leave in the midst of thee.'

Secondly, Their condition and disposition: they are 'an afflicted and poor people.'

Thirdly, Their practice and carriage towards God: ‘They shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

From the first, God’s dealing with his people in the worst times, we may observe, first, that (lbs;. 1. There is a difference of the people, both in regard of providence in this world, and in regard of that love that tends to the world to come. For God hath a more special care, as we shall see afterwards, of some, than he hath of others; and he loves some to eternal life, and not others: ‘I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,’ refusing others. God will leave some. He will purge away others; as he saith in the verse before, ‘I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride; and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.’ He will take away them, ‘but I will leave in the midst of thee,’ &c. There is a difference. All are not alike, as the proverb is, as white lines upon a white stone, that we cannot see a difference. It is not alike with all men, for we see a difference in this world; but not much here, because God’s government is veiled. It will appear at the last day; and whatsoever appears at the last day, it had a ground before. There is a difference in regard of grace and inward qualification, and in regard of the care of God. Even as there is a difference in the creatures; there be precious stones and common stones; and in plants, there be fruitful trees and barren trees; and as there is a difference likewise in the living creatures, so among men there is a difference.

The next thing is, that

Obs. 2. God will have some in the worst times. He will have some in all times, that are his, a remnant, as he saith here, ‘The remnant of Israel shall do no iniquity;’ and as in the text, ‘I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,’ &c. God will have always some that are his in the world.

Reason 1. For it is an article of our faith, ‘We believe the holy catholic church.’ There must not be an article of faith and no object to believe. If there be faith to believe a thing, there must be somewhat to be believed. If I believe that at all times there shall be an ‘holy catholic church,’ there must be such a church in the world, that is the object of my belief, or else there were no foundation for that article of faith. Therefore there must always be a church to the end of the world; sometimes more, sometimes fewer, even as the discovery of Christ is. From whence comes the abundance of the Spirit? The Spirit follows the manifestation of the knowledge of Christ, who is the head of the church. Then is the church most glorious, when the riches of Christ are more gloriously discovered. Those times wherein there is most

discovery of Christ, and the mercy and love of God in him, there are more 'elect' of God in those times than in other. There will be always a church in the world. That is the object of our belief. What is the meaning of it? I believe that in all times to the end of the world there will be a company of people spread over the world, gathered out of the rest of mankind, whom Christ hath knit to himself by faith, and themselves together in a holy spirit of love, of which company I believe myself to be one; therefore there must be such a company, or else there would be faith without an object of faith, which were a great absurdity in divinity and reason too.

Reason 2. Then again, The world should not stand, were it not for a company in the world that are his. For what are others? A company of swearers and blasphemers, profane persons, belly-gods, ambitious bubbles, that care for nothing but the vanities of the world. What glory hath God by them? What tribute do they give to God? What credit to religion? They are the shame of the times. They are such as pull God's vengeance upon the times and places they live in. Such is the ill disposition and poisonous nature of men, if they have not the Spirit of God, that God would not endure the world to stand a moment, unless there were some to withhold his wrath, to be objects of his love, and to stay his hand; and when they are all gathered, there shall be an end of this wretched and sinful world. Some there must be while the world endures, and for their sakes God continues the world. Those that keep God's wrath from the world are those that are his; and till all those be gathered the world shall stand. There shall always be some.

Use 1. It is a point not altogether fruitless. It yields some comfort to know, that when we are taken hence, others shall stand up when we are gone. The church shall not die with us. Is not that a comfort, when a Christian yields his soul to God, to think: yet God will have a church and people, if not amongst us, yet in some other part of the world. He will have some that shall glorify him in this world, that shall adorn and beautify religion, and shall for ever be glorified with him in heaven, till he have made an end of these sinful days. It is some comfort, I say, that goodness shall live after us, that the gospel shall continue after us. There shall be a posterity to the end of the world, that shall stand for the truth and cause of God. The world was not, nor ever shall be so bad, but God hath had, and will have, a party in the world that shall stand for him, and he for them. Now the children of God, as they know God hath a purpose to glorify them world without end; so they have a desire that God may be glorified world without end; and from this desire comes joy, when they think that there will be a people on earth to

glorify God still when they are taken hence: for it is a disposition wrought from God's peculiar love, to wish that God may ever have his praise here in the world, while it is a world, and for ever in the world to come. Therefore it is a comfort to them to think that God will always have a church.

But these are but a few, called by Isaiah a remnant: 'a remnant according to election,' as it is, Rom. xi. 5. A handful in comparison of the world, yet they are a world in respect of themselves; for they are a world taken out of the world. But compared with the rest of mankind, they are but as a 'few grapes after the vintage, as the gleanings after the harvest, one of a city, and two of a tribe,' Jer. iii. 11. The prophets, every one of them have special phrases to set out the fewness of those that God hath a special care of. He calls them in the next verse the 'remnant of Israel.' God will have some continually; but those are but a few that are his. His flock is but 'a little flock.'

It is a point not mainly aimed at here; but it is very useful.

Use 2. Is there but a few, but a remnant in all times? Am I one of those? What have I to evidence to me that I am of that little flock that is Christ's? What have I in me to evidence that God hath set his stamp upon me to be his? that I shall not go the broad way to destruction? This should force such queries to our souls. When we hear of the few that shall be saved, we should make that use that Christ makes of that curious question of the fewness of them that should be saved. 'Oh strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Luke xiii. 24. Stand not on many or few. Make this use of it. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Take up and practise the duties of religion, that are contrary to the corruption of nature, and contrary to the times. Avoid the sins and courses of the times, and then we shall know and evidence to ourselves that we are of that few number. Somewhat must be done to show that we are not of those that go the broad way. "We hear that there are few that go the other way; and indeed it will make a man look about him, the very consideration that there are but few that shall be saved.

Use 3. And it will make a man wondrous thankful. "Who am I, and what is my father's house?" 2 Sam. vii. 18. "What is there in me? "What could God see in me to single me out of the rest, out of a great number that go the broad way to destruction, to set his love upon me? It will inflame the heart with thankfulness to God. It will not make a man proud to despise others. That is pharisaical. But it will inflame the heart to be thankful in a peculiar manner to God, and to single out God in a peculiar manner to be our God, as he hath singled us out to be his. For always he works somewhat in us, like

to that he works for us. Those that God hath singled out to be his, he will give them grace to single out him again. God shall be my God, religion shall be my care, and that that God respects shall be that that I will respect. Since God so respects me, shall not I love and respect all that God respects? And shall I not grieve when anything goes amiss with that that God hath a care of? Certainly it will work this disposition, when we come to perceive, by grounded evidence, that we are of that few company, of that remnant here spoken of, that God will leave alway to trust in his name.

Obs. In the next place, though they be few, yet God hath a special care of them. "Why? There is good reason; for they are his in a peculiar manner. A governor of an house, he cares for all his cattle, but he cares for his children more. A man hath some care for all the lumber and trash in his house; he sees them useful at some time or other, but he cares more for his jewels. If fire come, he will be sure to carry away his jewels, whatsoever become of the lumber. God's children are his after a peculiar manner. Therefore he hath an answerable peculiar care of them in all times. And indeed when they are once his, as he makes them have a peculiar care of him, so he looks upon them as such as he hath wrought upon to be good, and to witness for him; that have a care to stand for him and his honour, to own him and the cause of religion; he will have a care of them. Not that they have this of themselves to win his love, but he works in them a care to witness for him; he works in them a care to stand for him and his glory in all times; and therefore he will be sure to stand for them in the worst times. He will not be beholding to any man. "What we have, we have it from him; and then he crowns his own graces after. He will have a special care of those that are his.

This might be instanced from the beginning of the world, from the infancy of the church to this present time. "When he would consume the old world, Noah must come into the ark. And Lot must come forth of Sodom when it was to be destroyed; the angel could do nothing else, Gen. xix. 22. So he had a care for Jeremiah and Baruk, he gave them their lives for a prey. He will have a care of his own in the worst times, for they are sealed; he hath set his seal upon them. Those things that are sealed we have a special care of; now in Rev. vii. 3, there are a number that are sealed, sealed inwardly by the Spirit of God, they are marked out for God; they are a marked, sealed number, all those that God will have a special care of. As in Ezek. ix. 4, those that were marked in the forehead, they were looked unto and cared for before the destruction came. So in Mal. iii. 17, God had jewels that he saith he would gather. "When he brings a general destruction, he will be sure to

gather his jewels; his first care is of them. 'A book of remembrance was written for them.' He hath a book of providence to write their names in. He hath their limbs, all the parts of them written; not a hair of them can miscarry: their tears, their steps, their days are numbered. 'My times are in thy hands,' saith David, Ps, xxxi. 15. All things are numbered exactly of those that belong to God. He hath a care of them and all theirs to a hair; as our Saviour Christ saith, they shall not lose so much as a hair of their heads. God hath an exact care of his remnant at all times.

Obj. But you will say, Sometimes it falls out otherwise.

Ans. Indeed, so it doth, for sometimes God's children are taken away in common judgments, perhaps for too much correspondency with the sins of the times; therefore they are wrapped in the destruction of the times. But yet there is a main difference between them. Jonathan and Saul died by the sword, both of them; Josiah and others died in the field. But there is a main difference. Jonathan was a good man; Saul, for aught the Scripture saith of him, we have no ground to judge charitably of him, but leave him to his judge. But sure it is in general, though the same things befall good and bad outwardly, yet there is a difference between Lazarus and Dives when they die. Dives goes to his place, and Lazarus to heaven. But for the most part this is true: in regard of the body of the church (though, some few members, God hath hidden ways to bring them to heaven and happiness; but for the body of his church and dear children), 'he will give them their lives for a prey,' Jer. xxi. 9. He will have a special care of them and be a sanctuary to them. Nay, so far he will do it, that the world shall know that he hath a special care of them in the world; as it is in the psalm, the heathen shall say, 'God hath done great things for them,' Ps. cxxvi. 2. Men that have no religion shall say, Certainly God doth great things for these men. Though he suffer them to be carried captive and to be in affliction, yet in that very affliction shall be the glory of the church, in that very bondage and abasement. Was the church ever more glorious than in Babylon, when Daniel was there, and the 'three young men' were put into the fire? The glory of the church oftentimes is in outward abasement. The world shall see that God hath a special care of them more than of others. God so magnifies himself, and is so marvellous to his church and children, to do good to them sometimes, to the envy of the enemies, and admiration of all the world that take notice of them, as at the return from the captivity; and the like shall be at the conversion of the Jews.

Use. The use of it may be, to comfort us against evil times, against the time to come. 'Let us cast our care upon God; he will care for us,' 1 Pet. v. 7. He will be with us and stand by us; he will never forsake us in the worst times. Nay, his fashion is to deal with his children as becometh his infinite wisdom, that they shall find most comfort and sweetest communion with him in the hardest times. Therefore let us fear nothing that shall befall us with slavish fear, let us fear nothing whatsoever in this world, as long as we are in covenant with God, come what will. It is a great honour to God to trust him with all for the time to come. Let us do our duty, and not be afraid of this or that, as long, I say, as we have God in covenant with us, who is all-sufficient. What should we be afraid of? 'Can a mother forget her child?' saith the prophet; 'If she should, yet will I not forget thee; thou art written on the palms of my hands,' Isa. xlix. 10. Those things that are in the palms of our hands we have ever in our eye. God hath us in his eye. He sets his children before him alway. How can he forget them? How can Christ forget his church? He carries them in his breast, as the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes on his breast in twelve precious stones, when he went into the holy of holies. Christ carries our names in his heart; how can he forget us then? Let kingdoms dash one against another, and let the world tumble upon heaps; let there be what confusion of states there will, God certainly will have a care of his jewels. 'I will leave,' in spite of all the world, 'in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people,' &c.

Quest. You will say, When is this performed?

Ans. 'In that day,' saith he in the verse before my text. You must know it is the Scripture's fashion, when it saith, 'In that day,' to take it indefinitely, not to tie it to a certain day; though there is a certain day wherein there shall be an accomplishment of all prophecies and a performance of all promises, that is, at the last day. In the mean time, there is a gradual performance of promises, and the accomplishment of them is in several knots and points of time, so much as shall give content to God's children, yet always leading to a further and further performance. As, for example, God showed mercy to these Israelites when they were in captivity. He brought them home again. They were a poor and afflicted people, and were much bettered by their abasement. There was a degree of performance then. And then there was a degree of performance in Christ's time, when he joined the Gentiles to them, and both made one church. There will be a more glorious performance at the conversion of the Jews, when God shall make his people 'trust in the name of the Lord,' and the Gentiles shall come in and join with them, and they

with the Gentiles. But that which follows in the verse after, ver. 13, ‘The remnant shall do none iniquity, nor speak lies; a deceitful tongue shall not be found in their mouth,’ these things shall have their time, when the people shall be more thoroughly purged than ever they were; and certainly these glorious portions of Scripture cannot have performance but in such days as are to come. But the accomplishment of all shall be at the day of judgment. Indeed, in the mean time, as I say, there is a comfortable performance, leaving us in expectation of further and further still; because, while we live here, we are in a life of hope and expectation, and always we are under somewhat unperformed. So much for that.

I come now to the state and condition of these people: ‘An afflicted and poor people.’

This is their state and condition, wherein is implied also their disposition. Their state is, they are ‘an afflicted and poor people.’ So it is answerable to the original, ‘an afflicted and impoverished people,’ a weakened people. However, God hath a special care of his church in this world. Yet it is with exception of some crosses and afflictions, ‘You shall have an hundredfold,’ saith Christ, ‘in this life;’ but ‘with tribulations and afflictions;’ that must come in. But yet, notwithstanding, here is a blessing in this: for howsoever he leave them ‘an afflicted and poor people,’ yet he leaves them a people; and though they be a people afflicted and poor, yet they are a people that are rich in God. They shall ‘trust in the name of the Lord;’ of which I shall speak afterward. In that he calls them ‘an afflicted and poor people,’ hence we see, in the first place, that,

Doct. The state of God’s church and children in this world, for the most part, is to be afflicted and poor in their outward condition.

I say, for the most part, we must not make it a general rule. It is a point rather to comfort us when it is so, than that it is always so with the church. For howsoever they are always in some respects afflicted, they have always something to abase them; yet the times of the church are sometimes more glorious in the eyes of the world. They have the upper hand of the world sometimes. And sometimes again the children of God, they walk in the abundance of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and increase and multiply, as it is in Acts ix. 31. When Saul was converted to be Paul, ‘the church increased and grew, and went on in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost.’ There be good days and times for the church sometimes; but for the most part in this world, God’s church and children are under some cloud. I

will not enter into the common-place of it, but only touch it in a word or two.

Reason 1. God will have it so, because it is fit the body should be conformable to the head. You know our blessed Saviour, when he wrought our salvation, he wrought it in a state of abasement, and we 'in working out that salvation,' in going to that salvation that he hath wrought for us, we must go to it, for the most part, in a state of abasement in one kind or other; for we are chosen to be conformable to our head, and we are as well chosen to our portion in afflictions as to grace and glory. God hath set us apart to bear such a share and portion of troubles in this world, to suffer as well as to do. 'From my youth up,' saith the church, 'they have afflicted me; the ploughers have ploughed upon my back and make long furrows,' Ps. cxxix. 3; that is, from the infancy of the church, in all the growth of it, this hath been the state of the church, for the most part, to be afflicted and poor.

Reason 2. And indeed, if we look to ourselves, by reason of the remainder of our corruptions, it is needful it should be so. God in wisdom sees it fit it should be so, that we should be afflicted and poor, because he sees that we can hardly digest any flourishing condition in this world. It is as strong waters to a weak stomach. However strong waters intoxicate them not, to make them drunk, yet they weaken the brain. So, however a good condition in the world doth not altogether besot men, yet it weakens them without a great measure of faith, and makes them forget God, and the condition of worldly things, how empty and vain they are; and forget themselves and their own mortality; and forget others, what respect is due to them, as if the world were made only for them to toss and tumble in at their pleasure, to have all at their will, as if other men were scarce men to them. You see when men are trusted with great matters, they deal with other men as if they were not men, as if all were made for their pleasure. This is the nature of man in great eminency. It sets up its own desire for a 'god,' as if all other were beasts, and base, and nothing. It is a pitiful thing to consider what our nature is in this kind. Nay, take the best. Hezekiah, in his prosperity, he would needs show his treasures to the king of Babylon, a fair booty for him. You know what it cost him afterward. Naturally we are prone to outward carnal excellency, too, too much. God knows it well enough. David would be numbering the people, that he might be conceited what a goodly number he had to fight against his enemies. God punished him you see in that kind. He took away that people that he made his confidence. God deals thus with his children in this world, because he sees a disposition in them that cannot

digest, and manage, and overcome prosperity. They cannot command it as they should do, but are slaves to their own lusts, though they have a good measure of grace. We are prone to surfeit of the things of this life, and God is forced; as it is in Ps. cxix. 75, 'of very faithfulness thou hast corrected me.' God, of very faithfulness, because he will be true to our souls and save them, he is forced to diet us and to keep us short of the things of this life; to take away matter of pride and matter of conceitedness in carnal excellencies; to make us know ourselves, and him, and the world, what it is; the vanity of the world and worldly things. You see, then, God hath some cause to do it.

Use. And we may justify God when he any way abaseth us in this world. He knows what he hath to do with us: let us leave that to him, so he save our souls, and sanctify them, and delight in us to heaven and happiness. If his pleasure be to diet us in this world, in regard of riches and greatness, that he do not answer our desires, but keep us under hatches, let us leave it to his will. He knows what to do with us, as the physician knows better what concerns the sick than the sick doth. Therefore, let us take in good part the wise dispensation of God.

But why doth he join 'afflicted and poor' together? Because poverty is affliction, and because affliction goes with poverty? Poverty brings affliction. It brings abasement with it, and it is an affliction itself. For the poor man is trod on at all hands. Men go over the hedge where it is lowest. It is an affliction, and it goes with affliction. Therefore the apostle St Paul, Philip, iv. 12, he joins them together: 'I have learned to want and to be abased.' Why? Because a man that is in want in the world is usually abased. Every man scorns him that is in want. They look haughty and high over a man that hath any use of them. So that affliction and poverty usually go together.

Those that God doth abase in this kind, let them consider that it is no otherwise with them than it hath been with God's people before. And let them labour for true riches: take advantage from their outward estate to be rich in a better way.

In the next place, we may observe hence, that Doct. God sanctifies outward affliction and poverty, to help inward poverty of spirit.

Poverty in outward condition helps poverty in the inward disposition. In their state and condition is implied their disposition: poor for condition, and likewise in inward disposition, for that is implied here. The prophet doth not mean he will leave poor people that shall only be poor, for we see a world of

poor and proud. A man, as he goes along in the streets, shall hear a company of poor that are the greatest rebels in the world against God; that blaspheme and swear, that rail against magistrates and governors. They are the most unbroken people in the world, the poorest and beggarliest, the refuse of mankind. As they are in condition, so they are in disposition. The Scripture speaks here of God's poor, not of the devil's poor, such as are poor every way, outwardly and inwardly, and have their poverty as a just punishment of their wicked lives, and continue in that wicked life, having it not sanctified to them to make them desire better riches. Doth God esteem such poor? No. But such poor and afflicted as, together with the meanness of their outward condition, have it sanctified to them; so as they grow to be low and poor in their own esteem of themselves, they grow to inward poverty of spirit, and so to seek to God, to seek for better riches, 'to be rich in faith,' as the Scripture speaks, James ii. 5; especially such, and only such, are here meant. So then, mark the point here, that God sanctifies affliction and poverty for the inward good of the souls of his children.

Reason 1. This is the reason of it: outward poverty and affliction takes away the fuel that feeds pride, that is an opposite to spiritual poverty and humility, and sight of our wants. That which pride feeds upon, it is some outward thing, some outward excellency, that the flesh takes occasion by to swell, to overween itself, and to overlook all others. Now, when the fuel is taken away, the fire goes out. When the fodder and nourishment is taken away, those wanton steeds, you know, that grew fierce with pampering, they grow more tractable. So it is with the nature of man. Take away that that makes him fierce, and then, when his fierce and high conceits are taken away, he will be tame. Take away that that feeds his carnal disposition, and he grows tractable and gentle. Thus then, affliction and poverty, outward in our condition, it helps to inward poverty of spirit and disposition; for it takes away that which inflames the fancy of a carnal man. A carnal man thinks himself as great and as good as he hath possessions of the things of this life; and the devil enlargeth his conceit more upon the imagination, to think these things to be a great deal greater than they are. We come afterward, by experience, to see them nothing but vanity. But this is in man without grace: we are prone, as I said, to surfeit of them. They are too strong for us to digest and overcome; and therefore God takes them away, that he may help the inward disposition of our souls.

Afflictions and poverty sanctified, they have a power to bring us to God, and to keep us in and to recover us when we are fallen. They bring us in, as

we see in Manasseh and in the prodigal son. Affliction and poverty they brought him to know himself. They brought him home. He was not himself before. They brought him to inward poverty. When he could not be satisfied so much as with husks abroad, it was time for him to look home again. So when we are in the state of grace, it keeps and pales us in: 'God hedgeth us in with thorns,' Hosea ii. 6, that we may not run out. And then, if we fall, it recovers us, and fetcheth us in again, by embittering sinful courses to us. We see, then, affliction and poverty is sanctified to God's children, to work an inward sight of their spiritual wants.

Use 1. Take notice, hence, of the poison and sinfulness of our corrupt nature, that defiles itself in the blessings of God; so that God cannot otherwise fit us for grace, but by stripping of us of those things that are good in themselves. This should abase us very much, considering that those things that should be rises to us, to raise us up to God, that should be glasses to see the love of God in, our nature useth them as clouds to keep God from us, and to fasten and fix upon the things themselves; so that there is no other remedy, but God must strip us naked of them. This consideration should humble us.

Use 2. And let us make this use of it: let us know, when any abasement is sanctified to us, it comes from God's love. If we find any affliction make us inwardly more humble and tractable, and more pliable, certainly it comes from love, and is directed to our good; and therefore it is in love, because it is directed to our good. For it is well taken away in earthly things, that is supplied in heavenly and spiritual. What if God takes away such outward honours, and respects, and riches, if God make it up in graces that are eternal, that make us truly and inwardly good, which all the outward things in the world cannot do! All the empires in the world cannot make a man an honest man. They may make him worse; they may be snares to make him forgot God and himself; they may be a means of his damnation, without wondrous care. What if God take away a great deal of these things, and make them up in favours of a higher kind! Therefore, if we find God sanctify any outward abasement for the inward good of our souls, let us bless him for it, and take it in good part as an evidence of his love; for God thus deals with his children. He sanctifies their outward abasements for their inward good, to draw them nearer to himself.

Use 3, Therefore, those that are weak in their condition, for a man may be poor in regard of his condition, though not inwardly poor, those that are

broken in their condition outwardly, they may know whether it be in love or no, if they find this condition sanctified to a hotter disposition. For as all things in general work to the best 'to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28, so this is one: especial affliction and poverty work for good to them that love God. God sanctifies it to them for that end.

Therefore we should examine when we are under any cross, see how it works upon us, whether by it we are humbled or no, whether we join with God or no; for those that belong to God have the grace of the Spirit to join with him in the work. When he afflicts them, they labour to afflict themselves; when he goes to humble them outwardly, they humble themselves; when he goes about to make them poor, to wean them from the love of the world, they wean themselves and join with God. As we see the physician by his art and skill, when he sees nature working away, then he will help nature till the cure be wrought; so God gives his Spirit to those that are his, to work with him. When God goes about to take them down, they will take down themselves too, and so they grow inwardly better, together with their outward abasement.

Those therefore that swell, and storm, and murmur, and rage, what do they get but more stripes! They get not out of trouble by it, but if they belong to God, they get stripes upon stripes. What doth the horse get at last by shaking off his rider that is skilful? More spurring and more strokes. So when men are under God's hand, afflicted any way, and labour not to make a good use of it, but will pull the rod out of God's hand and swell and pine, if they belong to God they get more stripes. Therefore let us kiss the rod, and the hand that holds it. God is about a good work, let him alone; desire him rather to sanctify the visitation and abasement than remove it. A gracious heart desires rather the sanctification than the removal.

Use 3. Again, Hence we learn not to 'despise the brother of low degree,' James i. 9, nor we should 'not have the faith of Christ in respect of persons,' James ii. 9. We should not take scandal at the church, that it is usually in a mean condition in this world, for the church is always rich in another kind of riches. The church is rich in reversion. It hath heaven and happiness, and the church is rich in bills and promises. The church is rich in an apparent pledge, that is worth all the world besides; that is, Christ. 'If he have given us his Son, will he not with him give us all things else?' Rom. viii. 32. The church is rich in this world indeed, 'for all things are yours, and you are Christ's,' 1 Cor. iii. 23. Christ carries riches for the church, and dispenseth them to the

church as occasion serves. Indeed, Christ's riches are the church's riches. The church cannot be poor if Christ be rich. It is only a medicinal poverty. It is God's dispensation to fit them for better riches. As a wise physician he purgeth a foul body, till he bring it almost to skin and bone; but why? That having made it poor, there may be a spring of better blood and spirits.

Let us take no offence therefore at God's dispensation, either towards others or ourselves, if we find him by his Holy Spirit sanctifying that outward condition to a holy inward bent and disposition of soul to God-ward. It is a happy affliction and poverty and abasement, whatsoever it be that draws us nearer to God, in whom we have more supply than we can want in the world. God never takes away anything from his children in this world, but he gives them more in better things. That is always his course. 'The poor receive the gospel,' Mat. xi. 5. The gospel is preached to them, and they receive it; those that by their outward abasements are brought to a sight of their spiritual wants, and thereupon to hunger after Christ.

Again, In that this outward poverty helps to inward poverty of the soul, outward afflictions help the inward disposition; hence we see likewise this truth that Obs. Providence is serviceable to predestination and election.

God in election hath a purpose to call us out of the world, to save our souls. Providence, that is a general government of all things in the world. Election is in order to salvation; he hath chosen us to a supernatural end, and fits us for it by calling and sanctification. Now how doth providence serve the decree of election? Thus; whom God purposeth to save, to bring to an end above nature, he directs providence, so that all things shall serve for that end; therefore he encourageth them with outward things, or takes outward things from them in his providence, as may serve his purpose in election to save their souls. He hath a purpose to save them, therefore providence works all things for their good, Rom. viii. 28. All things, by the overruling providence of God, are serviceable to a higher degree of love that God hears to his children, to serve his purpose to bring them to heaven. Thereupon comes the dispensation of riches or poverty, honour or abasement. He takes liberty for outward things concerning this life, to give or take them as they may serve the spiritual and best good of his children.

Use. Therefore God's children, when they see God intends their good in taking away the things of this life, in letting them bleed, as it were, for their health, they should bless God as well for taking as for giving, as Job did, Job i. 21. And there is as great mercy and love hid in taking away blessings as in

conveying of them. 'I will leave an afflicted and poor people.' In the original it is poor and mild and gentle. Poverty of estate, and poverty of spirit, the disposition of soul, come almost in one word, and indeed in God's children they are joined together. For he sanctifies all dispensations and carriages of himself towards them. When God hath a purpose to save a man, everything shall help him homeward. And it is not a better outward argument to know a man's state in grace, than to see how the carriage of things serve God's purpose to do good to his soul, when we ourselves are bettered in our inward man by whatsoever befalls us. God complains of the Jews; they were as 'reprobate silver,' Jer. vi. 30, because he had melted them, and they were never a whit the better; they were like dross consumed in the melting. God's children are as gold refined. Those that find themselves refined and bettered, it is an evidence that they are God's; because there is a providence serving their spiritual good, directing all things to that end.

But from their condition, we come to the disposition implied, inward and spiritual poverty.

1. Now this poverty is not a mere want of grace. To be poor in spirit is not to be poor of that spirit, or to be of a poor spirit. To be of a poor spirit is to have no goodness, no worth at all, but to be of a dejected, base mind. God's children are not so. There are none more courageous than they, when they are called to it. It is not this poverty of spirit to have no goodness at all. But to be 'poor in spirit,' is a state and disposition of soul, that hath some goodness, wherein they see a want of farther goodness. They have so much goodness and worth, as to see an unworthiness in themselves, and a greater worthiness out of themselves. They are sensible of their own want, and see they have no means of supply in themselves; and they see an all-sufficiency out of themselves, in God, in Christ; they see a necessity of dependence for supply out of themselves, in their whole condition till they come to heaven. In a word, this poverty is a sight of our own nothingness in ourselves, and besides that, our own inability, and a sight of sufficiency out of ourselves, and a desire of it; and likewise- a hope of supply from thence, which hope carries us to endeavour and to waiting till we have supply.

2. This will better appear, if we distinguish of this poverty in spirit by the two degrees of it. There is a poverty of spirit before we are in the state of grace, before we are in Christ; and a poverty after.

The poverty before we are in the state of grace, is, when God by his Spirit, together with his word and work of correction, doth open the eyes of

our souls to see what we are by nature, what we are in ourselves. It is a work of God's convincing Spirit, to give us a true view into our own condition, and with the sight to work a sense; and from a sight and sense and thorough conviction, comes a wondrous abasement, and a desire to be otherwise than we are. There is some hope in spiritual poverty in God's children before their conversion, which stirs them up to look upon Christ, and to the mercy of God in Christ; and this stirs them up to beg, and to use all means; and at length God is gracious and answers all the desires of their souls. This is before they were in grace; for before a Christian is a sound Christian, he must be driven out of himself. Naturally we are prone to cleave to something, either out of ourselves or in ourselves, and we must be fired out by a sight and sense of the misery we are in.

We see God hath taken this course alway in Scripture. This course he took with Adam. He cites him, arraigns him, condemns him. He lets him see what a miserable creature he was; as no man on earth was ever so miserable, till he felt the sweetness of the promised seed. He that had been in so great happiness as he was, to have his conscience so galled as his was afterward, to feel such misery for the present as he did, he must needs be very miserable, as indeed he was the most miserable man that ever was since his time. It is the greatest unhappiness for a man to have been happy; for his former happiness makes his present unhappiness more sensible. When God had prepared him thoroughly, then he raised him up with the promised seed. God deals as he dealt with Elijah; first, he casts him down with earthquakes and storms, and then he comes in a stiller voice. It is for that end that John Baptist comes before Christ, to level all, to cast down the 'mountains and fill up the valleys;' Luke iii. 5, for all must be laid fiat to Christ. We must lay ourselves at his feet, and be content to be disposed of by him, before we know what belongs to being in Christ. There must be poverty of spirit antecedent therefore. We see this lively set out in the prodigal son, that while he had anything in the world to content him, he never looks homeward; but when he saw such an emptiness in all things he met with, that he could not be satisfied with husks, then he began to think of going home, and that there was some hope he had a father that would receive him. I will be short in this, because the other is mainly intended.

If we would know and discern by some evidences whether we have been poor in spirit, in this preparative poverty or no,

1. Let us consider what we have judged of our condition by nature; whether ever we have been convinced of the ill condition we are in; for if there be not conviction of sin, there will not be conviction of righteousness, as you have it, John xvi. 8. There are three works of the Spirit, 'to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' of spiritual government. The Spirit, before it convinceth us that we have the righteousness of Christ, and convinceth us of the necessity of government and holy life in Christ, which is called there judgment, he convinceth of sin, which is an antecedent work. Let us examine ourselves whether the Spirit have had such a work or no.

2. Where this conviction and poverty is, a man sees an emptiness and vanity in all things in the world whatsoever, but in Christ.

3. And there is a desire of the grace and favour of God above all things. Ask a poor man what he would have; he would have that that may supply his poverty and want. Ask a man that is spiritually poor before he be in Christ; what would you have? Oh, mercy and pardon. Offer him anything else in the world, it contents him not. But that will content him, the sense and persuasion of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus.

4. "Where this poverty of spirit is, there will be a wondrous earnestness after pardon and mercy, and after grace. To be in another condition a man will labour, even as for life. If you come to a poor man that labours for his living, and ask him, Why do you labour so? he will wonder at your idle question. I may starve else, he will say. A man that is spiritually poor, and sees what a state he is in, he labours in the use of means to have an inward sense of God's love, to find some beginnings of the new creature, to find a change, to be otherwise than he is; he sees he must perish else. There is a prizing and estimation in him of mercy and pardon above all things in the world, and a making after it.

5. It is alway joined likewise with a wondrous abasing of himself. He thinks himself not worth the ground he goes on, till God hath mercy on him in Jesus Christ. This is not so sensible in those that are brought up in the church, or that have religious thoughts put into them continually in both kinds; both concerning their own estate by nature, and withal concerning grace and mercy in Christ. Therefore grace is instilled into them by little and little, and the change is not so sensible. But where the conversion is anything sudden, from an ill course of life to a better, God works such a poverty of spirit before he bring a man to Christ. In Mat. v. 3, it is the beginning of all happiness, the blessedness that leads to the rest, 'Blessed are the poor in

spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' And indeed, those that are poor in spirit are blessed, though they have not yet the sense of God's love so much as they desire; for this draws on all the rest, as I shall show afterwards. To be poor in spirit therefore, is to see that we have no good in ourselves; that we are beggars and bankrupts, and have no means to pay or satisfy; and this stirs up desire and the use of means, and all the qualifications that follow there, 'hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mourning, and meekness.' For this will follow. A man that is poor in spirit, say what you will to him, he is so tractable and meek, let God do what he will with him so he give him grace; if he will cast him down, so be it. 'What shall we do to be saved?' Acts xvi. 30, implying a pliability to take any course; he is willing to do or to suffer anything.

And indeed there must be such a poverty of spirit, before we can believe in Christ, whereby we may be convinced of our debts and of our inability to pay those debts, and our misery; that we are in danger to be cast into eternal bondage for them.

1. There must be this before; for else,

(1.) We will never repair to Christ nor God's mercy in him. 'The full stomach despiseth an honey comb,' Prov. xxvii. 7. We will not relish Christ, nor value him as we should.

(2.) Then again, without this, we will not be thankful to God as we should be. Who is thankful to God but he that sees before what need he stands in of mercy and of every drop of the blood of Christ?

(3.) And then we will not be fruitful; for who is so fruitful a Christian as he that is thankful? And this depends upon the other. A Christian that was never truly cast down and laid low by the spirit of bondage, he is a barren Christian. The other having tasted of the love of God in Christ, the very 'love of Christ constrains him,' 2 Cor. v. 14, and he studies to be 'abundant in the work of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58, as St Paul saith, and every way to 'show forth the virtues of him that hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light,' 1 Peter ii. 9.

(4.) Again, this is the ground, when men are not sufficiently humbled before, that they fall away dangerously. It is the ground of apostasy, because they did not feel the smart of sin. He that bath smarted for his estate before, and knows what it is to be in such a condition, he will be loath ever to come

into the prison again. Therefore the ground of careful walking is a sense of our unworthiness and misery. The more we are convinced of this, the more careful and watchful we will be, that we never come into that cursed condition again.

(5.) And indeed it is an error in the foundation which is not mended in the fabric, as we say, when there is an error in poverty of spirit at the first, when the work of humiliation is not kindly wrought; hence is the defect in all the whole carriage of a Christian. The foundation of God's building lies low; he digs deep. God lays his foundation oftentimes as low as hell itself in a manner; he brings his children to see that that he means they shall never feel, to see his wrath against sin, that so he may build upon this foundation. For Christianity it is an excellent frame; it is a frame for eternity, a building for ever. Therefore it must have a sure foundation, which must be laid in humiliation and poverty of spirit. An error in the first digestion is not amended in the second; if that be not good, the rest are naught. If there be not sound humiliation, nothing will be sound afterward. Therefore we should desire that God by his Spirit would help us more and more to know what we are in ourselves, that we may get to be what we are in Christ.

2. But there is a continual frame and disposition of soul, which is a poverty in spirit that accompanies God's children all the days of their life till they be in heaven, till they enjoy that riches that is laid up there for them; and that is especially here meant. And indeed it is an ingredient into all the passages of salvation.

(1.) For in justification there must be a poverty of spirit, to make us see that there is no righteousness in ourselves, or that can come from us, that is able to stand against the law and against the justice of God; all is defiled and spotted and unanswerable. And upon this poverty and apprehension of what is defective in ourselves, comes an admiration of that righteousness of God in Christ—for it is of God's devising, and of God's approving, and of God's working, Christ being God and man—to force us every day to renew our right in the righteousness of Christ, and to be 'found in him.' There is such a poverty of spirit as to account all 'loss, and dross,' Phil. iii. 8, and nothing; to be willing to part with all to be found in Christ, 'not having our own righteousness, but that which is of God in Christ,' as Paul divinely speaks, ver. 9. So it is necessary in that main passage, of justification, to be 'poor in spirit;' that is, to see a defect in our own righteousness, to stand opposite to

God's justice, who is 'a consuming fire.' It is requisite in regard of our daily living by faith in justification.

(2.) In the whole course of sanctification there must of necessity be poverty of spirit; that is, a sense that we have no sanctifying grace of ourselves, but we must fetch it from the fulness of Christ, whose fulness is for us: 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace,' John i. 16.

The ground of this is, that now in the covenant of grace all is of grace, both in justification and sanctification; all is of grace, nothing but grace. God hath set himself to get the glory of his free grace and mercy now in Jesus Christ. Therefore as our salvation is wrought out of us altogether by our surety, the 'second Adam,' Christ; so our righteousness is altogether out of ourselves, whereby we appear righteous before God. It is his, and given to us by marriage; being one with him, his righteousness is ours. And likewise in him we have the principle of all grace. He is the principle of our life, the root and foundation of spiritual life and sanctification: 'Without me you can do nothing,' John xv. 5. So that in Christ we have all that concerns our spiritual life in sanctification and justification, because it is a state of grace. Adam had it in himself. Though God at the first clothed him with his image, yet notwithstanding he had not such a necessity as we have to go to Christ for all; but now in the 'second Adam,' Christ, we must fetch grace for everything from him. Therefore there must be poverty in regard of our knowledge—we have no spiritual knowledge of ourselves—and poverty in regard of our affections. We have no joy, no peace, no comfort of ourselves, no delight in good things, nor no strength to them; we have all from Christ. 'By grace,' saith the apostle, 'I am what I am,' 1 Cor. xv. 10; as if grace had given him his being, his form, as we say. Indeed, so it doth; grace gives a Christian his form and being, his work and his working, for all working is from the inward being and form of things. By grace we are what we are in justification, and work what we work in sanctification. It is by what we have freely from Christ. Therefore in that respect there must be poverty of spirit.

Nay, I say more; in every action when we are in the state of grace, and have had the beginnings of the new creature in us, there needs poverty of spirit, in regard of our own inability to perform every action. For even as it is in our form—the life and soul, there is need of it in every moving and stirring—so there is a need of the spirit of grace, which is as the form and life and being of a Christian, to every holy action. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' saith the apostle, Acts xvii. 28. 'In him,' that is, in 'God

reconciled to Christ,' we have not only our being, that is, our form, but in him we 'live and move' to every particular act. We are no wiser in particular things than God makes us on the sudden; the wisest man will be a fool if God leave him to his own wit. We are no stronger in every particular act that needs strength than God supplies us with spiritual strength. We are no holier than God by his Spirit shines on us, and raises our souls in particular actions. So that it is not only necessary that we have grace at the first to make us Christians, but we must have a perpetual regiment of the Spirit, from whence we must have an influence to every particular act. Though we have grace, yet we cannot bring forth that grace to act without new grace. Even as trees, though they be fitted to bear fruit, as the vine, &c., yet without the influence of the heavens they cannot put forth that fitness in fruits; so though we be fitted by the Spirit of God, yet we cannot put it forth to particular acts when occasion serves, without the influence of Heaven to promote and further that grace and applying our spirits to every holy action by removing the impediments that would hinder it, adding new supply and strength to help grace. If the temptations be too strong, as sometimes they are, former grace will not serve, without a new supply of strength. As he that may carry a lesser burden cannot carry a greater without new strength, so in every temptation there is required more strength than the former; and in every new action there is required not only a continuance of grace, but a fresh supply of stronger grace.

And for want of this, the best of God's saints have fallen foully. Though they have had grace in them, yet, notwithstanding, the Spirit had left them to themselves in regard of new supply, because they have been conceited; they have not been poor enough in spirit. As Peter, he was conceited of his own strength: 'Though all men forsake thee, yet I will not,' Mat. xxvi. 33. This conceit moved God in mercy, as well as in justice, to leave him to himself, that by his fall he might learn to stand another time, and not trust his own strength. The best of us all, I say, when there is anything to be done, we had need of a fresh influence of grace, and a fresh light to shine upon us.

It should force perpetual poverty of spirit, to see the want that is in ourselves, and the supply that is out of ourselves, and to make use of that by going out of ourselves, and making towards him in whom is all our supply. In all our communion we have with God, which is the happiness of our estates, this frame and disposition of soul, to be poor in spirit, it is necessary in every act. Even in our very prayers for grace, we are so void of it, that we want ability to call for what we want. We must have that from the Spirit, not

only grace, but that disposition of soul which carries us to God. A spirit fitting us to pray, that must be also given us; we know not what to call for. We of ourselves are so poor, that we not only want grace and ability to action, but we have not ability to ask; but God's Spirit must dictate our prayers, and give us motions, and make us sensible of our wants, and must enable our faith to cherish those graces, and make us go out of ourselves even in our very prayers. What a state is this, then! Had we not need to be 'poor in spirit' all our lifetime, that have not so much as ability to go out of ourselves for supply from another, but that must come from Christ too? As St Augustine, who was a great advancer of the grace of God, and an abaser of man; he had indeed St Paul's spirit, saith he, 'We should boast and glory of nothing, because nothing is ours'. We have need of this poverty of spirit in the whole tenure of our Christian life.

Again, in the actions of this life, how pitifully do we miscarry, because we think we have wit and strength enough, and set upon things in our own wit and strength, we speed and have success answerable. Where the beginning is confidence, the end is shame, of any business even of this life. What is the reason that oftentimes the great and weighty business of this life have not answerable success? Many times it falls out so; as one said of general councils, they seldom were successful, because men came with confidence and wit for victory rather than truth. Certainly there is less success in great matters, because men come with self-confidence. Therefore it is a good sign that God means to bless great businesses, when he puts it into the hearts of those that are agents in them to seek him in the affairs of this life. We must be poor in spirit to see that the carriage and success comes from him.

Well, so it is in suffering likewise. We cannot suffer the least cross of ourselves but with murmuring and repining, without strength from him. When Moses came to the 'waters of strife,' Moses' spirit was discovered. He could not endure the harshness and rebellion of the people, Num. xx. 13. A Christian comes sometimes to such opposition that his spirit is moved, and he discovers much corruption. It is so with the best men. Even Moses, a meek man, when he had such temptations and provocations, it moved him. We must labour to get a greater spirit than our own, to have the Spirit of God to work this spiritual poverty in us.

This poverty of spirit, as we call it, is spirituale vacuum, spiritual emptiness. You know in philosophy there is nothing empty in the world, but

it is filled either with air or some kind of body, and to avoid the enemy of nature, emptiness, things will change their seat; heavy things will go upward, and things that are above will come below to avoid emptiness; that is contrary to nature, there being a fulness of things with one body or other. So, I say, spiritual poverty, it is an emptying of the soul, which of force always bring better things in. Wheresoever this emptying of the soul is, this making of ourselves poor, it is upon good ground by this course. It is always such a vacuum and emptiness of one thing that brings in another better. The soul can never be altogether empty. When wind and vain stuff is out, then comes better things in, which St Paul calls 'the fulness of God.' He prays and wishes that they might 'be filled with the fulness of God,' Col. ii. 9. Then comes fulness of knowledge and understanding, and fulness of affection, and fulness of contentment, and complacency in the will; and all the soul hath an answerable fulness to the proportion of the emptying itself of itself.

In the next place, let us come to discover this disposition of poverty of spirit where it is, and then show some helps to it.

1. First, To discover where this blessed frame of "soul is. Surely those that are thus poor in spirit they are full of prayer. 'The poor man speaks supplications,' as the wise man saith, Prov. xviii. 23; that is his dialect. 'The poor man is much in prayer. He that is 'poor in spirit' is much in supplication; for prayers, they are the ambassadors of the poor soul to God to supply it with the riches of his grace. Therefore where there is no prayer there is no sense of poverty, but there is a Laodicean temper, as if they were rich enough. You have a company of men, they say they cannot pray privately, their spirits are barren. They intimate much pride of spirit, for if a man be sensible of his wants you need not supply him with words. If a poor tenant came to a landlord, and find he hath a hard bargain, let him alone for telling his tale; I warrant you he will lay open the state of his wife and children, and the ill year he hath had; he will be eloquent enough. Take any man that is sensible of his wants, and you shall not need to dictate words to him. There is no man that hath a humble and broken heart, though he be never so illiterate, but he will have a large heart to God in this kind.

2. Again, there is a care of using all means. Where poverty is, there will be a making out of ourselves unto places where God bestows any riches. They that are poor, and have no victuals at home, they will go to market rather than they will starve; and those that find in themselves want of grace and comfort, surely they will go out of themselves: they will go to God's

market, they will attend upon the means. He that is like to be arrested for debt, and hath nothing at home, it is time for him to seek abroad for supply. So, when a man is poor spiritually, ready to be snared and caught in everything for want of spiritual grace, he will labour for strength in the use of all means. Therefore those that are of a Laodicean stamp, that think there is too much preaching, and too much hearing, and too much reading, and what need all this ado? alas! they were never humbled; they were never sensible of their state by nature; nor are not yet in the state of grace. For the soul of a true Christian is always in the state of spiritual poverty, as that it relisheth spiritual means and is not fed with husks. A soul that is spiritually poor will discern in the use of means, this is flourishing; this is for the ear; this is conceits; alas! it comes for food for supply. A poor soul that finds the want of grace, and strength, and comfort, it judgeth of the means by what it finds. There will be a use of all means, and likewise some ability to taste where there is true poverty of spirit.

3. Again, Where this inward poverty of spirit is, it will make God's children wondrous thankful, and thankful for a little grace. A poor man that is sensible of his poverty will be more thankful for a penny, than another man for a pound that hath money of his own. A soul that sees the want of grace, and withal sees the excellency of grace, is thankful to God that he will work anything in such a poor defiled soul as he is; that he will work any good motions, any good affections, any degree of faith, that he will give him any assurance of salvation. Oh he thinks what a good God is this! He breaks out with the apostles, Peter and Paul, that had both been sinners themselves and found grace; oh they were much in thankfulness! 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. A thankful soul is a poor soul, and a poor soul is always a thankful soul. He that is poor he knows he hath little and deserves little; therefore knowing that he deserves nothing, he is thankful for and content with anything. A humble man is always thankful, and that is the reason that God may have his glory from him. He is forced sometimes to humble and abase him. He should have no sacrifice from him else. A proud man, a conceited man, so doats upon his own worth; he forgets the giver, he makes himself an idol to him. Therefore such, they are usurpers of what they have, they enter upon God's blessings, not considering from whom they have them, nor for what end they have them. They deny God his tribute of thankfulness because they are proud. But a man that is poor in spirit, he enters upon all by title of gift, and receives all from God in the form of a poor man. Therefore whatsoever he hath he returns thanks for it again. An unthankful soul, therefore, is a proud soul. A thankful soul is an humble

abased soul alway; and the more humble and empty the soul is, the more thankful it is for every degree of grace and comfort.

4. Again, A soul that is thus disposed, that is poor in spirit, it is willing to resign itself to Christ's government, with self-denial of anything it is able to do of itself. It is ready to say, 'Lord, I have neither wit of mine own to govern myself, nor any strength and ability of mine own; therefore I put myself upon thy government, I desire to follow thy light and to go on in thy strength.' There is alway a resignation to Christ's government, and that in fear and trembling; for whom we resign ourselves unto, surely we will have a care not to displease them. A dependent life is alway an awe-filled life; for when a man hath resigned himself to the government of another, and knows he must depend upon him, he will have a care not to displease such an one; for he thinks, if I displease him he will withdraw his maintenance and countenance from me, and then what am I? So the soul that thinks it hath all from God, and from the Spirit of Christ, it resigns itself to the Spirit of Christ, and withal it is wondrous fearful not to grieve and displease the Spirit. For he thinks with himself, my life is but a dependent life, my graces are but dependent; let God but withdraw the beams of his Spirit and I sink; let him withdraw his comfort and his strength, what am I? Nothing but darkness, and deadness, and confusion. Those therefore that give not themselves up to Christ's government, but are governed by rules of policy, by the example of others, and have base dependence upon others, they know not what spiritual poverty is. They see there is a sufficiency in themselves to rule and govern themselves, as if Christ's wisdom were not sufficient. They are not so disposed as the apostle requires; they 'work not out their salvation with fear and trembling, because God gives the will and the deed,' Philip, ii. 12. The meaning is this, we should work out our salvation with a holy fear and trembling, a jealous fear, a son-like fear, lest we displease God. Why? 'He gives both the will and the deed,' Philip, ii. 13. He gives both the will to do good; and when he hath done that, he gives the ability of the deed itself. We cannot do anything, therefore we had need to walk in an awful condition, and not displease him in anything, lest he withdraw the assistance of his Spirit and leave us to ourselves; and then we shall fall, to his dishonour, to the discredit of religion, to the wasting of our own comfort, and the advantage of Satan. This is the temper of a man that is poor in spirit. He gives himself up to Christ's government, and depends upon it; and thereupon he is wondrous fearful to displease him in anything.

There are a company that know not what belong to this, that hope to be saved by Christ, and yet they will grieve the Spirit; they will venture into any place, upon any sight, into any company: but if ever they had been acquainted with the government of Christ's Spirit, they would know what it was to grieve the Spirit, and the Spirit would grieve them too. It is a sign they have not the Spirit of God, because he doth not chock them when they have done. Therefore your adventurous careless persons, that are indifferent for all things, for all companies and places, that do not watch over themselves, and over their words and carriages, they have not this poverty of spirit. For then they would know what it wore to displease God in anything, to walk and to speak loosely, because hereby they grieve the Spirit; and would presently find either want in grace or comfort. There is not one of many that are acquainted with the nature of this spiritual communion with God, and therefore they do not enjoy the happiness that those do, who are thus qualified, that are 'poor in spirit.'

5. Again, A man that is poor in spirit is very tractable, as it is in Isaiah: 'A child shall lead them.' 'The lamb and the lion shall feed together,' &c., 'and a child shall lead them,' Isa. xi. 6; that is, such an one, you shall lead him with any counsel, let the person be never so mean; having smarted for his sins, and his own counsel and ways, 'a child shall lead him,' that is, any man shall lead and move him to that which is good, he stands not upon terms.

G. And alway he that is poor in spirit, he is no upbraider of other men's wants. He is more sensible of his own than that he sees in other men. He is not prone to upbraid and object against them their wants and conditions, he is so taken up with the sense of his own.

7. And lastly, He that is poor in spirit is humbled in himself for spiritual wants; not so much for outward things, but because he hath not a large heart to God, because he finds impatience, because he finds not that heavenly-mindedness and strength to go through the duties that God requires, that his flesh is so backward; these things abase him and bring him on his knees, and not so much outward things; and answerably he looks for spiritual supply. When a man is humble and poor in spirit he is not abased with any outward thing, that that he would have is mercy and grace. The apostle, when he would pray for all happiness to the churches, he prays for grace, mercy, and peace; for as they are more sensible of their spiritual wants, so they are carried in their desires after that that may give them satisfaction that way.

Use. Let us labour to bring our souls to this blessed temper, to be poor in spirit; the happy temper that our Saviour began his preaching withal. The first thing that he falls upon is, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. v. 3. But before I come to any directions for the getting this spiritual poverty, we must know and premise this caution, that we must not be so 'poor in spirit,' as to deny the work of grace in our hearts. It is one thing to be 'poor in spirit,' and to see our wants; and it is another thing to be unthankful and unkind; to deny the work of grace, and so to gratify Satan. We must not give false witness against ourselves, and so deny the work of God's Spirit in us. It is not poverty, but darkness of spirit. We are not acquainted with that grace that God hath enriched us with. Therefore where the soul is in a right temper, there is a double eye, one to see the defects and the stains of those graces we have; to see what we are wanting in of what we should be, and to see how our graces are stained, and that there is a mingling of our corruptions with them. The viewing with the one eye, that we have any grace, that should make us cheerful, and thankful, and comfortably go on, considering that there are some beginnings that God will perfect; for he never repents of his beginnings. And then a sight of the want, and of the stains of those graces that we mingle our corruptions with them; that works again this poverty of spirit to go on still out of ourselves, to desire grace, to purge and cleanse ourselves more and more. Therefore, I beseech you, let us remember that, that we do not unthankfully deny the work of grace, and think that to be poverty of spirit, as some do out of covetousness, because they have not that they would have, they think they have nothing at all; that is a spiritual covetousness. But let us be wise to discern what God hath wrought in our hearts, what he hath done for and in our souls. A holy man, you shall have him much in mourning and complaining, but it is of himself, not of God, as if God were wanting to him. You shall have a holy man in a perpetual kind of despair, but it is in himself; he hopes in God still. Remember this caution, that as we complain, so let us be sure it be of ourselves; alway justify God in his mercy; and if we despair, let us despair of ourselves, that we can do nothing of ourselves. But be sure to maintain, all we can, the hope of God's rich mercy in Christ.

Now, having premised this caution, the way to come to spiritual poverty among many others is: first, to bring ourselves into the presence of God, to the presence of greater lights than our own. Men that think themselves somebody when they are alone; yet when they consider God sees them, whose eyes are a thousand times brighter than the sun, then they learn to abhor themselves in 'dust and ashes,' as we see Job did when God talked

with him, when he saw God, Job xlii. 6; and Abraham when he talked with God, he accounts himself dust and ashes, Gen. xviii. 27. Let us bring ourselves into the presence of God; consider his holiness, his justice. And withal let us bring ourselves to greater lights than our own; that is, oft come into the company of those that have greater grace than ourselves. The stars give no light when the sun is up. The stars are somebody in the night, but they are nothing in the day. And those that are conceited of their own excellencies, when they come into the presence and company, and converse with those that are better than themselves, their spirits fall down, they are abased. It is a good course therefore not to love alway to be best in the company, as is some men's vanity, because they will be conceited of their own worth, but to present ourselves before God in his ordinances, and present ourselves in communion and fellowship with others that are greater and richer in grace than ourselves, and so we may see our own wants. This is one direction to get spiritual poverty.

2. Again, That we may come to be poor in spirit, let us consider what we are, that we are creatures. The term whence creation begins is just nothing. It is so in the creatures in the world. God made all of nothing, and is it not so in the new creature much more? Therefore if I will be anything in myself as of myself, surely I must look to no creature of God's making. For grace is God's creature. Therefore it must rise of nothing; there must be a sight of our own nothingness. Indeed a Christian in himself is nothing now in the state of grace. Whatsoever he is for grace or glory, it is out of himself. He hath nothing in himself as of himself; all that he hath he hath from Christ. He is poor in himself, but he hath riches enough in Christ, if he sees his own poverty. He is a sinner in himself, but he hath righteousness enough in Christ, if he sees his sins. Let us know that this is a qualification to interest us in the good that is in Christ. We renew our right in Christ no otherwise than we renew the sense of our own poverty and want. Would we see all in Christ, that we have riches, and wisdom, and happiness, and favour, and life, and all in him? With the same spiritual eye of the soul, let us see that we have nothing in ourselves; for I can no otherwise renew that right and interest I have in Christ, but by renewing this sight. We altogether shine in the beams of our husband. The consideration of this will be a means to work our care and endeavour towards it; that we are creatures, 'new creatures;' and therefore we must rise of nothing in ourselves, and we must be maintained and supported by the new Adam, 'the second Adam,' and have fresh grace from him continually. 'We move and live in him,' as I said before.

3. Again, That we may be poor in spirit, help ourselves with presenting to ourselves abasing, emptying considerations. What be they? Among the rest reflect our minds back to what we were before God showed mercy upon us; how unprofitably we spent our days; what a deal of good we left undone that we might have done. For the present, consider the imperfections that hang upon us, whereby we even defile the best performances that come from us. Let us have in the eye of our soul presented our special corruptions for the present. For the time to come let us present to our souls what will become of us ere long; that for outward things, that nature is prone to be highly conceited of, they shall lie in the dust. These bodies of ours must lie low in the dust; all other things must be taken from us, and we from them, we know not how soon. Let us oft think and consider of the vanity of all things, what will all things be ere long. They must all come to nothing, The fire will consume all that is glorious in the world. There will be no excellency but the excellency of Christ, and his church and children; and think of the day of judgment. What will stand for current then? Think of the time of our dissolution, how we shall appear before Christ; what we have in us that will give us confidence at that day and time, to look upon him with comfort; that those thoughts of the time to come, of death, and judgment, and eternity may not be frightful to us. The consideration of these things will make us to look about us, and make us indeed 'poor in spirit.'

Especially let us consider what our profession requires of us; not by the law, let that go; but what in the covenant of grace we should be, and are not, it will shame the best of us. Alas! how much good might we have done that we have not! How have we failed in bringing honour and credit to our profession! How barren have we been in good works! How unwatchful over our thoughts and speeches, whereby we have stained our religion and our consciences, and grieved the Spirit of God. Let us consider how short we are of that we might have been; and this will bring inward shame and confusion of spirit, from whence this temper of poverty of spirit comes. Consider of these things, and enlarge them in your own meditations. There is not a more fruitful spending of our thoughts, next to the consideration of Christ, and the riches we have in him, than to consider what we are in ourselves; that we may be in a perpetual disposition of soul, fit to receive the good that is to be had in Christ.

Two graces are the main graces that must go along with us all the days of our lives; this grace to go out of ourselves; and another grace to go to another that is better than ourselves, in whom lies our happiness. That we

may go out of ourselves and the creature, and all that is in the creature, poverty of spirit is necessary, to see that there is not that in ourselves that will yield a foundation of comfort, and poverty of spirit sees that there is not that that we possess in the creature that will stand out. The creature, that is a particular good, for a particular case, to supply a particular want, and but for a time, it is fading and outward; but the comfort we must have it must be spiritual and universal, to give contentment to the soul. The consideration of these things will force us to go out of ourselves; this poverty of spirit, that we have not enough to make us happy. The heathen men, by the use of discretion and knowledge, had so much to see that there is nothing in the world to make man happy; the negative part they knew well enough. But there must be another grace to carry us to a positive happiness where that lies, and that is the grace of trust that follows. 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,' that shall be disposed and prepared by their outward poverty to inward spiritual poverty; to go out of themselves to Christ, to trust in him.

'And they shall trust in the name of the Lord.'

This is the carriage of these poor and afflicted people. 'They shall trust in the name of the Lord.'

God hath no delight in afflicting his children; he joys and delights in the prosperity of his children. It is our sinful nature that forceth him to afflict us, that he may wean us from the world, because we are prone to surfeit upon things here below. All that God doth is that we may trust in him, which we would never do unless he did afflict us, and make us 'poor in spirit;' but when we are afflicted and poor in spirit, and have nothing at home, we will make out abroad, as people in necessity will do. Supply must be had, either at home or from without; and when the soul is beaten and driven out of itself, which requires much ado, then we are fit for this blessed act here spoken of, to 'trust in the name of the Lord.' And the one is an evidence of the other. How shall we know that we are sufficiently humbled and made poor in spirit? When we trust in the name of the Lord.

In the unfolding of these words, take these for grounds; which I will but name.

First, That naturally every man will have a trust, in himself, or out of himself.

Secondly, That God is the trust of the poor man; what he wants in himself he hath in God. God is the rock or the castle to which he retires. He hath supply in him.

The third is, that Obs. God is trusted as he is known. They shall ‘trust in the name of the Lord.’ For God can be no otherwise trusted than he hath made his will known. It is presumptuous boldness to challenge anything of God that we have not a promise for; or to attribute that to him that he is not. God is therefore trusted as he hath made himself by some name known to us. He hath made himself known by his attributes, by his nature and essence, Jehovah; and by his word, and the promises in his word. For his word is one of the best and sweetest names whereby he hath made himself known. The name of God is glorious in all the world, in the creation; and every creature hath a tongue to show forth the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God. But what is this to us, if we know not the will of God toward us? There is the name of God discovered; what he is in himself; something of his power and wisdom, &c. But what he is to us, gracious, and merciful, and sweet; that we must gather out of the discovery of his own breast. He must come out of that ‘light that none can attain unto,’ 1 Tim. vi. 16, and discover himself as he hath done in his word; and by this name of God, his word, we come to make use of his other names. The next thing I will speak of is the improvement of God when he is known, to trust in him, to pitch our trust and confidence upon him. ‘They shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

Obs. For there must be an application of the soul to God. We must lay our souls upon God. Though he be a rock, yet we must lay our souls upon him; and though he be a foundation, yet we must build upon him and his truth revealed. There is an adequate comfort in God and in the Scriptures, and superabundant too to all our necessities whatsoever. It transcends them all. There is more in the spring than we want ourselves. Yet not-standing there must be grace in the soul to repair to God. There must be an hand, an empty beggar’s hand, such as faith is, to reach that help that God yields. There must be a wing to fly to our tower. The wing of the soul is this trust and faith; and when these two meet, faith or trust, and God, what a sweet meeting is there! For emptiness and fulness, poverty and riches, weakness and strength, to meet together, these will grasp sweetly; for the excellency and all-sufficiency of the one, and the necessity of the other meeting together, breeds a sweet correspondency. We must ‘trust,’ therefore, in the name of the Lord. That is the way to improve whatsoever is in God for our good.

Faith, the nature of it is, after it hath applied itself to the grounds of comfort, to draw virtue and strength from God. Of itself it is the most beggarly grace of all. Love is a rich grace, but yet notwithstanding in the covenant of grace, wherein grace and mercy must have the glory, God hath established such a grace to rule there as ascribes all out of itself, and is an empty grace of itself, to make use of the riches that is out of itself; therefore God hath made choice of this trusting instead of all other graces, as indeed leading to all other graces whatsoever. God brings us home by a contrary way to that we fell from him. How did we fall from God at the first, that was our rock, our defence, and trust? We fell from him by distrust, by having him in a jealousy, as if he aimed more at himself than at our goods. So the devil persuaded our first parents. The next way, therefore, to come back again to God, it must be to have a good conceit of God, not to have him in jealousy, but to be convinced in our souls that he loves us better than we can love ourselves, in spite of the devil and all his temptations. So to trust God is to rely upon him in life and death. Therefore God hath appointed this grace, as he saith here, 'They shall trust in the name of the Lord.'

Now, because we all pretend we trust in the name of the Lord, we will first examine our trust. Let us try our trust a little, that we may see whether it be true trust or no. And then upon that we will give some directions how to come to this blessed condition, to trust 'in the name of the Lord.'

For the first: I do not take trust here for the first faith, which is the grace of union to receive Christ; but for the exercise of faith afterwards in a Christian's life. So we speak of it as a fruit rather that comes from faith. And we may know our trust in the name of the Lord, being now conceived as a gracious Father in Christ, clothed with the relation of a father: for so we must trust him, not God absolutely, for there is no comfort in an absolute God, distinct from his relations; but when we apprehend him in relation as a sweet Father in Christ, in that name, then the nature of God is lovely to us, between whom and us there was an infinite distance before. Now Christ being Immanuel, God with us, has brought God and us together in terms of league. Now our nature is lovely to God in Christ, because it is taken to the unity of his person; and God's nature is lovely to us, having made himself a Father in Christ his beloved Son. Therefore, when we speak of God, our thoughts must run upon God as thus conceived, as clothing himself with a sweet term of Father, our God in covenant, we must so apprehend him.

1. Now one evidence of this trust in this our God, is a care to please him in all things. When we depend upon any men, we have a care to please them. A tenant that fears to be thrust out, will strive to please his landlord. We that hold all upon this tenure, upon faith and trust in God, we should fear to displease him.

2. And there will be likewise an use of all means to serve God's providence and care of us, if we trust in him; or else it is a tempting and not a trusting. There are no men more careful of the use of means than those that are surest of a good issue and conclusion; for the one stirs up diligence in the other. Assurance of the end stirs up diligence in the means. For the soul of a believing Christian knows that God hath decreed both; both fall under the same decree: when God purposed to do such a thing, he purposed to do it by such and such means. Trust, therefore, is with diligence in the use of all means that God hath ordained. He that trusts a physician's skill, will be very careful to observe what was prescribed, and will omit nothing. It is but presumption; it is not trust where there is not a care in the use of means, as we see many pretend to trust in God and sever the means from the end; they are regardless of the means of salvation.

3. Again, Those that trust in God, they are quiet when they have used the means. Faith hath a quieting power. It hath a power to still the soul and to take up the quarrels, and murmuring, and grudgings that are there, and to set the soul down quiet; because it proposeth to the soul greater grounds of comfort, than the soul can see any cause of discomfort. The soul being reasonable, yields to the strength of the reason. Now, when faith propounds grand comforts against all discouragements whatsoever, that overcomes them, that is greater in the way of comfort than other things in the way of discouragement, the soul is quiet. It hopes comfort will be had. The soul is silent and at rest. We see in Ps. xlii. 11, when there was a mutiny in David's soul, by reason of the perplexed state he was in, he falls a-chiding downright with his soul, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul! and why art thou troubled?' v. 11. But how doth he take up the contention? 'Trust in God, he is thy God.' So that wheresoever there is faith, there is a quiet soul first or last. There will be stirring at the first; the waters of the soul will not be quiet presently. As in a pair of balances there will be a little stirring when the weight is put in till there will be poise; so in the soul there will be some stirring and moving; it comes not to a quiet consistency till there be some victory of faith with some conflict, till at length it rest and stay the soul. For this power faith has to quiet the soul, because it bottoms the soul so strongly.

There is reason for it; it sets the soul upon God, and upon his promises. 'Therefore he that trusts in God is as mount Sion,' Ps. cxxv. 1. You may stir him sometime and move him, but you cannot remove him. The soul is quiet, because it is pitched upon a quiet object.

Therefore, where there is cherishing of disturbance in the soul, and cherishing of doubts, there is no faith, or very little faith; because it is the property of faith to silence the soul and to make quiet where it comes. This is one evidence and sign of true faith. And this is discerned especially in times of great trouble; for then the soul of the righteous is not disquieted, as you have it in Ps. cxii. 7, 8, 'His heart is fixed, therefore he is not afraid of ill tidings.'

4. And therefore this evidence to the rest, that faith as it hath a quieting power, so it hath a power to free the soul from all base fears, from the tyranny of base fear. There will some fear arise. We carry flesh about us, and flesh will always be full of objections and trouble our peace; but, notwithstanding, it will free the soul—this trusting in God—from the tyranny and dominion of base fears. If any news or tidings be of any great hard matter, I beseech you, who hath his soul best composed at that time? A sound Christian, that hath made his peace with God, that hath his trust in God, that knows what it is to make use of God, to repair to him. But for another man, in the time of extremity and trouble, he runs hither and thither, he hath not a tower to go unto, he hath no place of refuge to repair to. Therefore he is worse than the poor silly creatures. There is not a creature but hath a retiring place. The poor conies have the rocks to go unto, and the birds have their nests, and every creature, when night or danger approacheth, they have their hiding places. Only a wicked, careless man that hath not acquainted himself with God, when troubles come, he hath no hiding, nor no abiding place, but lies open to the storm of God's displeasure. Therefore he is surprised with fears and cares, and pulled in pieces with distractions. He is as a meteor that hangs in the clouds; he cannot tell which way to fall. But a Christian is not such a meteor, he falls square which way soever he falls, cast him which way you will. For his soul is fixed, he hath laid his soul upon his God. We see the difference in this between Saul and David. When David was in trouble, 'he trusted in the Lord his God,' when he was ready to be stoned. What doth Saul when he was in trouble? He goes to the witch; and from thence to the sword's point.

5. Again, Where there is this excellent grace of trusting in God, and the soul is calmed by the Spirit of God, to rely upon God in covenant as a Father in Christ, it will rely upon God without means and when all things seem contrary. So the Spirit of God will difference a Christian from a natural man, that will go so far as his brain can reach. If he can see how things can be compassed, he will trust God, as if God had not a larger comprehension than he. Where he sees no way or means to contrive a deliverance, nor no means to satisfy his desire, there the soul of a natural man sinks and falls down: a politician will go as far as reason can carry him. But a Christian, when he sees no means, he knows God can make means. Now, when all things are opposite, if he hath a word of God, he will trust God, even against the present state and face of things, as Job saith, ‘Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,’ Job xiii. 15. Therefore in the sense of sin, because there is a promise to sinners that, if they confess their sins, God will pardon them; he will believe the forgiveness of sins, though he feel the guilt of sin. And in misery he will believe an evasion, and escape, and that God will support him in it, because God hath so promised. And in ‘darkness, when he sees no light,’ as it is Isa. 1. 10; in such a state ‘he will trust in God.’ As a child in the dark clasps about his father, so a child of God in darkness when he sees no light, he will clasp about his God, and break thorough the clouds that are between God and his soul; as indeed faith hath a piercing eye. It pulls off the vizard of God’s face. Though he seem angry, yet he will believe he is in covenant and he is a Father. Therefore though God show himself in his dealing as offended, yet he argues God may be offended with me, but he cannot hate me; there is hope. Faith, where it is in any strength, it will believe in contraries. In death, when a man is turned to rottenness and dust, faith apprehends life and resurrection, and glory to come. It will trust in God’s means, or no means, if it hath a promise.

6. Again, He that trusts in God truly will trust him for all things, and at all times. For all things; for faith never chooseth and singleth out its object, to believe this and not that, for all comes from the same God. Therefore he that trusts God for one thing, will trust him for all things. If I will trust a man for many pounds, surely I will trust him for a shilling.

He that pretends he will trust God—God will save me, God is merciful — and yet notwithstanding will not trust him for common things, it is an abusive delusion and flattering of his own soul in vain. There is no such trust in him, because he that trusts God for the main will trust him for the less. Therefore true trust is for all things, he that trusts God for forgiveness of

sins, which is the main, and hath wrestled with God for the forgiveness of sins, and found peace with God there, he will easily wrestle in other baser and less temptations. As God saith to Jacob, 'Thou art Israel, thou hast prevailed with God, and shalt prevail over men,' Gen. xxxii. 28, so a true Christian, that in the grand point of forgiveness of sins, when his conscience is surprised with the fear of God's wrath, hath gotten assurance of the pardon of his sins, when he is to set upon other lesser temptations, he overcomes them easily.

1. Therefore a Christian will trust God, as for forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, so with his good name. Oh, will some say, you will be reported of thus and thus. He cares not. He knows the cause is just. He will trust his good name with God, 'who will bring a man's righteousness forth clear as the noonday,' as David speaks, Ps. xxxvii. 6. He that will not trust God with his good name is of a base spirit, and fear of disgrace keeps many men from many just actions.

2. He that truly trusts God, will trust him with the righting of his cause. He will not pull God's office out of his hands. He will not revenge himself, but he will trust God. God certainly will right me first or last. He will only use the legal means, and that quietly. But a man that is not acquainted with the Spirit of God is presently moved with revenge, and hath not learned to overcome himself in this conflict. A man hath gone indeed very far in religion, that can conquer himself in this conflict, that can trust his cause with God when he is wronged and overcome by might, &c. So our Saviour Christ committed his cause to him 'that was able to judge righteously,' 1 Peter ii. 23. Every true Christian hath the spirit of Christ. He, 'when he was reviled, retorted not again, but committed the cause to him that was able to judge righteously.' Shall I be able to commit my soul to God in the hour of death? and shall I not, in case of revenge, be able to commit my case to God, when I have done that that peaceably I may do? I may suspect that I am but yet an hypocrite; I have not true trust in God.

3. Again, He that hath learned truly to trust God for the grand main matters, he will trust him likewise with his posterity, with his children, without using indirect means to make them rich, as if they could not be blessed unless they have such a portion put into their hand when we die; as if God had not stock enough for them, 'for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. xxiv. 1. And he is the 'God of the faithful, and of their seed,' Gen. xvii. 19. Is he so? Then let us labour to leave our children in

covenant, leave them in a gracious frame and state of soul, that they may be God's children; and then we leave them rich, for we leave them 'God all-sufficient' to be their portion. Therefore those that pretend, I do this but for my posterity and children, when they are unjust and unconscionable in their getting, they make this defence for their unbelief. If they had true faith, as they trust God with their souls, as they pretend at least, so they would with their children and posterity.

4. Again, He that trusts God truly, will trust God with his gifts, with the distribution of his alms, with parting with that he hath for the present, when he sees it like seed cast upon the water. When seed is cast upon the water, we are likely never to see it again. Oh, but saith the wise man, 'cast thy bread upon the water, and thou shall see it after a certain time.' He that hath learned to trust God will believe this. Though he cast away his bounty, yet he hath cast it upon God and Christ, that will return it again; he knows he doth but lend to the Lord. Therefore those that think their bounty and alms and good deeds to be lost, because they see not a present return, a present crop of that seed, they have not a spirit of trust in God; for he that hath will endeavour to be 'rich in good works nay, he will account it a special favour, a greater favour, to have a heart to do good, than to have means. A reprobate may have means, abundance to do good; but only a child of God hath a heart to do good, and when he hath gotten a large and gracious heart to do good, it pleaseth him. Then he sees he hath an evidence that he is the child of God. He knows he shall not lose a cup of cold water, not the least thing that he doth in the name of Christ. The apprehension of this should make us more fruitful, and 'abound in the work of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is for want of trust and faith that we are so barren as we are in good works.

5. Again, He that will trust God with the greatest matters, will trust God with his ways for direction. He will not trust his own wit and wisdom, but God. God shall be wise for him. He will follow God's directions, and whatsoever is contrary to God's direction he will not do. He will acknowledge God in all his ways. Prov. iii. 5, 'Acknowledge God in all thy ways,' acknowledge him to be thy guide, thy defender, thy light, to direct thee; acknowledge him to be able and willing to give thee success; acknowledge God in all thy ways and consultations; and when we have especially any great matters in hand, oh, I beseech you, let us learn to acknowledge God. What is it to acknowledge him? To go to him for direction and protection in doing our duty, that we seek to him for strength and for success; this is to acknowledge God in our ways. What makes men so

unfortunate and successful in their consultations? Because they are so faithless; they do not acknowledge God in their ways, but trust too much to seeming things and appearance of things; they are carried too much with that. Though things seem to go never so well, yet let nothing make us give over to acknowledge God; nay, when things are never so ill, let us acknowledge God, for God can set all straight and at rights again. Alas! what a small matter is it for him that rules heaven and earth, and turns this great wheel of all things, to turn the lesser wheels to order lesser businesses, and bring them to a happy issue and conclusion! It is but a little matter with his command, seeing he rules all things. It is but trusting in him and praying to him, and then using the means with dependence upon him. Let us therefore acknowledge God this way, by committing our ways and affairs to him. We need knowledge and strength, and a comfortable issue for all that is necessary in our affairs; let us acknowledge God, and fetch all these from him.

6. Well, the last thing that we have any use of trusting God withal is, when we are dying, to trust our souls, to commit them to God, and yield them up to him, our deposition, to lay it with him. He that hath inured himself to trust God all his life, and to live by faith, he will be able at length with some comfort to die by faith. He that hath trusted God all his life with all things that God hath trusted him, he can easily trust God with his soul; and he that hath not inured himself to trust God in this life, undoubtedly he will never trust God with his soul when he dies. It is but a forced trust.

Thus you see in all the passages of our lives we must learn to trust God, and to make use of God, for God is so abundant that he is never drawn dry. He joys when he is made use of. It is an honour to him. Let us try ourselves by that I have said, whether we truly trust God or no. Let us not deceive our own souls, but labour to trust God for all things. Let it be our daily practice in the use of moans. Look to the course that he prescribes us, and then look up to him for strength and blessing and success. This ought to be the life of a Christian, *Oculus ad coelum*, as they say of the governor of a ship. He hath his hand to the stern, and his eye to the pole-star, to be directed by that. So the life of a Christian. He must have his hand to the stern, he must be doing that that God prescribes him, and he must have his eye to the star, to be guided in his course by God's direction. He that hath not this knows not what it is to trust in God.

How shall we bring our souls to this so necessary a duty? Indeed, it is a very hard matter. We know what it is to live by our wits, by our wealth, by

our lands; but what it is to live by faith in depending upon God, few souls are acquainted with that.

Therefore, in the first place, learn to know God. You see here, we must trust in his name. We know men by their names. God and his name are all one. His name is himself, and himself is his name. Therefore, let us learn to know God as he hath discovered himself: know him in his works, but especially in his word; know him by that work, as he hath discovered himself in his word. Let us know his promises, and have them in store for all assays whatsoever; promises for grace and for direction in this world. God will not 'fail us, nor forsake us,' John xiv. 18. He will be in all extremities with us, 'in the fire and in the water,' Isa. xliii. 2; and the promises of issue, 'All things shall work for good to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28; and the promise of his Spirit, 'He will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke xi. 18. Besides particular promises, a world of them in Scripture, let us know God in these promises; they are our inheritance, our portion. And if we should go to God, and not be acquainted with these, he will ask us upon what ground? How shall we be able to go to God? But when we have his promise, we may say boldly with the psalmist, 'Lord, remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust.' We may put God in remembrance: not that he forgets, but he will have us mindful of what he promiseth, and put him in mind. And it is an evidence to our souls that he will grant any thing, when we have faith to put him in mind of his promise: 'Lord, remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust.' Lord, thou canst not deny thy word, and thy truth, and thyself, and thy promise, and thy name by which thou hast made thyself known. Thus we should know God in his word; as it is Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will trust in thee, O Lord.' We never trust a man till we know him; and those that are not good, we say they are better known than trusted; but the more we know God, the more we shall trust him.

And know him in his special attributes that the word sets him, out in, besides the promises, that we may know that he is able to make good all those promises; and then we shall trust him. What are those attributes? He hath made himself known to be all-sufficient. What a world of comfort is in that. He saith to Abraham, 'I am God all-sufficient: walk before me, and be perfect,' Gen. xvii. 1. Take thou no thought for any other thing: 'I am God all-sufficient.' There is in him whatsoever may be for an object of trust. He is all-sufficient. He hath power. 'Our trust is in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth,' Ps. cxv. 15. There is a consideration to strengthen

faith: there is power enough. We believe in a God that made heaven and earth; and there is will to help us, he is our God; and there is skill to help us: as St Peter saith, 'He knows how to deliver,' 2 Pet. ii. 9. It is his practice. He hath used it from the beginning of the church, and will to the end. He knows how to deliver them, to protect and stand by them; he hath power, and will, and skill to do it. And then again, he is everywhere. He is such a castle, and tower, and defence. We have him near us in all times: he is 'a present help in trouble,' as it is Ps. xlv. 1. What an object of trust is here, if we had but faith to make use of it. Let us therefore know God in his word, in his attributes, and this will be a means to strengthen trust; as it is Ps. xxxvi. 7, 'How sweet is thy goodness; therefore shall the sons of men trust under the shadow of thy wings.' Why come we under the shadow of God's wing? Because his goodness is sweet: he is a fit object for trust. The things of this world, the more we know them, the less we trust them, for they are but vain. But there is such infiniteness in God, that the more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Therefore, let us grow in the knowledge of God's word and truth.

And add experimental knowledge. It helps trust marvellously: the experience of others, and our own experience. When we see God hath helped his church in all times, especially when they have sought him by fasting and prayer: 'Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded,' Ps. xxii. 4, 5. Therefore, if we trust in thee, we shall not be confounded. So for our own experience: 'Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb; I have depended upon thee from my mother's breast: forsake me not in mine old years, in my grey hairs, when my strength faileth me,' Ps. lxxi. 18. Thus we may gather upon God from former experience, that God will not now forsake us, because we have had experience of his kindness in former times. He hath been my God from my childhood; therefore he will be now. This is a good argument, because God is as he was; he is the same, he is never drawn dry: 'Where he loves, he loves to the end,' John xiii. 1. Where he begins, he will end. Therefore, this should strengthen our faith, to gather experience from former things. Thus David allegeth the lion and the bear; and so St Paul, 'He hath delivered me, therefore he will deliver me,' 2 Tim. iii. 11. It is ordinary with the saints of God.

Again, If we would trust in God, labour every day to be acquainted with God in daily prayer, in hearing, and reading, and meditation. We trust friends with whom we are much acquainted; and those that are not acquainted with God, in that communion which belongs to Christians, that do not often talk with God by prayer and meditation, when they go to God in extremity, what

will God say to them? Upon what acquaintance? You are strangers to me, and I will be a stranger to you; and 'Wisdom itself will laugh at their destruction,' Prov. i. 26, when they will force acquaintance upon God when they have use of him, and never care for him in the time of peace. Therefore, if we would trust God, and go to God boldly, as who is there here now that will not have need of him? We have need of him continually, but sometimes more than others. Therefore, I say, let us be acquainted with him, that we may after trust him. Those that have not the care to be acquainted with God, either they have not the heart to go to God, or if they have, they have but a cold answer. But indeed, for the most part, they have no heart to go to God, for their hearts misgive them, and tell them they have been careless of God, they have neglected God. Therefore, God will not regard them: 'Go to the gods ye have trusted,' as it is Judges x. 14. Answerable to our care, beloved, in the time of peace, will our comfort be when we are in trouble. Therefore I beseech you, let us remember this, as one means to strengthen our trust, our daily acquaintance with God; and acquaint ourselves so with him, as to keep him our friend, not to offend him, for if we offend him, we shall not trust him. A galled conscience is afraid of God, as a sore eye is of light. A comfortable conscience is from a conscience to please God. 'This is our boldness and confidence,' saith Paul, that we have laboured to 'keep a good conscience,' that we may have him our friend, 2 Cor. i. 15, Heb. xiii. 18.

Again, Let us labour to exercise our trust upon all occasions; for things that are exercised are the brighter and the stronger. Let us inure ourselves to trust in God for all things, and to trust him with all things; with our bodies, with our souls, with our estates, with our children, with our ways, with our good name, with our credit and reputation, with all; as I said before in the signs of trust. Faith it grows in the exercise, as we see Ps. lxii., a psalm expressing David's trust in God, and the conflict with his soul in trusting. He begins, 'Yet my soul waits upon the Lord,' &c.; and in verse 2d, 'I shall not be greatly moved,' saith he; but when he had gone on, and exercised his faith still, then he saith in verse 6th, 'He is my rock, and my Saviour, and defence; I shall not be moved.' He that at the beginning saith, 'I shall not greatly be moved,' afterward, working upon his heart and soul, and exercising his faith, saith, 'I shall not be moved; he is my rock, my Saviour and defence.' Faith it is the engine by which we do all, by which we prevail with God and overcome the world, and all the snares on the right hand and on the left; it is that whereby we do all. Therefore we had need to keep it in exercise, and inure it, that we may have it to manage and use upon all occasions. It is not enough to have faith in us, but we must live by it. It must not only live in us,

but we must live by it. This is another way to strengthen this faith, and assurance, and trusting in God.

The next is to practise that I spake of in the forenoon, to grow 'poor in spirit,' 'for they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' Let us labour more and more to see our own wants. A Christian should have a double eye: one to look to himself and to his own wants, to be abased; another eye to God's promise, to God's nature, to trust in God; and thus we should pass our days. The more we can empty ourselves, the more we shall be filled with God. We see here in the text the way to trust in God, to be 'poor in spirit.' The reason is in nature. Whosoever is not poor in himself, and sees a necessity, he will never go out of himself, for he hath some other supply. Therefore, if we would learn to trust in God, we must learn to empty ourselves of all self-confidence, by observing our weakness and wants; by taking notice, not so much of our graces, as of our wants. When Moses came from the mount, his face shone; he know not of it. All the world about him knew it besides himself, but he observed it not, saith the Scripture, Exod. xxxiv. 29. So when a Christian considers not, especially in temptations to pride, what he hath, but what he wants—how little good he hath done, how many evil thoughts and actions have passed from him, how short he is in fruitfulness and thankfulness to God—this is the way to trust in God, for then we will keep close to God when we do see our own weakness.

And let us labour to have a spirit of sanctification, to have our souls more and more renewed to trust in God, or else all other courses are nothing; for when it comes to particulars, if the soul be not sanctified there is no correspondency and harmony between it and God. How can an unsanctified soul close with a holy God? Therefore we must labour to be good and to do good; as the apostle Peter saith, 'to commit our souls to God in doing good,' 1 Pet. iv. 19. Let us labour to be good, to get grace, and then there will be a harmony, a connaturalness between a holy God and a holy soul; and then we shall trust and rely upon him easily. Where there is not grace in the heart subduing corruptions, when it comes to particulars, whether to trust in God or man, then the soul will rebel, and scorn as it were trusting in God. It will go to wits, to friends, to favours, and other helps.

Let a man be never such a scholar, of never so great parts, when he comes to any shift, if he have not grace in him, he will disdain out of pride of spirit, as every man naturally is deeply proud, to rely upon conscience, and upon the truth and promises of the word, and upon such terms. These be

weak things. No; he will stir hell rather, and earth, and all means. He accounts it greatness that he can do so. It is only the holy man that will cleave fast to God, and to his truth and word, for he relisheth it. The Spirit that penned the Scriptures and the promises, it rules in his heart, and therefore he relisheth them. Oh these promises are sweet! And as he can trust the promises, so he can trust God; because, as I said before, he is acquainted with them. Where there is not a gracious heart, there will never be a believing, trusting heart.

There is in God infiniteness of ways of supply, let us labour therefore for a prudent heart, to learn the skill of fetching out of God for all necessities. As our want is, so let us fetch supply from some attribute of God, and some promise answerable. This is the wisdom of the saints of God. Are we in extremity? Then with Jehoshaphat say, 'We know not, Lord, what to do: but our eyes are toward thee,' 2 Chron. xx. 12. Are we perplexed that we want wisdom? Then go to God, who is infinitely wise. Consider him so, for he is fit for the soul; nay, he exceeds all the maladies and wants of the soul. There is not only abundance in God, but redundance and overflowing abundance. Therefore there wants but skill to make use of what is in him for our turn. Are we wronged? Go to God, that 'judgeth righteously,' Jer. xi. 20; consider him in that relation, as a God 'to whom vengeance belongeth,' Ps. xciv. 1. Are we overpowered? Go to God, 'that made heaven and earth,' to the Almighty God, Ps. cxv. 15. Are we troubled with the sense of sin? Go to God, that is 'the Father of all mercy, and God of all comfort,' Rom. xv. 5. Are we cast down, and no man regards us? Go to God, that styles himself 'the comforter of the abject,' 2 Cor. vii. 6. This is the skill that faith learns, not only in gross to think of God, but to think of God answerable to all occasions; as indeed there is somewhat in God to satisfy the soul in all extremities whatsoever. I beseech you, let us learn to do this. What a happy condition is he in that hath learned to inure his soul to trust in God for the removal of all ill, and for the obtaining of all good! He is sure of all. 'For God is a sun and a shield;' a sun for all that is good, and a shield to defend us from all ill. He is so to all that trust in him. He is a 'buckler, and an exceeding great reward,' Ps. xviii. 30. He is a buckler to ward and shield ill from us, and an exceeding great reward for all that is good. Therefore in how happy a condition is the soul that is acquainted with this blessed exercise of trusting and believing in God! It is a state wherein we shall be kept from all ill—I mean from the ill of ills: not from the ill of sense, but from the ill of ills, and from the poison of all ill. Whatsoever ill we endure, there shall be comfort mixed with it; and it is better to have it than the comfort. What a comfort is

this! 'They that trust in the Lord shall want nothing that is good. He that trusts in the Lord is as a tree planted by the river side,' Jer. xvii. 7, 8. He shall alway have his leaf flourishing and bear fruit, because he is at the wellhead. He that hath the spring can never want water, and he that is in the sun can never want light. He that is at the great feast can never want provision. He that hath learned to trust in God, and can improve what is in him, what can he want? Oh it is the scarceness of our faith that we want comfort! As our faith is, so is our comfort; and if we could bring a thousand times larger faith to grasp the promises, we should carry away larger comfort and strength.

Spiritual Mourning

The First Sermon

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Mat. V. 4.

We have spoken of spiritual poverty the last day, when we showed you that it is a grace especially in the understanding. We must now come to the affections. And first, our Saviour begins with mourning, which follows immediately from poverty of spirit. Mourning is a wringing or pinching of the soul upon the apprehension of some evil present, whether it be privative or positive, as we speak; that is, when a man finds that absent that he desires, and that present which he abhors, then the soul shrinks and contracts itself, and is pinched and wringed; and this is that we call mourning. Now this always comes to pass in poverty. Such as the poverty is, such is the mourning; and therefore our blessed Saviour's order is very good in joining mourning to that poverty of which we have spoken. Thus much for the order.

Now for the words. There are, you see, two things in this verse.

1. A point. 2. A proof.

Our Saviour's point shall be our point of doctrine at this time, because we would not speak one thing twice. Therefore we will lay down the point in our Saviour's own words, and that is this, that spiritual mourners are blessed men. He is an happy man that is a good mourner. He that can mourn for his sins, he is in an happy case. That is the point.

Now in the prosecution of this, we must first expound it; secondly, prove it; and then apply it to you, as our Saviour doth to his hearers, Luke vi. 21, 'Blessed are ye that mourn.'

1. For the first, I may expound the point and the text both under one. You see the proposition what it is, every good mourner is in an happy condition. Here let us consider a little the terms to explicate them. Who is the party in speech? 'Blessed is the mourner,' saith Christ in Matthew; 'Blessed,' saith he in Luke vi. 21, 'are the weepers.' Both these, mourning and weeping, they are fruits of the same tree and root. The root is sorrow and

sadness, opposite to joy; the bud mourning, opposite to mirth; the blossoms weeping, opposite to laughter. The matter then is this, that they that are spiritual mourners are happy men; that is, those men that have not only cause and matter of sorrow and mourning, for so all have, but have also a heart to mourn. There is in them a disposition of mourning, they can do it, they will do it occasionally, they do perform it inwardly, they bleed, which is termed mourning outwardly, they demonstrate it, as our Saviour instanceth in weeping. These be the parties here spoken of that are mourners. Now what is the thing that is affirmed of them? that is, blessedness and happiness; the mourners are blessed and happy. As mourning is in itself, it is not simply good, but because it makes way for happiness. To call mourning happiness simply, were to speak a contradiction, to term misery felicity, and to make felicity misery. But he that mourns aright, is happy in a sense, he is in a happy estate and condition. A mournful state is a happy estate; happy, because this mourning is an argument of some happiness and goodness for the present, and a pledge of more for the future. It makes way for comfort and future happiness, and therefore he is happy.

Obj. You see the proposition now, how it is mournful men are happy men. But now for the quantity and extent of this proposition. Is this, will some men say, universally true? Are all men that mourn blessed men?

Ans. Nothing less. There is a carnal mourning, when a man mourns for the presence of goodness, and for the absence of sin, because he is restrained and cannot be so bad as he would be. There is a natural mourning, when a man mourns upon natural motives, when natural losses and crosses are upon him. There is a spiritual mourning, when a man mourns in a spiritual manner, for spiritual things, upon spiritual motives, as afterwards we shall show; when he mourns, because good things that are spiritually good are so far from him, and spiritual ills are so near to him. This is the mourner that Christ here speaks of, and this is the mourning that hath the blessing. Other mourning may occasion this through God's blessing, and may give some overture to this mourning, but the blessing belongs to the spiritual mourner and the spiritual mourning. Mourning must be expounded as poverty. Every poor man is not a blessed man, except his outward poverty bring him to spiritual poverty. So every mourner and every weeper is not therein blessed, except his outward losses, and crosses, and occasions, be an occasion through God's blessing and a means to bring him to spiritual sorrow and mourning. Thus now you see then the meaning of the proposition; it is thus much, that he

that mourns spiritually and holily, why he is in an happy estate and condition. This is the meaning of the point.

2. Now let us proceed to the second thing, the proving of it. For proof we need go no further than our Saviour's own testimony; yet we have besides his testimony some proofs and some reasons to give. For his testimony: 'Blessed,' saith our Saviour's own mouth, 'are they that mourn;' and Luke vi. 21, 'Blessed are they that weep.' This weeping and this mourning must be understood of spiritual weeping and spiritual mourning, as we told you, and then the testimony is very clear, every man that so mourns is an happy man. Our Saviour doth not only speak this, but prove it, 1. By an argument drawn from the contrary: Luke vi. 25, 'Woe be to you that laugh now.' These carnal mirth-mongers are in a miserable estate, and therefore spiritual mourners are in an happy estate. 2. He confirms and backs this by a reason here in the text: 'Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be comforted.' This reason will not hold in all kind of mourning and all kind of comfort. It is no good argument to say, Blessed is the man that is in pain, for he shall be refreshed and relieved; blessed is the man that is hungry, for he shall be fed and have his wants supplied. But yet this argument holds good, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted namely, with God's comforts, with the comforts of the Spirit, with the comforts of the word, the comforts of heaven. The comforts of God are beyond all the miseries and sorrows that a man can endure in this life; and though he do mourn and weep for them, yet notwithstanding, the comforts, the wages, will so far exceed all his sorrows that he is happy in this. He cannot buy spiritual comforts too dear, he cannot have them upon hard terms possibly. Though they cost him never so many tears, never so much grief, and sorrow, and heart-breaking, yet if he have them, he is happy in having them upon what rate soever.

Yea, further, spiritual mourning carries comfort with it, besides the harvest of comfort that abides the mourner afterwards. There are first-fruits of comfort here to be reaped, so it is that the more a man mourns spiritually, the more he rejoiceth; the more his sorrow is, the more his comfort is. His heart is never so light, so cheerful, and so comfortable, as when he can pour forth himself with some sighs, groans, and tears, before God. So that then our Saviour clears the point, that they are happy men that mourn in an holy manner. Howsoever mourning be not comfort, and misery he not happiness, yet notwithstanding, affliction and mourning may argue an happy estate and blessed condition, and that in these respects following, which we shall name to you, which shall serve for reasons of the point.

1. First, He that mourns spiritually hath a good judgment, and therefore is happy. Spiritual affection it argues a spiritual judgment and understanding. For the affections they work according as they receive information. A creature that is led by fancy, hath brutish affections; a man that is guided with matter of reason hath rational affections, as we term them; but a man that hath his mind enlightened and sanctified hath holy affections. So that holy mourning and holy affections argues a sound mind, a holy, settled, and spiritual judgment, and that is an happiness.

2. Secondly, It argues a good heart too.

(1.) First, A tender and soft heart. For a stone cannot mourn, only the fleshy heart it is that can bleed. He that then can mourn spiritually, he hath an evidence to his heart, that his heart is soft, that he hath a tender heart, and that is a blessing, and makes a man a blessed man.

(2.) As his heart is tender, so also it is sound. It is a healthful soul and an healthful temper, as I may speak, that he hath. For mourning proceeds out of love and hatred; out of agreement, if it be a spiritual mourning, with that which is good, and out of a contrariety and opposition between us and that which is bad. So that he that can mourn after goodness, and mourn for sin and badness, if it be spiritual mourning, this man shows he hath a good heart, his heart agrees with that which is good, his heart disagrees, and stands in opposition, and hath an antipathy to that which is bad. And this is a right constitution and temper of soul, that makes a man happy. There is one reason then why he that mourns spiritually may well be deemed an happy man, because he hath a sound judgment, and because he hath a sound and a soft heart too.

2. Secondly, As he is happy in the cause, so he will be happy in the effect too of his godly mourning. For godly sorrow and mourning brings forth blessed fruits and effects; the apostle in 2 Cor. vii. 10, seq., delivers divers of them, as there you see.

(1.) First, this is one thing in spiritual mourning; it secures and excludes a man from carnal and hellish mourning; yea, this orders him and saves him harmless from all other griefs. A gracious mourning, it moderates natural grief, and expels and drives out carnal and hellish grief and sorrow, like good physic, that heals and strengthens nature, and expels that poison that is hurtful to nature. The more a man can mourn for his sins, the less he will mourn for other matters; the more heavy sin lies upon his soul, the more

lightly he can bear other losses and crosses, whatsoever they be. So that this mourning prevents a great deal of unprofitable mourning. When a man bleeds unseasonably and unsatiably, the way to divert it is to open a vein and to let him bleed elsewhere, and so you save the man. When a man pours forth himself unseasonably and unprofitably in needless tears, griefs, and cares, the only way is to turn his tears into a right channel, to make him mourn for that which is mournful, and to set him to weep for that which deserves tears. If he weep in an holy and spiritual manner, he shall be secured and preserved from poisonous and hurtful tears.

(2.) Secondly, This is another happy effect of godly mourning, that spiritual and godly mourning alway doth a man good and never any hurt. Worldly sorrow, saith the apostle, causeth death. It hurts the soul, it hurts the life, it hurts the body of a man; but spiritual sorrow, on the other side, causeth life. The more a man dies this way, the more he lives; the more he weeps, the more he laughs; and the more he can weep over Jesus Christ, the more lightsome and gladsome his heart is, and the more comfortably he spends his time. This brings him joy, this brings him peace, this brings him evidence of God's love, this brings assurance of pardon, and so this makes way for life, and doth a man no hurt at all.

(3.) Thirdly, This spiritual and godly sorrow and mourning is a sorrow never to be repented of, as the apostle there implies. All other sorrow a man must unsorrow again. When a man hath "wept and blubbered, and spent a great deal of time in passionate tears, in cursed tears, in froward tears, in revengeful stomachful tears, he must blot out these tears with new tears; he must unweep this weeping, and undo his mourning because he hath thus mourned; he hath reason to repent for his sorrow. But when a man sets himself apart to weep over Christ, and sees his sins for the dishonour that is offered to God's name, and that his mourning is holy and spiritual mourning, he shall never have cause to repent of this time that is so spent, although he have spent many days and hours in that action.

(4.) Last of all, spiritual mourning works repentance, saith the apostle: that is to say, it works reformation and amendment; it sets a man further from his sin, and brings him nearer to God, and nearer to goodness; it works in himself partly, and in regard of others partly, those fruits that the apostle there mentions in the Corinthians. Saith he, what striving, what diligence and speed did you make, namely, to find out and to censure the incestuous person; and then this sorrow will make a man nimble to find out sin, to

reform and redress abuses in himself, in his house, and his place in what he can. In the second place, it gives a man defence and apology to speak for himself, and to say, Though I live amongst a polluted people of uncircumcised hearts, yet I join not with them in their sins, I mourn for them, I censure them, I blame them, as the Corinthians did the incestuous person. And for himself, he is able to hold up his head with comfort, and to say, It is true I have corruptions, but here is my apology, I bewail them. It is true I have thus and thus sinned, but here is my defence, I am sorry. I found place for sin, I find place for sorrow also, I confess it, I bewail it, I repent of my sin. Thus he clears himself.

(5.) Further, Spiritual sorrow, it works indignation against sin in himself and in others; a zeal against all impediments in himself and in others, the desire to God's ministers and word; that revenge that the apostle speaks of there, and that fear of hazarding one's self into the like occasions of sin for the time to come. In short, the fruits and effects of godly sorrow are exceeding blessed, exceeding many, and therefore in this sense, in this respect, he that mourns spiritually is an happy man.

3. Thirdly, He is happy in regard of the event and issue of his mourning, because all shall end well with him, and all his tears shall one day be wiped away, and joy and gladness shall come in place; yea, he is happy in this, that spiritual mourning it is always accompanied with joy: that is an happy estate that tends to happiness. Things are termed from the term in their motion. That is an happy estate that is attended with comfort, that ends in comfort, and shall be swallowed up of it at the last. Now this is the state of the spiritual mourner; while he doth mourn he hath comfort, and comfort because he can mourn. This doth a Christian heart more good than all the good of this world, when he can get himself apart and shed tears for his sins, and bewail the miseries and the sins of the time, and take to heart the dishonour of God's name. This, I say, doth more refresh and glad his soul than any outward comfort in the world. There is a laughter which Solomon speaks of, that makes a man sad, a carnal laughter; the heart is sad whilst the face laughs. So I may say the contrary, as there is joined sadness in some laughter, so there is laughter in some sadness. Carnal laughter makes a man sad while he laughs; but spiritual mourning, it makes a man merry when he mourns; the more he mourns, the more merry he is. Again, as for the present his mourning is attended with comfort, so in the end it shall end in comfort. There is a sorrow that shall end in darkness, that wastes a man as fire and heat wastes a candle, and so goes out of itself and vanisheth into smoke, into

nothing. There is a sorrow and grief that ends in a greater sorrow, and that empties itself into eternal misery, but this spiritual sorrow shall have an end. For there shall be an end of our sorrow. If it be holy sorrow, we shall not ever mourn, but the tears shall one day be wiped from all our eyes, it shall have an end, and an happy end too. For all our sorrow shall end in joy. For our garments of ashes we shall have garments of light and gladness, and 'everlasting joy shall be upon our heads,' Isa. xxxv. 10. So then, whether we respect the cause of our mourning, or the fruits and effects of it, whether we respect the close and event of it, it is clear that every man that can mourn spiritually is in that respect in a very happy and blessed estate and condition. We have given you now the point. You hear what our Saviour speaks is but reason, though he seem to speak a paradox to flesh and blood when he saith, every spiritual mourner is an happy man. Now then, my brethren, let us apply the point a little.

Use 1. If it be an happy man that mourns aright, we have reason, first, to bewail our unhappiness; unhappy time and unhappy men may we well say, touching ourselves, that vary so much from the mind and prescription of our blessed Saviour. 'Blessed,' saith our Saviour Christ, 'are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' 'Woe to you,' saith he, 'that now laugh.' We, on the other side, say, Woe to them that here mourn; happy are they that can here laugh and be merry. And as we vary in our judgment from our Saviour, so much more we vary in our practice from his direction and counsel. The Lord, when he gives direction that will bring joy and comfort, he bids us humble ourselves, cast down ourselves, afflict ourselves, &c., James iv. 10. God saith, 'Humble yourselves that you may be exalted.' We on the other side say, Exalt ourselves, and we shall not be humbled. God saith, Throw down yourselves; we say, Secure ourselves. God saith, Afflict yourselves, and then you shall have comfort. The Lord saith, Let your laughter be turned into mourning, that so you may laugh. We on the other say, Let our mourning be turned into laughter, that so we may not mourn. And therefore when any grief, natural or spiritual, begins to breed or to grow on us, presently we betake ourselves to company, to sports and exercises, that may drown the noise of conscience, that may put out of our minds motives to spiritual grief and sorrow, and that may provoke us to carnal, or at the best to natural mirth and rejoicing. Thus we vary from Christ's directions quite in our practice; nay more, vary further from the practice of the saints of God. We vary from the very time and season in which we live. For behold, it is a time of darkness and blackness; it is the year of God's visitation, as the prophet speaks; it is the time of Jacob's trouble, as Jeremiah speaks. For howsoever we have

peace at home, the church hath war abroad; howsoever we have health, yet the pestilence rageth abroad. Though we have plenty, there is poverty and misery abroad in the bowels of the church in other nations. Now then, when the time calls for mourning, and weeping, and lamentation, we vary quite, and are like to them in the prophecy of Isaiah.

‘In that day,’ saith God, Isa. xxii. 12, seq., ‘did I call for mourning and sackcloth: and behold here is slaying of oxen, and killing of sheep, and making merry, and provoking ourselves to all kind of jollity and security.’ Further, we vary from the practice of God’s children in like cases. They gave themselves to spiritual mourning upon due occasion. We read of Nehemiah, when he heard that the church was distressed and afflicted abroad, though he lived in credit, and in honour, and in safety himself at the court, yet he betakes himself to God in private, and there he fasts, and prays, and mourns, and there he sues to the Lord to be merciful unto Jerusalem. We read of good honest Uriah, he refused to go to his house and to refresh himself with meat and drink, upon this reason, because the ark of God and the captain of the host lay in the field in tents. This was the affection and the mind of God’s servants of old: they wept with those that wept, and they mourned in the mourning and lamentation of the church. But now, my brethren, we forget the afflictions of Joseph abroad. And, as it is said of them in Amos, ‘We drink wine in bowls, we stretch ourselves on our beds,’ vi. 7; we give ourselves to music and mirth, and we take not to heart the distresses of the church. So likewise for the sins of the time, we see what the saints did of old. Ezra, chap. ix. 10, when he heard of the sins that were committed among the people—the holy seed had mingled themselves with the cursed nations, whom the Lord had cursed—he betakes himself to prayer, and to mourning, and fasting; and there assembled to him many well affected men, and they trembled before the Lord, they cast down themselves, and wept in a solemn manner.

Thus the saints of God did for the sins of their time. But now, my brethren, what do we? We look on other men, and wonder that rulers and magistrates and public persons do no more. But what do we ourselves in private? My brethren, do we lay to heart our own sins, the sins of our kindred and acquaintance, of our families, the sins of our neighbours, of our towns, of our places where we dwell and have our abode? Had David lived in these days, he would have washed our streets with rivers of tears, as he speaks of himself, Ps. cxix. 136, to have seen such pride, such impiety; to hear such oaths and blasphemies so frequent and so rife amongst us. We, on the other

side, my brethren, see, nay, we act and commit, gross sins; we hear, nay, we utter, cursed speeches and blasphemies and oaths, and commit abominable sins, and yet there are not rivers of tears, nay, not a tear almost shed amongst us. This is that we are to complain of now, that we do what we can to put off mourning, and to bereave ourselves of true comfort; and this dryness and emptiness of tears, were it only of temper of body, and not from distemper of soul, the matter were more sufferable and more pardonable. But what shall we say for ourselves, when we have tears at command for every trifle, for every bauble, and have not tears for sin and for the dishonour of God? If a friend cross us, we can weep; if an unkind word be uttered, we sob and grow sullen; if a loss or a cross befall us, we can pour out ourselves in carnal weeping and lamentation: but for the sins of our souls, for the sins of our friends, for the sins of our nation, for the unkindness that we offer to God, for the contempt that is cast upon his name, we cannot shed a tear; and were it now that we were ashamed of these things, the matter were less. But, alas! we take not to heart that we have not hearts to mourn, and we labour not so much as to grieve because we cannot grieve. In our carnal natural grief, we stand and plead, we think we have reason to mourn: I have lost such a friend and such a friend. We think we have cause to bewail our estate in regard of such outward misery as befalls us. But we see no cause, no reason to weep over Christ for the sins we have committed against God.

We think many times carnal sorrow, which in truth is but poison, will do us good, a great deal of ease; and when men have crossed us, and disappointed us, or dealt unkindly with us, we think we will go and weep it out; and when we have cried and blubbered a while, we think that we give ease to our souls, and content to our hearts. But when we come to spiritual mourning, which only is comfortable mourning, we think that undoes us. Many a man thinks he forfeits all his joy, all his peace, all his liberty, all his happiness, and he shall never see a merry day again in this world if he gives way to mourning for sin, to sound repentance, to works of humiliation, and examination of his own heart and ways. And hence it is that we do what we can to hold possession against the Spirit in sorrow and mourning. Oh misery! Oh unhappiness of ours! When we take things in this manner, when we take poison for cordial, and cordials to be no better than poison, no marvel though we have no more comfort of our tears and of our mourning; for certainly our mourning for the most part is not a blessed mourning. We mourn not for sin, but for sorrow; we mourn not for corruption, but for crosses: not because we have dealt unkindly with God, but because men deal

unkindly with us. This is not a blessed mourning, and therefore it is that we find no comfort in it.

Use 2. Well, in the next place, we have another use, to take Christ's direction for comfort. Who would, who can be without it? Life is death without comfort. Every man's aim is to lead a comfortable life. Mark the way that Christ chalks out: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Do you believe Christ's word? Do you believe that he knows what he saith? Can you rest in Christ's testimony and in his promise? Then, if ever you will have comfort in your hearts, or in your lives, or in your ends, begin here, begin with spiritual mourning. Now that this you may do, we must,

1. First show you how spiritual mourning differs, and is discerned from other mourning.
2. How it is gotten.
3. How it is exercised.

1. For the first of this: Spiritual mourning is known by the objects. Such us the object is, such is the faculty. Spiritual mourning hath spiritual objects, either materially or formally, as they speak in schools. This spiritual mourning is busied about spiritual goods and spiritual ills. Spiritual good, either the chief or universal good, which is God; or subordinately good, as grace and comfort, the ordinance and worship of God. Spiritual ills, whether they be simply ill, as sin and impiety; or painfully ill, yet with relation to sin, as a fruit of sin, and as a pledge of God's wrath and displeasure against it. We will instance in this first.

For, first, if a man would know whether his sorrow be spiritual sorrow or no, let him see how he mourns for the absence of spiritual good things, how he mourns for the absence of God, the chief good. That is spiritual sorrow, when a man mourns because he hath lost God in his graces, in his communion, and in his comforts. This was a proof of David's sorrow that it was spiritual, because, as the Scripture speaks elsewhere, he lamented after the Lord, and mourned after God. 'My soul,' saith he, 'thirsteth after the living God,' Ps. xlii. 2. He hungered after God, he was pained, and pinched at his soul when he could not see God, and enjoy God as formerly he did. This was the reason of that idolater, Judges xviii. 24, seq., when his idols were taken from him, he cried after them: when a rude fellow asked him what he

ailed, 'What ail I?' saith he; 'you have stolen away my gods, and taken away my ephod, and do you ask what I ail? what more have you left me?' What he speaks of his false gods, a true Christian heart may conclude much more of the true God. If the true God be departed from him,—stolen he cannot be;—but if he be departed from him, that he have driven away God in Christ by his sinful and rude behaviour, that God hides his face, that he communicates not himself in his comforts and graces as formerly he hath done, this goes to his heart, this punisheth him, and grieves him more than any thing in the world. And so for inferior goods, a man that mourns spiritually, he mourns because he sees the want of good things, the want of faith, the want of grace, he finds a spiritual want, the absence of things spiritually good. A man that mourns spiritually, he mourns because the means of grace is taken from him, because he sees not his teachers, as the prophet saith, because there is no vision; there is none to say, How long? as it is in Haggai i. 4: 'How long shall the house of God lie waste? the ways of Zion are unfrequented: the Sabbaths of the Lord are despised.' He mourns because he is kept away from the house of God, where he used to taste of the fat things of God's house, and where he used to see him in his beauty and in his glory.

So this is spiritual mourning, when a man mourns because God in his love and in his comforts leaves him, and his countenance shines not upon him; because the word of God and the grace of God spreads not, that it stirs not sensibly within him, as formerly it hath done. And so likewise for ills. A man that mourns spiritually, he mourns for spiritual ills, to find so much corruption, so much pride, so much hypocrisy, so much self-love, so much worldliness, so much naughtiness in his own heart. This is his grief, as it was Paul's. He cries, O tired, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Rom. vii. 24. He weeps, and takes on more for the corruption of his nature, for the sins in himself, and in the people of God, than for persecution and disgrace, than for losses and crosses that befall him. So when a man mourns for sin, that he takes to heart the sins of his family, the sins of the state and of the church that he lives in, this is spiritual mourning. And so also when a man mourns for outward things spiritually, say he be poor, say he be afflicted, say he be famished, say he be persecuted, he turns all his griefs to godly grief; he apprehends God's displeasure. In these he apprehends and sees sin: in these he considers his crosses, in the cause, and in the root of them, in sin; and so he mourns for sin and the cause. This is spiritual mourning. Now when a man thus mourneth for the absence of spiritual good things, and for the presence of spiritual ills that lie

upon him and others, then he is said to mourn spiritually, and so he is a blessed man. This is all we can stay to say for the point.

Quest. Now, in the next place, how shall a man do to got this spiritual mourning?

Ans. First, He must labour to have an heart capable of grief and sorrow that is spiritual, a tender and soft heart. He must see that he have a disposition to holy mourning, able and inclinable so to do, when just opportunity and occasion is offered. Now how shall a man get this tender heart? Why surely he must go to God in his means and ordinances, who hath promised, as you heard, in the covenant, to take 'the stone out of our hearts, and to give us soft and fleshy hearts.' This a man must do for it. Withal he must be ready in the next place, when God hath given him a tender heart, to stir up the graces of the Spirit that are in him, to raise up his affections and his sorrow, and to provoke himself to mourn and to lament upon due occasion. Thus that he may do, he must,

1. First, Consider of a method that he must use; and then,
2. Of motives to stir him up thereunto.

1. For method. (1.) First, He must have respect to the time, that he do not let his heart lie fallow too long. Jer. iv. 3, it is said, 'Plough up your fallow ground.' Ground, if it lie long unploughed, it will require much pains to rear it and fetch it up, but if it be oft done, it will be the easier. So it is with the heart of man; he must not let his heart be fallow too long, but take it into task ever and anon, and labour to keep the flesh tender, and raw, and fresh, as we may say; and then upon every occasion it will be ready to bleed and to pour forth itself. To this end a man should every day be exercised in the duty of a godly mourning, every night reckon for the passage of that day, and say with thyself, What sin have I committed? What have I done? What have I said? What have I seen this day? What have I heard this day, that might be matter of humiliation and grief to me? And so work this upon the heart, that it may be turned to tears of godly sorrow.

(2.) Secondly, For the time, a man must be sure to take God's time. When God calls on him, when God gives them the heart, and is ready to close and to join with him, then take the advantage, set upon godly mourning, "when the Lord hath ransacked thy heart, when the Lord hath dealt with thee in the ministry of his word, when he hath applied himself to

thy soul and conscience, and detected thy corruption, and showed thee thy sin, and hath wounded thy heart in public with afflictions, in private with terrors and fears. So when the nature of grief is stirred by the occasion of the word, then take the advantage of this, seize upon this for the king's use; set upon sorrow whilst it is there, turn it into the right stream, into the right channel; turn it for sin, weep for sin, and not for outward losses and crosses. Thus much for the tune.

2. Secondly, There is another thing to be done for the order, and that is this, that a man must be sure to give over carnal mirth and carnal mourning, if he will mourn spiritually. His carnal laughter must be turned into mourning, as James speaks, iv. 9; and his carnal mirth must be turned into spiritual mourning too, or else he will never come to spiritual mourning. But we cannot stand upon that. We will only touch the motives, because the time is run out, and so conclude for this time. Consider well what are the motives to set us to work to mourn, and to mourn spiritually.

The motives are many. He that will mourn must look to these. There is one rule generally for mourning, and that is this: He that will mourn spiritually, he must apply himself to God's means and motives only. There be that tell us of a course of getting of sackcloth and haircloth, and I know not what, to work godly mourning. This makes men superstitious, and not humble. He that is an holy mourner, he will follow God's directions, he will work upon his motives and reasons, and no other; and therefore he mourns, because God bids him so mourn, for the Scripture bids us look upon Christ, not as he is in pictures, but in the word, presented upon the cross, and to weep, and to mourn, and to bleed out our souls there for our sins committed against him, and so to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to weep for him, as it is Zech. xii. 10. That is in general.

Now, in particular, consider these motives.

1. It is needful for us to mourn.
2. It is seasonable for us to mourn.
3. It is profitable. And,
4. It is comfortable.

Of these we should have said something more largely if the time and strength had given leave, but seeing both fail, we will only touch them now, and leave them till we can further prosecute them.

1. First, It is needful to mourn in a spiritual manner. Whosoever hath sin must mourn. Let him take his time and place, whether he will do it in this life or in that which is to come. Sin must have sorrow, that is a ruled case; and he that will not willingly mourn, shall, will he or nill he, in another place. And therefore, my brethren, we see there is a necessity laid upon us in regard of our sins. It is needful also in regard of others, to draw them to it by our example and practice. I know not how it comes to pass, but we are all fallen into a wondrous sleepy age, a time of security. Men bless themselves in their courses. They secure themselves in a formal, ordinary kind of religion and profession, with an ordinary stint of holy duties, when there is no powerful, hearty, sanctifying actions done in secret for our own sins, and the sins of the times. Why, since that all men sleep, let us be wakeful, and since others have need of provoking to this duty, let Christian men lead them the way. Let their faces, and apparel, and entertainment, and all their carriage and behaviour, speak mourning and lamentation to other men. Secondly, As it is needful in regard of others, so also it is needful in regard of ourselves too; for who doth not find in himself a wondrous proneness to sin, and aptness to take infection from others? Who finds not in himself a readiness to close with others in their sins? The way to preserve us is to mourn. That will preserve us from the infection now, and from judgment hereafter. How was Lot preserved in Sodom? By hearing and seeing they vexed his righteous soul, &c. While Lot mourned for their sin, he was free from sin; while he mourned for their impiety, he was free from the judgment. Because he did not partake of their wickedness, therefore he was not plagued with the wicked. If then we would not be infected by sin, if we would not be wrapped up in the common calamities and judgments, this course we had need to take, we must fall to mourning for our own sins and for their sins.

2. Secondly, As it is needful, so also it is very seasonable. The very time tends that way, as it were; the season is the time of weeping; the church of God weeps abroad. It is the time, as I told you, of Jacob's trouble. Oh the sighs, oh the tears, oh the griefs and sorrows that cover and overwhelm the people of God in other nations, and other places! The prophet David could say, his right hand should forget to play, rather than he would forget Jerusalem, Ps. cxxxvii. 5; but I know not how, what for play, and for sport, and for ease, and feasting, and one thing or other, we forget Jerusalem, we

forget the misery of the church in other places. Well, now they pray, and call upon us, as far as Prague, as far as Heidelberg, as far as France, that we would take notice of their afflictions, and of their miseries; at the least, that we would comfort them so far as to mourn for them. As it is seasonable in regard of the afflictions of the church, so in respect of provoking of others of this nation. For sin is now grown to a fulness, to a ripeness. Oh the oaths that are sworn in one day, in one city, and in one town! Oh the lies that are uttered in one fair, in one market daily! Oh the sins that are committed by high and low of all degrees within the compass of twenty-four hours! Who is able to reckon them? And the sins that are committed with an high hand against the knowledge, and against the light of the gospel, and against the express letter of the law, the word of God, should not these things cause us to mourn? They would cause a David to weep rivers of tears, and shall not we weep at all?

3. Thirdly, As it is seasonable, so it is profitable; for godly mourning it never hurts, it always helps. Carnal sorrow leaves a man worse than it finds him. It makes him more sick, and more weak, than it finds him. Spiritual sorrow leaves him better. He that can pour forth his heart before God, he that can go charged and loaden to heaven, with his heart full of fear and full of grief and full of sorrow, as ever it can hold, that man shall return back again loaden with joy, and peace, and comfort. Thou shalt never in thy life go before the Lord in sorrow and grief, and there spend but one quarter of an hour in tears, and prayer, and lamenting before the Lord, but thou shalt find thy heart somewhat lightened, somewhat eased and refreshed in so doing. Well then, since it is profitable for us, let us do it. As it is profitable for the soul, so it is for the body. This is the only means that is left to save ourselves. In Ezek. ix. 2, you know one was sent, with a pen and inkhorn, to mark out the mourners, that they might be saved in the common plague and judgment; and that God might be gracious and merciful to them. It is the only thing that is now left us. We must betake ourselves to prayer, and tears, and to lamentation, if we would not have judgments to fall upon us. This is profitable for the whole state, if there be some righteous men. If there had been but ten of these mourners in five cities of the plague, they had been upheld all for their sakes. The righteous man upholds the land and nation; they do beat back the judgments; and therefore, for the common good, let us mourn.

4. Lastly, It is very comfortable. It doth wondrously refresh a man. It is that that kills a Christian man, when he remembers many times the comforts

he hath had heretofore when his heart was enlarged; and if he could pour forth himself, and weep as once he could have done before the Lord, he would part with all the world for an heart so tender, and so soft, and so enlarged. There is no comfort to this in a Christian, he prizeth it above all other comforts in this world. Then he thinks himself in a safe estate, in the best case, in a comfortable estate and condition, when he can mourn best, when he can weep and sorrow for his sins, and weep over Christ.

Well, my brethren, let us consider these things, and now apply them to ourselves, and say, O my heart, thou hast need to mourn, it is time for thee to mourn! O my soul, it is profitable for thee to mourn! O my soul, it is comfortable for thee to mourn! If thou desire thine own profit, thine own ease, thine own comfort and safety, if thou desire life and salvation, betake thyself to this course; gather thyself from company; go alone, and set before thee thy sins thou hast committed, how bad thou hast been to God, how good he hath been to thee, what a kind Father he hath been, and what a froward child thou hast been. Lay these together till thou hast provoked thyself to some sorrow and tears. Thus if we could do, we should find comfort more than worldlings find in laughter, and in their merriment and sports; we should find more comfort this way than we shall in cold and comfortless weeping for crosses, and lamenting for afflictions; but, for that and other uses of the point, I am enforced, whether I will or no, to defer till next time.

The Second Sermon

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Mat. V. 4.

The lesson here is thus much, they that mourn in an holy manner, they are in an happy case. The proof of this doctrine is this, ‘they shall be comforted.’ We heard the last day, he is an happy man that can mourn in an holy manner; he is happy in his judgment. A holy affection argues an holy understanding. He is happy in his heart and inward temper, for holy mourning comes from a kind of spiritual softness and tenderness. He is happy in the effect of his mourning. Holy mourning will keep out carnal and worldly sorrow. It is a sorrow that a man needs never to sorrow for again; it is such a sorrow that tends to life and salvation. Worldly sorrow tends to death. He is happy in the issue of his mourning, for mourning makes way for rejoicing. He that now weeps shall one day laugh. Nay, for the present, the more he mourns in an holy manner, the more solid and substantial is his present comfort.

It is our folly and misery both, therefore, that we so utterly mistake the matter. We give way to a sorrow that will hurt us, and keep possession against that which will do us good. We see reason, as we imagine, why we should grieve in a passionate manner; we can see no reason why we should mourn in a spiritual manner. It is our unhappiness we can find time and leisure for the taking in of poison, that tends to death; we can find no place fit, no time, no opportunity for the receiving of a preservative that will bound and keep the heart against all poison. Of this point we have already said something too. What remains to be spoken of it in further uses we will gather in anon, and touch upon it in the prosecution of a new point if we can.

We pass therefore from the doctrine here delivered, 'Blessed are the mourners,' and come to the reason of it, 'for they shall be comforted.' Let us join these together, and see how they do depend. The point will be thus much—

Doct. 1. That spiritual mourning it ends in spiritual mirth. He that can mourn spiritually and holily, he shall undoubtedly and certainly be comforted. Holy tears, they are the seeds of holy joy. You see our ground in the text for this point. For the clearing of it further, let us know that we have good security for it.

1. The promise of God; and then, 2. The experience of God's people.

The best proofs that may be. First, the Lord undertakes in his promise two things touching our comforts:

1. That all our godly sorrow shall end in true comfort. The next is,

2. That all our godly mournings are attended and accompanied with comfort for the present.

1. For the first of these, you know the unwise, sorrow and weeping shall fly away, and joy and gladness shall come in place, Isa. xxxv., last verse, which place will refer you to many more. God hath made a succession of these things, as of day and night. His children's day begins in the night and in darkness, and ends in the day. After sorrow comes comfort; after they have mourned in a holy manner their sorrow shall be taken from them, and gladness shall come in the stead, Isa. lxi. 3. The Lord Jesus is appointed of his Father to give beauty for ashes, the garment of gladness for the garment

of sackcloth and mourning. God hath promised it shall be so; God hath appointed Christ, and fitted him, and enabled him to this word, that so it may be. Not to insist on this, our mourning shall not only end in comfort, but it carries comfort along with it for the present. God hath undertaken it shall be so, speaking of the afflictions that should come upon the state: 'And my servants shall be full, but he,' the wicked and hypocrite, 'shall be hungry: my servants shall rejoice, but he shall mourn: my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall howl for heaviness of heart,' Isa. lxxv. 13. Lo, when afflictions come upon a state, such afflictions as make the wicked cry and howl, then God in judgment remembers mercy for his. They shall have matter of joy and triumph even then. So in Isaiah lx., the beginning, he tolls them, calling on his church, 'Arise,' saith he, 'and shine; put on brightness and glory; the Lord shall be a light unto thee in darkness.' When the church is enclosed with darkness, nothing but misery and affliction round about her, then the Lord shall shine light, that is, he shall give comfort to his church. All their mourning and sorrow, their outward afflictions, shall cause them inwardly to mourn in spirit. God will take off the garment of mourning, and put on the garment of gladness in his due time. In the mean time, he will be a light to them in the midst of darkness. Thus God undertakes, this is the promise. Now, God promiseth nothing but what he purposeth, and God purposeth and promiseth no more than he will perform. Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? It shall certainly come to pass. All the counsels of God shall stand; every word of God is pure. All the promises of God are 'yea and amen.' They are certainly made good to the hearts and consciences of all God's people through Christ. Since therefore God hath said it, it shall be thus; sith Christ hath said, 'Mourn, and you shall be comforted,' we may build upon it that so it shall be.

2. To this promise of God let us add the experience of God's people. We will speak of the church in the bulk, and the particular members of the church they have all found this true, they have reported it by their own experience, and passed their word for God that it shall be thus with God's people. Thus the church is brought speaking in Micah vii. 8, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I be fallen, yet shall I rise;' comfort will come at the last. Nay, while I sit in darkness, the Lord for the present will be a light and comfort to me. Thus you know again what the church speaks, Ps. cxxvi. 6, from their own experience, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.' There is a seed that doth fail sometimes and disappoint our hopes, but this seed it never fails, it falls upon good ground, it will take root. If the seed-time be wet, the harvest will be dry. 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy;' and

in another, Ps. xcvi., the latter end, 'light is sown to the righteous,' and he expounds what he means by light, joy to the upright in heart. So that though this seed lie covered for a time, yet notwithstanding there is light sown for the righteous, and they shall be sure to have it. Thus the church speaks and gives her word for God. So likewise you may see it in particular Christians. David always found this; Ps. xciv. 19 saith he, 'In the multitude of the thoughts of my heart, thy comforts did glad my soul:' when I was perplexed in my thoughts, my thoughts were tossed and tumbled up and down in mine own meditations, seeking here and there for comfort. Even then in this distress, and distraction, thy comforts, thy double comforts, as the word implies, these comforts did refresh and glad this soul. So likewise Saint Paul, in 2 Cor. i. 4, he tells us that God did comfort him in all his tribulations; and as his sorrows did abound, so his consolations did overtop and superabound. And hence we may say, as it were, of the saints of God, that which they extracted from their own experience and particular case, that God comforts the abject, those that are cast down, as Paul saith, 2 Cor. vii. 6, and that of David, Ps. xxx. 5, 'Heaviness may continue for a night, but joy comes to the righteous in the morning.' We see then that if we look to the experience of God's people, they from their own experience give testimony to this truth, and give us to understand that true spiritual mourning shall end in true spiritual joy and comfort. If all this suffice not, let us consider of these reasons, and then we shall see that it is but reason that we should do so.

1. The first reason is drawn from the nature of sorrow and mourning. Sorrow is a kind of an imperfect thing, as it were. It is not made for itself, but for an higher and for a further end, to do service to something else, as it fares with all those that we call the declining affections. Hatred is servant to love; fear doth service to confidence; so likewise doth sorrow to joy. For God hath not appointed sorrow for sorrow's sake, but to make way for joy and true comfort. The physician doth not make a man sick for sickness sake, but for health's sake.

Many men's lives have been hazarded by carnal joy, as well as by worldly sorrow. And they that know anything in stories, they know many a man hath been taken away, his life hath leaped out of his mouth, as it were, by reason of extraordinary laughter and carnal joy. But now, the joy of a Christian man, a spiritual joy, it is a safe joy. It hurts no man, but doth a man good; it settles a man's mind, it strengthens his thoughts, it perfects his wits and understanding. It makes him to have a sound judgment: it makes for the health of his body; it makes for the preservation of his life; it doth a man

good every way. There is no provocation in it, there is no danger in it. Thirdly, as a Christian's joy is best in that respect, that it is the safest, so in this, that it is the surest joy. For this joy is an everlasting joy. The rejoicing of the wicked it is for a season, it lasts not long; but the joy of the righteous, it is a constant joy in the root, and in the cause and in the matter of it. It shall never be taken from him. Indeed, everlastingness stands at the end of both kinds of joy.

The wicked hath a joy, and there comes something after it that is everlasting; but that is everlasting shame, everlasting pain and anguish. The righteous he hath some joy here, and there is something that is everlasting that follows at the end of that; but that is everlasting glory, everlasting joy. It is swallowed up of eternity. Further, the joy of the righteous is a more rational joy than the joy of the wicked: that is but brutish, as it were. A righteous man rejoiceth in matters that are worthy of his joy, those things that he hath reason to be glad of. He rejoiceth that his name is written in heaven; he rejoiceth that Christ hath taken upon him his nature; that the Spirit of God the Comforter dwells in him in the graces of the Spirit, &c. But now the wicked man, his is an unreasonable joy; he rejoiceth where he hath no matter nor cause of joy. You see many times madmen sing, and dance, and leap, and shout, and take on. Will you term this joy “? Alas! this proceeds from distemper; not that they have cause to be merry, but it is from distemper that they so rejoice, if you term it mirth. That which Solomon saith you may say of the laughter of the wicked, ‘it is madness.’ He laughs, and he can give no reason for it; he rejoiceth for that which he hath no reason to rejoice in; he rejoiceth in the creature, he rejoiceth in himself, in his own wit, in his own worth, in his own strength. He rejoiceth many times in his shame, in his torment, in those things that tend to his utter ruin and destruction. The righteous, then, hath the start of the wicked for matter of comfort and joy. He hath a more solid, a more safe and sure joy, a more sweet joy, a more reasonable joy a great deal than the other hath. As he is beyond him in his joy,—

So, in the next place, he is beyond him in his sorrow too. Our life must have comfort and sorrow. It is compounded of sweet and sour. As the year is compounded of winter and summer, and the day of day and night, so every man's life is made up of these two. He hath some fair and some foul days, some joy and some sorrow. Now as the righteous is beyond the wicked in his joy and comfort, so he is beyond him in his sorrow. First, his sorrow is far better; it is a more gainful, a more comfortable sorrow than others' is. They

are beyond the sorrows of the wicked in all the causes and in all the circumstances of them.

(1.) First, The sorrow of the righteous it proceeds from a better spring and fountain than the sorrow of the wicked. The sorrow of the godly, it comes from a sound mind, from a pure heart, from an inside that is purified from hypocrisy, from self-love, from private respects. Whereas, on the other side, the sorrow of the wicked comes from distemper of brain, from an utter mistake. He takes that to be matter of sorrow, which is no matter of grief; he takes that to be matter of great grief that deserveth but a few tears, &c. Again, his sorrow comes from distemper of heart, from pride, from passion, from cursedness of heart and spirit, that he cannot stoop. It proceeds not from love to God or to mankind, but out of self-love, and from the miry puddle and filthy spring of pride and passion and error, &c.

(2.) Second, The sorrow of the righteous, as it hath a better spring, so it is busied and taken up about better objects, about better matters. A wicked man howls and cries, and takes on many times for a trifle, for a bauble; yea, many times, because he is disappointed and crossed in his lusts, in his base sins. The child of God finds himself somewhat else to do than to weep and to cry, and take on for trifles and vanities. He looks up to God, and is sorry he hath displeased him. He turns his tears into the right channel, and sets them upon his sin. He weeps for spiritual losses and crosses, for public miseries and calamities, and he takes to heart such things as are worthy of a man's sorrow, and such as will perfect the affections, as every affection is perfected from the goodness of the object about which he works.

(3.) Thirdly, The sorrow of the righteous is better than the sorrow of the wicked in regard of the manner of their mourning. For the mourning of the righteous is a composed kind of sorrow. He mourns in silence; he weeps to the Lord; he carries it with judgment and discretion. His sorrow is a moderated sorrow; he holds it within banks and bounds. Whereas the sorrow of the wicked is a tempestuous, a boisterous, a furious kind of mourning and lamenting. He knows no mean. It is without hope. He observes no decorum. He forgets himself what he is, what he saith, what he doth almost. His mourning is little better than frenzy or madness.

(4.) Last of all, they differ much in the end and upshot of their mourning. Godly sorrow, it doth a man good. It humbles him, as we said. It drives him from all purpose, from all practice of sin; it makes him resolute against sin. On the other side, it draws him into the presence of God; it

brings him before the Lord in the ordinance of prayer, in the ordinance of fasting and humiliation. This is his sorrow, and therefore it shall end well; whereas, on the other side, the sorrow of the wicked, it is a kind of vexing, tormenting sorrow, a painful sorrow, a despairing sorrow; a sorrow that drives a man from God, and is mingled many times with much murmuring, sometimes with cursing, sometimes with oaths and blasphemies. This sorrow of the wicked, it hath not so good an issue. There is great difference when a woman breeds a disease, and when she breeds a child. When a woman breeds a disease, there is no good comes of that: there is much pain, and no ease follows; there is much sickness, and no comfort in the close. But when she breeds a child, though there be much pain, yet it quits the cost when the child is born: 'She forgets her pain, because a child is born into the world,' John xvi. 21. So it is in the state of the godly and the wicked. The wicked are ever in travail, as we read in Job, viii. 22; he is always travailing with fear and with grief, with passion, discontent, and horror, &c., but then he never brings forth any fruit; and this travail, it never ends in comfortable birth. But it is contrary with the godly. He travails with pain, and with sorrow, and with fears; and some tears, and sighs, and groans he hath for the present; but in the end there is a deliverance. He is delivered of his fears, and of his pain, and his sorrows; and then comes joy and peace, and all his tears are wiped away; and then his sorrow's are forgotten, and joy comes, and takes possession. So that the joy of the godly it is far better than the wicked's joy; and the sorrow that falls upon the good and the bad is far different. Both must needs sorrow in this vale of misery. But the sorrow of the godly, it is an hopeful sorrow, it is an healing sorrow, it is a comfortable sorrow, it is a fruitful sorrow; whereas the sorrow of the wicked is full of despair and vexation, and the further he wades in, the more danger he is in of drowning. Still, the righteous begins in the night, but ends in the day: saith David, 'Heaviness may continue for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,' Ps. xxx. 5. The wicked sots forth in the morning, but then there comes darkness at night; he begins merrily and happily, but then the issue is most miserable.

Well then, to shut up this first reason, for information—upon which we have stood the longer, because carnal judgment will not credit this point,—it is clear, the righteous man in prosperity is better than the wicked, and in adversity better. Whence he hath occasion to rejoice.

A surgeon doth not lance and sear men because he would put them to pain, but because he would give them ease. The Lord of heaven delights not in wounding and grieving of his children; but therefore he calls them to

sorrow, that so they might come to comfort. Sorrow, then, never comes to its full end that it was made for; it obtains not its perfection, till such time as it convey a man to joy. And therefore, since it is appointed and ordained to this end by God, it is certain it shall arrive at joy, and obtain it in the end; for God doth nothing in vain, he will bring all to perfection.

2. The second reason may be drawn from the nature of this spiritual comfort and joy that we speak of. For spiritual joy is very strong: 'The joy of the Lord is your strength,' as he saith, Neh. viii. 10. A strong thing is spiritual joy, and therefore it will overmatch, and overcome, and drink up, as it were, all our sorrows and fears in due time, as the sun overcomes the darkness of the night, and the fogginess of the mist in the morning. Indeed, natural joy may be overmatched with natural grief, at the least with some grief, because we are more sensible of grief than we are of those comforts: they more infect the sense. And because natural grief weakens nature, therefore it is not able to make resistance; and therefore we say many times, natural grief overmatcheth natural comforts; much more will carnal grief, and other grief, overcome carnal joy, because these are weaker than natural, having less root in nature, and less subsistence in that way. But it is not so with spiritual joy and comfort, for these now have their root in God, and come from his strength; and therefore these will boar down before them all sorrow, all heart-breaking, all grievance whatsoever in due time. This is a joy that cannot be taken from us. It is a joy invincible, it is a joy impregnable. No sorrow, no affliction on the outside, no grief on the inside, can strip a man of spiritual joy and comfort, if it be in any strength. So then there be two reasons why we should think that all our spiritual mourning will end in joy and comfort: for joy will swallow it up at the last, it will be too hard for it; and because, again, mourning is made but for joy. Therefore, when joy comes in place, that must give place.

3. A third reason may be drawn from the cause of our spiritual mourning and spiritual joy; for these are fruits that grow both from the same root. Spiritual joy and spiritual mourning, they come from the same fountain, from the same Spirit. The same Spirit it causeth us to weep over him whom we have pierced, and it causeth us also to rejoice in the Lord whom we have pierced: 'The fruit of the Spirit is joy,' saith the apostle, Gal. v. 22. The same Spirit manageth and guideth both the one and the other. Carnal passions and affections they oppose one another, they fight one with another, because they are carried on headlong, without any guide or order at all. But spiritual affections they are subordinate and subservient one to another; the one

labours to further and to advance another. Thus the more a man joys, the more he grieves; and the more he grieves, the more he joys. Joy melts the heart, and gives it a kindly thaw; grief, on the other side, it easeth the heart, and makes it cheerful and lightsome.

4. Lastly, a reason may be drawn from the effects of godly mourning. If they be considered, it will be cleared, that he that mourns spiritually shall end in comfort at the last; for this spiritual mourning, what will it do? First, it takes off the power and strength of corruption. It weakens sin, it pricks the bladder of pride, and lets out our corruption. Spiritual mourning it takes down a man, it humbles him; and an humble heart is always a cheerful heart, so far as it is humbled. Spiritual mourning, again, makes way for prayer. For spiritual mourning sends a man to God. It causeth him to utter himself in petition, in confession, and complaints to his Father; to pour out himself to the bosom of his God in speeches, in sighs, and tears, in lamenting one way or other. All this tends to comfort. The more a man prays, the more he hath comfort. 'Pray,' saith Christ, 'that your joy may be full,' John xvi. 24. If a man will have fulness of joy, he must be frequent in prayer. Now, the more a man mourns spiritually, the more he prays; and therefore the more he is filled with true joy. Again, this spiritual mourning, it is a wondrous help of faith. It is an hopeful mourning; it helps a man's faith in the promises touching remission of sins. He weeps for it; he sues out his pardon in Christ's name. It helps his faith in the promises of our Saviour: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' If they 'sow in tears, they shall reap in joy,' &c. Now, the more a man's faith and hope is furthered, the more his joy is furthered. Still, the apostle speaks that they should rejoice in believing. The more a man believes and repositeth himself upon the promises, the precious promises of the word, the more his heart is joyed and comforted still. Now, the more he mourns, the more reason he hath to believe that that furthers his faith; and therefore it advanceth his joy and comfort.

Let us look, then, upon the reasons that hath been given, and the case is clear enough. Whosoever he be that mourns in an holy manner, that man shall certainly, first or last, be comforted. This mourning tends to comfort. It is made to draw it on. His joy will overtop his sorrow, and overcome all at last. Joy and mourning go together. They are branches of the same root, and therefore the more we do the one, the more we have the other. This godly mourning it makes way for prayer, it makes way for faith; and therefore it makes way for comfort and consolation. This point then being thus cleared, let us a little make some use of it to ourselves. The use is threefold.

Use 1. First, Here is one use of information touching others. Since those men are certain to have comfort in the end that mourn holily, here we may learn to determine now that grand question that hath been so long controverted, namely, who is the happiest man in the world? And for the deciding of this question, we must not go with it to Solon, to Plato, or to the philosophers, but come to a judge, the Lord Jesus. And what saith he to the point? Blessed and happy, saith he, are they that mourn. His reason is, 'for they shall be comforted.' So that here, then, is the trial of a man's state that is blessed. The signs of a blessed estate are these two in this verse. The first is, if so be he mourn well; the second, if he speed well for his comfort. So that that man, then, that hath the best sorrow and the best joy, that man then is the happiest man. Now the Christian man is this man. He hath the advantage of all other men, in his joy and in his sorrow; and therefore he is the only happy man in this world. First, for his joy, happy is he, saith Christ, 'he shall be comforted' with those comforts that a man cannot buy too dear, though he shed many tears for them, though he spend many nights in sighing and mourning and lamenting. Though it cost him much he cannot over-rate it, he cannot over-prize it. This comfort cannot be bought at too high a rate. Now what is this comfort? What is the Christian's joy better than another man's joy? In many respects,

(1.) First, This joy is a more solid joy than the joy of the wicked. The wicked man rejoiceth in face, but not in heart; the wicked's joy is but a blaze, it is but a flash; his rejoicing is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, that the Holy Ghost tells us makes a blaze and is gone in an instant.

This joy is rather in show than in substance. His joy is not rooted in himself. It is not bottomed upon any sure foundation, but it is rooted out of himself, in the creature. A wicked man hath no matter of comfort within himself, but his comforts they hang upon outward things. His comfort sometimes lies in the bottom of a pot; sometimes it lies in the bottom of a dish; sometimes in the heels of an horse; sometimes in the wings of a bird; sometimes in some base lust, or in some such filthy sin. Here lies the comfort of a wicked man; but now the comfort of the godly is not so. The joy of the righteous, it is a massy and a substantial joy. His afflictions indeed are light and momentany, but then his joy is everlasting, as I shall show anon. It is a joy that hath substance in it. The joy of the wicked, at the best, it is but a little glazed, it is but gilt over, but it is naught within; but the joy of the righteous it is a golden joy, it is beaten gold, it is massy and substantial and precious. As we said before, the root of his joy he hath it in himself, he hath

matter of comfort in himself. There is faith and grace, there is truth. Nay, it is not rooted in himself only, but the root of it is in heaven, in his head, in Christ. He pitcheth his joy upon God, and therefore his joy is such a joy, as will hold out in the wetting, and will bear him through all pressures, all burdens, and all discouragements whatsoever.

(2.) Secondly, The joy of the righteous, as it is a more solid, so it is a more safe joy than the joy of the wicked. A carnal joy is many times prejudicial to a man in his safety, therefore we may safely conclude, the godliest man is the happiest man. He is in the best estate and condition, that gives most way to godly sorrow, and that gives least way to carnal sorrow. That is one use.

Use 2. Now the next use is to the godly. First, a word of exhortation, and then a word of consolation. A word of exhortation to God's people. That since all their sorrow shall end in comfort, and is attended with comfort, that therefore God's people should lay open themselves and give way to godly sorrow as much as possibly they can. Stop up, my brethren, all the passages, dam them up if you can, that make way for worldly sorrow and for carnal grief, for this will come but too fast upon you; but, on the other side, pluck up the floodgates, and open all the passages, and give all the way to spiritual mourning and to godly tears. Do this even for your own sakes. Conceive that it is your happiness to mourn in an holy manner, since your Saviour tells you, that they are happy and blessed that do so mourn. Conceive that your comfort lies in your godly sorrow, as our Saviour saith; 'blessed' are they in this, namely, in this respect, because 'they shall be comforted for their mourning.' Believe it, brethren, one day, one hour spent in godly mourning, a few tears shed over Jesus Christ, and over a man's sin, when he is in health, when he is in peace, when he hath no outward cause to move him to tears and sorrow, it will more satisfy the soul, and more quiet the conscience, and more relieve and refresh the heart, than all the mirth, and all the delights, and all the treasures, and all the comforts of this world will do. Why, then, if you would be comforted, mourn; if you would laugh, weep; if you would have cheerful hearts and lightsome spirits, if you would live comfortably and die comfortably, give way to this mourning, so it be spiritual mourning, as much as you can.

Ay, but what is spiritual mourning? We spake somewhat of it the last day. Thus, in short, because I see the time will much prevent us.

(1.) First, Labour to mourn after spiritual things and spiritual persons. That is spiritual mourning when it hath spiritual objects. First, for persons.

Is it so, that the Lord withdraws himself from thee in his comforts, that thy soul doth not feel them, doth not find them, as sometimes thou had done? Lament after the Lord, weep and cry after him, and say, O unhappy man, where have I lost my peace? How have I behaved myself, that my Father will not speak to me! that he will not look to me! And as you see a little child that hath lost the mother, it follows crying, My mother is gone, I know not what to do, so let God's children do in this case, weep and take to heart this loss of losses, when thy rude, and unkind, and unholy behaviour hath alienated and estranged thy Father from thee, that he will not look on thee.

(2.) Again, Is it so, that the Lord withdraws himself in his ordinances, that we hear not the voice of his word, that we see not our signs? 'There is not a prophet among us to tell us how long,' Ps. lxxiv. 9; let us then set ourselves to mourn, as the church in that psalm. 'Lord, we see not our signs.' Lo, how a man may he free from his misery, whatsoever befalls.

(3.) Is it so, again, that in our mourning, we see the church of God, those sorrowful-spirited men, that they are distressed and afflicted. Let us weep for these too. Is the church of God carried into captivity? Let us cry out with the prophet of the Lord, 'My belly, my belly, I cannot be quiet; give me way to weep! Oh that I could shed rivers of tears! Oh that my head were a fountain of waters, that I could weep day and night for the daughter of my people!' &c., as in Jeremiah everywhere.

(4.) Is it so, that the church of God is foiled at any time by the adversaries? Let us take on, as Joshua did, 'rend your garments, and cast down ourselves before the Lord, and say, What shall we say, when Israel shall turn their backs and fly before their enemies?' Joshua vii. 8. Is it so, that the host of the living God is reproached and railed on by the Rabshakehs of this world? Take the matter to heart, as Hezekiah did. He goes before the Lord, and rends his clothes, and spreads the blasphemies before him. 'Lord,' saith he, 'it is a day of darkness, and blackness: the children are come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth,' Isa. xxxvii. 3.

(5.) In short, is the church of God in heaviness and lamentation? Are the armies of God in the field in danger and distress? Let every man, that takes himself to be a member of the church, and a member of Christ, take the

business to heart, and weep with them that weep, and lament with them that mourn. Let your mirth and your peace, which is carnal, in these days, be turned into mourning and lamenting, bear a part with the church of God, with that Uriah say, 'Shall I eat and drink, and solace, when the ark of God, and the camp, and the captain of the host lies in distress, and misery in the camp?' 2 Sam. xi. 11. So for spiritual matters. Is it so, that we hear that sin reigns everywhere? that we hear blasphemies, that we see pride and oppression, that we are eye-witnesses, or others report to us the horrible injustice, the monstrous filthiness, the unsufferable ills that cry mightily to heaven against our dwelling and against our nation? Let us here give way to mourning, and say with the prophet, Oh that I could weep! 'Oh that my head were a fountain of tears!' and with David, 'I shed rivers of tears, because men kept not thy law,' Ps. cxix. 136. Thus, my brethren, let us labour to be much in spiritual mourning, to mourn for the loss and for the absence of holy things, and to mourn for the presence and confluence of sinful persons and sinful things, to mourn for the sins of our land, for the sins of the church abroad, for the sins of our neighbours; mourn for the sins of our towns, mourn for the sins of our own families, mourn for the sins of our yoke-fellows, mourn for the sins of our children, mourn for our own sins. Oh happy is that man that can pour forth himself in godly tears. The more he mourns thus, the more he shall be comforted.

2. Secondly, Your mourning will be spiritual mourning, in case you dram your tears from a good fountain: that they come from a good rise, a good spring. When a man's zeal is for the zeal of God's glory, out of love, and mercy, and compassion to men's souls, out of a desire of men's salvation, of his own, and others'; and when he mourns out of hatred of ill, and of sin, and mourns for the love of grace and goodness, this is a spiritual mourning. Mourn now, and work upon these motives, and not upon private motives and respects; but let our sorrow come out of hatred of sin, and out of love to goodness, out of zeal to God's name, out of love, mercy, and compassion to men's souls. And this is holy and spiritual mourning.

3. Thirdly, Your mourning will be spiritual, in case it have spiritual effects. Let us look to those. Holy mourning, it sets a man further from sin. Holy mourning, it draws a man nearer to God. It makes him pray, as it is said of them, Judges ii. 4, O, they wept; and the place bare the name of weepers: 'Bochim,' 'they wept' and offered sacrifice. Prayer and tears go together. Sacrifice and sorrow go together. Now when our mourning is such mourning that it makes us not sit in a corner in a sullen manner, but makes us bestir

ourselves in praying and running to the Lord, it makes us wrestle with God, as Jacob did, in tears and sorrow, this is holy and spiritual mourning. This is the mourning that we describe to you from the objects, from the causes of it, and from the effects of it. This mourning is an healing mourning. It is a sweetening mourning. It is a comfortable mourning. It is a hopeful mourning. It will do a man much good. Therefore give way to this to the utmost of your power, as I said before. Let every man say to himself, I must mourn, I may mourn, and I will mourn.

(1.) First, I must, because God bids me, because the time calls for it. Therefore I must. Because my own need requires it, therefore I must weep. I find I am dead, and drowsy, and sluggish; and carelessness and sleepiness will creep upon me except I stir up myself to mourn. And then, as I must, so (2.) I may. David, and Paul, and Jeremiah could weep upon spiritual occasions. So may we in case we will go to the same means, to the same God. Our nature is capable of godly sorrow. We see in them who was their Father, even God, who gave them a tender heart. He can give it us. You know the Spirit of God is a spirit of weeping. It is a Spirit of supplication. It will make us to look to him whom we have pierced, and to weep, &c., as it is Zech. xii. 10. Now Christ hath promised that he that asks for this Spirit shall have it.

Let us go to the Lord, and say, It is possible that we should have so fit and tender hearts to shed tears for our own sins and the sins of others, as David and others before us have done. It is possible for me so to do if I go to God and ask such a heart. God hath promised that he will give his Spirit if we call for it; and therefore let us call and desire the Lord to smite our rocky hearts, as Moses smote the rock, that he would cause water to gush out of thee as he did out of the rock.

(3.) Thirdly, As we may, so let us resolve that we will do it. Let us come to resolve. Well, I see the time calls for it; I see my brethren and myself have need of it, I will do it, I will set upon it; I will take a time when I will cast up all my reckonings between God and myself; I will take a time to unweep my former carnal sorrow; I will take some time from my carnal laughter for this. Take the time now, defer it not; now it is a fit time. You use to cast up your shops at this time of the year, then come and reckon how your estate stands, my brethren; cast up your shop with God; rifle your souls and see how matters stand between God and you; see whether you go backwards or forwards. Mourn there, and bewail your sins that you have committed against God, and the sins of the time; and one day spent in this manner between

God and thy soul will do thee more good than all the feasting and merriments, and all the sports that you meet withal this time. That is for the second use.

Use 3. Now there followeth a third. Here is a word of comfort to those that mourn—comfort in regard of the whole church, and comfort in regard of the particular members of the church. For the whole church; here is comfort for the people of God in affliction. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, saith Jeremiah, but he shall come out, Jer. xxx. 7. He hath a time of trouble, but he shall be delivered, he shall have a time of comfort; he is weak, but then his Redeemer is strong. Jacob hath strong friends and strong means. All that is in heaven is for Jacob, for the church, I mean; all the saints in earth pray, and these prayers are not in vain. There will come comfort out of them at the last. Fear not, then, O worm Jacob, saith the prophet, fear not; though thou be as a worm, be not afraid, Isa. xli. 14.

Obj. Oh, but Jacob's grief is more than his fear.

Ans. Why should the people of God grieve? Do they grieve because the enemies insult? Let them answer the enemies in the words of the church: 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemies: for though I be fallen, yet shall I rise again; and while I sit in darkness, God shall be a light to me.' Do they grieve because they are in darkness, and are encompassed with many sorrows and distresses? Hear what the Lord saith, Isa. lx. 1, 'Arise, and shine; put on glory; I will cause light to shine in darkness.' And saith another place, 'O thou tossed and afflicted with tempest, I will make thee walls of carbuncles,' Isa. liv. 11. They were before of ordinary stone, now they shall be made of precious stones; the Lord will make the conclusion of his children an happy conclusion. Mark the righteous, the end of his life is peace; and so the end of every particular temptation, of every particular affliction, is peace. All shall end well with him. It shall be well on his side.

Here, then, is comfort for the church. The church of God is afflicted, but she shall be comforted. She is despised, but she shall be honourable and magnified, and her enemies shall lick the dust of her feet. The church of God is opposed and put hard to it. But her Redeemer is mighty, and her hoofs are made of brass, and her feet of iron, to trample to dust and powder all the enemies that rise up against her. She is in the everlasting arms, as Moses speaks of the almighty God there, Deut. xxxiii. 27. She finds rest there; she finds peace and comfort. In the greatest miseries, this is comfort for the church. The Lord will comfort her and her mourners too: Isa. lvii. 18, 'He

will comfort Sion and her mourners.' All Sion, the church of God, shall be comforted; all the friends of the church that mourn in her mourning, and that take to heart her sorrows and desolation, they shall be comforted too. All that mourn with her shall be comforted. This is comfort for the church in general. Now, for every Christian, for every member in particular, here is comfort.

Are we, my brethren, such as do mourn, and mourn spiritually? Do we mourn for the breach of God's Sabbath? for the contempt of his word? for the abuse of his sacraments? for the contempt of his name? Do we mourn for the church that is under captivity, under the sword? Do we mourn that Christians be under temptations, under misery, under afflictions? Do we mourn because the work of grace goes on no better in the hearts of God's people and in our own hearts? Do we mourn for our sins, and for the sins of our brethren? especially those that profess religion, is this the matter of our sorrow, my brethren? Here is comfort, you shall be comforted; the Lord hath passed his word that it shall be so. All these tears are registered and put into the bottle of God. He keeps them as a precious water, and there is not a tear shall be forgotten. All this is seed sown. If we sow in tears, we shall reap in joy. Harvest follows seedtime, so joy follows tears. It shall be so. 'There is light sown for the righteous,' Ps. xcvi. 11. It may be under the clods, it may be buried for a time, it may seem lost, but it will sprout at the last, and there will come a crop out of it. Well, here is comfort. All the sorrows of the godly, all his griefs, all his sighs, all his wants, all his heart-breaks, if all these turn to spiritual mourning, they shall all turn to his advantage and comfort in the end. Nay, his sorrow for the present hath comfort along with it, and the more he sorrows, the more he rejoiceth, and the more true comfort he hath still. The more a man can weep over Christ, the more bitterly he can weep, the more sweet Christ will relish to him. The more grief and sorrow he brings to the word and to the ordinances of God, the more true sweetness he finds in the word and carries from the word. And the more he can bewail himself before the Lord in his wants, in his bankruptness in grace, the more he is advanced, and enlarged to comfort and joy by the Lord. But for the wicked, woe to him; for 'in laughter his heart is sad,' saith the text; he laughs in the face, but his heart mourns. On the other side, happy is the spiritual mourner; in his mourning, his heart laughs, as it were. He hath matter of joy in sorrow, as the wicked hath matter of mourning in mirth. Woe be to the wicked, for all his joy shall end in sorrow; the end of that mirth is sadness in spirit, saith Solomon; but happy is the holy mourner. All his tears shall be

wiped away, all his sorrows, all his griefs, all his fears shall end in comfort and consolation at the last.

Obj. Oh, but how shall I know that my mourning is spiritual mourning? I suspect it much this way. And why? First of all, my sorrow begins in the flesh; I never mourned, I never went to God in prayer and fasting, or any exercise of religion, till God tamed me and took me down with crosses and afflictions; then when he laid load on me, I went to it, and not before.

Sol. Well, my brethren, thus it may be: Thy sorrow may begin in the flesh; but, if it end in the Spirit, all is well. It may be a Christian's sorrow was first occasioned by crosses, by worldly sorrow, and worldly respects; but if he improve his sorrow, and turn it to holy sorrow, if he turn the stream into the right channel, if he set his grief, his indignations, his tears upon sin, all shall end well at the last, though the beginning were not so good.

Obj. Ay, but, will some say, my sorrow is more for outward things than for spiritual matters. I grieve when I am sick, but it is for pain more than for sin. I mourn when I am poor, but it is because I am poor in purse, because I am poor in state, rather than in regard of my spiritual wants; and so for other matters too.

Ans. My brethren, this is easily granted. There is no floor here, but there is chaff as well as wheat with it. There is no precious mine here so rich, but there is some dross as well as good gold, as well as good metal. So it is with a Christian. There is a mixture of flesh and spirit. They run both in the same channel, and they run within the veins of the same soul and spirit, as it were; the question is not, therefore, whether there be any fleshy sorrow, any carnal sorrow, grief, and mourning; but whether there be any holy and spiritual sorrow. How much there is of the one is not the point, but whether there be any of the other. And if it be so, it is spiritual sorrow, that thou canst shed some tears, vent some sighs and groans to God in spiritual respects, for spiritual losses, for spiritual evils. Here is matter of comfort, there is so much spiritual comfort, so much spiritual joy belongs to thee.

Obj. But how shall I know that my mourning is spiritual mourning, when I cannot mourn for sin? I have abundance of tears for losses, and for crosses, and unkindnesses; but I am dry, and barren, and tearless, when it comes to matter of sin and offence, and trespass against God. Is this well, that a man should have tears at command for outward losses and crosses, and not shed a tear in prayer, and in repentance for sin?

Ans. No, my brethren, it is not well; but how shall we do to amend this? Surely, even go to God and confess how it is; complain of thyself, and desire him to amend it; and, if we condemn ourselves, God is ready to receive us.

Obj. Ay, but the children of God are more plentiful in teats for sin than for outward things.

Ans. Ay, in what sense? Not in regard of the bulk, but in regard of the worth, in regard of the value of their tears. One tear spent for sin is worth rivers of tears for outward matters. In the regard of the price and excellency, it is more, because God accepts of a man's endeavour and desire in this kind, and he looks what his desire, and intention, and endeavour is. They are more also in regard of our esteem, that we would gladly weep more for sin than for other matters. Otherwise, the children of God are more plentiful many times in tears for the loss of children, as David was for Absalom; or for some cross that befalls them, as at Ziklag he wept so much that he could weep no more, than for sin against God, and yet they would weep most for that. They think that a matter of greatest sorrow, and they desire to be more plentiful in tears for it, and then God accepts it, according to that a man would do, and not according to that which he cannot do, and which he hath not.

Obj. Further, it will be said, How shall I know my sorrow to be spiritual sorrow? I answer in a word:

Ans. 1. First, Look to the object, that it be universal. So in spiritual things, he that is spiritually sorry he mourns for the want of goodness wheresoever he seeth it, be it in himself or in other men, nay, be it in his enemies. David saith, Ps. cxix. 53, sorrow seized on him, 'because his adversaries kept not the law of God.' Spiritual mourning, it makes a man sorry for painful evils that fall upon his brethren as well as himself; and on himself as well as them. Do we mourn for other men's faults as well as for our own? Do we mourn that our enemies do overshoot themselves, and that they disgrace themselves, as well, though not so much, as if our friends had done it? If our sorrow be universal, then it is spiritual.

Ans. 2. Secondly, Our sorrow will be spiritual and holy, if it be accompanied with prayer; for holy mourning makes way for prayer. Sometimes a man is so surprised and overwhelmed, as David saith, that he is not able to speak a word, notwithstanding there may be a mental real prayer. His eyes may be towards heaven, he may sigh, and groan, and lament, and bemoan his own estate, that he cannot speak and pour forth himself in

prayer to God as he would do, and as he should do. Now, if our sorrow be such sorrow, that it sends us to God, that it brings us on our knees, that it makes us either speak or chatter, as Hezekiah did, it makes a man mourn, groan, as the dove doth, as he saith of himself; if it be such sorrow as this, it is spiritual sorrow. You know that it is said of Jacob, Hos. xii. 4, that he wrestled with the angel with tears, and sued to him with supplication. Tears and supplication went together. He begged apace, and cried apace; he hanged on him, and would not let him go without a blessing.

A us. 8. Again, It is spiritual sorrow, when it is accompanied with thankfulness. A carnal man, when he is pinched and twinged, and knows not which way to turn himself, he will be glad to cry, when he sees there is no other refuge in the world, but either he must cry or sink. But a man that is a spiritual mourner, he will be thankful as well as prayerful. This is a comfortable kind of mourning. There is hope in it, there is sweetness and comfort in it; and that man that can so mourn, he blesseth God that he can mourn, that God hath given him time and leisure, that he may set himself apart to provoke himself to mourn. He blesseth God that God hath given him a word that can work upon him, that God hath given him friends to deal faithfully, that God hath applied this word to his heart, that it hath wounded him and made him bleed; he is thankful for the mercy, and thinks it a great promotion, when he can shed tears, when his heart yields under the stroke of the word of God, and of the hand of God that is upon him. Nay, he is thankful whatsoever it costs him. The child of God, when he sees his heart is enlarged to weep over Christ for his sins, he cares not how dear he pays for this sorrow, for this mourning, though he lose some of his estate, some of his credit with men; though he lose some of his wealth, some of his comforts, some of his friends; yet, notwithstanding, if he can weep and mourn, he thinks he hath a good bargain, a good purchase. Though God afflict him, though he pain him, though he cross him and cast him down, yet if he see that his heart can weep for his sin, that he can lament after the Lord, and can take to heart his corruptions, this man can rejoice in this estate, he can bless God's name, that hath given him an heart to mourn spiritually, though he pay dear for it in regard of outward losses and outward smart.

Now, then, if you have such a mourning as this, that you do mourn for spiritual things; and you so mourn that your mourning fit you for prayer, that it make way for praise and thanksgiving; then take comfort in your mourning, and know that it will end well. After night will come a day; after darkness there will come light; after seed-time there shall be an harvest, you shall have

a crop. The more you mourn, the more you shall rejoice. Blessed are they that mourn for themselves and for others. Blessed are they, they shall be comforted. They are comforted, and they will be more comforted afterwards. So saith the mouth that cannot lie. It is the speech of Christ himself. Thus we have done with the point, and can no further proceed at this time.

Violence Victorious

From the days of John Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.—Mat. XI. 12.

John Baptist and our blessed Saviour gave mutual testimonies one of another. He witnessed of Christ before he came, and our Saviour Christ gives witness of him here. The occasion of this you have in the second verse. John being in prison, sends two of his disciples to Christ, to know whether he were the Christ or no; not that John did doubt, but to confirm his disciples. Christ returns a real and a verbal answer. ‘Toll John,’ saith he, ‘what ye have seen and heard,’ &c.; and then he closeth up all, ‘Blessed is he that is not offended with me.’ Upon this occasion Christ enters into a commendation of blessed St John Baptist, even unto a comparative commendation, ‘Amongst them that were born of women there had not yet risen a greater than John the Baptist;’ not so much in eminency of grace, though that may have a truth, as in regard of the dispensation of his ministry, John living in more glorious times. For the excellency of the church is from Christ. He doth ennoble and advance times, and places, and persons. Bethlehem, a little city, yet not a little city in regard that Christ was born there; and saith Christ, ‘Happy are the eyes that see that which your eyes see,’ Luke x. 28. Everything is advanced by Christ. So John Baptist, in regard of his office, being the immediate forerunner of Christ, was greater than all that were before him; yet he saith, ‘The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he;’ not in grace, but in prerogative, in regard of the revelation and manifestation of more things. For John Baptist died before he saw the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Christ accomplished, before he was glorified. Therefore in regard of these prerogatives, the least in the kingdom of heaven, that is, in the church of the New Testament, is greater than he. It is a rule that the least of the greater is greater than the greatest of the less. John was greater than the greatest of thorn that were before him, but lesser than the least of those that were after him.

Then Christ commends John from the efficacy of his ministry: ‘From the days of John Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ So you see how the words depend upon the former. For the points we are to consider in them.

First, Here you have the state of the church in the New Testament. It is a kingdom, and the kingdom of heaven; together with the quality of the means whereby it comes to be a kingdom, the means of grace, the gospel. The gospel and the people that are wrought on by the gospel in the New Testament, they are both called the 'kingdom of heaven.'

Then, secondly, here is set down the affection of those people that seek this kingdom at that time, and so forward to the end of the world. The disposition of the persons is, 'They are violent.'

The third is, the issue or success of this eagerness and violence. Though the manner be violent, yet the success is good. 'The violent take it by force.'

The fourth is, the date or time when it begins, and. how long it continues. It bears date from the preaching of Saint John Baptist to the end of the world. 'Until now;' that is, to the end of the world. As it was said, 'till now,' in the evangelist's time, so posterity may say, 'Until now,' from the first coming of Christ till his second coming. While there is a gospel preached, which is the ministry of the Spirit, the Spirit will be working; and there are such glorious things in the gospel, that there will be violence offered. So while there is a people to be gathered, and a gospel to be preached to gather them, and a Spirit that works by that gospel, there will be violence in the church offered to the means of salvation.

Doct. 1. First, The state of the church, together with the means, the gospel preached, it is called the kingdom of heaven.

Besides others, there are three main significations of these words, 'The kingdom of heaven.'

First, The famous, leading, proper signification is the state and place where God himself and his people are most glorious, 'the kingdom of heaven.' All the other significations end in that. But, secondly, because all that shall come into that glorious kingdom, they must be kings here first, in the state of the kingdom of grace, which consists 'in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Gal. v. 22, in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, therefore the state of grace comes to have the name too of 'the kingdom of heaven.' And thirdly, Because grace in this world cannot be attained without an order, and means, and dispensations from God, hereupon the dispensation of the means whereby we come to have grace is also called 'the kingdom.' The unfolding the mysteries of salvation in the

gospel is called the kingdom of God. As Christ saith, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you;' that is, the preaching of the gospel; therefore 'the gospel' is called 'the gospel of the kingdom,' and 'the word of the kingdom,' because by this word we come to have grace, and by grace, glory. There is no glory without grace, and no grace without the word. One makes way for another. The preaching of the gospel doth cause a church, which is the kingdom of Christ, wherein he rules by the sceptre of his word; by which word Christ and all his riches, and glory, and prerogatives are unfolded; and thereby grace is wrought, and grace leads to glory. This connection and subordination is to be observed,

1. First, For the conviction of those who do not indeed belong to the kingdom of heaven. Every man is ready to talk of the kingdom of heaven, and the glory there; ay, but there is a subordination of grace, and of the means of grace. How standest thou affected to the means of salvation, to the 'word of the kingdom,' the 'word of life,' the 'word of reconciliation'? for it hath the name from all the excellencies to which it brings us; to show that as we value life, a kingdom, reconciliation, and all that is good, so we must value this gospel, or else it is a presumptuous confidence. If the privileges of grace and glory belong to us, we must come to them by these steps. Those that regard not the gospel and means of salvation, they have nothing to do with grace nor glory. They are hereby convinced of arrogant folly.

2. Again, It is a ground to comfort weak Christians that regard the means of salvation, and yet fear their falling away. Be of good comfort whosoever thou art. God hath knit and linked these together; all the power of earth and hell cannot break one link of this chain. Conscionable attending upon the means, and grace, and glory, will go together. Therefore hold on, attend upon the means of salvation, and wait with comfort. The gospel of the kingdom will bring thee to grace; and grace, though it be but a little measure, will bring thee to glory. Where God hath begun a good work he will finish it; he will second one benefit with another; diligent attending on the means with grace, and grace with glory.

In Scripture, works have their denomination from that they aim at, as the apostle saith, 'Ye have crucified the old man,' Rom. vi. 6, and 'ye are crucified with Christ,' Gal. ii. 20, because ye are in doing it, and ye shall do it perfectly. So we are saints, because we shall be so. We are kings now, because we are in part so, and we shall be so fully hereafter. So grace is called the kingdom of heaven, because it is the undoubted way to the kingdom of

heaven and glory. God would help our faith by the very title; for we are not elected to the beginnings only of glory, but to the perfection, as it is excellently set down Eph. i. 6, 'We are elected to glory by means and beginnings.' Therefore undoubtedly we may hope for the accomplishment when we see the beginnings.

Quest. Why is the state of grace, and the means of grace, and glory itself, called 'the kingdom of heaven'?

Ans. Because they are all of and from heaven. The one is in heaven the kingdom of glory, and the other the kingdom of the word here; and truth and grace which are by it are from heaven. The truth we have and grace from that truth come from heaven; yea, and Christ, the author of all, is from heaven, and they all lead to heaven.

Which should teach us with what minds to converse in the hearing and reading of these things with heavenly affections. And it shows likewise why worldlings and base people are no more affected with the things of the gospel, because it is 'the kingdom of heaven.' If it were of the world, we should have it sought with eagerness enough, though it were a less matter than a kingdom; but it is a 'kingdom of heaven' remote from flesh and blood. There must be a new Spirit to work a new sight and a new taste, to work a change in the heart of man, and then he shall know the things of 'the kingdom of heaven.' He must come out of the world that will see this kingdom, as in Rev. xviii. 4, 'Come out of Babylon.' A man must come out of antichrist's kingdom to see the baseness of it. He cannot see it in the midst of it. So we must come out of the world if we would see the glorious kingdom of Christ. It is a heavenly kingdom. Therefore the greatest potentates of the world must abase themselves. There is no greatness in the world can help them to this heavenly kingdom.

Quest. But why should the gospel and the state of the church in the New Testament be called the kingdom of heaven, and receive the date now? was it not the kingdom of heaven before?

Ans. I answer, It is the manner of the Scripture to give titles to things from the glorious manifestation of them. Things are said to be when they are gloriously manifested. The mystery of Christ is said to be revealed now in the time of the gospel. It was known before to Adam and Abraham and the rest. But now there was a more apparent glorious manifestation of it. Therefore now the manifestation of Christ, and the good things by him, they are called

‘a kingdom.’ Before it was kept enclosed in the pale of the Jewish church, it was veiled under types, it was hid in promises that were dark and obscure. But when Christ came, all was taken off and Christ was unveiled. It is said in the gospel, ‘The Holy Ghost was not given yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified,’ John vii. 39. The Holy Ghost was given before, but not so fully and plentifully. So there was a state of heaven before men were saved, before the coming of Christ; but it was not called ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ It was not a state of liberty and freedom from the bondage of ceremonies, &c.

And there is reason that there should be violence offered to this state, and means, and grace wrought by it. It is a kingdom. It is no great wonder that a kingdom should suffer violence, especially such a kingdom as ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ What is in a kingdom?

There is, first of all, freedom from slavery and danger. A kingdom is an independent state. There is none above it. He that is a king is free, independent, and supreme.

Then again, a kingdom is a full state. There is abundance and plenty of people and good things in a kingdom.

Again, In a kingdom there is glory and excellency—where is it to be had else?—all the glory, and sufficiency, and contentment that earth can afford.

Now in that the state of the church by reason of the glorious gospel is called a kingdom.

First, It is a free state, as indeed the ‘word doth make us free’ from former bondage. In particular, the gospel of Christ it frees us from Jewish bondage, and from all kind of bondage spiritual. ‘If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed,’ John viii. 36. A Christian is above all. He is over sin, and Satan, and the law. He is free, and supreme, and independent. All are under him. A Christian, as a Christian, he is under none but Christ, under no creature. ‘The spiritual man judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man,’ 1 Cor. ii. 15. I speak not of civil differences; but as a Christian is a member of Christ, and a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, he hath a kind of independent state. His conscience is only subject to God and Christ. But all earthly things he commands, they are under him.

And second, The state of a Christian is a full state. God is his, Christ is his, ‘all things are his,’ 1 Cor. iii. 21, so much as shall serve to bring him to

heaven. That which is truly good is directly his, and indirectly all other things are made his by Christ, who hath the authority, and power, and strength of a king to command all things to work together for his good, Rom. viii. 28. Death, and sin, and all that befalls him, are thus his. And then he hath a spirit of contentment in the want of good, and of patience in the suffering of ill, that he 'can do all things,' as St Paul saith, 'through Christ that strengthened him,' Phil. iv. 13. What he wants in outward things he can fetch supply from the promises of the gospel, he can fetch supply from Christ, and from the state to come; and what he wants in other things he hath in grace, which is better.

Third, It is a state likewise of glory and excellency. But it is a spiritual glory, and therefore it consists together with outward baseness and meanness. It is a glorious state to be the 'Son of God,' to be 'heirs of heaven,' heirs of all things in Christ; by the Spirit of Christ in him he rules over all. How glorious is the Spirit of God in a Christian in the time of temptation and affliction, when he hath a Spirit ruling in him that is stronger than the world and all oppositions whatsoever? 1 John iv. 4. The state of a Christian is glorious even in this world in the beginnings of it. What then is the glory that is to be revealed on the sons of God 'in the day of revelation?' Rom. ii. 5. It cannot enter into our thoughts, it is above our expression, nay, it is above our imagination and conceit. Thus you see there is great cause why 'the kingdom of heaven should suffer violence.' When crowns and kingdoms are laid open to people with hope of getting them, especially such an one as 'the kingdom of heaven is,' it is no wonder if there be 'violence' offered to get them.

The next thing is the affection of those that seek after this kingdom. It is violent.

'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.'

How doth the 'kingdom of heaven,' the gospel and means of grace, 'suffer violence.'

1. First, Because when these good things were revealed by John Baptist, and then by Christ, and after by the disciples and apostles, many thronged into the church, which is the gate of 'the kingdom of heaven.' They all pressed to be of the church, to hear the word of God. They hung, as it were, upon the word of Christ, upon his mouth. They pressed so, that 'they trod one upon another,' Luke xii. 1; and it is said they all came out to hear John

Baptist: 'Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,' Matt. iii. 5. So that in regard of the multitude there was violence.

2. And then in regard of their affections, their zeal to the good things of the gospel was eager and earnest. To be citizens of a kingdom, to partake of the means of salvation, to come to grace and so to glory, it made them wondrous violent.

3. In regard likewise of the persons, 'the kingdom of heaven suffered violence,' the persons being such as might be judged to have no right unto it. Alas! for poor wretched sinful men and women, that had been notorious sinners, to come to receive a kingdom, to become kings, this was strange! What had sinners to do with grace? This doctrine was not heard of in the law, that there should be hope for such wretched persons as these. If such might be admitted, surely there must needs be great violence.

Then again, they were poor and mean people. 'The poor receive the gospel,' Luke vii. 22. For beggars to become kings; poor men that were advantaged by their outward abasement to come to spiritual poverty!

4. Again, they were Gentiles, 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise,' Eph. ii. 12, heathen people.

'The Jews were the children of the kingdom,' Mat. viii. 12, the Gentiles were foreigners and strangers. Now for these to come in, and 'the children of the kingdom' to be shut out, it must needs suppose violence. Where there is no apparent right, there is force. Now what right had the Gentiles, that were little better than dogs? Could they have anything to do with the kingdom? Ay, saith Christ, they take it by violence; and the Jews, and the proud scribes and Pharisees that seem to be the apparent 'children of the kingdom,' shall at length be shut out. 'They that were first,' in outward prerogatives, 'shall be last; and they that were last,' the Gentiles, sinners, mean people, that take the advantage of their baseness and sinfulness, to see their unworthiness, and to magnify the grace of God in Christ, 'shall be first,' Mat. xx. 16. In these respects the kingdom of heaven is said to suffer violence.' People will to heaven, whatever come of it; when these good things are discovered they will have no nay. Hence, we may learn this,

Doct. That it is the disposition of those that are the true members of the church of God to be eager and violent.

Those that intend to enter into the kingdom, they must throng and strive to enter; and when they are in, they must keep the fort, and keep it with violence.

There is indeed a violence of iniquity and injustice; and so the people of God, of all others, ought not to be a violent people. 'Do violence to no man,' saith the Baptist to the soldiers, Luke iii. Id. Violence rather debars out of the kingdom of heaven than is any qualification for it. But this is another manner of violence which our Saviour here speaks of, necessary for all that desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and that for these reasons:

I. First, Betwixt us and the blessed state we aim at there is much opposition; and therefore there must be violence. The state of the church here, the state of grace and the enjoyment of the means of grace, it is a state of opposition. Good persons and good things they are opposed in the world. Christ rules in this world, 'in the midst of his enemies.' He must have enemies therefore to rule in the midst of; he must be opposed; and where there is opposition between us and the good things that we must of necessity have, we must break through the opposition, "which cannot be done without violence. Now the means and graces of salvation they are opposed every way, within us and without us.

(1.) They are opposed from within us; and that is the worst opposition. For Satan hath a party within us that holds correspondency with him, our own traitorous flesh. In all the degrees of salvation there is violence. Hence, in effectual calling, when we are called out of the kingdom of Satan, he is not willing to let us go; he will keep us there still; and when we come to have our sins forgiven in justification, there is opposition; proud flesh and blood will not yield to the righteousness of the gospel; it will not rest in Christ; it will seek somewhat in itself. In sanctification there is opposition between 'the flesh and the Spirit.' Every good work we do it is gotten out of the fire, as it were, it is gotten by violence. In every good action, whether it be to get grace, or to give thanks to God, how many carnal reasonings are there! If a man be to give to others, the flesh suggests, I may want myself. If he be to reform abuses in others, he is ready to think, others will have somewhat to say to me; and I shall be offensive to such and such men. And then the affection of earthly things chains us to the things below, and self-love prompts a man to sleep in a whole skin. We love our wealth, and peace, and favour with men. So that a man cannot come to the state of grace without breaking through these; and hereupon comes the necessity of violence, from the opposition

from within us. We must offer violence to ourselves, to our own reason, to our own wills and affections. 'You have not yet resisted unto blood,' saith the apostle, *Hob. xii. 4.* We do not resist by killing others, but we ourselves resist to death, when, rather than we will miss heaven and happiness, and rather than we will not stand for the truth, we will suffer death.

(2.) Again, There is opposition from the world: on the right hand, by the snares and delights of the world, to quench the delight in the good things of the Spirit; and on the left hand, by fears, and terrors, and scandals, to scare us from doing what we ought to do.

(3.) And then there is opposition from Satan, in every good action. He besets us in prayer with distracted thoughts; and in every duty, for he knows they tend to the ruin of him and of his kingdom. There is no good action but it is opposed from within us and without us. The means of salvation, and the attending on them, they are not without slander and disgrace in the world. God will have this violence therefore, because there is opposition to the means, to the attendance on them, to grace, to every good action, to everything that is spiritually good.

Nay, sometimes God himself becomes a personated enemy; in spiritual desertions he seems to forsake and leave us; and not only to forsake us, but to be an enemy, 'to write bitter things against us,' *Job xiii. 26;* and that is a heavy temptation.

II. Again, God will have this violence and striving, as a character of difference, to show who are bastard professors and who are not; who will go to the price of Christianity, and who will not. If men will go to heaven they must be violent, they must be at the cost and charges, sometimes to venture life itself, and whatsoever is dear and precious in the world. A man must be so violent, that he must go through all, even death itself, though it be a bloody death, to Christ. This discards all lukewarm, carnal professors, who shake off this violence. In all estates of the church, it is almost equally difficult to be a sound Christian; for God requires this violence even in the most peaceable times. Now, the truth and religion are countenanced by the laws, yet the power of it is by many much opposed. Therefore he now that in spite of reproach, in spite of slander, will bear the scorns cast upon the gospel, that will 'go with Christ without the gate, bearing his reproach,' *Heb. xiii. 13,* such a man may be said to be thus violent. It is an easy thing to have so much Christianity as will stand with our commodity or with pleasure, &c.; but to have so much as will bring us to heaven, I say, it is equally hard in all

times of the church, it requires violence to carry us through these lesser oppositions.

III. Again, God will have us get these things with violence, that we may set a greater price on them when we have them. When we have things that are gotten by violence, that are gotten hardly, Oh we value them much! Heaven is heaven then. Things that are hardly gotten and hardly kept are highly prized.

IV. Again, The excellency of the thing enforceth violence. It is fit that excellent things should have answerable affections. Now, it being a kingdom, and the kingdom of heaven, what affection is answerable but a violent, strong affection?

V. Again, Together with the excellency, the necessity requires it; for the kingdom of heaven it is a place of refuge as well as a kingdom to enrich us. There were cities of refuge among the Jews. When a man was followed by the avenger of blood, he would run as fast as he could to the city of refuge, and there he was safe. So when a guilty conscience pursues us, when there is a noise of fear in the heart, when God's judgments awaken us and hell is open, when a man apprehends his estate and is convinced what a one he is and what he deserves, of necessity he will fly to the city of refuge; and where is that but in the 'kingdom of heaven,' in the church? Happy is he that can but get in at the gate of this kingdom, there is no doubt of his going in further. But there must be a striving 'to enter in at the gate,' Luke xiii. 24. And then there he shall be hid in his sanctuary; as the pursued doves get into their nests, and the conies hide them in the rock, when they get that over their heads then they are safe. So a Christian, when he is pursued with conscience and with the temptations of Satan, he flies to his sanctuary. Do you wonder that a guilty man should flee to his sanctuary, and the pursued creatures to their hold and refuge? In this respect 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.'

Herein it is compared to some great, rich city, that hath some great treasure and riches in it; and it must be besieged and beleagured a long time, and those that can enter into it they are made for ever. Or it is like the entrance or gate of a city where there is striving and thronging, and where besides enemies are, that if men strive not they are cut, and mangled, and killed. So it is in the state of this kingdom. When a man's eyes be opened, he sees the devil and hell behind him, and either he must enter or be damned; and being entered, it makes him rich and advanceth him for ever. So he is

strongly moved to offer violence on both sides. If he look behind him there is the kingdom of Satan, darkness and misery and damnation; for as Pharaoh pursued the Israelites when they were gone out of his kingdom, so the devil pursues a man when he is broken out of his dominion: and then before him there is the kingdom of happiness and glory. The fear of that that follows them, and the hope of that that is set before them, both make them strive to enter into the gate of that city.

Use. What should this teach us?

First, Let it be a rule of trial to know and judge of our estate, whether we be entered into this gate of heaven or no. Our lives are very short, very uncertain; let us consider if we be in the way to heaven. What striving, what straggling, what violence have we ever offered? There are a company that regard not the means of salvation at all, either in private or public. Some come to the word and hear, but they do not hear it as the word of God, to be ruled by it, but as a discourse to delight themselves for the time; to have matter to speak of and to censure, not with a spirit of obedience to be guided by it as the sceptre of the kingdom. What 'violence' is this, now and then to hear a sermon, now and then to read a chapter, now and then to utter a yawning prayer between sleeping and waking, perhaps when thou knowest not what thyself sayest? How then wouldst thou have God to regard it? What violence is in the lives of most Christians? what strength to enforce good actions? How do they improve the means of salvation? Many means are wholly neglected. Some perhaps they use, that may stand with their convenience, now and then; whereas there must be an universal care of all the means. There cannot one be neglected without the loss of grace, and there must be attendance on them with violence. There is none of the means can profit us without rousing and stirring up our spirits. We cannot hear nor pray without drawing up and raising up our souls. The flesh will stop the comfortable performance of any action else, and Satan will kill them in the very birth if he can.

To search a little deeper, do but compare your courses toward these good things of heaven with your courses towards the world. If there be hope of preferment, the doors of great men are sure to suffer violence with favourites. The courts of justice suffer violence to have our right in earthly things. The stages and such places are thronged, and suffer violence. If a man could but overlook the courses of men abroad in the city, he should see one violent for his pleasures, running to the house of the harlot 'as a fool to the

stocks,' Prow vii. 22; another to the exchange, to increase his estate; another to the place of justice, to detract his neighbour, or to get his own right, perhaps neglecting his title to heaven in the mean time; another to the court, to get favour to rise to some place of preferment. These places suffer violence. But what violence doth the poor gospel endure? Alas! it is slighted; and men will regard that when they can spare time, &c. It is not regarded according to the worth and value of it. If ever we look to have good by the gospel, our dispositions must be violent, in some proportion answerable to the excellency of it.

Alas! we may justly turn the complaint on ourselves, that whilst we spend our strength in violence about the base and mean things of this life, the kingdom of heaven it offereth violence to us, and yet we will none of it. How doth God beseech us in the ministry! 'We beseech you to be reconciled,' 2 Cor. v. 20; and 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Ezek. xviii. 31. As if the gospel and grace were commodities that God were weary of, he comes and puts them upon us whether we will or no, and yet we refuse them. We are so far from offering violence to the gospel and to grace, that God offers violence to us, as if we should do him a favour to receive the gospel, and to do good to our own souls; and yet the vile, proud, base heart of man will not regard and receive these heavenly things. How will it justify God's sentence at the day of judgment, when he shall allege there was a discovery of such things unto you, and instead of violence in seeking them, you slighted and neglected them? Nay, there is a worse sort of men than these, those that oppose the 'kingdom of heaven' in the means of it, in the persons of it; what kind of men are these, think you?

Again, We see here that there is a blessed violence that may stand with judgment. A man cannot be violent and wise in the things of this world, because the things are mean; and eagerness is above the proportion of them. A man cannot be violent after honour or riches, and be as he should be. These are things that he must leave behind him, and they are worse than himself. Much less after filthy pleasures can a man be violent and wise; a man 'must become a fool in this respect,' as the Scripture saith, 1 Cor. iii. 18. But in respect of heavenly things, a man may be violent and wise; for there is such a degree of excellency in the things that no violence can be too much. Men talk of being too strict and too holy. Can there be too much of that which we can never have enough of in this world? I speak it the rather to confound the base judgment that the world hath of a holy disposition, which is carried with a sweet, eager violence to these things. They are thought to be

frantic, to be out of their wits, as they thought St Paul was; but he answers, 'If we be out of our wits, beside ourselves, it is to God,' 2 Cor. v. 13. Christ himself was sometimes laid hands on, as if he had been out of himself, John x. 20; and as Festus told blessed St Paul, 'that much learning had made him mad,' Acts xxvi. 24, when he saw him eager in the cause of Christ, so many, when they see a man earnest in the matters of God, they think surely these men have lost their discretion. No; it is the highest discretion in the world to be eager and violent for things that are invaluable; and if men be not eager for these, they are fools. They know not how to prize things. The most judicious men here are most violent. So that it be violence that hath eyes in its head, violence guided with judgment, from the knowledge of the excellency of the good things of the gospel, I speak of such a violence as that.

Away, then, with base reproaches! Let us not be affrighted with the ill reports of idle brains and rotten hearts of people, that know not the things that belong to the 'kingdom of heaven.' Alas! they know not what they say; they are to be pitied, and not censured. Is there anything that a man should be earnest for if not for these things? Were our souls made to pursue things that are earthly and base, worse than ourselves? Were our wits made only to plod in our temporal, and to neglect our heavenly, calling? If anything may challenge the best of our endeavours, the marrow of our labours, the utmost of our spirits and wits, certainly it is these: grace and glory, that will stand by us when all things will fail us. Therefore let not your own hearts besot you, nor the vain speeches of others affright you. It will be acknowledged by every one ere long that there is nothing worth a man's eagerness but these things. The worldling is violent and eager; he troubleth himself and his house about 'a vain shadow,' Eccles. vi. 12, for pleasures and profit, &c.; and what comes of all his violence? He is turned naked into his grave, and thence into hell; and there is an end of all the violence about all other things besides these.

We see then the disposition of true professors, they are violent in respect of heavenly things. Those therefore that are not earnest in the cause of religion, when the state of things requires it, they have no religion in them, they are not in the state of grace. We must be earnest, first of all, against our own sins. Violence must begin there, to subdue all to the Spirit of Christ, to suffer nothing else to rule there; and after that, violence to maintain the cause of Christ. 'To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,' Jude 3; to contend with both hands; not to suffer it to be wrested from us or

to be betrayed; and if it be opposed, to vindicate it. We must be violent both to propagate the truth of God, and, in case of opposition, to vindicate it. 'He that is not with me,' saith Christ, 'is against me,' Mat. xii. 30. If a man be not with Christ, he is against him. It may seem a strange speech, but Christ cannot abide lukewarm neuters. He cannot abide nullifidians. He cannot endure cold persons. His stomach cannot brook them. 'He will cast them up,' as he saith Rev. iii. 15, 16, 'I would thou wert hot or cold.' A man had better be nothing in religion than be lukewarm. The reason is, if a man will have good by any religion, he must be in earnest in it: 'If Baal be God, stand for him, if you would have good by him: if the Lord be God, stand for him,' 1 Kings xviii. 21. Be earnest in his cause. If popery be good, then stand for that, if you hope for good by it; and if our religion be good, then stand for that, if you hope for good by it. There is no good received by religion if we be not earnest for it. Religion is not a matter to be dallied in.

Therefore they are hither, sour, profane, scoffing atheists, that trifle with religion, as if it were no great matter what it be. They will be earnest in all things else; earnest to scrape riches, to satisfy their base lusts. But for religion, it is no matter what it be; it is a thing not worthy the seeking after; the old religion or the new, or both or none. These are persons to be taken heed of, breeding a temper opposite to religion more than any other. Christ can least brook them. There is great reason for it. Who can brook any favour to be neglected and slighted? Especially for these excellent things to be undervalued and slighted, it cannot be that God can endure it. There will be a faction in the world while the world stands—Christ and Antichrist, good and evil, light and darkness. But a man cannot be of both; he must show himself of one side or other in case of opposition. Therefore the temper of the true professor is to be earnest in case of opposition of religion, and in case of opportunity to advance his religion. In civil conversation, and dealing with men that are subject to infirmities, he must be gentle and meek: 'the Spirit of God descended in the shape of a dove' upon Christ, as well as in 'fiery tongues' upon the apostles, Mat. iii. 16, Acts ii. 3. But in the cause of Christ, in the cause of religion, he must be fiery and fervent. No man more mild in his own cause than Moses—he was a meek man, Exod. xxxii. 19—but when occasion served, when God was offended, down he throws the tables of stone. He forgot himself, though he were the meekest man in the world otherwise in his own matters. So, I say, the Spirit is both meek and gentle as a dove, and earnest, and zealous, and hot as fire. In Acts ii. 2, the Spirit of God comes down as a 'mighty wind.' The wind is a powerful thing, if it be in a man's body. There is no torment like to windy sickness, as their complaints

witness well enough that feel them. And if a little wind be enclosed in the earth, it shakes the whole vast body of the earth. The Spirit is like wind: it makes men bold; it fills them with a great deal of eagerness in the cause of God. Again, the Spirit appeared to the apostles in the likeness of fire. It inflamed their zeal, and made them fervent, that were cold before; as we see in Peter, the voice of a damsel terrified and affrighted him, Mat. xxvi. 69, 70; but when the Spirit came upon him, it so fired him that he accounted it his glory, Acts v. 41, 'to suffer anything for the cause of Christ.' Therefore, those that hope for anything by religion, let them labour to be for that religion in good earnest. They shall find God in good earnest with them also.

Again, Hence we see that religion takes not away the earnestness of the affections. It doth direct them to better things; it changeth them in regard of the object. It takes not away anything in us, but turns the stream another way. Violence requires the height and strength of the affections. Religion taketh them not away, but turns them that way that they should go. If a stream run violently one way, if it be derived by skill and cunning another way, it will run as fast that way when it is turned as it did before. So it is with the heart of man. Religion takes nothing away that is good, but lifts it up; it elevateth and advanceth it to better objects. There are riches, and honours, and pleasures when a man is in Christ, but they are in a higher kind. Therefore they draw affections, and greater affections than other things. But these affections are purified, they run in a better, in a clearer channel. Whereas before they ran amain to earthly, dirty things below, the same affections, of love, of desire, and zeal, do remain still. He that was violent before is as violent still, only the stream is turned. For example, take St Paul for an instance. He was as earnest when he was a Christian as before. He was never more eager after the shedding of the blood of Christians, and breathing out slaughter against them, as he was afterwards in breathing after the salvation of God's people and a desire to enlarge the gospel. Zaccheus was never so covetous of the world before, as he was covetous of heaven when he became a Christian. I say religion takes not away anything, only it turns the stream. But it is a miracle for the stream to be turned. It was God that turned Jordan. So it is a greater work than man can do to turn the streams of man's affections, that run amain to earthly things, to make them run upward. It is only God's work. This is the excellency of religion. It ennobles our nature. That which is natural it makes it heavenly and spiritual; that a man shall be as earnest for God and good things as over he was before after the things of this life. So much for that point.

The third thing is the success.

‘The violent take it by force.’

The earnestness of affection and violence, it is successful. ‘They take it.’ The good things of God, they are here compared to a fort, or to a well-fenced and well-armed city, strengthened with bulwarks and munition, that is a long time besieged, and at length is taken; for this clause, ‘The violent take it by force,’ it doth as well show the issue of the violent ones striving for the kingdom of heaven, to wit, that they do at length take it, as the manner how it is taken, namely, by force.

Doct. The violent, and only the violent, and all the violent, do at length certainly obtain “hat they strive for, the kingdom of heaven.

Why?

1. Because it is promised to the violent. ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you,’ Mat. vii. 7. ‘Be zealous, and repent’ (that is the means to cure all former transgressions, ‘repent’), ‘and be zealous, and do the former works,’ and ‘To him that overcometh,’ Rev. iii. 19, 21 (that is, he that is earnest, that will never leave off till he hath overcome), ‘to him will I grant to sit with me on the throne; and to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life,’ Rev. ii. 7. All the promises are to him that overcomes, to him that is zealous and earnest.

2. Then again, The Spirit whereby a man is earnest is a victorious Spirit. As Christians have the word and promise to build on, that leads them on, and encourageth them, so they are led by a mighty Spirit, that hath the force of wind and fire, that beats down all before it, that breaks through all oppositions and difficulties. Being led with a divine Spirit, what earthly thing can oppose that which is divine? It brings under and subdues all. Therefore ‘the violent take it,’ the Spirit of God seizing upon and possessing the heart, and carrying it with strength after these things.

3. And then only the violent take it, because God hath set it at this rate. ‘He that heareth and doth,’ ‘he that perseveres to the end,’ ‘he that sells all for the pearl,’ for the treasure in the field; there must be nothing retained; all must be parted with; we must be at any cost and charge and peril, and all little enough. It is offered to us upon these terms, of parting with all, of

enduring anything, of breaking through all difficulties. Only such, and all such, shall obtain it by force.

4. And again, Only the violent, because only they can prize it when they have it. They only can prize grace and heaven. They know how they come by it. It cost them their pleasures and profits, it cost them labour, and danger, and loss of favour with men; and this pains, and cost, and loss, it endears the state of grace and glory to them; for God will never bring any man to heaven till he have raised his affections to that pitch, to value grace and glory above all things in the world. Therefore only those shall take it by violence; for only those show that they set a right price on the best things. They weigh them 'in the balance of the sanctuary,' Dan. v. 27. They value things as God would have them valued.

Obj. But is not the kingdom of heaven and grace free? Therefore what needs violence to a thing that is free, and freely offered?

Ans. I answer, Because it is free, therefore it is violently taken. For, alas! if it were offered to us upon condition of our exact performing of the law, it might damp the spirits of men, as indeed usually such, if they be not better informed, they end their days in despair. But being freely offered, 'the publicans and harlots,' saith Christ, 'go into the kingdom of God before the proud Pharisees,' Mat. xxi. 31. Because it is free, it is free to sinners that feel the burden of their sins. 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' &c., Mat. xi. 28. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: they shall be satisfied,' Mat. v. 3-6. Thereupon he that hath a guilty conscience, he makes haste, and offers violence, when he hears of free pardon. What makes the condition of the devils so desperate? There is no hope of free pardon to them. What makes men so eagerly to embrace the gospel, notwithstanding their sins? Because it is freely offered. Thereupon it was that the Gentiles were so glad of it, that had been sinners and under Satan's kingdom before; and that makes miserable persons, that are humbled with afflictions and abasement in the world, glad of it—it being so great a thing, the kingdom of heaven, the favour of God, and freedom from misery, and so freely offered. It is so far from hindering violence because it is free, that therefore the humble afflicted souls that desire grace are the more eager after it. The proud Pharisees thought the kingdom of heaven belonged only to them; and therefore they despised Christ, and despised the gospel, because it was propounded to sinners, and to such mean persons that they thought

were viler than themselves. But now when the meaner sort of people, and others that were abased with crosses in the world, saw what a kind of gospel it was, what great matters were offered, and that it was offered freely, they justified wisdom, Mat. xi. 19, and the counsel of God which others despised, and pressed for it with violence, Luke vii. 29, 30.

It is little comfort to hear of the excellency and necessity of these heavenly things, if there were not hope of them. Hope stirs up diligence and endeavour in the things of this world. What makes men adventure to the Indies, east and west? They hope for a voyage that shall enrich them all their life. Hope in doubtful things stirs up industry. What makes the poor husbandman diligent to plough and to sow? The hope that he shall have a harvest; yet this is under a providence that may guide it another way. But spiritual things are more certain. Therefore hope in spiritual things must needs stir up endeavour. We need not call them into question. And as it stirs up to diligence, so it stirs up in the use of the means; not to give over till we see our hopes accomplished. Then, in the third place, hope of success, that we shall not lose our labour, it enables and strengtheneth us to bear the tediousness of the time and the incumbrance of afflictions, and whatsoever is between us and the thing we expect. Though we have not that comfort from God that we would have, yet it makes us wait upon God.

Therefore when he saith, 'the violent take it by force,' it is to encourage us. The violent, eager, strong endeavours of a Christian in the ways of God, in the means of salvation, they are no successless endeavours.

He labours for that he knows he shall have; his violence is not in vain. He that is violent in good things hath a promise. He that wrestleth with God shall overcome, and he that overcometh shall have a crown. Here is a promise to build on. Therefore here is encouragement to be earnest and violent, 'he shall overcome,' he shall enter the castle at the last, if he continue striving, and give not over. Hence there is a difference to be observed between the endeavours of a Christian and of three sorts of other men.

(1.) First of all, If those only that offer violence to the kingdom of heaven, that set on it with encouragement, shall get it, and that by force, illicit a great difference then is between them and those that in a contrary way offer violence to the kingdom of heaven; that is, those that wrong Christ in his members, and hinder the means of salvation. What promise have they to speed? Surely they have no promise nor hope at all. Only their malice carries them amain in spite. Because the gospel reveals their hollowness and

hypocrisy to all men, and forceth upon them a necessity to be other men than they list to be for the present, therefore they are eager in hating the gospel. There are threatenings enough against such as are violent against the gospel. They are violent in vain, for they 'kick against the pricks,' Acts ix. 5; they run themselves against a stone wall, and they shall dash themselves against it. Those that have ill will to Sion shall perish. There is one 'sits in heaven that laughs' all their attempts 'to scorn,' Ps. ii. 4. A Christian hath comfort in his endeavours. There is hope of good success, though there be inward and outward opposition. He shall prevail. Those that are enemies have nothing but discouragement. They shall be 'as grass on the house-top,' Ps. cxxix. 6, &c., that no man blesseth, but is cursed of every one. No man bestows a good word on them. It is a fruitless endeavour. They are under a curse.

(2.) Again, It shows us how to judge of the courses of other men, that are violent in other courses, about the world. A Christian he takes his kingdom at the last and enjoys it for ever; but those that are violent for the world, after pleasures, after baser things than themselves, alas! when they have it, they have but a shadow, and they become shadows in embracing it. Vanity embraceth vanity, and bow soon are they stripped of all! If a man by violence scrape a great estate, he must leave it shortly. Here he found it, and here he must leave it, in spite of his heart, ere long; and 'all is but vanity' in the censure of him that knew all things the best of any man, even Solomon, that had gone through the variety of all things. And oft-times they miss of that they labour for; 'they do not roast that they get in hunting,' Prov. xii. 27. They hunt after preferment and after riches, but oft-times they do not enjoy them; and if they do, they get the curse of God with them, and ere long they are stripped of all. But here is that that may strengthen our endeavours. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it.' It is not an endeavour that is lost.

(3.) Then again, This shows that the state of true Christians is different from the state of persons that are carried to good things, but not violently.

'The violent take it.' He surpriseth the city at the last, he lays his siege, and will not remove till death. He will not give over till he have it. He will have it, or he will die in the business, and so at last he obtains his desire. The sluggish careless man he goes a little way. As Agrippa said to Paul, 'he "was almost persuaded to be a Christian,' Acts xxvi. 28, so it is with such men. In some things they will be Christians, but there they are at a stand. They will go

no farther. 'The sluggard desireth and wisheth, but his soul hath nothing,' Prov. xiii. 4. A sluggish, cold, lazy Christian he loseth all his pains. If a man be to go ten miles, and go but nine, and there sit down, he shall never come to his journey's end. If a man will give but seven or eight shillings for that which is worth ten, he shall go without it. Grace and glory are set at this price. There is required such strength of labour and endeavour and violence. Therefore without this, a man shall never attain it, unless he stretch himself to such a pitch.

'He shall never come to the end of his faith, to the salvation of his soul, to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' 1 Pet. i. 9. 'The sluggard wisheth and gets nothing.' The reason is, because he is a sluggard; because he will not strive; but the striver gets the fort, and hath all in it, and is a man made for ever.

'The sluggard thinks himself wiser than many men that can give a reason,' Ps. xxvi. 16. The sluggish discreet Christian, I warrant you, he hath reasons for what he doth! It is not good to be too earnest! It will incur the disfavour of such a man or such a man! I shall be accounted so and so for my pains! But a wise man he seeth the excellency of the things, and he knows that his courses and his conscience will justify him at the last, and therefore he goes on, whatever comes of it.

God is not so weary of these precious things, these precious jewels of grace and glory, as to force them upon us. Is 'the kingdom of heaven' such a slight thing, that it should be obtruded to us whether we will or no? Shall we think to have it when our hearts tell us we esteem other things better? No. There are none ever come to heaven but their hearts are wrought to such an admiration of grace and glory, that they undervalue all things to it. Therefore there is no hope for any to obtain it, but he that takes it by violence. We see Moses esteemed the basest thing in the church better than the greatest excellencies in the world, that men are so violent after. He esteemed the very afflictions of God's people better than the treasures and pleasures of sin for a season, nay, than the pleasures of a court, Heb. xi. 25. When men shall esteem the base things of the world above all the treasures of heaven, above the state of Christianity, they have no hope of coming there. They may pretend God is merciful, and Christ died, &c. Ay, but whosoever he brings to salvation, he works such a sense of misery in them, and such an apprehension of grace, and of the means of grace, that there is an undervaluing of all other things. God will not bring them to heaven that shall

not glorify him when they come there; and how shall they glorify him here or there when they value the world and these base things that they must leave behind them more than the things of heaven? This is the reason that few are saved, because they content themselves with easy, dull, and drowsy performances, and never consider with what proportion they are carried to things. When they had rather lose the advantage of that which will bring everlasting good to their souls, than lose the petty commodities of this world, and yet think themselves good Christians, what a delusion is this! It is the violent only that are successful, 'they take it by force.'

Obj. Ay, but what if the opposition grow more and more?

Ans. Then the grace of God and courage will grow and increase more and more. As Luther said well, 'The more violent the adversaries were, the more free and bold was he'. So the more the enemies rage, the more the Spirit of grace grows in God's people. It increaseth by opposition. As Noah's Ark, the higher the waters were, the nearer still it was carried to heaven. So we are nearer to God, and nearer to the 'kingdom of heaven,' the more opposition swells and rages. True courage grows with opposition. As the palm-tree riseth up against the burden that presseth it down, so the divine Spirit being a heavenly thing, and all opposition below of the devil and devilish-minded men being but earthly, what are they to the divine Spirit which sets us on and encourageth us? They cannot quell it, but the Spirit grows more and more in opposition. The apostles they ran all from Christ when he was to be crucified. They had but a little measure of the Spirit, but when the Holy Ghost was shed more plentifully on them, they began to stand courageously for the cause of Christ. When there was more opposition the Spirit grew more and more, till they sealed the truth with their blood. Therefore though opposition of enemies and their fury and rage grow, let us know whose cause we manage, and with what assurance of success. The violent at length 'shall take it by force.' Let us meditate upon this, that success is tied to violence. Therefore when you pray to God, if he seem to deny your request, offer violence, wrestle with him, let him not go without a blessing. When he seems to be an enemy, as sometimes he doth to try our strength, we must use an holy violence. When we are dull, and not fit to pray, nor fit for holy things, let us stir up the Spirit of God in us, and labour to get out of that estate; let us use violence, and violence will overcome at the last. A man that hath the Spirit of God gets the victory of whatsoever opposeth him. If there be snares offered from the world, he withstands them if Satan come with his temptations, he resists him. He hath a promise for it: 'Resist

the devil, and he will flee,' James iv. 7. Let us hold out and we shall get the victory, and overcome even God himself. How much more all other things! Therefore when either opposition without, or indisposition within, sets upon us in the course of religion and piety, let us think here, now is time and place for violence. I know, if I set myself about it, I shall have the victory and the crown. A Christian is always in a hopeful state and condition, he hath somewhat to encourage him, he hath arguments to prevail over the state of opposition; he knows he shall win all at last if he go on, and that makes him courageous in what estate soever he is. Let us not be discouraged to hear of opposition. And let us be encouraged when we hear of good things, when we hear that the kingdom of heaven and grace is offered in the preaching of the gospel. 'Let us attend upon the posts of Wisdom's doors,' Prov. viii. 3, 4, and not give over till 'we come to peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. If we hear of comfort in the word of God against distress of conscience, let us never give over till we find it. If we hear that God is a God 'hearing prayer,' let us never leave knocking at heaven-gate, never leave wrestling, till our prayers be heard. When we hear what ill is to be avoided, and what good is offered, let us not cease till we avoid the one and obtain the other. 'The violent take it by force.'

The last point is the date of time from whence this kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.

'From the days of John Baptist until now.'

Quest. Was there not a kingdom of heaven that suffered violence before John Baptist's time? Bid the kingdom of God begin then? Was Christ a king, and was heaven opened only then?

Arts. I answer, No. But now the things of God were more gloriously discovered. Therefore, John i. 51, 'henceforth you shall see heaven opened.' The kingdom of heaven was opened now by the preaching of the gospel more gloriously than before. Therefore the state of the gospel is called the 'kingdom of heaven,' partly in regard of the times before, and partly in regard of the times after.

The law was full of servile bondage to ceremonies. It was a heavy dark state. They were laden with a multitude of ceremonies, which were but cold things to the spirit of a man that desires peace. Though they were ceremonies of God's appointing, yet they were but outward empty things in comparison:

‘weak and beggarly elements,’ as the apostle saith, Gal. iv. 9. They were costly and painful and cold things, that had not the efficacy of spirit in them.

And secondly, Then it was entailed to the Jews only. Now, since Christ’s time, it is enlarged; and being more large and free, this blessed estate is called ‘a kingdom.’ John Baptist now opening Christ clearly, and a better state than the church had yet enjoyed, when people saw an end of the ceremonies, and the beginning of the glorious liberty in Christ, this made them violently set on them.

Again, John Baptist made way for Christ, levelling the souls of men by his powerful preaching and his holy life. He taught them in what need they stood of Christ. He was the messenger sent before Christ for that end. He was as the morning star to the sun. He was powerful in his preaching, and holy in his life. He told every man his own. He told the Pharisees that they were a ‘generation of vipers.’ He showed men their state by nature, and told them of a better state, that ‘the kingdom of heaven was at hand,’ Mat. iii. 2. And although he wrought no miracles, yet himself was a miracle. To teach such holy doctrine, and to live an austere holy life in those evil days, it was no less than a miracle. Therefore this violence to the kingdom of heaven, it hath the date from John Baptist’s time; from his preaching, not from his birth. He being so excellent a preacher, no wonder there should be violence.

This shows the reason why the gospel in later times was embraced so greedily when Luther began to preach. Alas, people had been in a worse condition than Jewish in respect of ceremonies; and otherwise foolish idle men they will set God to school, they will have some fooleries always that they will make as much of as of the worship of God; and so it had been in the times before Luther. In Saint Austin’s time he was pestered with many vain ceremonies; and, good man, he yielded to the stream and custom in many things, though he could hardly endure the slavery of those things. Now when the times grow better, it is no wonder the world embraced the gospel with violence, as in Luther’s time, when there was a freedom proclaimed from those beggarly rudiments and traditions. Antichrist had hampered the consciences of men with an intolerable mass of foolish, groundless ceremonies, making them equal with the word of God, as we see in the Council of Trent, and this vexed the consciences of people like scorpions, as it is Rev. ix. 9. They oppressed the people with a multitude of weights and burdens, which when people could not assent unto, it stung their consciences. No wonder then if people thronged after Luther when he

opened the doctrine of free justification by faith, that the consciences of men were not to be hampered with these things. He taught that God's people were only to have a few ceremonies for present order; but for the rest, to trouble men's consciences, and to make them of equal value with the word of God, he showed it was an abominable doctrine, and wrote against it learnedly and sweetly. And therefore it is no marvel though the truths he taught were soon and cheerfully by multitudes embraced.

And the reason why now the gospel begins to be so little embraced and esteemed, is because, by reason of the long continuance of it, we are weary of this heavenly manna. As the people in Saint John Baptist's time, as eager as they were after John's preaching, yet it was but for a time that they rejoiced in his light. They grew weary of him. We never felt the burden of those Romish ceremonies, and therefore now grow weary of our liberty. Whereas in the beginning of Luther's time, because they were eased from many beggarly, and which is worse, tyrannical ceremonies of Rome, therefore with much joy and eagerness they embraced the truth when it came to be preached amongst them.

Therefore we are to praise God for the liberty of the church at this time, that we have the word of God to rule our consciences, and that other matters are not pressed on us but as matters of decency and order. Alas, if we were in bondage to those proud popish wretches, our consciences would be enthralled to a world of snares.

Last of all, 'From the days of the Baptist,' and so forward, 'the kingdom of heaven did suffer violence,' because from that time forward the Spirit began to be more plentifully given. Christ comes with his Spirit, which is soul of our soul, and the life of our life. The Spirit is like a 'mighty wind,' that moves the ship in the water. The ship is becalmed. It cannot move unless there be a wind. So the soul cannot move to that which is good without the Spirit. Now there is more abundance of the Spirit since the coming of Christ. Christ, who is the king of his church, the Lord of heaven and earth, he reserved the abundance of the Spirit till his own coming, especially till he entered into heaven. Then the Spirit came in abundance. 'It was poured upon all flesh,' Joel ii. 28. It was but, as it were, dropped before, but then it was 'poured out.' Then the Gentiles came in, and the apostles received the Spirit in abundance. Therefore no wonder that there was violence offered to the kingdom of heaven. Then hence we may observe,

That the more dearly Christ and the blessed mysteries of Christ are opened, the more effectual the Spirit is, and the more heavenly men are, and more eagerly disposed to spiritual things.

(1.) The reason and ground of it is in nature. The affections follow the discovery of the excellency of things. When first the necessity of being in Christ is laid open; that there are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil, and that a man must either enter into the kingdom of Christ, or be of the devil's kingdom still;

(2.) And when, secondly, together with the necessity, the excellency of Christ's kingdom is discovered, that it is a state that will make us all kings; a state wherein we shall at length overcome all opposition of hell, sin, death, the wrath of God; that whereas earthly kingdoms are opposed, and enthralled, and one dash against another, the kingdom of heaven is a state that subdues all that is against it by little and little. As Christ overcame death and the wrath of his Father, and now rules in heaven in his person, so all his members shall overcome all in time. When the excellency of this kingdom is laid open to the understandings of men, is it a wonder that their affections are set on fire? Will anything do it more than such a kingdom?

(3.) Then, in the third place, when it is hopeful, too; when, together with the necessity and excellency of it, there is assurance given us that we shall obtain it if we strive for it; when it is offered freely, even grace and glory, and we are entreated to receive grace: 'Come unto me, ye that are weary,' &c., Mat. xi. 28. Nay, we are threatened if we do not come, and we have example of the worst sort of people: of Zaccheus, and the poor woman out of whom the devils were cast; of Peter, that denied Christ; of Paul, that persecuted him; such as had been wretched persons, that have come out of Satan's kingdom; when these things are propounded, and understood, and apprehended, men that are in their wits, that are not besotted by the devil, men that are not in love with damnation, and hate their own souls, they will embrace them. When they see a state discovered in Christ wherein they are above angels, in some sort, above death and hell, that they triumph over all in Christ, that because it is as sure that they shall be crowned conquerors with Christ in heaven, as if they were there already; when it is propounded thus hopefully, who would not offer violence to this kingdom? When John Baptist laid it open so clearly to them, 'This is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world,' John i. 29, it made them offer violence to it.

And this is another reason why in the latter, the second spring of the gospel—for there was a winter in the time of popery, it being a kingdom of darkness, keeping people in ignorance—so many nations so suddenly embraced the truth. Luther was a man that was wondrously exercised and afflicted in conscience. This made him relish the doctrine of justification by grace in Christ, and thereupon to lay open the mysteries of Christ and the bondage of popery; and this being once a-foot, the people's minds being prepared out of the sense of their former bondage, whole kingdoms came in presently. As in the spring time, when there comes a fine sunshine day, the prisoners are let loose out of the earth after a cold winter, so after the winter of affliction and persecution, inward and outward, came the sunshine of the gospel, and made all come forth and flourish presently. Wheresoever Christ is taught powerfully and plainly, and the excellency and necessity of the state we have by him, and that men may partake of it, if they be not false to their own souls, there is always violence offered to these things, because where the riches of Christ are opened, the Spirit goes with it, and goes with violence, that it carries all before it.

Hence, again, we may see that popish spirits are witty- in opposing the unfolding of the gospel in the ministry, especially where there is conscience and skill to unfold Christ plainly. They know when Christ is opened, all their fopperies and inventions will grow base. The more Christ is unfolded, the more people will grow in hatred of antichrist. The more they see the light, the more they will hate darkness. For this cause they oppose the unfolding of the gospel to the understanding of the people; they would keep people in ignorance that they may make them dote upon them. It argueth a disposition dangerous, that shall never taste of the good things of God, to be in a bitter temper against the unfolding of the gospel of Christ. For we see here the discovery of it makes it wondrous effectual. John Baptist laying open Christ clearer than he was discovered before, 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.'

Here we are instructed what way we should take if we would bring ourselves or others into a temper fit for heaven, to an earnest temper after holy things, not to begin with dead outward actions, but to begin, as becomes the condition of reasonable men, as God deals with man, befitting the nature of man; begin with the understanding. Let us meditate seriously of the truth of Christ's coming in the flesh, of the end of his coming, 'to dissolve the works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8, to bring us out of the state of nature to a better condition. Meditate of the excellency of the state of grace, of the

eternity and excellency of the state of glory. Let us warm our hearts with these things. When a man hath once these things and believes them, let him be cold and dull if he can. And so, if we would gain others to a fit disposition for heaven, let us labour to instruct them what their state by nature is; what kingdom they are born in; that they are liable to hell and damnation; that they are under the possession of the 'strong man,' the devil, if the stronger man bring them not out and dispossess him; and let them know withal the infinite love and mercy of God in Christ, offering a better state, giving the gospel and promising his Spirit with his truth; and if they belong to God, this will work upon thorn, or else nothing will. Other courses, to punish men in their purse, or imprison them, or the like, may subdue them to outward conformity, but if we would bring their souls to heaven, let us endeavour to enlighten their understandings to see the danger they are in, and to see the riches of grace and salvation that is proffered in Christ, and this will 'compel them to come in,' Luke xiv. 33. There will be no need of any other compulsion, no more than there can be need to bid a man escape away that sees wild beasts about him, or to bid a guilty person to flee to the city of refuge and take hold of the horns of the altar. Let John Baptist come before Christ to make way for him, and presently 'the kingdom of heaven suffers violence;' and after Christ's time, when the Spirit was more abundantly given, and the gospel more clearly opened, the world stooped to the gospel. The gospel at length overcame the proud sceptre of the Roman empire. They laid their crowns down before Christ's gospel. The cross of Christ got above the crown in the preaching of the gospel, it was so powerful. Thus, if we would have the number of heaven enlarged, let us desire that God's truth may be opened plainly and powerfully. John Baptist was a plain and powerful preacher; a man of holy life. They all revered John as a holy man. Thereupon his doctrine came to be so effectual. This is the way whereby God will do good to those he delights in. For others that are bitter atheists, whom God hath appointed to damnation, the gospel hardens them and makes them worse. The Pharisees were the worse by the preaching of Christ. When the gospel is preached, some are made worse by it, and malign, and persecute it as far as they dare. As the apostle saith, God is glorified in the damnation of such bitter opposers, Rom. iii. 8. We are not to look to gain all by preaching. Those that withstand it are sent by it with the more just damnation to hell, but those that do belong to him are gained this way.

Let us labour, therefore, for a clear manifestation of Christ. There is the treasure of all goodness in Christ, whatsoever is necessary to bring us to heaven. And the more he is discovered and applied, the more we are

enriched with grace and comfort. Times of change may come; and if times of opposition and persecution come not, yet temptations will come, and the hour of death will come, when we shall have occasion to use all the strength and comfort we have; and the more dangerous the times are, the more sound and clear knowledge of Christ we should labour for, and that will breed this holy violence, that shall break thorough all oppositions whatsoever.

Angels' Acclamations

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.—Luke II. 18, 14.

The words are few and pregnant, very precious, having much excellency in a little quantity. The heavens never opened but to great purpose. When God opens his mouth, it is for some special end; and when the angels appeared, it was upon some extraordinary occasion. This was the most glorious apparition that ever was, setting aside that it was at Christ's baptism, when the heavens opened, and the Father spake, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the likeness of a dove upon the head of Christ,' Mat. iii. 16, when all the Trinity appeared. But there never was such an apparition of angels as at this time; and there was great cause, for,

1. There was never such a ground for it, whether we regard the matter itself, the incarnation of Christ. There was never such a thing from the beginning of the world, nor never shall be in this world: for God to take man's nature on him; for heaven and earth to join together; for the Creator to become a creature.

2, Or whether we regard the benefit that comes to us thereby. Christ by this means brings God and man together since the fall. Christ is the accomplishment of all the prophecies, of all the promises. They were made in him and for him. Therefore he was the expectation of the Gentiles. Before he was born, he was revealed by degrees. First, generally, 'the seed of the woman,' &c., Gen. iii. 15. Then, more particularly, 'to Abraham and his seed,' and then to one tribe, 'Judah,' that he should come to him; then to one family, the house of David; and then, more particularly, 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' Isa. vii. 14, and the place, 'Bethlehem,' Micah v. 2; till at last John Baptist pointed him out with the finger, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,' John i. 29. Even as after midnight, the sun grows up by little and little, till his beams strike forth in the morning, and after it appears in glory, so it was with the 'Sun of righteousness;' as he came nearer, so he discovers himself more gloriously by degrees, till he was born indeed; and then you see here a multitude of angels celebrate his nativity.

Now, as before his birth he was revealed by degrees, so after his incarnation he was revealed to all sorts: to the old, in Simeon; to women, in Anna, a prophetess; to wise men and to silly shepherds; to all ranks of men; and to whomsoever the incarnation of Christ was revealed when he was born, they all entertained it with joy. The angels they sang and praised God; Simeon was even content then to die; and Zechariah, you see, beforehand breaks forth, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,' &c., Luke i. 68; and the shepherds went away rejoicing. There is a special passage of divine providence in the carriage of this manifestation; for Christ was revealed to the wise men that were Gentiles by a star, because they were given to star-gazing. He was discovered to the shepherds by the apparition of angels. The scribes that were conversant in Scripture, they found it out by searching the Scriptures. God applies himself to every man's condition.

'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude,' &c.

You see here, however, Christ lay in the cradle, in the manger, yet notwithstanding there were some circumstances that showed the greatness of his person, that he was no ordinary person. He lay in the cradle indeed, but the wise men came and adored him; and he appeared to the shepherds, poor men; yet notwithstanding, here is an host of angels that praise him. So likewise at his death he converted the good thief, and shadowed the sun itself, and then he gloriously rose again. So that there were some beams of his divine nature that broke forth in all his abasements. "We see here an apparition of angels. In the words consider these things.

Here is, first of all, an apparition of heavenly angels.

And then their celebration of Christ's birth.

The apparition: 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.'

The celebration of it: 'praising God, and saying.'

The matter of the celebration and praising God,

'Glory to God in the highest,

'In earth peace,

‘Good will towards men.’

I shall especially stand upon those words; but somewhat is to be touched concerning the apparition of these angels.

1. The circumstances of their apparition. They appear to poor shepherds.

God respects no callings.

He will confound the pride of men, that set so much by that that God so little respects; and to comfort men in all conditions.

2. Again, The angels appeared to them in the midst of their business and callings; and indeed God’s people, as Moses and others, have had the sweetest intercourse with God in their affairs; and oftentimes it is the fittest way to hinder Satan’s temptations, and to take him off, to be employed in business, rather than to struggle with temptations. We many times meet with comfort in our business, in our callings, that without fit, in speculation and otherwise, we should never have.

3. And then they appeared to them in the night.

God discovers himself in the night of affliction.

Our sweetest and strongest comforts are in our greatest miseries. God’s children find light in darkness; nay, God brings light out of darkness itself. We see the circumstances then of this apparition.

He calls these angels ‘a heavenly host,’ in divers respects; especially in these:

(1.) An host for number. Hero are a number set down. A multitude is distinct from an host; but in that they are an host, they are a multitude; as in Han. vii. 10, ‘Ten thousand times ten thousand angels attend upon God.’ And so, Rev. v. 11, there are a world of angels about the church. In Heb. xii. 22, we are come to have communion with an ‘innumerable company of angels.’ He sets not down the number; and here appears ‘a multitude of angels.’ Worldly, sottish men that live here below, they think there is no other state of things than they see; they are only taken up with sense, and pleasures, and goodly shows of things. Alas! poor souls! There is another

manner of state and frame of things, if they had spiritual eyes to see the glory of God, and of Christ our Saviour, and their attendants there—an host, a multitude of heavenly angels,

(2.) An host likewise implies order; or else it is a rout, not an host or army. ‘God is the God of order, not of confusion,’ 1 Cor. xiv. 83. If you would see disorder, go to hell. Surely disordered places and companies are rather hells than anything else; nay, in some respects worse; for there is a kind of order even among the devils themselves. They join together to destroy the church, and the members thereof. I note this by the way. Here was an host of angels; that is, they are an orderly company. What that order is, I confess with St Austin, is undetermined in Scripture; we must not rashly presume to look into these things.

(3.) Again, Here is consent; an host all joining together in praising God: ‘Glory to God on high.’ And sure it is a heaven upon earth, when a company of Christians, led with one Spirit, shall join in one work to praise God; to help one another in some spiritual way. When they meet together to hear the word, and to pray to God, all with one consent, their prayers meet in heaven. Christ commends union and consent. “‘Where two or three are met together in my name, I will be in the midst of them,’ Mat. xviii. 20; and ‘whatsoever two or three shall ask in my name, if they agree’ (if there be no jarring, nor schism, nor breach among them), ‘I will grant it,’ Mat. xviii. 19. Agreement in good is a notable resemblance of that glorious condition we shall enjoy in heaven. This multitude of angels they all agree with one consent.

(4.) An host of angels, it shows likewise their employment. An host is for defence or offence. That is the employment of angels here below especially, for the defence of the church, and for the offence of the enemies of the church. It is a great comfort to the church and children of God. The church is in the midst of devils here. We are all strangers in the way to heaven. We live in the midst of devils, and devils incarnate, devilish-minded men, that are led with the spirit of the devil. But here is our comfort, we have a multitude, an host of angels, whose office is to defend the church, and to offend the enemies of the church, as we see in Scripture.

(5.) Again, An host implies strength. We have a strong garrison and guard. We are kings in Christ, and we have need of a guard; and God hath appointed us a strong guard, a guard of angels. Angels severally are strong creatures. We see one of them destroyed all the first-born in Egypt; one of them destroyed the host of Sennacherib the Assyrian in one night. If one

angel destroyed a whole host, consisting of many thousands, what can a multitude of heavenly angels do? Yet all are for the service of Christ and of his church. These and such like observations we may gather hence, that they are said to be an host of angels.

Beloved, we have need of such comforts; and let it not seem slight unto us to hear of angels because we see them not. It is a thing forgotten of us too much. Why are we so cold, and dead, and dull, and distrustful in dangers? We forget our strength and comfort in this way. There is now at this time an earthly host against the church, men led with anti-christian spirits. Let us comfort ourselves, we have an heavenly host with us; as Elisha said to his servant, 'There are more with us than against us,' 2 Kings vi. 16. If God see it good, this outward host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, he can make them fight for his church, as in Sisera's case, Judges v. 20. But there is another host, that see the face of God; that is, that observe and wait on his will and command. We have an heavenly host within the heavens, that having a command from God, can come down quickly for the defence of the church, and for every particular Christian, not only one angel. That is but an opinion, that every one hath his angel; but even as God sees good, one or two, or more, a multitude, an host of angels.

God useth angels, not for any defect of power in himself to do things, that he must have such an host, but for the further demonstration of his goodness. He is so diffusive in goodness, he will have a multitude of creatures, that they may be a means to diffuse his goodness: angels to the church, and the church to others. It is for the spreading of his goodness, for he is all in all in himself. Let it take impression in us, that we have such glorious creatures for our service.

We see here this host of heavenly angels, they attend upon the Lord of hosts at his birth, for Christ is the creator of angels, the Lord of them; not only as God, but as Mediator. As God, he is the creator of angels; as Mediator, he is the head of angels, Col. i. 16. It was fit therefore that an host of angels should attend upon the Lord of angels; it was for the honour of Christ. God would let the world know—although they heeded it not, there was no such thought in Augustus's court at that time—that there was an excellent, glorious person born into the world. God himself took our nature: Christ, Immanuel. Though he were neglected of the world, and fain to lie in a manger, yet God took better notice of him than so. Heaven took notice of him when earth regarded him not. Therefore God, to show that he had

another manner of respect and regard to Christ than the world had, he sends a multitude, an host of heavenly angels, to celebrate the nativity of Christ.

There is much solemnity at the birth of princes; and God, that is King of kings and Lord of lords, he makes a solemnity likewise at the birth of his Son, the greatest solemnity that ever was, an host of heavenly angels. But these things I do but touch.

‘And suddenly there was,’ &c.

‘Suddenly,’ in an unperceivable time, yet in time; for there is no motion in a moment, no creature moves from place to place in a moment. God is everywhere. ‘Suddenly:’ it not only shows us,

1. Somewhat exemplarily from the quick despatch of the angels in their business—we pray to God in the Lord’s prayer, ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;’ that is, willingly, ‘suddenly,’ cheerfully—

2. But also it serves for comfort. If we be in any sudden danger, God can despatch an angel, ‘a multitude’ of angels, to encamp about us ‘suddenly.’ Therefore, though the danger be present, and the devil present, and devilish-minded men present to hurt us, God hath a multitude, an host of angels as present to defend us; nay, as himself is everywhere, so in the midst of his church he is present more than angels can be. He is not only among us, but he is in us by his Spirit, to comfort and strengthen us. Therefore let us stir up the Spirit of God in us, in all difficulties and dangers whatsoever, considering we have such grounds of comfort every way.

What is the use and end of this glorious apparition? In regard of the poor shepherds, to confirm their faith, and in them ours; for if one or two witnesses confirm a thing, what shall a multitude do? If one or two men confirm a truth, much more an host of heavenly angels. Therefore it is base infidelity to call this in question, that is confirmed by a multitude of angels. And to comfort them likewise in this apparition. We see by the way that for one Christian to confirm and comfort another, it is the work of an angel, an angelical work; for one man to discourage another, it is the work of a devil. When Christ was in his agony, the angels appeared to comfort him, Luke xxii. 43. We may take notice how willing and ready these glorious spirits were to attend upon our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, in all the passages from his incarnation to his glory. We see they appeared here at his incarnation; they ministered unto him after his temptation; at his resurrection, then they were

ready to attend him; and at his ascension, they were ready then; but oh the welcome when he entered into heaven! There was the glorious embracings, when all the host of heaven entertained him at his ascension. In the garden, as I said, they comforted him. Let us imitate them in this blessed work, if there be any in distress that need comfort and confirmation. We love examples of great, noted persons. Here you have an example above yourselves, the example of angels; who, to confirm and comfort the poor shepherds, appear in an host, 'a multitude of heavenly angels.' The angels, as they attend upon Christ, so for his sake they attend upon us too; for he is that Jacob's ladder. Jacob's ladder, you know, stood upon the earth, but it reached to heaven, and the angels went up and down upon the ladder; that is, it is Christ that knits heaven and earth together, God and man; and the angels by Christ, having communion and fellowship with us, as I noted out of the place, Heb. xii. 22, 'we are come to an innumerable company of angels;' so that they attend upon us for Christ's sake, whose members we are. They attend upon Christ mystical as well as Christ natural: 'For they are ministering spirits for the sakes of them that shall be saved,' Heb. i. 7. And therefore in our childhood and tender years they have the custody of us committed to them; as Christ saith, 'their angels behold the face of God;' and in our dangers they pitch their tents about us, and at our death they carry our souls to the place of happiness, as they carried Lazarus's soul into Abraham's bosom, and at the resurrection they shall gather our dead bodies together. So that as they never left our blessed Saviour from his birth to his ascension, so they always attend upon his members, his spouse. For his sake we have communion with the blessed angels. These things may be of some use. But it is not that I mainly intend. Thus much for the apparition.

2. Now the celebration is 'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.'

The word signifies 'singing,' as well as praise. It implies praise expressed in that manner; and indeed 'praising God,' it is the best expression of the affection of joy. The angels were joyful at the birth of Christ their Lord. Joy is no way better expressed than in 'praising God,' and it is pity that such a sweet affection as joy should run in any other stream, if it were possible, than the 'praising of God.' God hath planted this affection of joy in the creature, and it is fit he should reap the fruit of his own garden. It is pity a clear stream should run into a puddle, it should rather run into a garden; and so sweet and excellent [an] affection as joy, it is pity it should be employed otherwise than 'in praising God' and doing good to men.

They express their joy in a suitable expression ‘in praising God.’ The sweetest affection in man should have the sweetest employment. The sweetest employment that joy can have is to be enlarged in love, ‘to praise God,’ and for God’s sake to do good to others.

See here the pure nature of angels. They praise God for us. We have more good by the incarnation of Christ than they have; yet notwithstanding, such is their humility, that they come down with great delight from heaven, and praise and glorify God for the birth of Christ, who is not their, but our Redeemer. Some strength they have. There is no creature but hath some good by the incarnation of Christ; to the angels themselves, yet however they have some strength from Christ, in the increase of the number of the Church; yet he is not the Redeemer of angels. In some sort he is the head of angels, but he is our Redeemer. ‘To us a child is born; to us a Son is given,’ Isa. ix. 6. And yet see, their nature is so pure and so clear from envy and pride, that they even glorify God for the goodness showed to us—meaner creatures than themselves; and they envy not us, though we be advanced, by the incarnation of Christ, to a higher place than they. For, beloved! the very angels have not such affinity to Christ in this as we. They are not the spouse of Christ. They make not up mystical Christ. The church doth. The church is the queen, as Christ is the king of all. It is married to Christ. Angels are not; and yet although they see us advanced in divers respects above them, yet they are so pure and free from envy, that they join in ‘praising God’ here in love to us.

Let us labour therefore for dispositions angelical; that is, such as may delight in the good of others, and the good of other meaner than ourselves.

And learn this also from them: shall they glorify God for our good especially? and shall we be dull and cold in praising God on our own behalf? Shall they come ‘suddenly from heaven,’ and cheerfully, and willingly, and ‘to praise God’ for his goodness to us, and shall we be frozen and cold in this duty, that is for our good more especially? I hasten to that that follows:

What is the matter of their celebration and gratulation?

‘Glory to God in the highest,

‘In earth peace,

‘Good will towards men.’

There is some difference in the readings. Some copies have it, 'On earth peace to men of good will,' to men of God's good will; and so they would have it two branches, not three. If the word be rightly understood, it is no great matter.

1. First, The angels begin with the main and chief end of all. It is God's end; it was the angels' end, and it should be ours too, 'Glory to God on high.'

2. Then they wish the chief good of all, that whereby we are fitted for the main end, 'peace.' God cannot be glorified on earth unless there be peace wrought. For man else conceives God as an enemy. By this peace we are fitted to glorify God. If we find reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, then the sense of God's love in the work of reconciliation will inflame our hearts to glorify God. Therefore, next to the glory of God, they wish 'peace on earth.'

3. Then, thirdly, here is the ground of all happiness from whence this peace comes: from God's good will; from his good pleasure or free grace, 'to men of God's good will.' So if we go back again, the good will and pleasure of God is the cause and ground of peace in Christ; and peace in Christ puts us into a condition and stirs up to glorify God. So we see there is an order in these three.

To begin with the first:

'Glory to God in the highest.'

The angels, those blessed and holy spirits, they begin with that which is the end of all. It is God's end in all things, his own glory. He hath none above himself whose glory to aim at. And they wish 'glory to God in the highest heavens.'

Indeed, he is more glorified there than anywhere in the world. It is the place where his majesty most appears; and the truth is, we cannot perfectly glorify God till we be in heaven. There is pure glory given to God in heaven. There is no corruption there in those perfect souls. There is perfect glory given to God in heaven. Here upon earth God is not glorified at all by many. The whole life of many being nothing but a dishonouring of God, by abusing his ordinances, trampling upon his church and children, by slighting his word and sacraments, there is little honour given to God in the world, but only by a few, whom he intends to glorify for ever. And indeed, if we will glorify

God here, we must raise our thoughts to heaven at that time; raise them above the world, to heaven, where we shall for ever glorify him; where we shall join with the blessed saints and angels, and sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,' &c. In the mean time, let me add this by the way, that in some sort we may glorify God more on earth than in heaven. It may seem a paradox, but it is true. That is thus: here upon earth we glorify God in the midst of enemies; he hath no enemies in heaven, they are all of one spirit. Here upon earth we live not only among devils, but among men led with the spirit of the devil, where God is dishonoured; and if here we take God's side, and the truth, and gospel's side, and stand for God's cause, in some sort, we honour God here more than we are capable to do it in heaven, where there is no opposition. In this respect, let us be encouraged to glorify God, what we can here: for if we begin to glorify God here, it is a sign we are of the number that he intends to glorify with him for ever.

The verb is not set down here; whether it should be, Glory is given to God; or whether, by way of wishing, 'Let glory be given to God; or by way of prediction or prophecy for the time to come, 'Glory shall be to God,' from hence to the end of the world. The verb being wanting, all have a truth. For, first, it cannot be a wish, unless it were a positive doctrinal truth, that all glory is due to God in the incarnation of Christ; and because all glory is due to him, thereupon comes the ground of wishing and of prayer, 'Let God be glorified.' Why? Because it is due. If it were not a positive doctrinal truth, there could be no foundation to raise a wish or a prayer: for what is a prayer, but the turning of a promise or truth into a prayer? And what is praise, but the turning of a truth into praise? So it is a doctrinal truth; first, that God is to be glorified especially in Christ; and in Christ, in this particular, in the incarnation of Christ. And it is a wish for the time to come, let him be glorified; and a prediction, God shall be glorified in the church. He shall always have some to glorify him for Christ, and especially for his incarnation.

'Glory to God on high.'

Glory is excellency, greatness, and goodness, with the eminency of it, so as it may be discovered. There is a fundamental glory in things, that are not discovered at all times. God is always glorious, but, alas! few have eyes to see it. But here I take it for the excellency and eminency of the goodness and greatness of God discovered and taken notice of. In the former part of the chapter 'light' is called the 'glory of the Lord,' ver. 9. Light is a glorious creature. Nothing expresseth glory so much as light. It is a sweet creature,

but it is a glorious creature. It carries its evidence in itself, it discovers all other things and itself too. So excellency and eminency will discover itself to those that have eyes to see it; and being manifested, and withal taken notice of, is glory.

In that the angels begin with the glory of God, I might speak of this doctrine, that The glory of God, the setting forth of the excellencies and eminencies of the Lord, should be the end of our lives, the chief thing we should aim at.

The angels here begin with it, and we begin with it in the Lord's prayer, 'hallowed be thy name.' It should be our main employment. 'Of him and by him are all things, therefore to him be glory,' Rom. xi. 36. Therefore we should give God that which is his own; 'Thine is the glory,' as it is in the conclusion of the Lord's prayer. But this being a general point, I will pass it by and come to the particular, in which it will more comfortably appear, as this glory shines in Christ, in the incarnation of Christ, there is matter of glorifying God, both the angels and men.

And here I do not take the incarnation of Christ abstractively from other things in Christ, but I take the incarnation of Christ as a foundation and prerequisite to all the other good we have by Christ; 'Glory to God on high, now Christ is born.' Why? Only that he is born? No. But by reason of this incarnation there is a union of the two natures, God and man. So that by the incarnation, now Christ is man, and holy man. The human nature in Christ is pure and holy, being sanctified by the Spirit and united to God. Now Christ being not only man, but pure man and God-man, God taking our nature to the unity of his person, hence it is that he comes to be qualified for all that he did, and suffered after. It was from hence that they had their worth. What was the reason that his being made a curse, and to die for us, should be of such worth? It came from a person that was God-man; nay, so near is the manhood to God, that what the manhood did God did, because the person was God; the second person taking the nature of man, and what he suffered in his human nature, God suffered according to man's nature. Hence comes that phrase of the communication of properties. Whatever was done or suffered in man's nature, God did as a mediator, God did it in that nature. Thereupon comes the price of it. Thus the incarnation is a prerequisite and foundation to all other benefits by Christ. Therefore take it conjoined, his incarnation, and his death, and resurrection, and ascension, and all.

Well then, the incarnation of Christ, together with the benefits to us by it, that is, redemption, adoption, &c., it is that wherein God will show his glory most of all. That is the doctrinal truth. The glory and excellency of God doth most shine in his love and mercy in Christ. Every excellency of God hath its proper place or theatre where it is seen, as his power in the creation, his wisdom in his providence and ruling of the world, his justice in hell, his majesty in heaven; but his mercy and kindness, his bowels of tender mercy, do most of all appear in his church among his people. God shows the excellency of his goodness and mercy in the incarnation of Christ, and the benefits we have by it. Many attributes and excellencies of God shine in Christ, as,

His truth: ‘All the promises of God are yea and amen in’ Christ,’ 2 Cor. i. 20. There is an accomplishment of all the promises.

And then his wisdom, that he could reconcile justice and mercy, by joining two natures together. This plot was in heaven by God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Trinity, that God and man should be joined together. To join and knit two attributes seeming contrary, justice and mercy; to reconcile man by reconciling justice and mercy, and by such an excellent way that God should become man, Emmanuel, this was a great wisdom—to reconcile justice and mercy by such a person as should satisfy justice and give way to mercy, that is, by Christ. God will lose none of his attributes. His justice must be satisfied, that his mercy might be manifested. The wisdom of God found out that way. It is a plot the angels study in.

Likewise here is justice, justice fully satisfied in Christ. He became our surety who is God as well as man. If no creature can satisfy God, God can; when the second person took our nature, and was our surety, and died for us, he was the glory of his justice.

And of his holiness, that he would be no otherwise satisfied for sin. It was so foul a thing, that to show his hatred of it he punished it in his own Son, when he became our surety. How holy and pure is God. That is, what a separation is there in the nature of God from sin, considering that he so punished it in his Son, our surety, that he made him cry out, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Mark xv. 34. We cannot see the nature of God in anything in the world so much as in Christ. In Christ we see, as in a glass, his infinite sweet wisdom, his justice and holiness in hating and loathing of sin.

But the main of all is his mercy and goodness, which set him on work to contrive this great work of redemption by the incarnation and death of Christ. The infinite, rich, glorious, abundant mercy—that is the main thing wherein God is glorious now in Christ. Therefore everywhere you have these and the like titles put to his goodness and mercy. The bounty of God appeared, and the riches of his mercy, and the exceeding great height, and breadth, and depth of his love. There are no words large enough to set out the goodness and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore I will only speak of this attribute, because this bears the mastery among all the other attributes, though God be equally powerful and just; and yet he expresseth his mercy and grace most of all in Jesus Christ, towards poor wretched man. For after the fall man being miserable and sinful, what attribute can exalt itself, but mercy to misery, and grace to sinful man in pardoning his sin? Considering in what terms man stood, there was no other attribute could exalt itself but grace and mercy, to triumph over misery and sin. As it is in a city, those that are otherwise equal in honour, yet sometimes one bears rule above another; and he that is now magistrate and chief, take him at another time he is inferior to others; so since the fall the mercy of God bears office, and is chief governor and commander over all the attributes of God. For as I said, what moved God to set his wisdom on work to contrive such a thing as the salvation of mankind, to reconcile God and man in one person? His mercy moved him. What moved him to satisfy his justice? It was that an excellent way might be made, without prejudice to any other of his attributes, for his free grace and mercy. That is it that set all the other on work. That is the main triumphing attribute, considering man now standing in that exigence of mercy. Therefore ‘glory to God in the highest heavens,’ especially for his free grace and mercy in Christ.

Now that you may understand this sweet point, which is very comfortable, and indeed the grand comfort to a Christian, do but compare the glory of God, that is, the excellency and eminency of God’s mercy, and goodness, and greatness of this work of redemption by Christ, with other things.

1. God is glorious in the work of creation. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God,’ and the earth manifests the glory of God. Every creature indeed hath a beam of the glory of God, especially those celestial bodies in the heavens, they praise God in their kinds, but with our mouths; they give us matter of praise. And if we have gracious hearts we take notice of it, and magnify him for his goodness. His goodness appears in the use of the

creatures, and his greatness in the bulk of the creatures; his wisdom, in ordering and ranking of them. So that his mercy shines in all things in heaven and earth marvellously. Oh but, beloved, heaven and earth shall come to nothing ere long; and what is all this glory of the goodness and greatness of God to us, if we be sent to hell after this short life is ended? What comfort is it that we go on the earth, and enjoy the comforts that God gives us in this world, and then to perish for ever? Therefore the glory and goodness of God doth not so gloriously appear in the creation of the world.

2. Nay, the glory of God's love and mercy shined not to us so, when we were in Adam; not in Adam, for there God did good to a good man: he created him good, and showed goodness to him. That was not so much wonder. But for God to show mercy to an enemy, to a creature that was in opposition to him, that was in a state of rebellion against him, it is a greater wonder and more glory. It was a marvellous mercy for God to make man out of the earth; but here God was made man, he became man himself. There all was done with one word, 'Let us make man.' It was easily done. But in this, for Christ to become man for us, and to suffer many things, to be 'made a curse for us,' it was not so easy a matter. Therefore herein there is a great manifestation of the glory of God's goodness and mercy to us. For God hath set himself to be glorious in his mercy, and goodness, and grace, in Christ. He hath set himself to triumph over the greatest in man, which is sin, in the glorious work of redemption. So that you see here the greatest glory and mercy of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ, the foundation of which is his incarnation. In *Exod. xxxiv. 6*, God doth make an answer to Moses, who desired to see the glory of God, that he might have it manifested to him, not out of curiosity, but that he might love God the more, how doth God manifest his glory to him? 'Jehovah, strong, merciful, glorious, pardoning sin and iniquity.' "When God would set himself to show his glory in answering Moses's petition, he doth it in setting out his glorious mercy and grace, and loving-kindness, in pardoning sin and iniquity, to show that he will now have his glory most appear in the sweet attribute of mercy and compassion in the forgiveness of sins, &c. In *Titus ii. 12*, 'The grace of God hath appeared, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' &c. The grace of God hath appeared. Grace hath not a body to appear visibly; ay, but Christ appeared; and when he appeared it was as if grace and love had been incarnate, and took a body. So that grace and mercy most of all shines in the incarnation of Christ.

I need not clear the point further, but only make a little use of it, and so end. Doth the grace, and love, and mercy of God, those sweet attributes, now appear and show themselves in Jesus Christ? I beseech you, let us remember it—there is no point of divinity of more use and comfort — especially in the greatest plunges and extremities; for it answereth all objections, the greatest and strongest that can be made.

The sinner will object, My sins are great, of long continuance and standing; they are of a deep dye.

Look then upon God in Christ, and consider his end in the incarnation of Christ. It was that his mercy, and goodness, and grace should be exalted, and triumph over all man's unworthiness. The greater thy sin, the greater will be the glory of his mercy; and that is it God seeks for now, to be glorious in his mercy.

Again, Thy heart tells thee, that if there be any mercy showed to such a wretch as thou art, it must be no ordinary mercy.

It is true. God's mercy is no ordinary thing. Of all attributes he will triumph in that. The glory of his mercy and goodness is that he seeks to have of men, by the incarnation and redemption wrought by Christ, above all things whatsoever.

Obj. Thou wouldst have infinite mercy.

Ans. Thou hast it in Christ.

Obj. Thy sins have abounded.

Ans. God's grace abounds much more.

Obj. Thy sins are mountains.

Ans. God's mercy is as the ocean, to cover those mountains.

Obj. But is it possible for God to forgive such a wretched sinner, that hath been a blasphemer, &c.?

Ans. It were not with men; but, saith God, 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts,' Isa. lv. 8. You are vindictive in your dispositions, and will not

pardon; but my thoughts are as far above yours as the heavens are above the earth. Therefore bound not the infinite mercy of God, wherein he will triumph, with thy narrow thoughts, but let it have its scope, especially in plunges and assaults, and at such times as the best of us may be brought unto. In Hosea xi. 9, 'I am God, and not man,' implying that if he were man, we might have mean thoughts of him, confined thoughts; but 'I am God, and not man,' therefore comfort yourselves in this, consider how God sets himself to be glorious in his love and mercy to poor, miserable, wretched man in Jesus Christ.

You see the mercy of God in Christ, even in the sacrament. He doth not only give Christ to us—'So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,' John iii. 16, to be born and to die for us—but his mercy is a boundless mercy. We see he labours to strengthen our faith by these pledges, that we make use of this. What if God be merciful in Christ! and what if Christ be gracious, and there is nothing but grace and mercy! If there be not an application, if there be not an interest, what benefit have we by it? We must interest ourselves in this glorious person, interest ourselves in Christ, for it is founded upon Christ. All the glorious mercy of God is grounded upon satisfaction of justice; that is, in Christ. But this is nothing except we interest ourselves in Christ, and in the mercy of God; for our approbation is the ground of all comfort. God out of Christ is a 'fountain sealed.' He is a fountain of mercy, but he is sealed up. He is a 'consuming fire,' but in Christ he is a cheering, comforting fire. But this is nothing to us, unless we be in Christ. We must have interest in Christ. We must be 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' He hath married our nature, that we might be married to him. We have no benefit by his incarnation else. Now all our comfort is by this union and communion with Christ, by marrying ourselves to Christ, by strengthening our faith in this union and communion, that so we may make use of the boundless mercy of God in Christ. Therefore how should we be encouraged to come to the sacrament, to enjoy this comfort!

You have heard, beloved, of the joy of the angels, of their manner of celebrating the birth of Christ; and if the angels should leave heaven, and come down upon earth, and take upon them bodies, how would they celebrate the incarnation of Christ! You see here, 'Glory to God on high.' This would be the course wherein they would carry themselves to glorify God, answerable to their song. So should we do, if we will be like the blessed angels. We see how to celebrate the nativity of Christ. We need not go to fetch joy from hell to celebrate it. If the devil should be incarnate, and come

to live among men, how would he celebrate the incarnation of Christ otherwise than in many places it is? If we do not love to have our portion with devils, surely we should not imitate those whose state and condition we are afraid of. The angels saw matter enough in the thing itself to make them sing, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men.' What! Hath God been so rich in love to us in Christ, so wondrous in mercy, as to take our miserable nature, not at the best, but at the worst, and to take our condition upon him? Here is matter of joy; and shall we be beholden to the devil for joy, when we should rejoice for Christ? Will not the thing itself yield matter of rejoicing? Oh base dispositions, that we should not content ourselves with homogeneal, uniform joy to the thing itself. I desire repentance, and reformation of what hath been amiss. If there be any that have been guilty in this kind, that intend to come near God in these holy mysteries, let them know, that God will be honoured of all that come near him; let them take it to heart. As Tertullian said in his time, What! shall we celebrate that which is a public matter of joy to all the church, for a public shame, in a disgraceful way?

I beseech you, consider of these things. 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is near,' saith the Baptist, Mat. iv. 17. What! shall we therefore give carnal liberty to all looseness, as if Christ came to bring Christians liberty to licentiousness? Shall we, instead of repenting, run further and further into guilt, and indispose ourselves to all goodness? Is that the reasoning of the Scriptures? No. 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' Change your lives, for Christ and the fruits of the gospel are at hand. 'The grace of God hath appeared in Christ.' What! to teach us to live as we list, and to be more disordered than at other times? Oh no. 'To live soberly and justly,' Titus ii. 12, not to wrong any body, and holy and godly in this present world. This is the Scripture reasoning, and thus, if ever we look for comfort from God and Christ, we must reason too.

Let none think it too late to speak of these things now; but those that have not had the grace of God to keep them innocent, let them make use of the grace of God to repent; and as the phrase of some of the ancients is, repentance is a board to escape to the shore, after we have made shipwreck, and done things amiss. Therefore, as I said, those that have not had the grace before to be innocent, let them make use of the grace of God, that now invites them to repentance, or not presume to come to these holy things. I speak it, not only to free mine own soul, but to free you from contracting further guilt; for do you think to make amends by coming to the sacrament,

without repentance of what you have done before? 'What hast thou to do,' saith God, 'to take my name into thy mouth,' Ps. 1. 16—to take my sacrament into thy mouth—'when thou hatest to be reformed?' God accounted his own service as the 'cutting off a dog's bead,' when they came indisposed and unprepared, Isa. lxvi. 3. The sacrament is bane and poison to us, if we come without repentance. What saith the apostle? 'For this cause,'—because you come unreverently to the things of God—'some are sick, and some weak, and some sleep,' 1 Cor. xi. 30. God struck them with death for it. And it is a great cause why many are hardened in their sins, and go on still; because God executes these spiritual judgments for profaning these holy things, thinking to daub with God, and to compliment with him in an easy performance.

I know those that belong to God are suffered sometimes to do things amiss, and to fall into errors and miscarriages, that they may know themselves better. And indeed, much of our spiritual wisdom is gotten by the sight of our own errors. We grow more stablished after, against the like temptations, for the time to come; and we can say by experience, It is good that I know the foolishness of my own heart, &c. But he that God hath no delight in, he swells and rages against any admonition, though it be in love to his soul. I hope there are none such here. Therefore, those that have made their peace with God, let them come to these holy mysteries with comfort, notwithstanding any thing before; for God hath prepared these things, not for angels, but for weak men, whose faith stands in need to be strengthened.

And let us not think that Christianity is a matter of compliment; that because we are baptized, and come to hear the word, and receive the sacrament, all is well. For we may do all this, and yet be greater sinners than Turks, or Jews, or pagans; for the most horrible sins are committed in the church. Where is the sin against the Holy Ghost committed? sins against light and against conscience, but where the conscience and understanding is most enlightened? There be the horrible, provoking sins, where there is more light and direction to live in another way. When the grace of God and the riches of Christ are opened, and yet men live in their sins, against conscience and the light of the gospel, so far is the outward performance from excusing in sickness and at the hour of death, that it aggravates our guilt and damnation when we make not a right use of the holy things of God.

That which I shall next stand upon, shall be to show,

1. How we may know whether we glorify God for Christ or no;

2. And then the hindrances that keep us from glorifying God for this excellent good;

3. And the means how we may come to glorify God.

1. For the first, of glorifying God in general, I will not speak much. It would be large; and the point of glorifying God is most sweetly considered, as invested in such a benefit as this, when we think of it, not as an idea only, but think of it in Christ, for whom we have cause to glorify God, and for all the good we have by him.

(1.) First, then, we hold tune with the blessed angels in giving glory to God, when we exalt God in our souls above all creatures and things in the world; when we lift him up in his own place, and let him be in our souls, as he is in himself, in the most holy. God is glorious, especially in his mercy and goodness. Let him be so in our hearts, in these sweet attributes, above all our unworthiness and sin. For God hath not glory from us till we give him the highest place in our love and joy and delight, and all those affections that are set upon good, when they are set upon him as the chief good; then we give him his due place in our souls, we ascribe to him that divinity, and excellency, and eminency that is due to him. And this especially appears in competition and opposition of other things, when we will not offend God for any creature, when we can say as the psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there in earth in comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. Therefore let us ask our own thoughts often what that is, that our affections of delight and joy and love, and all the sweetness and marrow of our souls, is spent on, and runs after. Is it the sweet love of God in Christ, the excellent state we have in Christ? It is an excellent sign. Surely the blessed saints in heaven, and those that are in earth that look for heaven, are thus disposed for the most part, especially when they set themselves in their devotions before God. Let us examine what is highest in our souls. 'The loving-kindness of the Lord is better than life itself,' saith the psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 8. Then we give God glory, when we set light by life itself, as holy Saint Paul could say. What! do you tell me of suffering at Jerusalem? 'I am not only ready' to do that, but to 'die for the name of Christ,' Acts xx. 2-1, and in Philip, i. 20, 'so God may be magnified by my life or death.' I am at a point; so if the question be whether we shall sacrifice this blood and life of ours, or dishonour God and wrong the gospel, or be any way prejudicial to the truth known, when we are ready to part with all, with father and mother, and houses and lands, and all for Christ, then with the angels we say, 'Glory be to God on high.' Therefore in

a state of opposition, when we cannot enjoy both, let us leave the creature and cleave to God.

(2.) Then again, we give glory to God for Christ, when we take all the favours we have from God in Christ, when we see Christ in everything. ‘All things are ours because we are Christ’s,’ 1 Cor. iii. 23. It is by Christ that we are heirs, that we have any comfortable interest. Therefore, when we accept all in Christ, and give God in Christ the glory of all, we practise this that the angels do here; we give glory to God.

. (3.) Then again, we give glory to God when we stir up others. All the angels consent. There was no discord in this harmony of the angels. When we all join together and stir up one another, and labour to promote the knowledge of God in Christ all the ways we can—every one in our place and calling, magistrates and ministers, and every one in our families—labour that Christ may rule there, that God in Christ may be known. In Ps. ciii. 20, seq., there the psalmist stirs up himself to glorify God, and he stirs up the angels, and here the angels stir up men, ‘Glory to God on high,’ &c. When there is a zeal of God’s glory, and a disposition fit to glorify God, there will be a stirring up one of another—angels men, and men angels—and a wishing that God may have glory in heaven and earth. Therefore those that labour not in their places that the truth may be made known, that for base and worldly ends are opposers of the publishing of the gospel any way—as it is the fashion now, they will not appear openly, but cunningly undermine the gospel under pretences—they bear no tune with these blessed angels. For those that have dispositions like them will study how this blessed truth may be promoted and propagated, and spread even over the world. Therefore we should labour every one to spread the glorious gospel of Christ, especially those that are ministers, whose office it is to unfold and open the ‘unsearchable riches of Christ.’

(4.) Again, We glorify God in Christ, when we see such glory and mercy of Christ, as it doth transform us and change us, and from an inward change we have alway a blessed disposition to glorify God, as I showed out of 2 Cor. iii. 18. This is the difference between the glass of the gospel and the glass of the law and of the creatures. In the law we see the beams of the justice of God, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all,’ &c., Gal. iii. 10, and the beams of his power and goodness in the creature. But it doth not change and transform us to be good and gracious. But when we see the glory of God, of his goodness and infinite mercy, shining in the face of Jesus Christ—for we

dare not look upon God immediately—it changeth the soul to be gracious like unto Christ. Therefore if we find that the knowledge of God in Christ hath changed our dispositions, it is a sign then we give glory to God indeed. For to glorify God is an action that cannot proceed but from a disposition of nature that is altered and changed. The instrument must be set in tune before it can yield this excellent music, to glorify God as the angels do; that is, all the powers of the soul must be set in order with grace by the Spirit of God. If the meditations and thoughts of the gospel have altered our dispositions to love God, and that that pleaseth God, to do good to men, to delight in goodness, it is a sign we are instruments in tune to glorify God, and that we have an apprehension of the love and mercy of God in Christ as we should. For it hath a transforming power to work this. ‘The grace of God will teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live holily,’ Titus ii. 12. When the grace of God, that is, the free love of God in Christ, in the forgiving our sins and advancing us to heaven, hath this effect in our souls, it is a sign we have a true notion and apprehension of the excellency and eminency of God’s grace. Otherwise, if we ‘turn the grace of God into wantonness,’ Jude 4, to make the benefits by Christ a pretence and covering for our wicked and loose lives, we know not what it is to glorify God; but though in words we say, ‘Glory be to God,’ yet in our lives we deny it, as the apostle saith, Titus i. 16. The hypocrites in Isa. lxvi. 5, they had good speeches in their mouths. Saith God, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word: your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.’ So you shall find those that are opposers and persecutors, and haters of sincerity, will sing ‘Gloria Patri, ‘God be glorified;’ but what good will this do them if they have diabolical, Satanical dispositions, if they be like the devil in opposing the truth, and hating that that is good? The devils in the gospel could glorify God for their own ends: ‘We know that thou art the Son of God,’ Luke iv. 41. So devils incarnate can come to church and receive the sacraments, and seem to praise God. Oh, but there must be a change; for to glorify God is a work of the whole man, especially of the Spirit. ‘All that is within me, praise his holy name,’ Ps. ciii. 1. It came from the heart-root of a sanctified judgment, out of grounds why we do it. The wish of the angels here, ‘Glory to God on high,’ it came from a good ground, because they knew God is to be glorified in Christ. For judicious phrases are founded upon truths. So there must be a sanctified judgment to be the ground of it, and the affections must be in tune answerable to those truths. “Then we are fit to glorify God. And all this is by the power of the gospel transforming us.

(5.) Again, We glorify God when we take to heart anything that may hinder, or stop, or eclipse God's truth, and obscure it; when it works zeal in us in our places, as far as we can; when it affects us deeply to see the cause of religion hindered any way. If there be any desire of glorifying God, there will be zeal. The heart will move with a kind of indignation when God is dishonoured, and his truth eclipsed with false doctrine or by ill practice. It cannot be otherwise. It is out of the nature of the thing itself. Therefore those that either are instruments of stopping or obscuring the truth, or causing it to be reproached by their wicked lives, or if they be not instruments, yet they do not take it to heart when they see God dishonoured, surely they can speak little comfort to themselves. They have neither angelical nor evangelical dispositions; for if they had the knowledge of the gospel it would work this in them.

(6.) Again, If we apprehend this glorious mystery of Christ in the gospel aright, it will work in us a glorious joy; for joy is a disposition especially that fits us to glorify God. Then we are fit to 'glorify God,' when our hearts are enlarged with joy; when we think of God in Christ; when we think of the day of judgment; when we think of heaven; when we think of hell with joy, as being subdued; and bless God for Christ; when we can think of all that is opposite as conquered in Christ. So that our joy is enlarged in the apprehension of our own blessed condition. It is a good sign we are in a disposition to 'glorify God.' But I will not enlarge myself further in this point.

2. This being so excellent a duty, to which we are stirred by the angels, 'Glory to God on high,' &c., what are the main hindrances of it, that we give not God more glory?

(1.) The main hindrances are, a double veil of ignorance and unbelief, that we do not see the glorious light of God shining in Jesus Christ; or else if we do not know it, we do not believe it; and thereupon, instead of that blessed disposition that should be in the soul, there comes an admiration of carnal excellencies, a delighting in base things.

This ignorance is partly from the darkness of our own hearts, being overcast sometimes, that such great things are too good to be true. Our hearts have a hell of unbelief in them.

And sometimes the policy of Satan, who casts dust in our eyes, and labours that we may not see the glory of God in the gospel: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The

God of this world hath blinded their eyes,' &c. Ignorance arising from within or without is a great cause why we do not see the excellencies of God. Therefore no wonder if, where the gospel is not preached, that the devil hath a kind of reign, and God is not honoured at all, because the devil is the prince of darkness, and rules in darkness. That is one cause, ignorance.

(2.) So likewise unbelief, when we hear and see and know the notion of mercy and of Christ, and can dispute of these things, like men that talk of that they never tasted of. The devils know all these things better than any man; yet they do not 'glorify God,' because they do not believe that these things pertain to them. Men want a light suitable to the truth of the things themselves. A man may see them with a natural light, or with the light of education, or by books or the like; but not in a spiritual and proper light. He sees not spiritual, heavenly things, in a spiritual light. And that is the reason he believes them not. These two veils are the cause why we see not the light of God shining in the gospel, and why we do not glorify him. Light is a glorious creature. It was the first creature. It is not only glorious in itself, but it shows the glory of all other things too. If we had all the sights in the world presented to us, if there were no light to discover them, or no sight in our eyes, if either be wanting, all the glory of them would be lost. So it is in the gospel. Though there be wondrous admirable things there, if we want either light or sight; if the light shine round about us, 'and the god of this world have blinded our eyes,' and infidelity have blinded us, how can we 'glorify God,' wanting a heavenly, proper, peculiar, spiritual light, suitable to the things? For a natural man, by the light that he hath, cannot judge of them. These are the main hindrances, the veil of ignorance and unbelief.

(3.) And, on the contrary, there is another hindrance; that is, too much light; either want of light altogether, or too much light, when by the preaching of the word of God, awaking our conscience, and showing our sins so enormous, so transcendent, so odious, that we forget mercy in Christ, and so dishonour Christ, to set the sins of the creature above the infinite mercy of the Creator; as those that doubt, and from doubting, proceed to despair of the mercy of God, seeing the vileness of their sins in the true colours of them, and seeing and feeling God's anger and wrath, together with their sins in the conscience; here is too much light one way, and not looking to the other light, this excellent, glorious, infinite light of God's mercy, shining in the gospel. They look not on God in 'the face of Christ.' Out of some stubbornness and pride they flatter themselves; they will not believe; they will not receive the consolations due to them, but dwell upon the

consideration of their unworthiness and sins; and Satan holds them in that slavery and bondage. This is a great hindrance of glorifying of God, when we lift up our sins above the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. This is to take away God and Christ altogether; for if the mercy, and rich and bountiful goodness of God, wherein he will be infinitely glorious, were not greater than our sins, it were not the mercy and bounty of a God. God should not be glorious in it. But there are but few of these that miscarry; God usually shines upon them at the last. There are three ranks of men. Some are in the first profane, dead, loose Christians, that were never under the law, that never understood the corruption of nature, nor themselves. Some are brought from that to understand themselves a little too much, that are under the law, and feel the flashes of God's wrath. And some, in the third place, are brought from hence to be under grace. That is the only happy condition, to be under the grace of God in Christ. Some men never come to the second step. They never understand what sin is, and what the anger and wrath of God is. They will give their conscience no leisure to tell them what their condition is. There is hope of the second that they will come to the third rank; but for a company of profane persons, opposers of goodness, to talk of the mercy of God in Christ, they are not in the next step to it. A man must be sensible of his sins and of his misery before he can have grace. Therefore, for those that have too much light, though it be a great fault in some, and hinders God of much glory, and themselves of much comfort, out of this peevish stubbornness of theirs, yet there are not many of them, and, as I said, few of them miscarry.

Now, from these two veils that hinder the glory of God, there come other hindrances; for the soul of man will wonder and admire at somewhat. It will have somewhat in the eye of it. Hereupon, not seeing or not believing the mercy, and goodness, and love of God, and the excellent prerogatives of a Christian issuing from the goodness of God, and the fruits of it, they dote upon some worldly excellency; either they are proud of their parts, and so God is robbed of his honour, or on creatures meaner than themselves. For the base nature of man, since the fall, it doats upon earth, upon gold and silver, mean and base things, not to be compared to the excellency of man, or else upon some duties they perform, upon their own works, as if God should be beholden to them. For not knowing themselves well, and the infinite glory of God in Christ, that God must have all the glory, not only of happiness, but of grace that brings us to happiness, they glory in that they have done; as in popery, they think they merit much by their performance. In the night time a torch seems a goodly thing; and sometimes rotten wood will shine; but in the day time, when the sun appears, the very stars shine not; we care not

for meaner lights. For what good do they then? So the soul, when it wants a sight of the greatest excellency, it doats upon rotten wood, upon every torch-light. Many vain things seem to be great. A man may see by the dispositions of many what they admire and stand upon most. Their carriages shows it well enough. It argues a corrupt and weak judgment. You see what are the main hindrances.

3. Now, the way to attain to this glorious duty, to glorify God. The next thing shall be to give some directions, because it is a most necessary duty. Is it not that we pray for in the Lord's prayer, 'Hallowed be thy "name"? And what is the end that we were created and redeemed for, but that God may have some glory by us? Therefore, being a necessary absolute duty, let us hearken to some directions that may help us that way.

(1.) First, Therefore, if we would glorify God, we must redeem some time to think of these things, and bestow the strength of our thoughts this way. The soul being the most excellent thing in the world, it is fit it should be set on the excellentest duty. Man being in such an excellent condition, being heir of heaven, and having an understanding soul, it is fit the most excellent part of the most excellent creature should be set upon the most excellent object. Now, the most excellent part of the soul is the understanding. It kindles all the affections, and leads all the rest. Therefore let us take some time to meditate and think of these things. What we are by nature, and the misery we are exposed to by sin, that whatsoever we have more than hell is more than we deserve; and then withal, think what we are advanced to in Christ; what we are freed from,—that cursed condition; and what we shall be freed from,—the sting of death; and all that we fear for the time to come. Think of what we are freed from, and what we are advanced to, and by whom. By God becoming man: a mystery that might, nay, that doth ravish the very angels themselves; God-man, now in heaven, making good what he did on earth, by his intercession. And then the ground of all, the infinite love, and mercy, and bounty of God to poor distressed man. The thought of these things will inflame the heart. Now, they never work upon the heart thoroughly till they end in admiration; and indeed the Scripture sots it down in terms of admiration, 'So God loved the world.' 'So.' How? So, as I cannot tell how, I cannot express it; and 'what love hath God showed us, that we should be called the sons of God?' 1 John iii. 1. And then the fruits that we have by this incarnation of Christ, and by his death, they are admirable: 'peace that passeth understanding,' Philip, iv. 7, 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' 1 Pet. i. 8. So that the mystery is wonderful, and the dignity

wonderful, and the fruits, the comfort, and peace, and joy, wonderful; everything is an object of admiration. Therefore when we think and meditate of these things, let us never end till our souls be wound up to admiration of the excellent love of God. We wonder at things that are new, and rare, and great. Is there anything more new and rare than that that never was the like, for God to become man? Is there anything more excellent than the benefits we have by Christ becoming man, to free us from so great misery, and to advance us to so great happiness? If anything be an object of admiration, surely it must be this. Therefore the apostle doth well to give all the dimensions to the love of God in Christ, 'height, and breadth, and depth, and length.'

It is a love 'passing knowledge,' Eph. iii. 19.

Quest. What good will come by this?

Ans. When the soul is thus exercised, then it will be fit to glorify God. When it is in this frame, it will think itself too good for any base service of sin. Eagles will not catch at flies. 'When the soul is lift up to consider God's love and mercy in Christ, will it be catching at every base thing in this world? No. It will not. The soul never sins, but when it loseth this frame, to have a judgment suitable to things. When our judgment and affections are lost of the best things, then comes in a judgment and affection to other things as better. So losing that frame the soul should be in, we fall to the creature, to commit spiritual fornication with that.

Let us labour to keep our souls in this temper, begin every day with this meditation, to think what we were, what we are now in Christ, what we shall be, and by what glorious means all this was wrought, that so the soul may be warmed with the love of God in Christ. This frame of spirit will not suffer the soul to sin, to stoop to base sinful lusts.

(2.) Now, to help this, in the next place, beg of God the 'Spirit of revelation' to discover to us these things in their own proper light, 'for they are spiritually discerned.' Now the Spirit knows the breast of God, what the love of God is to every one in particular, and he knows our hearts too. Therefore the apostle desires of God 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17, to discover these things to us, not only that they are truths, but that they are truths to us. For unless we know these things belong to us in particular, we cannot glorify God as we should. They are in themselves glorious things: to hear of God's mercy in Christ; of God becoming man; to

hear of kingdoms and crowns. Oh, but when there is a spirit of appropriation to make these our own, that God in Christ loves us—‘who loved me, and gave himself for me,’ Gal. ii. 20—then the soul cannot but break forth with the angels here, ‘Glory to God on high.’ Therefore beg the Spirit to reveal to us our part and portion, that he would show his face to us, that he is to us a Father in Christ. Surely in hearing, meditation, and prayer, &c., we shall find a secret whispering and report from heaven, that God is our Saviour, and that our sins are forgiven, especially when we stand in most need of this comfort. Let us therefore beg of God to take away the veils of ignorance and unbelief, and openly to reveal his fatherly bowels and tender mercy to us in Christ; to discover to us in particular more and more our interest in the same by his Spirit, that only knows the secret of our hearts, and being above our hearts can settle our doubts. Only the Spirit can do it. For as God only works salvation, so the Spirit only can seal to our souls our salvation. This is one excellent way to help us to glorify God.

And add this as motive, as a plea, not to move God so much as to move and to satisfy our hearts, and to strengthen our faith, that it is the end of our lives and the pitch of our desires to ‘glorify God.’ Therefore we desire God to reveal himself so far to us, to be our Father in Christ, that we may glorify him. Surely it is a forcible plea. God will do that that is suitable to his end. ‘He hath made all things for his own glory,’ Prov. xvi. 4. Especially the work of redemption in Christ is for the glory of his rich mercy; and we desire the sense of his mercy and love for this end, that we may be fitter to glorify God. It is a prevailing argument, fetched from God’s own end.

(3.) And let us labour daily more and more to see the vanity of all things in the world. Put the case we have honours and large possessions in the world, that we wanted nothing; if this were severed from God’s love in Christ for life everlasting, what comfort could we have in this, especially at the hour of death? Let us see, therefore, the vanity and emptiness of all things else out of Christ, and the good we have by Christ, what all will be ere long. The daily thoughts of that will be a good means; for we must empty ourselves of that we are, that we may be filled with that we are not; and we must daily consider the emptiness of the creature where-with we labour to support ourselves. For when men have no goodness in themselves, they will have an excellency in the creature. Therefore, when we see ourselves out of Christ, to be nothing but fuel for God’s vengeance, and see that the creature can afford us nothing but vexation, these thoughts that these things are so, and out of experience, will make us draw near to God upon all occasions. It

will make us glorify him and abase ourselves. What made Job abase himself and glorify God? When he drew near to God, and God drew near to him. 'I abhor myself,' Job xlii. 6; and so we see in Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. Let us draw near to God upon all occasions, in the word and prayer, and in the sacraments, and this will make us see our own nothingness and God's greatness; for that is the way to honour him, to see his greatness, and a nothingness in the creature; that all things in him are so excellent, and out of him nothing, and worse than nothing.

Now we are to draw near to God in the sacrament; and the nearer to God, the more we honour him. Who honours God most? Surely Christ, because he is so near him, being God and man in one person; and next to him the blessed angels 'glorify God.' They are near him. Therefore, in Isa. vi. 2, they 'cover their faces,' it being impossible for the creature to comprehend the great majesty of God; and they cover their feet in modesty. The nearer we draw to God in the meditation and consideration of his excellency in the ordinances, the more humble and abased we shall be in ourselves; and the more we shall honour God, seeing his excellency, especially of his love. So next to the angels the saints: 'all thy works praise thee,' Ps. cxlv. 10; they give matter and occasion, but 'thy saints bless thee.' If it were not for a few saints on earth, though all the works of God are matter of praise, they could not praise God: 'thy saints bless thee.' And the nearer we come to God, the fitter we are for this. Now, there is a wondrous near-coming to God in the sacrament. If we come prepared, we come to have communion and strengthening in Christ. He is both the inviter and the feast itself. We come to be made one with him: 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' Therefore, if we come prepared, this is the way to bring us to a disposition to glorify God. You see here the wondrous, infinite love of God in the sacrament, to stoop so low to his creature, to strengthen our faith by giving us these things. God had been good to us whether he had given us his oath and his seal or no, but he knows we are weak, and unbelieving, and doubting; therefore to help us he hath given us not only his promise, but his oath, and besides his oath he hath given us signs and seals. Here is wondrous mercy. Let us be encouraged to come in and admire the love of God, not only in giving his Son Christ for us, but in affording us other means to strengthen our faith. Let none be discouraged in the sight and sense of their own sins; but let them come in, and they shall glorify God the more. 'Where sin hath abounded' in their sense and feeling, there 'grace shall more abound.' And those that have been good, and have slipped any way, let them consider God's infinite love in Christ. It is not a cistern, but a spring. God's mercy in

Christ, and the blood of Christ, is a 'fountain opened for Judah,' &c., Zech. xiii. 1; that is, it serves not for our first conversion only, but every day, upon every occasion, when we have made any breach with God, we may come and wash in that bath, Christ's blood. 'The blood of Christ purgeth,' 1 John i. 7. It is in the present tense. It runs continually in the vigour of it. There is a spring of corruption in us; there is a spring of mercy in God. There is a spring of Christ's blood, that hath a perfect efficacy to wash our souls. Therefore, if we have not yet been converted, and humbled, and cast down for our sins, let us now come in and give God the glory of his mercy; and if we have fallen again, consider there is a fountain opened for 'Judah and Jerusalem to wash in,' and let us come and renew our repentance and faith at this time.

'Peace on earth.'

The same holy affection in the angels that moved them to wish God to have his due of glory from the creature, it moves them to wish peace to men likewise; to show this, by the way, that There can be no true zeal of God's glory but with love to mankind.

They were not so ravished with the glory of God as to forget poor man on earth. Oh no! They have sweet, pure affections to man, a poorer creature than themselves. Therefore let them that are injurious and violent in their dispositions, and insolent in their carriage, never talk of glorifying God, when they despise and wrong men. There are some that overthrow all peace in the earth for their own glory, but he that seeks God's glory will procure peace what he can; for they go both together, as we see here, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.'

Now, their end of wishing peace upon earth, it is that men might thereby glorify God, that God being reconciled, and peace being stablished in men's consciences, they might glorify God. Hence observe this likewise, that We cannot glorify God till we have some knowledge of our peace with him in Christ.

We must have the first act, to cast ourselves upon God's mercy in Christ, and adhere and cleave to that mercy; and then we shall feel so much comfort as shall make us glorify God, though we may question it in desertion sometimes. Here the angels, intending that God should have glory of all, they wish peace on earth, in the consciences of men especially.

The reason is, peace comes from righteousness. Christ is first the 'King of righteousness,' and then 'King of peace;' righteousness causeth peace. Now, unless the soul be assured of righteousness in Christ, it can have no peace. What saith the Virgin Mary? 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' She begins with magnifying the Lord. But what was the ground? She rejoiced in God as a Saviour; therefore she magnified him. So in the Lord's Prayer we say 'Our Father,' which is a word of the covenant of grace, when the soul conceives of God as a gracious Father, reconciled in Christ. And then comes 'Hallowed be thy name,' insinuating that, till we know in some measure God to be our Father, we cannot with a gracious spirit say, 'hallowed be thy name.' For can we heartily wish for the manifestation of the glory of him that we think is our enemy, and him that we have no interest in his greatness and goodness? The heart of man will never do it, therefore God must first speak peace to the soul;—the angels knew that well enough;—and then we are fit to glorify God.

'Peace on earth.'

What is peace? It is the best thing that man can attain unto, to have peace with his Maker and Creator. Peace, in general, is a harmony and an agreement of different things. This peace here you may know what it is by the contrary, as the apostle saith, Eph. i. 10. The word there is very significant, Anakephaliosis (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις). There is a recapitulation or gathering all to a head in Christ. Out of Christ there is a division, a separation and a scattering, a breach, that is five-fold.

(1.) First, There is a scattering and a division from God, the fountain of good, with whom we had communion in our first creation, and his delight was in his creature. We lost that blessed communion, and our sins have separated between God and us, as the prophet saith.

(2.) Then there is a separation between the good angels and us; for they being good subjects, take part with their prince, and therefore join against rebels, as we are. Hence it is, that upon the sight of angels, the very hearts of good men have sometimes been stricken, considering that there is no very good terms between us and the angels, till we come to Christ again.

(3.) Then there is a division and scattering between man and man. No common Spirit of God will keep men together till they be in Christ, as it is said, God sent an evil spirit, 'a spirit of division, between the men of Shechem, Judges ix. 23. So, since the fall, there is an ill spirit of division

among men, till the gospel again bring peace; especially there is no sound peace between men in the state of nature and others that are God's children, nor with the ordinances of God. For men apprehend the ordinances of God as enemies. The word cuts and lanceth him. It is as the sentence of a judge to condemn him. Therefore he fears and trembles at the powerful opening of the word. The ordinance of God speaks no comfort to a carnal man. He is as Ahab. He never had a word of peace from the prophet. The word alway speaks ill to him. He is under the law, and it speaks nothing but terror and curses to him.

(4.) And then there is a division and separation between a man and the creature, which is ready to be in arms against any man that is in the state of nature, to take God's quarrel, as we see in the plagues of Egypt and other examples. If God do but give them leave, they presently make an end of sinful man; and they would glory in it too, to serve their Creator. It is part of their vanity to be subject to wicked men. They have no peace with the creature.

(5.) And they have no peace with themselves. They speak peace to themselves, but, alas! God speaks none to them. They make a covenant with death and hell, but death and hell make no covenant with them. So it is a forced, sleepy peace. It is a dead sleep. The peace they have, it is but a diversion to other things. They consider not themselves and the war they are in with God, with themselves, and with the creature; it is but a truce that they take up for a time. When God opens their conscience, there is a hell in their hearts and souls, that when it is loosed, makes them to suffer a hell upon earth. They enter into the pains of hell before their time. So there is 'no peace to the wicked' at all, Isa. lvii. 21. There is, since the fall, a separation between God and man, between angels and man, between man and the creatures, between man and himself.

Now, Christ at his coming, taking our nature upon him, brings all into one again. He brings God and man together again, by offering himself a sacrifice, by making full satisfaction to the justice of God; and sin, which is the cause of his displeasure, being taken away, God being gracious and merciful, his mercy runs amain on us. Sin only separates between God and us, and that Christ takes away. Therefore he is called by St Paul, 'Christ our peace,' Eph. ii. 14, and 'the Prince of peace,' Heb. vii. 2. He was qualified to be our peace. He was a friend to both parties, having married our nature of purpose, that he might in our nature bring God and us together, as it is 1

Peter iii. 18. His whole work was to 'bring us back again to God,' from whom we fell at the first.

Then if we be at peace with God, all other peace will follow; for good subjects will be at peace with rebels, when they are brought in subjection to their king, and all join in one obedience. Therefore the angels are brought to God again by Christ.

And so for men, there is a spirit of union between them. The same Spirit that knits us to God by faith, knits us one to another by love.

And we have peace with the creature, for when God, who is the Lord of hosts, is made peaceful to us, he makes all other things peaceable. The heathen could say, *Tranquillus Dens, tranquillat omnia*, when God is at peace, he makes all so.

So there is peace in our own hearts. We are assured by the Spirit of God that he is our Father. He seals it to our conscience by his Spirit, because the blood of Christ is set on by the Spirit of God, and not by our own, so that now God and we are brought to one, and angels and we, and all other things. Therefore now the angels say, 'Peace on earth,' when Christ was born.

Now, we will show that this blessed peace, in all the branches of it, is founded in Christ. Christ is the cause and the foundation of it. For though these words were spoken at the incarnation of Christ, yet we refer them to the whole work of his mediatorship, in the state of his abasement and his state of exaltation. Our peace is wholly founded upon him. For he was born and became man, and became sin; that is, a sacrifice for sin for us; he became 'a curse for us,' to establish a peace and to satisfy God's anger; and then he rose again, to show that he had fully satisfied God's anger, and that peace was fully established. Therefore the Holy Ghost was sent after the resurrection, as a testimony that God "was appeased; and now in heaven, he is ever there as a priest, to make intercession for us. So that Christ is our peace from his incarnation to his death, from thence to his resurrection, and ascension, and intercession; all peace with God, with angels, and with creatures is established in Christ.

Quest. And why in Christ?

Ans. Christ is every way fitted for it, for he is the mediator between God and man; therefore by office he is fit to make peace between God and man.

He is Emmanuel, himself God and man in one nature; therefore his office is to bring God and man together.

(1.) It is fit it should be so in regard of God, who being a 'consuming fire,' will no peace with the creature without a mediator. It stands not with his majesty, neither can there ever be peace with us otherwise. Now Christ is a fit mediator, being a friend to God as the Son of God, and a friend to us, taking our nature upon him, to be a merciful Redeemer.

(2.) It was also fit, in respect of us, it should be so. Alas! 'who can dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Who can have communion with God, who is a 'consuming fire?' No. We cannot endure the sight of an angel. The Israelites could not endure the sight of Moses when he came from the mount, his face shone so; and can we endure the glorious presence of God, 'who dwelleth in light that none can attain unto?' 1 Tim. vi. 16. Therefore God derives all good to us in our flesh, that though we cannot see God directly in himself, yet in the flesh we can see God incarnate. We may see the sun in the water, though we cannot directly look on that creature without hazard. It was a comfort to the patriarchs, that they had Joseph their brother the second man in the kingdom. So it maybe to every Christian, that now we have the second person in heaven, our brother in our nature. He is the steward of heaven and earth, to dispense all God's treasures to us. Will not he acknowledge us, that are 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,' when he took our nature for this end, to be a merciful Redeemer? It is most suitable to our condition, that Christ should be the foundation of our peace.

3. If we look to Christ himself, he being God's Son, and the Son of his love, for him to make us sons, and sons of God's love. Is it not most agreeable, that he that is the image of God, should again renew the image of God that we lost? Jacob's ladder knit heaven and earth together; so Christ knits heaven and earth, God and us, together. You know if a ladder lie upon the ground, it doth no good, or if it be kept above, it serves for nothing; so if Christ were only God, or only man, there could be no union wrought between God and man; but now, being both, he is a fit mediator between both. Christ is the foundation of our peace, in the gracious covenant that God hath made with us, in all his offices. For as a prophet, he proclaims peace. He preached before in the time of Noah. He published peace as the prophet of his church in himself, when he lived, and by his ministers when he left the world. And as a priest, he did work our reconciliation, offering himself a sacrifice. He made a peace between God and us, and is now in

heaven, to make intercession between God and us. And as a king, he subdues the corruptions of our souls, he pulls down the pride of our thoughts, to bring the heart into subjection to him by his mighty power, which indeed requires an almighty power; also by his kingly office, he rules, and governs, and subdues all the enemies of his church, without and within. You see then, without further illustration, that Christ is the foundation of our peace, by his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.

This should teach us, first, that whatsoever intercourse we have with God the Father, we should take Christ, take our Benjamin, our Beloved, with us. We must not offer sacrifice without the High Priest. Let us offer nothing to God without Christ. There is no intercourse between God and us, till we be reconciled in Christ, in whom we must offer all our sacrifices and endeavours. Therefore, let us not own an absolute God in our devotions: let us think of God 'reconciled' in Christ, and at peace with us, and a father in covenant in Christ; and then our persons, and prayers, and all, shall be accepted for the sacrifice of Christ, in whom he smells a sweet savour. As it is said concerning Noah, he offered a sacrifice to God, 'a sweet smelling sacrifice of rest,' Eph. v. 2. So doth God in Christ. He is the true mercy-seat in Christ, in looking to whom, God frees us from the curse of the law. Jerusalem was the glory of the world, and the temple was the glory of Jerusalem; but the mercy-seat was the glory of the temple, because that pointed to Christ, the Mercy-seat, in whom we have intercourse with God the Father.

We conceive not high enough of the majesty of God, when we go to him immediately. We must go to him in his Son, whom he hath sent, and anointed, and set forth, 'as the propitiation for our sins,' Rom. iii. 25, and 'him hath God the Father sealed,' John vi. 27. He cometh with authority. Therefore God will be reconciled in Christ. We may bind God himself, when we offer Christ. He is the foundation of reconciliation and peace, by God's appointment. He is 'the Prince of peace,' of his own anointing. Therefore we may go boldly to God, to the throne of grace in Christ.

And let us often seriously meditate of the sweet favour and reconciliation stablished now between God and us through Christ. It is the sweetest meditation.

First, To think in what ill terms we are with God by nature; and then think how near we are now to God in Christ, that we are at peace with him. Methinks the word is too short. There is more meant than is spoken. At

peace with God in Christ: nay, now we are friends; nay, we are sons and heirs, fellow-heirs, fellow-kings with Christ; for God's favours are complete. As a God he stablisheth not a peace as men do, only to do them no harm that they are at peace with; but where he makes a peace, he confers all that is good: reconciliation, adoption, giving us the liberty of sons and friends, to go boldly to God as a Father in all our wants. Let us think more of this, and improve this blessed privilege every day.

'Peace upon earth.'

Quest. Why doth he say, 'peace on earth'?

Arts. Because peace was here wrought upon earth by Christ in the days of his flesh, when he offered himself 'a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to his Father.'

Because here in earth we must be partakers of it. We oftentimes defer to make our peace with God from time to time, and think there will be peace made in another world. Oh, beloved, our peace must be made on earth. 'We must live godly, and righteously, and soberly in this present world,' Titus ii. 12. We must enter 'into the kingdom of heaven' here. Further entrance 'must be ministered here, by growing in grace daily more and more,' 2 Pet. iii. 18. If heaven be not entered into here, it shall never be entered afterwards; for the church is the seminary of the heavenly paradise. All that are taken to heaven, to be set there for ever, they are set in the church before they are planted, and grow up there a while, under the means of salvation. Therefore, labour to have this 'peace on earth,' or else we can never glorify God on earth; and if we glorify him not on earth, we shall never do it in heaven.

But to come to some trials, whether we have this peace made or no; whether we can say in spirit and truth, there is a peace established between God and us.

1. For a ground of this, that may lead us to further trial, know that Christ hath reconciled God and us together, not only by obtaining peace, by way of satisfaction, but by way of application also. Whom he died for to obtain 'peace,' he [lives a spirit of application to improve that peace, to improve 'Christ, the prince of peace,' as their own. For there is a mutual commerce between God and man, who is an understanding creature; and there is nothing that God doth for man, if we look to the general and head of benefits, but there is somewhat in man wrought by the Spirit to answer it

again. God is reconciled to man in Christ. Man must be reconciled to God in Christ; in 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world.' When he was on the cross, God was there reconciled in Christ. Is that all? No. God by us entreats you to be reconciled to God. A strange condescending, that God should entreat us to be good to our own souls by his ministers. 'We entreat you to be reconciled,' 2 Cor. v. 20; that is, to accept of the reconciliation wrought by Christ, and to lay aside all weapons of rebellion, whereby you fought against God in the course of your vanity. We beseech you to be reconciled, and to 'repent, because the kingdom of God is at hand,' Mat. iii. 2. So that except there be reconciliation wrought by a spirit of application on man's part, it is not sufficient that God is reconciled in Christ, because God will always have a reflex act from man. As he chooseth man, so man by grace chooseth him. As he loves and delights in man, so he will have man, by a spirit of sweetness, delight in him again above all the world. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. So there is somewhat wrought by the Spirit to God again. Why should God be at good terms with us, but to enjoy the friendship of his poor creature? Unless, therefore, there be a gracious disposition wrought in the creature, to look back, to love and delight in God, as God doth in him, there is no actual reconciliation. There must be a forcible application by the Spirit. If God should not give a spirit of application, as well as Christ obtain heaven for us, those that are in the covenant of grace should not be established; but God by this means brings them so near, that he, loving them, loves them for ever, and they have an everlasting covenant and an everlasting union. The carnal heart of man is a poisonous thing, and hates God naturally. It wishes that there were no God to judge him. He may think well of God for the good things of this life, but when he thinks of God as a judge to cast him into hell, he wisheth with all his heart, Oh that there were no God! that I might have my full of the pleasures of sin. Now the soul when it is at peace with God, when God by his Spirit speaks to the soul, and saith, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' Mat. ix. 2; and as Christ to the good thief on the cross, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' Luke xxiii. 43; when he whispers to the soul, 'Thou art mine, and I am thine,' Cant. ii. 10; then the soul becomes sweet and peaceable to God again, and studies to advance the glory of God's mercy by all means, and to advance the gospel of peace. It becomes friendly to God.

To come to some more familiar evidences, whether we be at peace with God, and whether we have the comfort of this peace, established by Christ, or no.

2. Those that are reconciled one to another have common friends and common enemies. If therefore there be 'peace' between God and us, it is so with us. We love all where we see any evidence of God's love. We love Christians as Christians. And whom God loves not, we love not; what God hates we hate in ourselves and others. We hate corruptions in ourselves and others, though we love their persons.

3. Another evidence of 'peace' made in Christ between God and us, is a boldness of spirit and acquaintance with God. 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with him,' Job xxii. 21. A Christian being at 'peace' with God in Christ Jesus, he goes boldly to the throne of grace in all his necessities, as a poor child goes boldly to his father, and moves the bowels of his father by his petitions. When two kingdoms are at 'peace,' there is trading set up afresh again. So when God is at 'peace' with the soul, there is a heavenly intercourse and trading set up. There is no man that is at 'peace' with God, but he calls upon God in his person, in his family. He sets up the worship of God there. He labours to bring all to God that he can. He thinks it the most gainful trade in the world. In the want of grace and spiritual comfort he goes to the fountain of grace, and improves that blessed prerogative we have by peace in Christ. Those that have not the Spirit of God to improve it in communion and trading with God, it is a sign there is no peace. Strangeness shows that there is no peace. Alas, how strangely do many walk towards God, that from Sunday to Sunday scarce lift up their hearts to heaven for a blessing, but walk in the strength of their own mother-wit, and support themselves with the success of second causes, and bless themselves; they are strangers from the 'God of peace.' Let us take notice of this, and account it a great prerogative, that we may go to God with boldness, that it is not now as it was in paradise. There is no angel with a sword to shut us from heaven. But now there is an entrance to the throne of grace. We may go boldly in the name of Christ, to offer ourselves and all our endeavours.

4. A Christian that hath made his 'peace' with God, will never allow himself in any sin against conscience, because he knows sin is odious in itself, loathsome to God, and hurtful to his soul; therefore he will not be in league with any sinful, unjust course. What! to be in league with God, and to be at 'peace' with that that God hates more than the devil himself! He hates sin more than the devil, for he hates him for sin. Therefore a man that allows himself in known sins, there can be no peace between God and him, as he saith, 'Why do you talk of peace, as long as the witchcrafts and whoredoms of Jezebel remain?' 2 Kings ix. 22. A man that lives in sins against

conscience, that is an open swearer, an unjust person, that cares not by what moans he advanceth himself, what doth he talk of peace with God, when he is in league with God's enemy? Therefore, though such men,—out of 'the hardness of their hearts, which are harder than the nether millstone,' Job xli. 24, and God seals them up under a hard heart to damnation, except some terrible judgment awake them,—force a peace upon themselves, they ought to speak none, and they shall find it to their cost ere long. Therefore let us examine our own hearts how we stand affected to any sinful course. There may be infirmities and weaknesses hang upon the best that are besides their purposes and resolutions, but for a man resolutely to set himself in an ill way, how can he be at peace with God and with Satan at the same time? Let us take notice of these things, and not daub with our own consciences.

5. Again, Where there is a true peace established, there is a high esteem of the word of peace, the gospel of reconciliation, as St Paul calls it, 2 Cor. v. 18, 'He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.' Those that find this peace, there is stirred up by the Spirit in their breasts a high esteem of the ordinance of God, as being the word of their 'peace.' How come we to have peace between God and us? Is it not by opening the riches of God's love in Christ in the Scriptures? Therefore, saith the Scripture, 'blessed are the feet of them that bring glad tidings,' Isa. hi. 7.

The meanest part of their body, their feet, are blessed. Therefore those that have despicable conceits of the ministry of the word, and place their happiness in depraving the labour and pains of that office and calling, it is a sign that they have profane hearts; for whosoever hath had any grace wrought by the word of reconciliation and of peace, they will highly esteem it, and respect them for their office sake. It cannot be otherwise.

6. Lastly, Those that have found peace are peaceable. It is universally true God doth make an impression of the same disposition in us to others. "We apprehending God in Christ to be peaceable to us, we are peaceable to others. Therefore, in Isa. xi. 6, seq., the knowledge of God in Christ, it alters and changeth men's dispositions. It makes wolves and lions to be of a milder disposition and temper. Harsh, proud, sturdy dispositions, they never felt 'peace' and mercy themselves; therefore they are not ready to show it to others. In the nature of the thing itself it is impossible for the soul to apprehend peace in the love of God, and not to have the disposition wrought upon to show what it hath felt. Let us think of these and such like evidences daily, to keep our hearts from speaking false 'peace.' The greatest danger in

the world, in this regard, is in the church; for people under the gospel speak false 'peace' to themselves. There is a spirit of delusion that carries them along to their death, and deceives them also in death; and so they are in hell before they be aware, and then too late. They see that they were never in good terms with God in all their life, because they looked on Christ making peace, without any consideration of the spirit of application.

There must be a sprinkling of the blood of Christ on our souls to make it our own: "We are come to the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. xii. 24. It is not the blood of Christ that makes our peace only as blood; but as it is sprinkled by the hand of faith, that is as the hyssop that sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the people. "We must not think to have any good by the blood of Christ, when we want the blood of sprinkling, that is, this particular faith: 'Christ loved me, and hath chosen me,' Gal. ii. 20; and I choose him, and love him again; and so go with boldness to God as a Father. Unless there be this passage of the soul, between God and us, let us not talk of peace. For if we might have good by Christ, without a spirit of application, and if there wore not a necessity of sprinkling the blood of Christ upon our souls by faith, all the world should be saved.

In the next place, to give a few directions to maintain this peace actually and continually every day.

1. To walk with God, and to keep our daily peace with God, it requires a great deal of watchfulness over our thoughts,—for he is a Spirit, over our words and actions. "Watchfulness is the preserver of peace. "Where there is a great distance between two that are at peace, it is not kept without acknowledgment of that distance, and without watchfulness. It is not here as it is in a peace that is between two kings that are co-ordinate with one another; but it is a peace between the King of heaven and rebels that are taken to be subjects; therefore we must walk in humble, low terms. 'Humble thyself, and walk with thy God,' 1 Pet. v. 6. We must watch over our carriage, that we do not 'grieve the Spirit of God;' for then, however the first peace established in conversion should be never taken away, yet God interdicts our comfort. "We cannot daily enjoy our daily peace without watchfulness. But God suffers our knowledge, and our former illumination, to lash our conscience, and to be more miserable in our inward man, than a carnal man that never had sight of goodness. Oh the misery of a man that is fallen into ill terms with God, that had peace before! Of all men such a man hath most horror till he have made his peace again. Watchfulness will prevent this.

2. And because it is a difficult thing to maintain terms of peace with God, in regard of our indisposition, we fall into breaches with God daily; therefore we should often renew our covenants and imposes every day.

And if we have fallen into any sin, let us make use of our great peacemaker, Christ, who is in heaven to make peace between God and us. Let us desire God, for his sake, to be reconciled unto us, 'for God is, in Christ, reconciling us unto him,' 2 Cor. v. 19, still. The fruit of Christ's death remains still. Let us desire him to testify it unto us by his Holy Spirit.

3. And take that direction of the apostle, in Philip, iv. 6, when we find any trouble in the world, not to trouble ourselves over much. 'In nothing be careful,' &c. No. Shall we cast away all care? Cast your care upon God; let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving; let your prayers be made to God; and let him have his tribute of thanksgiving for what you have received already. What then? 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep and preserve your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,' Philip, iv. 7. Perhaps we shall not have what we pray for, when we have made our requests known to God. If we have not that we pray for present, yet we shall have the 'peace of God, that passeth all understanding,' [which] shall 'keep our hearts and minds.' Therefore, when any thing troubles us, let us consider there is peace made between God and us, and put up our requests in the name of Christ, and we shall find that peace that passeth understanding.

4. Again, If we would maintain this peace, let us be always doing somewhat that is good and pleasing to God. In the same chapter, Philip, iv. 8, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,' &c., 'think of these things;' and what then? 'The God of peace shall be with you.' The peace of God and the God of peace shall be with you. There must be a thinking of whatsoever is good. The thoughts must be exercised that way, and there must be a practice of what we think of. This is one means to maintain this peace with God. The very heathen had this reward of God, I mean in this life, that when they did good to their country, and one to another, they had content of conscience, they had a peace suitable. For in this world there is a suitable pleasure of conscience and contentment upon everything that is good. God rewards it in this world. For as the heat followeth the fire always—naturally it cannot be without heat—so the thinking and practising of that which is good, especially when it is joined with some opposition of corrupt nature, when the light of

nature is above the corruption of nature. If a man be a pagan, he shall have this reward in this world, a kind of inward peace; for we see how comfortably they speak sometimes upon some notable performance for their country. Now, the God of peace will be with us much more when we have laid the foundation of our peace aright, in the mercy of God in Christ, besides what is reserved, heaven and happiness. In this world we shall find the peace of God in the doing that which is good.

As for those that live in the church, and are not yet in the state of grace, that have lived wicked lives, let them consider that yet the day of grace continues, as yet the sceptre of mercy is held forth in the ministry; there is a day of jubilee for them to return from their former captivity. Let them not abuse the patience of God, and think to do it afterward; for that is the way to harden the heart more and more. And this Scripture puts an effectual argument into the hearts of all that are in ill terms with God, that have not made their peace, or that have had peace and have broken it. Here is an effectual way of pleading with God. 'Glory to God on high,' &c. If the soul can say, I consider my folly and madness in running into sin; thou mightest justly damn me if thou wouldst; it is thy mercy I am not sent to hell. Oh, but thou shall have the greater glory! If I find mercy therefore that I may say, 'Glory to God on high,' let me find peace on earth; speak peace by thy Spirit to my soul; say, 'I am thy salvation.' This was the end of thy sending of Christ, the end of creation, the end of providence, all to bring thee glory. Thou mightest have the glory of thy justice to damn me. Oh, but it will be the glory of thy mercy to save me; that as my sins have abounded, so thy glory shall more abound. O Lord, extend the bowels of thy mercy. Will not the Lord be jealous 'of his glory' when you allege it? Certainly he will. You see the angels here cry, 'Glory to God on high, peace on earth.' The way to bring 'peace' is to allege the glory of God's mercy in Christ. It is a prevailing way.

Now, to stir us up more and more to search the grounds of our peace, I beseech you, let us,

1. Consider the fearful estate of a man that hath not made his peace with God. However Christ have died, that will not serve the turn. But if Christ be food, if he be not eaten; if he be a garment, and not be put on; if Christ be a foundation, if we do not build on him, what benefit is it to us? Therefore those that have not been brought by the Spirit of God to communion with Christ, alas! they are under the wrath of God, however God doth use them;

as princes do traitors in the Tower, he gives them the liberty of the prison, yet the sentence of death is not revoked. All the delights of a prisoner in the Tower doth not content him; he knows he is in ill terms with his prince. So, till we have made our peace with God, by hearty confession of our sins, by shaming of ourselves, by a particular faith, believing the forgiveness of our sins, and a resolution against all sin for the time to come, alas! we have not sued out our pardon; all our delights are but as those of a prisoner in the Tower. Therefore, ask thy soul, Hast thou sued out thy pardon? Is there reconciliation wrought between God and thee, and accounts made even? 'If we confess and forsake our sins, we shall find mercy,' 1 Kings viii. 35 and 1 John i. 9. It is the word of the God of heaven, who is truth itself. He hath pawned his fidelity and truth on it, to forgive us, if we confess. He is content to be thought unjust and unfaithful if he do not forgive, if we ingenuously, without all guile of spirit, lay open our sins, and take shame to ourselves.

2. If we do not make our peace with God, what a case are we in! God himself ere long will appear our enemy. Christ, whom we think will save us, will be our judge, and a terrible judge. The Lamb will be angry. 'Who shall cover us from the wrath of the Lamb?' Rev. ii. 12. We think of Christ as an innocent, meek lamb only, that will not be angry. The rebellious kings and potentates, that fight against Christ and his church, they think to trample on Christ and his gospel; but the time will come when they shall 'desire the mountains to cover them,' Rev. vi. 16; and 'if his wrath be kindled, who shall abide it?' Ps. ii. 12. He speaks there of Christ: 'Happy are they that trust in him.'

3. As for the Holy Ghost, how can they look for comfort from him?

They have grieved him, therefore he will grieve their conscience. The Holy Ghost, as he is the God of all comfort and consolation, so he is the ground of all terror to wicked men; when he hath knocked at their hearts, by the ministry of his word, to open and to let him in, but they would not.

4. And the angels are ready executioners of God's vengeance upon any occasion; and others, creatures, wait but for a command from God to execute his wrath upon sinners. The heavens are ready to rain upon them as in the flood, and the earth is ready to swallow them as it did Korah; the beasts that carry us, the creatures we use, wait for a command from God to destroy us; our meat to choke us, the air to infect us, the water to drown us. They are all ready to serve the Lord of hosts against his enemies; as he saith, Isa. i. 24, 'Ah, I will be avenged on mine enemies.' Indeed, here God shows

his patience; and our long life, that we think a great favour, 'it is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath,' Rom. ii. 5. And then, when God's wrath comes at the day of judgment, when God hath forsaken sinful men, when God the judge of all hath said, 'Depart, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41, no creature shall minister them the least comfort. The sun shall shine upon them no more; the earth shall bear them no longer; as we see Dives, he had not a drop of water to comfort him in those flames, Luke xvi. 24. Therefore, if we be not at peace with the Lord of hosts, every creature is ready to be in arms against us.

5. As for the devils, they will be ready to be tormentors. They that are incentives to sin will be tormentors for sin afterwards.

G. As for the church, what comfort can a wicked man look for from the church, whom he hath despised, and whose ministry he hath rejected?

7. And for the damned spirits, they are all in that cursed condition with himself. Therefore, 'where shall the ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. iv. 18. Ere long whence shall he hope for comfort? Neither from God, nor angels, nor devils, nor wicked men, nor good men. None of them all will yield him a dram of comfort.

Let us not therefore delude ourselves, but get into Christ, get into the ark in time, that when any public calamity shall come, we may be safe in Christ. If we be at peace with God, by repentance of sins, and by faith in Christ, everything will minister thoughts of comfort to us. We cannot think of God, but as our Father; of Christ as our Redeemer and reconciler, that hath brought God and us together. The Holy Ghost takes upon him the term of a Comforter for such. Angels, they are ministering spirits. As for the church itself, God's people, they all have a common stock of prayers for us. Every one that saith, 'Our Father,' thinks of us; and all other things, they are at peace with us, as Job saith, 'The stones in the street,' Job v. 23; nay, the stone in a man's body, the terrible pangs that comes from that disease, they have a blessing upon them. In the greatest extremities, a soul that is at peace with God, however God do not deliver him from the trouble, yet he delivers and supports him in the trouble; and as the troubles increase, so his comforts increase; and the very troubles are peace with him. 'All work for the best to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28. And in the greatest confusions and tumults of states, yet 'the righteous is afraid of no ill tidings,' Ps. cxii. 7, because his heart is fixed upon God's love in Christ. The wicked, when war and desolation, and signs of God's anger appear from heaven, they 'shake as

the trees of the forest,' as a wicked Ahaz, Isa. vii. 2; as a Belshazzar, when there is but a fear of trouble. How did he know that the handwriting was against him? It was nothing but this naughty conscience. He knew not what it was till it was expounded. So when any troubles comes upon wicked men, their consciences upbraid them with their former life. Their knees knock together, and they grow pale as Belshazzar. Oh the misery of a man that hath not made his peace with God, in the evil day, and the comfort of a man that hath! There is the difference between godly and ungodly man. Consider them in calamities. The one is at peace with God, in the midst of all calamities and troubles; nay, as I said, even troubles themselves are peaceable to him.

Yea, when death comes, which is the upshot of all, the sting of it is taken away, and it is for our greatest good. He that hath made his peace with God, he can say, with old Simeon, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke ii. 30. Mine eyes have seen Christ with the eye of faith. He is willing to yield his soul to God, because he is at peace with God. Their graves are their beds, and their souls rest with God. They die in peace, and commend their souls to God, 'as to a faithful Creator,' 1 Peter iv. 19, with a great deal of confidence: as Saint Paul saith, 'I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have run my race; henceforth is reserved for me a crown of righteousness; and not for me only, but for all those that love the blessed and glorious appearing of Christ.' Oh the comfort of a gracious soul in the hour of death, that hath made its peace with God, Job xviii. 14, when 'the king of fears,' death, shall look with a ghastly, terrible look upon men that have not made their peace. But to the other it is the end of misery, the inlet to eternal happiness. 'Blessed are those that die in the Lord,' in the peace of the Lord; 'they rest from their labours,' from the labour of sin, of callings, of afflictions, Rev. xiv. 13. There is no resting till then. Saint Paul himself was troubled with the remainders of sin, with afflictions and troubles of his calling; but blessed are they that die in the peace of God in Christ. They rest from their labours. And after death, what comfort are those in that have made their peace with God in Christ! Then their Saviour is to be their Judge. He that makes intercession for them in heaven will be their Judge; and will the head give sentence against the members, the husband against the wife and spouse? Oh no! Therefore the godly have comfortable and sweet thoughts of those blessed times, that astonisheth wicked men. They have a glorious expectation of the times to come. They cannot think of death and judgment, when their souls are in a good frame, without much comfort. 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near,' Luke xxi. 28. Therefore let us not conceive slightly of this peace.

It is not a freedom from petty ills, and an advancement to a little good; but it is a freedom from ills that are above nature; from the wrath of God, before which no creature can stand; no, not the angels themselves; from hell and damnation; the curse of God; from the kingdom of Satan. It is a freedom from that condition that all the powers of the world shall tremble at. How can they stand before the anger of God? And it is an advancement to the greatest good; a freedom from bondage; an advancement to sonship. Therefore let us have high thoughts of this peace; as the angels had, when they sang, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace.'

'Good will towards men.'

Divers copies have it otherwise, 'On earth peace to men of good will.' Some have it, 'Good will towards men,' The sense is not much different. Peace on earth, 'To men of God's good will, of God's good pleasure.' That God hath a pleasure to save, or 'good will towards men,' of God's good pleasure; 'Peace on earth,' to men of God's good will and pleasure; or God's good pleasure towards men.

'Good will towards men.'

This is the spring and root of all. The angels begin with 'Glory to God,' and then they come to 'peace among men,' because without peace and reconciliation with God the heart of man cannot be enlarged to glorify God. The angels would have men glorify God as well as themselves. Therefore they desire peace on earth, that God may be glorified in heaven. Now there is no peace but issues from grace. Grace is God's free good will and pleasure. Therefore the angels say, 'Good will towards men.'

The holy apostles, they could not have better teachers for their salutations in their epistles than to learn of the angels; as you have Saint Paul's prefaces, the same with this evangelical celebration and gratulation here to men, 'Grace, mercy, and peace,' so here, 'Peace on earth, good will towards men.' Only the apostles they begin, 'grace and peace;' and here the angels, 'peace and grace.' But the meaning of the angels and apostles is all one; for the angels, when they wish 'peace on earth,' they go to the spring of it, 'good will towards men.' The apostles, they begin with grace, the spring, and then go to peace after.

'Good will towards men.'

The words need not further to be explicated. There is no great difficulty in them. The points considerable are these.

1. God now hath a gracious good will towards men.
2. This good will is the foundation of all good.
3. And this is founded upon Christ.

The first of these I will but touch, because it doth but make way to the other.

1. God shows now good pleasure towards men.

The love that God bears towards man hath divers terms, from divers relations. As it is a propension in him to do good, so it is love. As it is his free, so it is his good, pleasure or grace. As it is to persons in misery, it is mercy. The fountain of all is love. But as the object is diversely considered, so the terms be divers. Good pleasure and grace imply freedom in the party loving, and mercy implies misery in the party loved.

Now this free good will and grace, it is towards men, towards mankind. He saith not, towards angels. It is more towards men, than oven to good angels, in some sort. For now man is taken to be the spouse of Christ. Good angels are not so. Neither is it good will to evil angels; for their state is determined. There is no altering of their condition. Therefore God is called Philanthropos, not Philangelos; and the Scripture calls this Philanthropia, the love that God hath showed to men in Christ. Therefore we should have thoughts of God as gracious, loving our nature more than the angelical nature in some respects.

And learn this for imitation, to love mankind. God loved mankind; and surely there is none that is born of God, but he loves the nature of man, wheresoever he finds it. He will not stand altogether, whether it be good or bad, &c. But because we are now in the way, and our state is not determined, and because God loves the nature of man, therefore every man that hath the Spirit of God loves mankind. He will labour to gain Turks, or Indians, &c., if he can, because he loves the very nature of man. But I pass from this point to the second.

2. This *ἔνδοξα*, ‘good will of God’ to restore lapsed man by the sending of his Son, is the ground of all good to man, and hath no ground but itself. God’s grace and love to the creature is altogether independent in regard of the creature. God fetcheth not reasons of his love from the creature, but from his own bowels. What can he foresee in ‘persons that were dead’? nay, in persons that were in a contrary disposition to goodness? There is nothing but enmity in our nature to supernatural goodness. Can God foresee grounds of love in enmity?

As Moses tells the people of Israel in divers places, Deut. vii. 8, ‘that it was not for any foresight of good in them,’ they were the stubbornest people under heaven, therefore God, to show his free love, he chose a stubborn people, and singled them out to be the object of his mercy. So God oftentimes takes the unlikeliest men in the world, and passeth by many, otherwise of sweet natures. So we see, even the means themselves, they are of God’s free mercy and love.

We have whatsoever we have by virtue of the covenant; for what could we look for from God but in covenant, wherein he hath bound himself? Now, since the fall, this covenant is called the covenant of grace; that now, ‘if we believe in Christ, we shall not perish, but have life and salvation,’ John iii. 15. In all the parts of it, it is of God’s free grace and good pleasure. What is the foundation of the covenant? Christ. Christ is of free grace. ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,’ verse 16. There is nothing freer than gift. Christ is a gift, ‘the greatest gift. He came freely from God; he ‘gave him to death for us all, Rom. viii. 32.

And then whatsoever good thing we have in Christ, it comes freely too. He that gave Christ freely, shall he not ‘with him give us all things too?’ Rom. viii. 32.

Then the very grace to keep the covenant, repentance and faith, they are the gift of God. ‘I will take away your stony heart, and give you new hearts, and cause you to walk in my statutes; I will circumcise your hearts,’ Ezek. xi. 19. So the grace to walk in the covenant of grace, it comes from God. God doth his part and ours too, to show not only that the covenant of grace is a covenant of wondrous love, to give us grace here and glory hereafter, but that the foundation is of grace, and the performance on our part is of grace. Nay, it is of grace that he would enter into covenant at all. He humbled himself wondrously to vouchsafe to enter into covenant. It was humiliation

on God's part, and exaltation to us. Therefore, as it is in Zechariah, we may cry, 'Grace, grace.' There is nothing but grace and free love in the whole carriage of our salvation.

If whatsoever good come to man be merely from God's good will, let us empty ourselves, and give him the glory of all. It is easily spoken and heard, but not so easily done. For man naturally is proud, and for flesh and blood to be brought to go out of itself and acknowledge nothing in itself, to give the glory of all goodness and happiness to God's free grace and goodness, it is hard to bring proud nature to do this. But we must beg grace of God to work our hearts to this more and more, to empty ourselves of ourselves, and to give God the glory of all. But, I come to the last point, because I would end this text at this time.

3. This free love and grace of God is only in Christ.

Therefore the angels pronounce it now at the birth of Christ, 'good will to men.' All these agree very well: Christ's free grace, and faith. For what we have by grace, we have only by Christ; because he hath given satisfaction to God's justice, that so grace may be conveyed and derived unto us without prejudice to any other attribute in God; and then the embracing power and grace in us is faith. So these three agree.

I say, whatsoever we have from God's free love now, we have it in Christ. The free love of God is grounded in Christ. We in ourselves, especially considered in the corrupt mass, cannot be the object of God's love. God cannot look upon us, but in him, the best beloved, first. Therefore all is in Christ in the carriage of it. We are elected in Christ, called in Christ, justified by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, glorified in Christ.

'We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ,' Eph. i. 3. 'This is my beloved Son; I am well pleased in him,' Mat. iii. 17. It is the same word there, *ἐνδόχισα*, 'in whom I delight,' Isa. xlii. 1, out of which the Father takes his speech, 'This is the Son I delight in.' Now, all God's delight is first fixed in his Son and in us, because we must have communion with the Son. So the first object of God's free love is Christ, and then he looks upon us in him.

The Trinity have a wondrous complacency in looking upon mankind. Now in Christ God loves us, as redeemed by Christ; Christ loves us as elected by the Father, and given by the Father's choice to him to redeem.

The Holy Ghost hath a special liking to us, as seeing the love of the Father in choosing us, and of the Son in redeeming us. And surely if we would see likewise those sweet interviews of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it should be our main delight too, to see how God hath chosen us and given us to Christ to save; how Christ hath redeemed us, from this very respect, that the Father hath chosen us and given us to him, as it is in John xvii. 6, 'Thine they were, thou gavest them me;' and how the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of communion—the 'communion of the Holy Ghost,' 2 Cor. xiii. 14—that hath communion with the Father and the Son, and issues and proceeds from them both; how he witnesseth this love to our souls, and applies it to us. The Holy Ghost applies all. The Father decreed and ordained all. The Son works and dispenseth all. The consideration of the point is wondrous comfortable.

Whatsoever good wall the Father hath to us, it is as we are in Christ.

Quest. And why in Christ?

Ans. Because Christ is the first thing that God can love. He is 'the only begotten Son of God.' Whosoever is loved to glory in a spiritual order, is loved in the first beloved. Christ is loved of God as the character of his own image. The Son represents the Father. He is loved of God, as mediator by office. So God looks upon us in Christ as the 'Son of his love.' So he is called by Saint Paul, Col. i. 13.

Then if we consider ourselves, this must be so. Alas! we are not objects of God's love in ourselves, nor cannot be; but in some other that is loved first. For what are we? And what is the glory to which God loves us? To love such as we to such glory, and to free us from such misery due, it must be by another foundation than ourselves. Therefore God's good pleasure is founded upon his Son Christ. This is a clear point. The Scripture beats much upon it. He is our elder brother, and we must be conformed to him.

Use. To make some use of it.

First of all, then, we see here that all that are not in Christ lie open to the vengeance and wrath of God. His good will towards men is only in Christ.

Again, If all God's good will and pleasure be in Christ, as our high priest, without whom we can offer no sacrifice, as we know whatsoever was not offered by the high priest it was abominable, therefore we should look to God in Christ, love God in Christ, perform service to God in Christ, pray to

God in Christ, give thanks to God in Christ, desire God in Christ to make all things acceptable for Christ's sake, because it is in Christ that God hath any good will and pleasure to us.

It is a point of marvellous comfort, that God's love and good pleasure is so well founded, as in Christ. He loves Christ eternally, and sweetly, and strongly. Is not God's love to us the same? Doth he not love us with the same love that he loves his Son? He loves his mystical body with one love, that is Christ, head and members: John xvii. 23, 'That the love thou bearest to me may be in them.' What a sweet comfort is this! God loves Christ and me with one love. He loves me strongly, and sweetly, and constantly, as he doth his own Son. His love to me is eternal, because the foundation of it is eternal. It is founded upon Christ. The love of a prince, if it be founded on a favourite he loves dearly, must needs be firm and strong. Now God's love to Christ is ardent, and strong, and sweet, as possibly can be conceived. Therefore it is so to us, his good will to us being founded on Christ.

Why should a believer fear that God will cast him away? He will as soon leave his love to his own Son, as to us, if we continue members of his Son. It is an undefeasible love. It is a point of wondrous comfort.

'What shall separate us,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 35, 'from the love of God founded in Christ? neither things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor anything.' Many things may sever the soul and body, but there is nothing in the world but sin, that shall sever either soul or body from the love of God in Christ, because both body and soul are members of Christ. Therefore let us treasure it up as a point wondrous comfortable.

To come to an use of trial, how shall we know whether God's good will be to us in Christ or no? How shall I know that he loves my person, that I am in the state of grace and love with him?

The Holy Ghost must ascertain this. For as the work of salvation was so great, that only God could satisfy God, so the doubts of man's heart, and the guilt of his conscience when it is upon him, and the fear of God's wrath upon just guilt, is such that God must assure him that God is reconciled to him. God the Son must reconcile God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost must seal and ascertain this to the soul. The soul will never be quiet, before it see and know in particular God reconciled in Christ. The Spirit that is God, that is above conscience, must seal it to the soul, being above conscience. He can set down and quiet our conscience. Now this Spirit that worketh this in

us, and assures us of God's good pleasure, it alters and changeth our dispositions, that we shall have a good pleasure in God, for there is a mutual good pleasure. God hath a good pleasure in us as his, and we have a good pleasure in God wrought by the Spirit. The Spirit not only witnesseth, but worketh this sweet and gracious disposition to God. God delights in us, and we in God. God delights in the church above all things. The church is his wife and spouse, his body, his friends, his children, and those that have the Spirit of God delight in them too. Ps. xvi. 3, 'All my delight is in the excellent;' and Prov. viii. 31, 'My delight is in the sons of men,' saith Christ; which he showed by taking the base nature of man upon him. So all that have the Spirit of Christ delight in the church and people of God: 'All my delight is in the saints on earth,' Hosea ii. God saith his delight is in his church. So all that have the Spirit of God, they delight in the people of God.

God delights in obedience more than sacrifice. God's people, that he delights in, they yield their bodies and souls a sacrifice to God: Rom. xii. 1, 'They will seek out what is well-pleasing and acceptable to God.' God accepts them in Christ, and he is acceptable to them in Christ Jesus, and they seek out what pleaseth him and is acceptable to him. As the sons of Isaac sought out what might please their old father, what he could relish, so God's children seek out what duties God relisheth best. Thanksgiving is a sacrifice 'with which God is well pleased.' Is it so? Then they will seek out that that may please him. God by his Spirit will work in them a disposition to please him in all things. Therefore the people of God are said to be a voluntary, free people, 'zealous of good works,' Titus ii. 14, being set at liberty. The Spirit infusing and conveying the love and good pleasure of God in Christ to them, it sets their wills at liberty, to devise to please God in all things. They have, as David prays, Ps. li. 12, 'a free Spirit.' As God, not out of any respect from us, but freely from his own bowels loved us, and gave Christ to us, and delighted in us, so the sold freely, without any base respects, loves God again. Those, therefore, that do duties for base aims, and forced, as fire out of a flint, not as water out of a spring, that duty comes not naturally and sweetly from them, God hath no pleasure in them, because they have none in God; but the good they do is extorted and drawn from them.

Let us try ourselves therefore. If we have tasted God's good will towards us, we will have a good pleasure to him again. Whatsoever is God's pleasure shall be our pleasure; what pleaseth him shall please us. If it please him to exercise us with crosses, and afflictions, and losses, what pleaseth God shall please me; for when he hath once loved me freely in Christ, every thing that

comes from him tastes of that free love. If he correct me, it is out of free love and mercy. All the ways of God 'are mercy and truth.' His way of correction and sharp dealing, it is a way of love and free mercy. Therefore, if it please him, it shall please me; my will shall be his will.

Again, If we find the free love of God to us in Christ, it will quicken us to all duties, and strengthen us in all conditions. But these evidences shall suffice. Let us search our hearts how we stand affected to God, and to the best things. We delight in them, if God delight in us.

And if we do not find ourselves yet to be the people of God's delight, towards whom God hath thoughts of love, as the prophet speaks, Jer. xxix. 11, what shall we do?

Attend upon the means of salvation, the gospel of peace and reconciliation, and wait the good time, and do not stand disputing. This is that that hinders many, their disputing and cavilling, that perhaps God hath not a purpose to save me, and that the greatest part of mankind go the broad way, &c. Leave disputing, and fall to obeying. God hath a gracious purpose to save all that repent of their sins and believe in Christ. This is gospel. 'I will leave secret things.' 'They belong to God, revealed things belong to me,' Deut. xxix. 29. I will desire of God his Spirit, to repent of my sins, and to believe and cast myself in the arms of his mercy in Christ, and then let God do as he please. If I perish, I will perish in the arms of Christ. Let us labour to bring our hearts to wait in the use of the means, for God's good Spirit to enable me to see my state by nature, and to get out of it, by casting myself upon God's love in Christ.

And object not the greatness of any sin to hinder the comfort of God's mercy. It is a free mercy. The ground of it is from himself, and not from thee. It was free to Manassas, that had sinned, no man more. Being a king, and being the son of a good father, his sins spread further than ours can do, answerable to the greatness of his person. Being an infinite and free mercy, it extends to the greatest sinners. Let no man pretend any sin or unworthiness, if he seriously repent. If any sin or unworthiness could keep it back, it were something; but it is a free mercy and love from God's own bowels in Christ.

And consider how God offers this in the gospel, and lays a command. It is thy duty to have a good conceit of God in Christ. We ought not to suspect a man that is an honest man; and will God take it well at our hands to suspect him that he is so and so? He makes a show of his love and mercy in

Christ, but perhaps he intends it not. Put it out of question by believing. If thou have grace to believe the mercy of God in Christ, thou makest thyself a member of Christ and an heir of heaven. Thou questionest whether thou be one that Christ died for or no? Believe in him, and obey him, and thou puttest that question out of the question. Thou doubtest whether God love thee or no? Cast thyself upon the love of God in Christ, and then it is out of question. Whosoever hath grace to cast himself upon the free love of God, he fulfils the covenant of grace. Stand not disputing and wrangling, but desire grace to obey; and then all questions concerning thy eternal estate are resolved; all is clear.

If these things will not move you, then let all men know, that live in a sinful condition, that they had better have lived in any part of the world than in these glorious times and places of light; for when they hear the love of God in Christ laid open to them, if they will come in and receive Christ, and cast themselves upon him, and be ruled by him, and they will not, it shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrhah, for Jews, and Turks, and pagans, and those that worship devils, than for us. For when God offers his free love and mercy in Christ if we will entertain it, and we will none of it, then justice alone shall not condemn us, but mercy shall condemn us; we will none of mercy. There is not the worst man but would have pardoning mercy. He is content to have God pardon his sin; but he will not take the whole mercy and love of God in Christ, curing, healing mercy. There are those that live in filthy courses, in profaneness, in swearing, &c. It is food to them to be malicious, to deprave the best things. Serpents feed on poison. They are content to have their sins pardoned, if God will let their filthy nature alone,—their poisonful, blasphemous disposition, that exalts itself against God,—and let them go on in their course. They will have one mercy but not another. But we shall never be saved without entire mercy, healing as well as pardoning. Whom God loves, he doth not only pardon their sins, but heals their nature, and makes it like unto Christ's, holy and pure.

Those that have not the Spirit in them, desiring, altering, and changing, and healing grace, as well as pardoning grace, they are hypocrites.

Let us remember this especially, because it is most useful; and most men are deceived in this. They think, Oh, God is merciful, and his love is free in Christ; and though I be unworthy, yet God will have mercy upon me. But hast thou a secret desire to partake of God's whole mercy and love, to make thee good, as well as to make thee his son, and entitle thee to heaven, to have

thy nature altered, to see the deformity of sin and the beauty of grace? If thou hadst rather to have the image of God upon thee more than any favour in the world, that thou hadst rather be free from the bondage of sin than any other deliverance: if it be thus, thy state is good.

To hasten; considering God's free love opened now in Jesus Christ, I beseech you, let us study Christ, and labour to get into Christ daily more and more, that we may be members of Christ; and desire God, daily more and more, to reveal himself in Christ to us, that we may see his face in Christ, that we may know him in the sweet relations he hath put on him in the gospel.

To know God in general as a Creator and doing good, &c., the heathens did that by the light of nature; but we should labour to see him in the face of Christ; that is, to see him appeased and loving us, wishing us well. Concerning eternal glory, that must be by the light of the gospel, and by the Spirit. Therefore in hearing of the word, and reading and meditating, desire God above all to reveal by his Spirit his gracious face in Christ; that in Christ we may see him as a Father, as a husband, as a friend, in those sweet relations of love that he hath taken upon him. It should be our daily desire of God to manifest his love more to us in Christ Jesus than in any other fruits of his love; for there be common fruits, as to give us health, and friends, and liberty, and quiet government, which are great favours that we see denied to many nations. Oh, but the soul that is touched with the Spirit of God, and the sense of his own condition by nature, is thus disposed: Lord, I desire that thou wouldst show the fruits of thy love to me; but I desire not so much those common fruits, that the reprobates may have as well as I. Oh show me by thy Holy Spirit that thou hast a particular and peculiar love to me in Christ; and for this end give me grace to know the mystery of Christ more and more, and the mystery of my natural corruption, that knowledge that may drive me to make much of thy love and grace in Christ! Now, the Spirit that knows the deep things of God, the depth of God's love to any one in particular, and the depth of our hearts, if we beg the Spirit to reveal the good pleasure of God to us, in time God will show unto our souls that he delights in us, and that he is our salvation. This shows that the soul is [in] an excellent temper, that it sets a right price and value on things, that it prizeth God's favour above all things. That is the nature of faith; for what is faith? Only to believe in general that Christ died, &c.? No. But to esteem God's love better than all the world; for God's love is entire in pardoning and curing too. By this the soul is raised up to esteem the love and mercy of God in pardoning

and healing sin above life itself: Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.'

To conclude all with this one motive, the loving-kindness of God; when we have it once, it is no barren, complimentary kindness. It is a lovingkindness that reacheth from everlasting to everlasting, from God's love in choosing to his love in glorifying us. It is a love that reacheth to the filling of nature with all the happiness it is capable of. In this world, in all misery, one beam of God's loving-kindness will scatter all clouds whatsoever. What raised the spirit of Daniel in the lions' den? of the 'three young men' in the midst of the furnace? of St Paul in the dungeon? The beams of God's love in Christ brake into the prison, into the dungeon. A few beams of that will enlarge the heart more than any affliction in the world can cast it down. It is excellent that Moses saith, Deut. xxxiii. 16, 'The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush,' &c. You know that God appeared in the bush, when it was flaming. The flaming bush showed the state of Israel, in the midst of the furnace of persecution; yet notwithstanding the bush was not consumed. Why? Because the good will of God was in the bush. So let us be in any persecution; put case we be like Moses's bush, all on fire; yet the fire shall not consume nor hurt us. Why? 'The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush is with us. In Isa. xliiii. 2, 'I will be with thee in the fire, and in the water;' not to keep thee out, but I will be with thee in it. So that in the greatest persecutions that can be, in the fiery trial, as St Peter calls it, 'the good will of him that dwelt in the bush will be with us.' So that we shall not be consumed, though we be in the fire; 'afflicted, but not despair,' 2 Cor. iv. 8. Why? 'The good pleasure of God dwells in the hush, in the church. In the midst of afflictions and persecutions he is with us. Who can be miserable that hath the presence of God, the favour and good will of God? But this shall be sufficient for this time and text.

The Fruitful Labour for Eternal Food

Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him hath God the Father sealed.—John VI. 27.

Our blessed Saviour was mighty in word and deed. Witness what he did, what he taught, and both in this chapter.

What he did. He fed many with a few loaves. He came over the water without any help.

What he taught. Witness from this part of the chapter to the end.

The words are part of an answer of our blessed Saviour to his hypocritical followers, that followed him for the loaves, and not for any confirmation of their faith by his miracles. For upon occasion of those two miracles—mentioned in the former part of the chapter—they followed him; and perceiving that he was miraculously come over the water, they began to ask him, ‘Rabbi, how earnest thou here? Our Saviour perceives that they meant to compliment with him. He sees with what hearts they came after him. Therefore, as most befitting the exigence of their state, because they were hypocrites, he answers, not to their question, but to their persons, ‘Verily, verily, ye seek me, not because of the miracles, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth,’ &c.

, The verses together contain a conviction, and an injunction or direction.

A conviction, and that is serious and loving. Serious, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because of the miracles, but because ye ate of the loaves,’ &c. He convinceth them of their fault, of their hypocrisy, of their wicked and carnal aims in holy business. They come flattering of Christ: but as he was too holy to flatter, so he was too wise to be flattered. He deals therefore directly with them, thoroughly convinceth them of their hypocrisy and corrupt aims in following after him. We are all naturally prone to these carnal ends in holy actions. We must take heed with what minds, with what hearts, we come before God, whose eyes are brighter than the sun, who regards not so much what we do, as with what minds we do it.

As his conviction is serious, so it is loving; for with the conviction or reproof follows the injunction or direction, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth.'

In the injunction there are two things:

First, He shows them what they should not follow. He takes them off from labouring after 'the meat that perisheth.'

And then, secondly, he instructs them in what they should follow, what they should seek after: 'but labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life,' &c.

There are arguments in both. In the first, there is an argument dissuasive, and that is unfolded: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth,' because it is meat that perisheth.

In the second, there are arguments persuasive, or enforcing to the duty, and they are three,

The necessity.

The excellency.

The possibility of attaining.

The necessity. It is meat; and what so necessary as meat?

The excellency; and that is set forth, first, by the continuance. It is 'meat that endures.' Secondly, by the fruit or effect of it. It is 'meat that endures to everlasting life.' It is meat to life, and it is meat that tends to an everlasting, to a glorious life.

The possibility of attaining it. 'The Son of man shall give it you: for him hath the Father sealed.'

There are three things that must concur to make a thing attainable, and to be had:

A willingness in the giver.

Power and strength to give it. '

And then authority with power.

Here are all these. Here is will to bestow it. He will give it. What freer than a gift? The Son of God became the Son of man upon purpose to give it. He will give it, and he will give it freely.

Here is power and strength to give it; for he is the Son of God as well as the Son of man.

And then here is authority joined with that power, for 'the Father hath sealed him.' The Father that created heaven and earth, that hath all power in his hands, that is King of kings and Lord of lords, 'he hath sealed him.' He hath given him full commission to be the Saviour of all that trust in him. Christ came not without authority from God the Father. He came out with God's broad seal as his commission.

So you see the arguments, both dissuasive, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth,' and persuasive, 'but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' I shall but touch the former, and principally insist upon the latter branch."

To speak a little for the explication or the words. What is here meant by the 'meat that perisheth'?

We must enlarge the sense according to our Saviour's meaning. By 'the meat that perisheth,' he doth not intend only outward food, but all outward things whatsoever, they are the 'meat that perisheth.' All earthly and outward things are the food that the soul of a natural man feeds upon. The soul of a covetous man feeds upon his money, applauding himself that he is worth so much and so much. The ambitious man, chameleon-like, feeds upon the air, upon the airy applause of the people. The sensual man feeds upon base and sensual pleasures. In a word, all carnal men, natural men, are condemned to that sentence of the serpent, 'to eat dust,' to feed upon outward, earthly, perishing things. So that everything that is not grace and glory, or the means that lead to it, is a perishing thing.

Nay, to raise it a little higher, learning and knowledge, if it be only of perishing things, is food that perisheth; for as the frame of nature and the civil frame of the world must have an end and perish, so the knowledge of natural and civil things must needs be perishing also.

And to say no more, the very knowledge, the speculative and contemplative knowledge of religious things, if we have only the knowledge of the things in us, and are not turned into the things we know, is a perishing thing. The truths of God indeed are the food of the soul, but unless the goodness of those truths be the food of the will and affections, unless we are moulded and fashioned into the very form of those truths, unless we are framed to a love and liking of that which we know, that those truths be rooted and planted in us, it is 'food that perisheth.'

In a religious discourse, in preaching, all your ornaments, besides that which quickeneth and strengtheneth the soul to holy duties, is 'food that perisheth.' And your hearing, if it be only to hear witty sentences and turnings of speech, without regard to the truth itself, is 'food that perisheth.' Thus you see what a great latitude this food that perisheth hath in Christ's meaning.

Now our blessed Saviour takes them off from labouring for this by a strong argument. Would you have a greater argument? 'It is food that perisheth.' We do not regard the lustre of things, but their continuance. Why do we esteem of crystal more than glass? Because it continues. Flowers have a goodly gloss, but we regard them little, because they are fresh in the morning, and cast away at evening. And so it is with all excellencies, unless it be grace or glory. All flesh is grass, and the excellentest things of nature, wit, and honour, and learning, and all, though they be not as grass so common, yet they are as 'the flower of the grass; they are all fading and withering; but the word of God endureth for ever;' that is, the grace and comfort that we get by the blessed truths of God, 'that endures for ever,' and it makes us endure for ever. But all other things are food that perisheth, and we perish in the use of them. 'The world passeth away, and the concupiscence of it;' the world, the things lusted after perish; and in lusting after the world, the lust perisheth, and we perish too in the pursuit of them; nay, which is worse, the immoderate seeking after these things destroy us: we eternally perish. For by placing our affections on earthly things we turn earthly. Therefore in divinity we have our denomination from our affections. We are called good or ill, not from our knowledge, but from our affections. The devil knows good, but he is not good. It is loving, and joying, and delighting in good or ill that makes us good or ill. We have our form and being in religion from our affections.

Now by seeking after and placing our affections, that are ordained to close with better things—which shall make us happy in another world—by

planting them on earthly things, we become like the things, earthly; by placing them on the world, we become the world, we become earthly. Therefore they are not only perishing in themselves, but we perish in the pursuit of them. It is a strong argument that is here used. All earthly things are 'food that perisheth.' For, alas! he that is rich to-day may be poor to-morrow. He may be as rich as Job in the morning, and as poor as Job at night. He may be in credit now with Haman, and be in discredit ere soon. He may be in health now, and sick ere long. We need not Scripture for this. Experience reads us this lecture enough; but we are so desperately set on earthly things, that neither faith nor experience, nor the strength of discourse, nor reason, is sufficient to take us off, till God by his Spirit convince us thoroughly of this. Therefore Moses prays that 'God would teach them to number their days,' Ps. xc. 12. So, though there is a sufficient argument in the discovery of these earthly things to be perishing things to enforce a dissuasion, yet we cannot loosen our affections to them, nor know the uncertainty of them till God teach us.

To make some use of this in a word, and so to go on to that which I more intend. If all things here below be grass, and as the flower of the grass, perishing and fading things, why then we should take heed that we do not redeem any perishing thing with the loss of that which doth not perish, with the loss of this soul of ours, which is an eternal spiritual substance, breathed in by God in the creation, and redeemed by Christ; which is capable of immortality, capable of happiness, capable of the blessed impression of the image of God. 'What if one should gain the whole world,' saith Christ, that knows the price of a soul best, 'and should lose his own soul!' It is an argument sufficient even to a man that is led but with the strength of natural reason, not to labour for that which will perish, when he hath a soul that will not perish. To labour after that thing as his main chief good, that is of shorter continuance than himself, is extremity of folly. Therefore no carnal man, that seeks after these perishing things, can ever be a wise man, because he hath an end inferior to himself. He may be wise for particular ends, to be rich, to have great places, to get his pleasure. This is to be wise for particular ends. But he cannot be wise for the chief, and last, and best end, for his soul, for eternity. He cannot direct his course that way, that labours for the 'food that perisheth.'

And again, we should not pass to neglect any earthly thing, to gain advantage of our souls, because they are perishing things. We should force ourselves to contentment in the loss of earthly things for the gain of spiritual.

The loss of things perishing is an easy matter. We lose things that will perish whether we lose them or not. All earthly things perish either in our time or after us. We should not therefore be over-eager in getting of these earthly things. Let us leave things that perish to men that perish. You see therefore how strong a reason our Saviour Christ allegeth here, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, because it perisheth.'

And learn here from our blessed Saviour a point of heavenly wisdom. You see when he would take us off and dissuade us from the pursuit of earthly things, he takes an argument from the nature of them., They are perishing things; and therefore, when we look upon the outward lustre of earthly things, we should withal consider the perishing nature of them. When we are tempted to too much delight in the creature, we should present to ourselves the perishing and fading nature of outward things. When we are tempted to sin, either to commit or to leave that which is good for anything that is outward, we should consider, What do I now? I stain my soul, I crack my conscience, I contract guilt and grounds of terror for the time to come for that which is perishing.' It is always good to have present to our souls and to our fancies the nature of earthly things, that they may be as present as the temptation that Satan from them urgeth and forceth upon the soul. It is good always to remember that they are perishing things, and that as they are perishing in themselves, so they will destroy us, cause us to perish in the pursuit of them. But my meaning is not to dwell long upon this.

'Labour not for the meat that perisheth.'

What! Doth Christ mean that we should not labour at all for earthly things? Doth he read a lecture of ill husbandry, and unthriftiness, and negligence?

No. He doth as we do. When we would set a crooked thing straight, we bend it as much the contrary way. Our Saviour saw that they were desperately addicted to earthly things, that they followed him for their bellies, sought him for the loaves, therefore he bends the stick the contrary way: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth;' that is, labour not for it in comparison of better things; labour not so inordinately, so immoderately, labour not so unseasonably. It is said of the Israelites that they brought Egypt into the wilderness, because they brought the love of the garlic and onions of Egypt with them, Num. xi. 5. We have many come to the church, to these holy exercises, to this holy place, but they bring the world with them. They come with carnal affections. Labour not so unseasonably. It should he

our heavenly wisdom to lay aside importunate earthly thoughts of earthly things; to drive them away, as Abraham did the birds from the sacrifice, Gen. xv. 11. We should leave them as he did the beasts and his servants, at the bottom of the mount, when he went up to sacrifice unto God, Gen. xxii. 5. Thus, labour not; labour not immoderately; labour not inordinately; labour not unseasonably.

But how shall we know when our labour is immoderate, unseasonable, and inordinate after earthly things?

I answer, In a word, when they either hinder us from, or hinder us in, holy things; when they keep us from holy duties, as from the sanctifying of the Lord's day, or from any other service of God; or when they hinder us in them; when they fill us full of distractions; when they turn the soul from the business in hand, &c. Thus, when they do either hinder us from or hinder us in better things, we may know we offend against this dissuasion of Christ. 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth.'

But why doth our Saviour begin first with his dissuasion, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth,' and then enjoin what they should seek after, but 'for the meat that endureth to everlasting life'?

Because he saw that their souls were corrupted, and desperately set upon the seeking after earthly things; and when the soul is invested to anything, there must first be a removal of that; as in ground, the thorns must first be rooted out before there be any sowing of seed; and in bodily distempers, there must first be a purging of the malignant humour before there be any cordials given. So Christ, he first takes them off from an immoderate and inordinate seeking after the world and earthly things, and then he directs them what they should do, what they should seek after: 'Seek the food that endures to everlasting life.'

Here is the prerogative of Christianity. A heathen man, out of the strength of moral discourse and outward experience, can teach the negative part, can tell you that all earthly things are vain and perishing. A stoic will declaim wittily and gravely from moral principles and daily experience upon these things; that these earthly things of themselves are all vain and fading, and that it is our conceit of them only that bewitcheth us to them: it is that only that renders them to us green and fresh. But now for the affirmative part, what we should seek after; here paganism is blind. That is only to be learned in the church of Christ. It is proper to Christianity to direct us here,

as I shall discover better to you when I come to speak of the duty enjoined, which is that I especially aim at.

But before I come to enforce the act or duty which our Saviour here exhorts unto, I must unfold the object of that act: what is meant here by the ‘meat that endures to everlasting life.’

The ‘meat that endures to everlasting life’ is our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus, as he is contained and wrapped up in the means of salvation, with all the blessed liberties, privileges, and prerogatives, graces, and comforts, that we have by him and in him. For our blessed Saviour never goes alone. He is never embraced naked; but with him goes his graces, comforts, prerogatives, and liberties. We have him not now as we shall see him ‘face to face’ hereafter in heaven; but he is to be considered as wrapped up in the word and sacraments. So is Christ the food that lasts to everlasting life. And in this latitude we must take it, or else we mistake and straiten the Holy Ghost.

But why is our blessed Saviour so considered, and the comforts, and prerogatives, and good things we have by him, termed food?

In divers respects. To instance in a few. But, first, you must know that as the soul hath a life as well as the body, so it hath a taste as well as the body; and as God, lest the body should pine away, hath planted in it an appetite, which is the body’s longing after that which refresheth it—for if it were not for appetite, if it were not for hunger and thirst, who would care for meat and drink?—so God hath planted in the soul, lest it should pine away, a spiritual appetite, an earnest longing and desiring after that which is the most necessary good of the soul; for the soul hath that which the body hath, taste, and smell, &c., though in a more sublime and divine sense, but as really and truly, as we shall see afterwards. Now our blessed Saviour is this spiritual food of the soul. He is the bread of life that came down from heaven; he is the true manna; he is the true tree of life in paradise, in the church of God, the true paradise. He is the true show-bread; he is the true Lamb of God.

He, considered with all the blessed prerogatives, and privileges, and comforts we have by him, is called meat or food for divers respects.

First, Whatsoever sweetness, or comfort, or strength there is in meat, it is for the comfort, and strength, and good of the body; so whatsoever is comfortable and cherishing in Christ, as indeed all comfort and cherishing is in him, it is for our good; to us he is given, for us he was born: ‘To us a child

is born, to us a Son is given,' Isa. ix. 6; all is for us, for us men, for us sinners. There is nothing in his natures, in his state and condition, both of abasement and exaltation, nothing in his offices, but it is all for our good. Consider him in his human nature, and join with his nature his abasement: that he was man, that he took upon him our nature, that he was abased in it, that he humbled himself to death, even to the death of the cross, to be a sacrifice for our sins; how doth the soul feed on this, on the wonderful love of God in giving Christ to be incarnate, and then to die for us! How doth the soul feed upon the death of Christ, because by that God's wrath is appeased, and he reconciled! 'Where the dead body is, there the eagles resort,' Mat. xxiv. 28. So doth the soul prey and feed upon the dead body of Christ. Christ crucified is the special food of the soul.

Consider him in his exaltation, in his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven; how doth the soul feed upon that? Christ our surety has risen again. Therefore our debt is discharged, the justice of God is satisfied to the full. So for his ascension. When the soul is basely-minded on earthly things, it ascends to Christ, who is taken up to heaven for us.

So his sitting at the right hand of God. The soul feeds on that, because he sits there till he have triumphed over all his enemies, till he have trod them all under foot.

Consider him in his offices. In ignorance the soul feeds on him as a prophet to instruct it. In the sense of wrath and anger, the soul feeds on him as a priest to make peace and reconciliation. In want of righteousness, the soul feeds on [his righteousness: 'he is our righteousness.' In the sense of corruption, the soul feeds on him as a king, that by his Spirit will ere long work out all corruption; that as he will tread down all our enemies without, so he will tread down all corruption within. He will never leave the soul till he have made it a glorious house, fit for himself.

So the prerogatives we have by him, the soul feeds on them, feeds on his redemption; that by his redemption we are freed from our enemies and all that hate us, and all that we feared; that we are set at liberty from the law, from sin, and from death; and notwithstanding all the debasements of this world, we are 'the sons of God and heirs of heaven.'

In a word, whatsoever is in Christ is for our good. He is all mine; his life is mine; his death is mine; his resurrection is mine; his ascension is mine; all is mine. He is expended and laid open for my good. That is the first.

Again, As in the bodily life there is a stomach, a power to work out of the meat that which is for strength and nourishment, so in the soul there is faith, the spiritual mouth and stomach of the soul, to work and draw out of Christ whatsoever is for the comfort and nourishment of it. As there is comfort in Christ, so the Spirit of God gives a man a hand, a mouth, as it were; gives a man faith to work out of Christ somewhat for comfort. What were food if there were not a stomach to digest it, to make it a man's own? So what were Christ if we had not faith to lay hold on him?

Again, thirdly, As our life is nourished and maintained with that which is dead, with dead things, so the chief dish that maintaineth and nourisheth the life of the soul, as I said before, is 'Christ crucified.' 'God forbid,' saith the apostle, 'that I should rejoice in anything but in Christ crucified.' When the soul of a poor sinner is pursued with accusations from Satan and his own conscience, when they take part with God against him, whither runs it? To the city of refuge. It runs to Christ, to Christ crucified. Thither the soul flies, being pursued with the guilt of sin; 'to the horns of the altar,' as Joab did when he was pursued, but with better success, for he was pulled from thence, 1 Kings ii. 28. But the soul that flies to Christ crucified, to the death of Christ, to Christ abased, to his satisfying the wrath of God by his death, and making of us friends with God, there it holds; there it lives; and there it will continue for ever. This keeps the soul alive.

And then again, as in meat, before it can nourish us, there must be an union, an assimilation, a turning of it into us, so Christ, except he be made one with us by faith, unless there be an union between him and us, he can never nourish and comfort us savingly.

Again, As we oft eat, and after we have received food once, yet we eat again every day, because there is a decay of strength—and there are still new businesses, new occasions that require new strength—and therefore there is need of a continual repairing of our strength by food, even so there is a perpetual exigence, a continual need that the soul hath to feed upon Christ, upon the promises of Christ, and the prerogatives by Christ, because every day we have fresh impediments, fresh assaults, and therefore we have need to fetch fresh supplies and refreshment from Christ, to have meat from Christ every day; to live on Christ not only at the first, but continually; that as our corruptions, and temptations, and infirmities return every day, so every day to feed on Christ for the repairing of our spiritual strength. Especially we are to make daily use of the death of Christ; for howsoever the death of Christ

be transient in respect of the act of it, as one of the ancients saith, yet the fruit of it remains for our daily comfort and refreshment. His blood runs every day in the church afresh, like a fountain always poured out, for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in, Zech. xiii. 1. It always runs; that is, in regard of God's imputation, in regard of the fruit that comes to the soul; and therefore we should make daily use of it for the comfort and strength of our souls upon all occasions. 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John ii. 1. He is now an intercessor in heaven'; he continually applies the fruit of his death now by his intercession in heaven.

Again, As, after meat received and eaten, there is strength and comfort gotten for the affairs of this life, so likewise after the soul hath digested and relished Christ, and the benefits and prerogatives that come by him, after we have made the heavenly truths of Christ our own, the soul is strengthened to holy duties. It is fit to do; it is fit to suffer; it is fit to resist temptations; it is fit to perform all the services of Christianity.

In these and divers other respects Christ is the blessed meat here mentioned; not himself alone, but considered with all the blessed good things which we have by him. For Christ, as I said before, is never alone. If we have him, we are sons in him; we are heirs in him; we are free in him; we are redeemed in him; we are kings in him; priests in him; prophets in him; we are all in him; we have with him all the good things that he hath; for as we have not them without him, so we have not him without them. Those that have the field, have the pearl in the field; and they that have the pearl in the field, have the field. They that have Christ, have Christ clothed with all his blessed prerogatives, and privileges, and comforts.

But wherein lieth the difference between this meat, this food of the soul, and other meat?

In these things. First of all, Christ, as he is from heaven, so all the graces and comforts that we have by him are all from heaven, and they carry us to heaven. All the other things are earthly.

Secondly, All earthly food doth not give, but maintain life where it is; but Christ he is such a food as gives life. He is as well life as food: 'I am the life,' John xi. 25.

Again, thirdly, The nourishment we have from this outward food, we turn to ourselves; but Christ, this spiritual meat, turns us into himself, transforms us into his own likeness; for Christ offered to us in the gospel being digested by faith, doth by his Spirit change us every way into his own likeness.

Lastly, All other meats are consumed in the spending, and there will a time come when we shall not be able to relish any worldly thing; our mouth will be out of taste with these outward things. But Christ, the food of the soul, is never consumed, but grows more and more; and when we can relish no other, we may relish this food that endures to everlasting life. It always satisfies the soul. All earthly things are as salt water, that increase the appetite, but satisfy not. Only Christ and grace, and the comforts we have by him, satisfy, and that everlastingly. They are as a spring that never dies.

As he himself in his own person endures to everlasting life, so all that we have by him is everlasting. Grace is everlasting. Grace ends in glory. Christ always satisfies, though not wholly here, because there must be a continual recourse to him; yet he will satisfy hereafter. 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,' Mat. v. 6.

Thus you see what is meant by the 'food that endures to everlasting life,' and the reason of the resemblance and the difference that is between this and other meat.

Here are arguments enough then to enforce us to a labouring after this meat that endures to everlasting life, that is so agreeable to the best part of us, that is able to make us happy; to labour by faith to get them to be our own.

Now the labour required is especially to get a stomach to this meat. God requires nothing of us when we come to his delicacies but that we bring a good stomach with us. I will therefore speak a little of that, what we must do to get an appetite to this spiritual meat.

A good stomach, we know, is procured by sharp things. The paschal lamb was 'to be eaten with sour herbs,' Exod. xii. 8. If we would have an appetite after Christ, labour daily to consider what a cursed estate we are in without Christ. God hath left the law, as for other purposes, so for this, that we should feed upon the threatenings of it, that it should drive us to Christ. A legal faith is the way to evangelical. Labour therefore thoroughly to be

convinced of the need thou standest in of Christ, and then I need not bid thee to labour for the food that endures to everlasting life. That will sharpen thy appetite after it. And beg of God illumination to see the ill that is in thee, and the ill that belongs to thee. God hath left infirmities and corruptions in us on purpose for this end, and likewise we have temptations without us. We carry not only a hell within us, which if God should not keep in would carry us to despair; but there is a hell without us, the temptations of Satan, the accusations of the law, the anger and wrath of God. Thus we should labour to be convinced of our wretched estate without Christ, the danger we are in if God should take us hence on a sudden. This will force every day a fresh appetite and stomach in the soul to feed on Christ.

Secondly, If we would sharpen our appetites to this food, tee must purge our stomachs, which naturally surfeit of earthly things. Purge the soul by a consideration of the vanity of all other things that draw us from Christ. The reason why we have no better relish of Christ and heavenly things is, because we cleave in our affections so much to earthly things. We set up idols in our hearts instead of Christ, and we cleave in an adulterous and false affection unto them. Let us set before us arguments of the vanity of all things but Christ; and there can he no better argument than here is set down, 'they are all perishing things.' That which the soul neglects Christ, and heaven, and happiness for, and is so madly set upon, alas! they are all base in respect of the soul. The whole world is not worth a soul. They are all perishing things, of less continuance than the soul is. We should purge our souls by such considerations as these.

Then again, thirdly, exercise getting a stomach. Let us every day spend our spiritual strength in spiritual exercises, in resisting temptations, in withstanding the snares of Satan, in bearing those daily crosses that God lays upon us. Live as Christians should live, and the exercise of a Christian life will enforce us to go unto Christ to feed on him, to fetch from him spiritual strength. When in our daily exercise we shall see the continual need we have of pardon for daily sins, of comfort and strength against daily corruptions and infirmities, this will make us feed on Christ and on the promises made in him—not only on the promise of forgiveness, but on the promise of a supply of necessary grace, on that sweet promise, that 'he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed,' Mat. xii. 20—feed on him as a King to subdue our corruptions, &c. The daily exercise of a Christian life will force us unto Christ.

Again, To whet our appetite after Christ, consider the necessity we have of spiritual strength and comfort. When a man considers that he hath a journey to take, he will eat to enable him to his journey; as Elias was bid to rise up and eat, because he had a journey to go, 1 Kings xix. 7. We are all to take a journey as far as heaven, and we are to travel through the wilderness of this world; and we shall be daily assaulted, besides our inward corruptions, with divers temptations; and therefore we had need every day to fetch strength from Christ. And consider that sickness will come, and death will surprise us; and if we have not Christ, we are wretched creatures without him. And though we have applied Christ to ourselves, and made him our own, yet a time of desertion, a time of trial, will come. Thus the necessity of spiritual strength will force us to feed upon Christ.

Again, To get us a stomach to these things, let us converse with those that are spiritual, with those that are heavenly-minded, 'that have tasted of heavenly things,' Heb. vi. 4. When we see them delight in reading, delight in hearing; when we see them contemplate of heaven and heavenly things, on Christ and the benefits we have by Christ, on the blessed condition of a better life, and of the world to come; when we see these persons that are better than ourselves, that have less cause than we, take such pains for their souls, we will be ashamed of our own neglect; and it will be the discourse of a soul presently with itself, Surely there is some excellent strength and comfort in these things, some extraordinary sweetness and refreshment that these men find, that they so fall to them. It is a great advantage to converse with those that are spiritual.

And lastly, To put an edge to our dull appetites after this food, consider we know not how soon this table that Christ hath spread, these dainties that wisdom hath provided for us in the ministry of the word, may be taken from us. Therefore, let us fall to while we have them. We should do as those do, that, being at a feast, and have neglected feeding, at the latter end, when they see all ready to be taken away, fall to afresh. We know not how long we may enjoy these blessed opportunities. Therefore now with Joseph, let us lay up against a time of scarcity. There will a hard winter come. Therefore, let us imitate the wisdom of that poor creature the ant, to provide against winter, Prov. vi. 6. Now, while the jubilee is, let us take out a pardon. There is a time of spending to come; now let us 'get oil in our lamps,' Mat. xxv. 4. Now is the seed time; now are the waters stirred in the pool of Bethesda; now is the acceptable time of grace. We know not how long it shall continue. Therefore, now let us labour for the food 'that endureth to everlasting life.' I never knew

any repent of the pains they had taken for their souls; but many that have lamented and bewailed the precious time they have spent, and that they have not been good husbands for their souls. It is one special point of heavenly wisdom to take advantage of our precious time, to fill it up with holy exercises. Let us often offer this consideration to our souls, Wherefore was I sent hither into this world? What is the end why I live here? Is it to scrape together perishing things, and so to perish with them? Or am I not rather sent hither to get out of the state of corruption wherein we all are by nature? to get into Christ, to make him mine own, to be turned into him, to feed on him, to get joy, and comfort, and strength from him? Is not this the end why I live here?

But to go on, and to make an use of trial, whether we have, as we should do, relished and tasted Christ, whether we have fed on this meat or no. How shall we know that?

I answer, We may easily know it. For, first of all, if we have relished Christ and the good things by him, we disrelish all other things; we begin to have a baser esteem of all earthly things. It is with the soul as it is with a balance. When Christ is high in the soul, other things are low; and when other things are high, Christ is low in the soul. Christ was high in Paul's soul; therefore he esteemed all as 'dung' in comparison of the excellent knowledge of Christ, Philip, iii. 8. The poor woman of Samaria, when she had heard Christ, and tasted the sweetness that was in him, down goes her water-pot, and she runs to the city and tells them, 'I have seen a man that hath told me all things; is not this the Messiah?' John iv. 29. Zaccheus, when he had tasted of grace, and had the pardon of his sins by Christ, 'half my goods I give to the poor,' &c., Luke xix. 8. When grace is planted in the soul, when the soul hath tasted once of better things, there will be a mean and base esteem of earthly things. The more the soul feeds on heavenly things, the less respect it hath to temporal things. The soul is a finite essence, and it cannot spend itself on all things. The more it runs into severals, the more shallow it is to others; as in a stream, when it is cut into many channels it runs weakly in the several, whereas it runs strongly in the main. So it is with the soul: when it is scattered, as the poor Israelites were about the land of Egypt to gather straw, to gather these perishing earthly things, it is weak to heavenly things; it hath little strength to those. But when the course of it is wholly bent to those, there are but weak or no desires running to these earthly things. When once the soul of a Christian hath had a true taste and relish of the things of heaven, it looks with a despising eye upon whatsoever is here below. When

once it hath tasted of Christ, then especially it grows out of relish with poison; then away with popery! away with false doctrine! away with hypocrisy and formality in religion!

Again, secondly, We may know that we have tasted Christ, and fed on him, and on the good things that are by him, when we are strengthened by our feeding; when we are strengthened to duties; strengthened against temptations and against corruptions. Thou sayest thou believest on Christ, and hast made him thine own; what comfort and strength feelest thou by Christ? Art thou able to encounter a temptation? Art thou able to resist a lust? Art thou able to perform holy services? If there be no strength in thee, but every temptation turns thee over, and thou yieldest to every base lust, where is Christ? Canst thou believe Christ to be thy King, and yet suffer thy lusts to bear sway in thee? Canst thou believe that Christ is a priest that died for thy sins, and yet cherishest and lovest sin? Canst thou believe that Christ is in heaven, and that thou art in heavenly places with Christ, and yet hast no mind of heavenly things, but art carried away with every earthly thing? No. Thou hast not yet tasted how good and gracious the Lord is; thou hast not relished the heavenly manna. The soul that feeds on Christ is strengthened from spiritual reasons, and supernatural grounds, and divine principles drawn from Christ, to duty, so that it is enabled even with a holy violence to do anything for Christ's sake; for the soul reasons thus: Christ gave himself to death for me; I will therefore, if need be, give myself to death for him. Christ thought nothing too dear for me, I will think nothing too dear for him. This pride, this vanity that I am tempted to, these were the spears that were the death of my Saviour. Thus the soul fetches reasons from the death of Christ to strengthen it against temptations, to strengthen it to duty; and so for the matter of comfort. After meat hath been received we are refreshed. If the soul be sweetly refreshed with the comforts that are to be had in Christ, and in the word of Christ, it is a sign we have tasted Christ. Those that have trembling and discouraging hearts and souls, that cannot rest nor receive comfort, it is a sign they have not rightly tasted Christ. 'Come unto me,' saith Christ, 'all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls,' Mat. xi. 28. In Christ there is rest, out of Christ there is no rest. And so likewise those that have corruptions bearing sway in them. It is a sign they have not so much as touched Christ, for if they had but touched Christ, he would stop the issue of their corruptions. The poor woman in the gospel, as soon as she had touched Christ, her bloody issue was stayed; so, upon the least touch of Christ by faith, there will be an abating of corruption.

Thirdly, In the bodily life, we know after a good meal the desire and appetite is satisfied, so the soul that tastes of Christ, it hath sweet satisfaction and contentment. Oh the sweet satisfaction that a Christian soul hath above a heathen! A Christian, that hath Christ, need not go out of him for anything. It hath fulness and satisfaction in him in all estates, both in life and in death. Dost thou find Christ, and the privileges and prerogatives we have by him; dost thou find the word of Christ and the promises of the word fully and sufficiently satisfy thee? Then it argues that thou hast fed on Christ; for Christ being received by faith into the soul, gives it fulness and contentment.

Lastly, To name no more, as men, if they have the grace of God in their hearts, will give thanks for their bodily food, so it is an evidence that we have fed on Christ, when our hearts and tongues are enlarged to praise God for Christ, for the comforts, and contentment, and satisfaction that we find in him and in religion. Therefore St Paul begins his epistle to the Ephesians with 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' Eph. i. 3. And St Peter, being led by the same blessed Spirit, his heart being full, his mouth is full of thanks: 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to an inheritance immortal, that fadeth not away, reserved for you in the heavens,' 1 Peter i. 4, for you that are reserved by faith to salvation. So, undoubtedly, the soul that tastes the sweet comforts of religion in Christ will be much in sweet enlargements of heart in thanksgiving. It cannot be otherwise. It is an universal reason. The more believing a soul is, the more thankful a soul is. Where there is no praise, there is no faith.

Thus you see how we may try whether we have tasted and relished, whether we have fed upon 'the food that endures to everlasting life' or no.

Taste is the most necessary sense of all, saith a wise searcher of the mysteries of nature: our life is maintained by taste. Every creature sees not, every creature hears not, but every creature hath taste. You may judge of yourselves by your taste and relish; and if once you have tasted and relished Christ, all the world cannot persuade you to fall from him. If all should say there wore no' sweetness in religion, that it were better to be a worldling, &c., you would defy it; you would never believe it. There is no disputing against what a man tastes. If all men should say sugar were sharp, if I once tasted it I would say otherwise.

'Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life.'

The arguments enforcing this act upon the object to labour for Christ are, that he is food, and food that endures; 'and food that endures to everlasting life.'

Let me from these arguments here in the text, for I will draw no other, enforce what I have said before. I have showed you what this labour is, and rules how you may know whether you rightly labour for this food or no. Now to enforce this act, consider, first, the necessity of that our Saviour here enjoins us to; it is food.

It is a strange thing that persons should persuade themselves that they are Christians, and yet go from day to day without refreshing themselves with Christ, and with the meditation of the blessed estate they are in by him, both in respect of this world and that which is to come; without getting strength from Christ against temptations and against corruptions. Christ is food, and the promises and prerogatives we have by him are food. We should labour after it every day, feed on it every day. If a man should ask a man in his calling, Why do you take such pains, morning and evening, rising early and going to bed late? he would answer, It is to get bread; it is to get food to maintain my family. So should it be our answer to any that wonder why we take such pains for our souls, why we labour so after Christ. Oh, remember we take pains for life; to get and maintain life; and what is so necessary as life? And if life be so necessary, food which preserves it must be necessary. We see the patriarchs for food left their country; and the poor Egyptians sold themselves and their cattle, and all to get food to keep life. We famish eternally except we feed on Christ; except we have so much faith as makes us one with him; except by faith we digest him and got nourishment and strength from him. It will appear to be so when it is too late. Ere long nothing in the world will relish us; and then if we have not Christ and the things of another life to relish us, what will become of us? I beseech you, consider what opinion and judgment we shall have ere long of these earthly things, and of the better things of another world. At the hour of death, our judgments will be convinced that the things of heaven are the best things; and if it be true that they will be so then, why is it not true that they are so now? Labour to have the same judgment now.

With the necessity our blessed Saviour joineth the excellency of this food, 'It is food that endures to everlasting life.' Christ and the good things we have by him are of equal extent and of equal time with our souls. If we labour for earthly things, we labour after that which is of shorter continuance

than our souls. We may outlive our happiness, and what a miserable state is that! But if we labour for the food that endures to everlasting life, our happiness is of the same continuance with our souls, and that is only true happiness.

If there were such a tree upon the earth now as there was in paradise, a tree of life, that whosoever should taste of the fruit of it should live, though but on the earth here to enjoy his sensual pleasures, oh what would not men give for a little fruit of that tree, though it were to redeem a little time, and to lengthen out a fading, base life on earth, but much more to live for ever! Here is food 'that endures to everlasting life,' to such a life as is heavenly and glorious. Now, blessed be God that since we are cast out of the first paradise by sin, that now in our relapsed estate God is so merciful to us as to provide another manner of tree of life. That in paradise was but a typical tree. The true tree of life is Christ; and whosoever feeds on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Certainly if we believed this, it could not be, but it would wondrously set us on to labour after this meat, because it is not only food that tends to the preservation of life, but to life everlasting, to a life that endures as long as our souls.

And let us know that if we do not labour for this meat that brings to this life, look what degree of excellency we have had in the rank of the creatures, the same degree we shall have in misery; for as the angels in the degree of excellency were the most excellent creatures, but being fallen they are in the same degree of misery that they were in happiness, and are now the most accursed creatures of all others, so man, as he is a most excellent creature, if he feed on the food that endures to everlasting life; so if like Nebuchadnezzar he feed as a beast on earthly things, and forget his soul and affections, which are made to close and feed on Christ and better things, he shall have the same degree of misery that he hath in happiness, even next to the devils, the most wretched creature that can be. What if a man were clad as Aaron was in all his pontificality, in his priestly robes! What if he should feed deliciously every day as Dives! What and if he had the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson! What and if he had all the kingdoms of the world! If he have not the 'food that endures to everlasting life,' he should be stripped of all these ere long. It is only Christ, and the good things that are to be had in him and by him, that continue everlastingly.

This should enforce us to labour after this food in the use of all good means. And before I leave the point, consider the reality, the truth of these

heavenly things, of these things we have by Christ, 'the second Adam,' all things else are shadows. The food that nourisheth the body is not food in comparison of that. Earthly kingdoms are not kingdoms in respect of that; earthly sonship is not sonship to that; earthly riches they are nothing, they are vanity in comparison of that. Earthly inheritance is no inheritance in comparison of the inheritance we have by Christ. All other things are but titles of things. They are but empty things. There is a reality in Christ, a truth in the kingdom of grace. Alas! what is riches, what are pleasures, what are honours, what is son-ship, what are all earthly things, in comparison of the soul, which is an immortal, a spiritual, an eternal substance? They are but shadows. Those things that are of equal extent and continuance with the soul; and not only of equal extent, but that raise the soul to have communion with God in heaven, with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; there is the reality, there is the truth, if we will have the truth of things. 'I am that bread,' saith Christ afterwards in this chapter, 'and my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,' as if other meat and other drink refreshed not indeed, but were only shadows of things.

Labour therefore for this meat; and certainly, if so be the Spirit of God once convince your judgments that these things which I say are true, both for the necessity and excellency of this food, they will be effectual to stir you up to labour more after this food that endures to everlasting life. So much for that.

'Which the Son of man shall give you, for him hath God the Father sealed.'

To come now to the possibility of attaining this food, which is the third argument our blessed Saviour useth to enforce upon us this injunction, to 'labour for the food that endures to everlasting life.' Hope stirreth up endeavour, as we see in merchandizing. Though when we venture beyond the seas we commit all to wind and water, as they say, and it is doubtful what the issue may be, yet we hope, and that sets us on work. So the poor husbandman, but that he hopes to have a comfortable issue, to have a harvest, he would never set himself to work. Now here is hope; and hope on a better ground a great deal; for he that makes other things successful, he hath given Christ for this purpose; and Christ, you see here, he gives himself, 'which the Son of man shall give you.'

Here is all that we may ground and found our hope upon. Here is will, here is power, and here is authority to give it.

Here is will; Christ will give it. Why? Because he is the Son of man. What use is there of these words in this place? Why doth he not say, 'which the Son of God shall give you?'

Oh, the Son of God without the Son of man is indeed a fountain of good things, but he is a sealed fountain; alas! of no comfort. Our comfort is in Immanuel, God-man. All our comfort is to be brought back to God, from whom we fell in paradise, and we must be brought back again to God by God. But unless God had become man, man had never come back again to God. Therefore all the union and communion we have with God, it depends on this first union of Christ with our nature, that the Son of God became the Son of man, as St Austin saith; for now the next union, that we become the sons of God, it comes from this, that God became man. And therefore he saith here, 'the Son of man shall give it you.' You need not climb up to heaven to fetch this food that endures to everlasting life, for the Son of God is come down from heaven to earth to take the nature of man; and in that to die, in that to satisfy God's wrath, and so to become this blessed and everlasting food; the Son of man, 'the second Adam.' As by one man we all come to misery, so by the 'second Adam,' by man, we are restored to a blessed condition again. Therefore he saith here 'the Son of man,' because in the human nature all our salvation was wrought. Indeed, the worth and efficacy of our salvation comes from the divine nature; but it was wrought in man's nature, the divine nature could not work it alone. But I will not dwell on this.

'The Son of man shall give it you.' You need not fear it, God is become man on purpose to give it you. We may now boldly go to a mediator which is made bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. We should have feared and trembled if he had only been God, but now all grace and comfort is hid in this nature of ours in Christ. If Christ had not took this poor, wretched nature of ours upon him, it had been a hateful nature to God. God hated the nature of man; but now, because the Son of God is become the Son of man, our nature is become lovely in the eyes of God; and not only lovely, but it is filled in him with all grace, and of his 'fulness we receive grace for grace,' John i. 16. He will give it therefore, because he is 'the Son of man.'

Here is will; ay, but what power and strength hath he to give it?

He is so the Son of man as that he is also the Son of God. Therefore we are said, Acts xx. 28, 'to be redeemed with the blood of God.' Christ by his

eternal Spirit, by his Godhead, offered himself a sacrifice for sin. So that he can give it because he is God.

But what authority hath he?

He is 'sealed' to do it. That is the third; that is, he hath authority, for authority is here expressed by 'sealing.' Now, Christ is said to be 'sealed,' first, because there is the impression of God upon him. Even as the seal imprints in the wax the likeness of that which is in it, so God hath imprinted in Christ his own likeness. He is the image of God, for Christ as he is God is the character of his Father; and his human nature is likewise as like God as nature can express. 'We saw,' saith the apostle, 'his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God,' John i. 14. We saw a kind of divinity in him, as much as human nature could receive; the likeness of God sparkled in him; therefore he is said to be 'sealed.' But that is not all, nor the principal here meant.

Again, secondly, The use of a seal is to appropriate and distinguish from other things; so Christ is sealed, that is, God hath appropriated him to be his own Son, and to be a mediator of his own appointing, and hath distinguished him from all others by a blessed anointing and qualification of him above all. He is as Saul among the rest, higher than all; he is as Aaron, anointed with the oil of gladness, but above his fellows, and yet for his fellows. From him distils the blessed ointment of grace. It is poured on his head first, and descends from him down to all the skirts of his garment, to all his members. So here is in this sealing likeness, distinction, and appropriation.

But especially by sealing here is meant authority: for a thing sealed is not only to distinguish and appropriate to a man's use, but to authorise also. As a magistrate that hath the king's broad seal, he is authorised; so Christ he hath God's seal, God hath authorised him to be a mediator; and as he was foreordained before all worlds, as the apostle Peter saith, 'to be the head of them that should be saved, and to be their mediator,' 1 Pet. i. 9, seq., so when the fulness of time was come, when he came in the flesh, he was authorised by the greatest testimony that ever was, by the blessed Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, at his baptism. 'This is my beloved Son, hear him,' saith a voice from heaven, Mat. iii. 17. There was the Father, the Son in the voice, the Holy Ghost in the dove. There was the whole Trinity. So he was authorised from heaven.

And then he was authorised by his miracles. God gave him power to work those works which none could do but a Mediator. Therefore he saith, 'If you believe not me, yet believe me for my works' sake,' John x. 38.

He was authorised also by his resurrection, as the apostle saith, in Rom. i. 4: 'He mightily declared himself to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.' The angels from heaven brought witness of him. He was witnessed by all kind of persons on earth, yea, by the devils themselves. So he is 'sealed' and authorised every way, by all kind of witnesses, to be a mediator.

This is set out in other phrases in the Scripture. In Ps. ii. 7, 'This my Son have I set upon my holy hill of Sion;' and Rom. iii., toward the latter end, ver. 25: 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.' God hath set him forth as the showbread was set out under the law. And then again in another place, 'Whom he hath sent,' 1 John iv. 9, 10; and in 1 Cor. i. 80, 'He is made of God unto us wisdom,' &c. 'He is made of God;' that is, he is 'sealed,' appointed, authorised by God for that purpose.

So you see why Christ is said to be sealed, especially because he is authorised by God the Father, 'made,' 'sent,' 'set forth,' 'whom the Father hath sealed;' that is, the party offended by our sins, he hath sealed and authorised Christ to be a mediator.

If this be so, let us learn this use of it, to bless God the Father as well as Christ. 'Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and 'Blessed be Christ,' for him hath the Father 'sealed' by the Spirit. The blessed Trinity have all a hand in our salvation.

And then again consider, if we despise Christ, whom we despise. We despise the Father that hath 'sealed' him. It is a weighty matter. Read the second psalm, and you shall see there what it is to despise Christ, not to 'kiss the Son;' that is, when God hath anointed and sent forth a Saviour, and 'sealed him,' and authorised him by all the testimonies that can be, to be a mediator, not to receive him for our king, for our priest and prophet. It is a rebellion, not against Christ only, but against the Father who hath 'sealed' him.

And likewise it serveth wonderfully to strengthen our [faith when we go to God for forgiveness of sins. Offer him his own broad seal, offer him Christ as a mediator authorised by himself. Lord, I am thus and thus a sinner,

but notwithstanding, thou hast sent thy blessed Son and set him forth to be a Saviour for me, and him I offer to thee. Thou canst not deny or refuse thy own 'sealed' Mediator and Redeemer. If he had been a mediator of my own appointing and of my own sealing, it were another matter; but I offer thy own mediator, look on the death of him whom thou hast 'sealed' to be my intercessor. It is a wondrous prevailing argument with God. He cannot deny that which he hath devised himself, him whom he chose before all worlds for this great office.

But how shall I know whether he be 'sealed' for my good or no? Saith the soul that hears this, we hear much of an authorised Saviour, of an authorised mediator to be all-sufficient, but what is that to me?

Why? For whom is he 'sealed?' Is he 'sealed' for angels or for men? And amongst men is he 'sealed' for holy men or sinners? 'I come not to seek or to save whole men, or men that never were lost,' Mat. xviii. 11. No. He came to seek and to save men, but they are lost men, sick men; and it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all means to be embraced, 'that Christ came into the world to save sinners,' saith blessed Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. Therefore he is 'sealed' to save thee if thou art a sinner, to save thee if thou wilt receive him; and thou art bound to receive him, under pain of the punishment of rebellion. Is it not rebellion not to receive a magistrate whom the prince has authorised under his broad seal? It is another manner of matter not to receive Christ. It is a greater sin than to sin against the law; for if a man sin against the law there is the gospel to help him, but if a man sin against the gospel there is not another gospel to him. Now to refuse Christ offered in the gospel is a sin against the gospel. Where then can there be hope of salvation? Salvation itself cannot save him that will not be saved, that refuses the remedy 'sealed' by God the Father, the party offended. Who can heal him that casts down the potion that is brought to heal him? that refuseth the physician that comes to cure him? I say he is 'sealed' to save thee if thou wilt be saved; if thou wilt receive him; receive him not only to be thy Saviour, but to be thy king to rule thee, and thy prophet to teach and instruct thee, as we shall see afterwards.

But, to clear this a little better, we must know that there are three distinct sealings.

There is God's sealing of Christ, which I have unfolded to you.

And there is our sealing of God; that is, our sealing of God's truth.

And then again, there is God's sealing of us by his Spirit. And these follow one the other.

Why hath God sealed Christ, but that we hereupon should be stirred up to believe and to receive Christ, and so by consequence to seal, that God is true in sending such a blessed Mediator, as St John saith, 'he that believes in the Son hath set to his seal that God is true,' John iii. 33. God hath sealed him, that we, by receiving him, should seal God's truth.

Beloved, God comes to us for our testimonials, for our hands and seals. Oh how wondrously doth God condescend to wreak man! He hath sealed Christ for the office of a mediator, and he offers him unto us, and he comes to us likewise that we would set to our seals too, that Christ is the Son of God. He counts it not sufficient that he hath sealed him himself, but he will have us seal too; and we seal him when we receive him. He that receives him hath set to his seal that God is true. He that doth not receive him, 'he makes God a liar,' saith St John, 1 John v. 10.

And what comes of this, when we receive Christ, and set to our seal that God in the promise of salvation by Christ is true? Then we having honoured him, he honours us by his Spirit, as the apostle saith, Eph. i. 13, 'In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed.' So when we believe and set to our seal that God is true, God seals us by his Spirit; 'after ye believed you were sealed.'

But what is this seal of the Spirit whereby God seals us after we believe?

I answer, God seals us when he sets the stamp of his Spirit upon us; when the work and witness of his Spirit is wrought in us. For as in a seal the wax hath all in it, the whole likeness of the image that is in the seal, so the soul that is sealed by the Spirit hath the likeness of the Spirit of Christ stamped on it. God imprints in their spirits the likeness of his Son; that is to say, he makes them loving souls, humble souls, obedient as Christ was in all things, patient, meek, &c. You may see in the spirit of a believing man an expression of the spirit of Christ. So that if you would see Christ in his excellencies, look on the spirit of a true Christian. There you shall see a resemblance of Christ Jesus, not perfectly, but in some comfortable measure. You shall see the very image of Christ. You shall see how full of love he is, how patient in crosses, how humble, how meek, how obedient to God in all things, both in a passive and active obedience. This is the stamp of the Spirit; when a man believes, God honours him by setting his image on him.

And yet this is not all. Besides this, we are sealed with the witness and comfort of the Spirit as well as with the work of the Spirit, the Spirit of God sweetly witnessing that we are the sons of God. And this sweet witness of the Spirit especially comes after we have honoured God by believing in temptation, when we are able to hold out and say as Job said, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15. So when we can, after conflicts of doubting and despair, say, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' I will set to my seal that he is true. Well, will you so? God, to honour such a soul, seals him to the day of redemption; that is, he gives to the soul of such a one a sweet evidence and testimony that he is the Son of God.

And this seal of the Spirit is double: not only done by the witness and work of the Spirit inwardly, which I have showed, but likewise the Spirit doth seal them outwardly, enabling them to make an outward confession of Christ and his truth; and therefore, in Rev. vii. 3, seq., Christians are said to be 'sealed in the forehead,' that is, as they are marked and singled out in ill times, to be such as God hath set his special favour upon, so they are 'sealed' with a spirit of boldness, willingly and with forwardness to confess the truth of Christ in ill times.

Now, to apply it to our purpose, wouldst thou know whether thou be such a one, for the present, as for whom Christ is 'sealed' a mediator? Examine, first of all, whether thou hast put to thy seal that God is true, by receiving and believing Christ, and the promise of salvation through him. If thou hast done so, then thou wilt find another seal from God, even the work of the Spirit in sanctifying of thee, and conforming of thee to the image and likeness of Christ; and thou wilt find the witness and comfortable testimony of the Spirit, in telling thee that thou art the son of God; and withal thou wilt have a spirit of boldness, and readiness, and forwardness to confess Christ. Thou wilt not care for all that the world saith; but wilt, if need be, stand to the profession of religion to the death.

If thou canst find this in thyself, undoubtedly thou art not only such a one as Christ came to seal, but for the present thou mayest be assured that thou hast interest in this mediator, sealed by God for that purpose.

Thus you see that here is 'food that endures to everlasting life,' which is Christ and the benefits we have by him. You see that that blessed meat is attainable, because he is willing to give it; for he is become man for that purpose. He is able to give it, for he is God as well as man, and he hath authority to give it, for God the Father hath sealed him and fitted him for

that office. If we receive him, he will seal us with his blessed Spirit; that is, the same Spirit that furnished Christ with grace, that sanctified him in the womb, will sanctify all those that are his members, will work a likeness and conformity in them to his blessed image; for the same Spirit that was in the natural Son is in all the adopted sons of God. And he will likewise give us the comfortable evidence and assurance that we are the sons of God, furnish us with boldness and resolution to profess Christ in all times.

Let me then, I beseech you, come again to re-enforce this exhortation. Take heed you refuse not Christ. Consider with what authority he comes.

‘He is sealed.’ It is no presumption therefore to receive him, though you be never such sinners, to receive him; I mean not only to be a priest to reconcile you to God, but to be a king to rule you, and a prophet to instruct you by his Spirit; to receive him on this manner is no presumption. To receive him indeed as a Saviour, but to neglect him as king, to refuse to come under his government, is great presumption; but to receive whole Christ is obedience and faith, and no presumption; nay, if you do not receive him you sin damnably, you commit the greatest sin that can be. He came to save all that will come under his blessed government, that will kiss the Son. ‘Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the waters of life,’ Rev. xxii. 17. All the good promised by Christ is promised upon our receiving of him, upon the obedience of our faith. There is nothing required but a will to embrace him, and to be under his government. There is no exception made of sins, or persons, or times. ‘At what time soever a sinner repent,’ 1 Kings viii. 30, seq., whatsoever sinner, whatsoever time, or whatsoever the sins be, if he repents, Christ is ready to receive him.

If you pretend your unworthiness and want of excellencies, he takes away that objection. ‘Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden,’ Mat. xi. 28; ‘Come, buy without money,’ Isa. lv. 1; and here in the text, ‘The Son of man shall give;’ and what so free as gift?

If you pretend you have sinned since your calling, and that you have sinned against conscience and knowledge, and therefore now you have no further hope of Christ, remember that Paul, 2 Cor. v. 20, speaks to the Corinthians that were in the state of grace, ‘I beseech you to be reconciled to God and in Jer. iii. 6, seq., ‘Return again, you backsliding Israel, and I will heal your backsliding;’ and again, ‘Will a man receive a wife that hath played the harlot, and broken the band of marriage? Yet return, O house of Israel, and I will receive you.’ Therefore run not away from God. Though thou hast

sinned after thou art in the state of grace, come again, I beseech you. Still Christ is to be received; the door of grace is always held open, and the golden sceptre continually held out as long as we live in this world.

But yet it is not good to neglect the time of grace. Receive Christ presently; defer not to come under his government; and receive him wholly, or else there is no receiving of him at all.

And to press this a little further; I beseech you, consider that if you leave not your sinful courses, and come under the blessed government of Christ, if you receive not this 'sealed' king, this 'sealed' priest and prophet, this 'sealed' mediator, whom God hath 'sealed' and sent unto you for salvation, there is not anything in the world that will one day more torment you than your refusal of him. Oh that we should ever live to hear of salvation so freely offered, and of a Saviour so authorised, yet notwithstanding that we should respect our sins more than our souls! and because we could not have him to be our Saviour except we came under his government and be ruled by him as a king, we refused him wholly altogether. Indeed, if we might have had salvation by him and the forgiveness of sins, and withal have remained under the rule and sway of our own lusts, and been led by them, we would have been contented to have had him; but rather than we would leave our blasphemous, our unclean, injurious, and covetous courses of life, we were content to let Christ go if he would. Oh that we should reject this 'sealed' Saviour! Oh that we should refuse salvation offered on such loving terms, when God was so loving as to seal and authorise his Son; when the Son was so loving as to give himself when he was 'sealed;' to refuse this and that for such base respects, will certainly one day, when the conscience is wakened, prove the greatest torment that can be!

See how the apostle notably enforceth this in the second of the Hebrews, ver. 3: 'If so be they did not escape that despised Moses' law, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' He doth not say, How shall we escape if we oppose Christ, if we rail on him, if we despise his image in his children, as many cursed wretches do? but, How shall we escape if we do but 'neglect so great salvation,' so witnessed and authorised with all the signs, so offered and tendered with all the terms of love that may be?

And therefore, if there be any here that have lived in sinful courses, and have a purpose to break them off, that are weary of the government of their lusts, and of Satan that rules them by their lusts,—for all are under one government or other, either under the 'sealed' government of Christ, or

under the base government of Satan that tends to damnation,—Oh leave it, and come under this governor ‘sealed’ by God the Father, authorised from heaven by the blessed Trinity, by miracles, and by all the arguments that can be; come under his blessed government and you shall do well. God the Father, the party offended with your sins, he hath ‘sealed’ him; and he cannot refuse a mediator of his own sealing.

And do not say your sins have been thus and thus; for consider what were these parties that he offers himself to here, that he saith to, ‘Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life.’ Were they not cursed hypocrites, that followed him for the loaves, and yet he saith to them, ‘Labour for the meat that endures,’ &c. I am ‘sealed’ even for your salvation, if you will come out of your hypocrisy and be ruled by me. Therefore let none stand out from coming under the government of Christ, for he offers mercy, you see here, to the worst of men, even to cursed hypocrites.

And, to conclude with a word of comfort, if there be any poor distressed soul frightened in conscience with the sight of his sins and Satan’s temptations, Oh let such consider the love of God in Christ. Satan pictures out God as a terrible judge; and so he is indeed to men that go on in their sins, ‘a consuming fire.’ But art thou weary of thy courses? art thou willing to come under a better covenant? Let not Satan abuse thee by setting God before thee as a terrible judge, and Christ as one that would not save thee. No. Come in, kiss the Son, ‘for him hath the Father sealed,’ ‘sealed’ for thee if thou be weary of thy sins. Enforce not upon thy soul any unwillingness to be in God. Wherefore doth God stoop so low, and labour by all these arguments here, as that Christ is the Son of man, and that he shall give it you, and that the Father hath sealed him for that end; wherefore is all this, but to show his willingness to receive thee? Wherefore hath the Father ‘sealed’ Christ but in love to thee? Come in, therefore, and then, if you will seal to his truth, if you will believe and cast yourselves on God’s gracious promise, even against doubting and distrust, you shall find God sealing you by his Spirit; you shall find his Spirit witnessing to your spirits that you are the ‘sons of God.’

Here then you see is sure footing for poor doubting souls to fasten upon. God the Father, the party offended, hath ‘sealed’ his Son; hath authorised him to save thee, if thou repent and come in. What are all thy sins and unworthiness to Christ, God-man, ‘sealed’ and authorised by the Father, who is the party offended? If thou art willing to come in, bring all thy sins and oppose them to Christ, God-man, ‘sealed’ by the Father, and they will

vanish as a cloud. But, as I said before, if thou wilt not come in and accept of this Saviour, if thou wilt not submit thyself to his government, thou sealest thy damnation.

Thus you see I have unfolded this blessed portion of Scripture. Christ Jesus, and all the prerogatives and benefits that come by him, is the food that endureth to everlasting life. You see the arguments our blessed Saviour useth to enforce us to labour after this food. It is 'food.' It is food that 'endures,' and it is food that 'endures to everlasting life;' and he 'will give it,' for 'him the Father hath sealed' and authorised so to do. He is both the gift and the giver; both the food and the inviter to the food; both the priest and the sacrifice. Labour therefore after this food.

There is an objection which I will briefly answer, and so end.

Labour after it. Why? Christ will give it; if he will give it, why must we labour after it? And if we must labour for it, how doth he give it? How can these two, gift and labour, stand together?

I answer, Very well; Christ will give himself, and forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, and yet we must labour too. But we must know for what we must labour. We must not labour for any merit to the title unto heaven and happiness. Christ indeed gives that. But labour in the use of all good means to get knowledge and faith to receive this gift, to get the knowledge of Christ, what he is in his natures and offices, what he hath promised, what he hath done and what he hath suffered, what the intent of the gospel is; what the giver is; and what the authority is, that his Father hath given him. This requires labour. It is a labour to crack the shell, to understand the letter of the Scripture; to know what the gift and what the giver is. And it is likewise a labour to get faith to receive this gift; to get the soul emptied of all self-confidence; of all worth in itself and in the creature; for Christ must be received with a beggar's hand; and it will ask much labour to deny a man's self; for proud flesh will always have somewhat to trust to either in itself or in the creature.

So that these two may well stand together, labour and gift. We are taught to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' God will give us our daily bread. We must not therefore stand still and do nothing; but though God will give it, yet he will give it in the use of means, in the use of our lawful callings. So here, God will give us this spiritual food; yet he will give it in labour. It is his ordinance; and whatsoever he gives, he gives not in idleness, but in

obedience to his ordinance. He will have us to labour in the use of the means, in reading, hearing, receiving the sacrament, praying, meditating, and the like, to have a part in Christ this blessed gift. Nay, because he will give Christ, therefore labour. The one enforceth the other. The like reason Moses giveth the Israelites: 'Fight,' saith he, 'for the Lord hath given them into your hand,' Joshua x. 19. They might say, If our enemies be given into our hand, why should we fight? Yes; fight the rather, be encouraged to fight, because you shall be sure to conquer. So here, 'Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life, for the Son of man will give it.' Therefore labour, because he will give it. In labouring we shall be sure to have it; do that which belongs to thee, and thou shalt be sure to have that which belongs to God; thou shalt find Christ, and heaven, and glory, and all in the use of the means. But he gives nothing without labour. There can be no good done in earthly things without labour; and do you think to have heaven without labour? No. Spiritual things are against the stream. Heaven is up the hill. There must be labour, there must be striving against corruptions within, and against temptations without; and our labour it is a happy labour. It is not a barren labour; 'Our labour is not in vain in the Lord,' as the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 58. We that labour for the food that endures to everlasting life, we labour for somewhat; but worldlings that beat their brains, and tire their spirits, and rack their consciences, and wear out their bodies, it is all for nothing; it is for that which is 'vanity and vexation of spirit,' Eccles. i. 14; for that which they must leave behind them. A true Christian, to encourage him to take all the pains that may be, he labours for something; it is a hopeful and not a barren labour. And, beloved, blessed are we that we can have this food for our labour; that since the fall we can recover by the 'second Adam' a better estate than we had by the first.

And our blessed Saviour, to the end he might distinguish true Christians from hypocrites, enjoins this duty of labouring so much the more; for we have many in the church that think to have Christ and his benefits without labour, as if heaven would drop into their mouths. They can say that God is merciful, and Christ died for us; but you shall in the mean time find them careless of reading, of hearing, of praying, of the communion of saints, &c., are idle in working out their salvation with fear and trembling, negligent in selling all that they have for the pearl, will part with nothing for Christ. I say, to distinguish these hypocrites from true Christians, therefore he saith, 'Labour,' to show to us that only they that labour for Christ in the use of all good means; that labour for the true knowledge of him, and for faith to receive him; that sell all for him; that take pains to grow in grace and in union

with Christ; that make him their best portion in the world, and delight in him: it is they only that have interest in Christ; only the painful Christian is the true Christian.

Therefore, I beseech you, as you would have it discerned that you are not hypocrites in the church, be stirred up to use all sanctified means to know Christ, to believe in him, to know that you are in communion with him, that you belong unto him. Be not discouraged. You shall have rest ere long. 'There is a rest for the people of God,' as the apostle saith to the Hebrews, Heb. iv. 9. Indeed, so long as we are here below, there is labour joined with weariness; for we have great conflicts with corruptions and temptations, with enemies within and enemies without; but be of good comfort, we shall at last come to a rest, to a rest perpetual and everlasting. It is true, in heaven there shall be labour, for we shall be always praising God; but it shall be labour without weariness, labour without conflict. There shall be no corruption within, nor no devil without. Satan could enter into paradise below, but he shall never enter into that heavenly paradise. Therefore be encouraged to labour for a while. Though it be tedious, because of corruptions and temptations, 'yet there is a rest for the people of God, an eternal rest.

The Matchless Love and Inbeing

Sermon I

I have declared unto them thy name, and I will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.—John XVII. 26.

The dependence we have heard heretofore, when I entered upon the first part of this verse. Our Saviour intending to have committed his disciples to the love of his Father, that they might be the fitter objects of his love, he sets down here his own care for the present, and for the time to come; for it is hypocrisy in prayer when we pray for that that we endeavour not. For as he prays the Father to take them into his charge, so he sets down his own care about them: 'I have manifested thy name, and I will,' &c. The verse contains this blessed act of Christ.

1. What he hath done.
2. What he will do.
3. The end of it.

'I have declared thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' 'I have declared, and will declare.' This I unfolded at large the last day. Among many other things, this one I observed, that we are in a perpetual proficiency in this life. We never know so much, but we may know more, and we ought to know more. So that by consequence there is a perpetual necessity of Christ's prophetic office. 'I have declared, and I will declare,' &c. We see the church in general grew to knowledge by degrees, till Christ, the Sun of righteousness, came gloriously in the flesh; till John pointed at him with the finger, 'This is the Lamb of God,' &c., John i. 29. And as the whole body mystical, so every member; we grow to knowledge by degrees. 'I have declared,' &c. Christ doth fit his work to our exigents. We need further knowledge, and he is bountiful to promise a further declaration. 'I have, and I will.' He is never weary of well-doing. As his love is infinite, so his expression is unwearied that comes from his love. A ground of special comfort, as we showed, to all Christians, especially to the labouring, weak Christians, that their beginnings

are pledges of further degrees. For Christ, where he is Alpha, he will be Omega; and where he is the author, he will be the finisher of our faith; where he hath laid the first stone, he will set up the roof at length. 'He hath declared, and he will declare.'

He is not such an unwise builder as will leave his work. He knows what he can do, and therefore we may enter upon all the moans of saving knowledge, with this confidence, that we have a teacher that will carry us along from one degree of knowledge to another. And let us never despair for any insufficiency of parts. It is no matter what the capacity or the incapacity of the scholar be, when there is such a teacher. When God is the teacher, it is no matter how dull the learner is, for Christ doth not only bring doctrine, but he brings wit, grace, and ability to the inward man; that is, not only a declaration, as man doth teach the outward man, but he unlocks and opens the heart, the ears of the inward man, as he opened Lydia's heart, &c., Acts xvi. 14. Let none distrust if they be conscionable and careful in the use of good means. Many other things, I observed hence, which I will not be large in unfolding. 'I have declared to them thy name,' &c.; that is, that whereby thou mightest be known. Now in the covenant of grace, God would be known by the sweet name of Father, by the attributes of mercy and love. That whereby he will be known is his name, his mercy in the covenant of grace in condescending to be our Father in Jesus Christ, together with the sweet attributes of love and mercy, from whence all spring. This is his name. Now he will not be known only to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, or out of the North; but he will be known by the name of 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and our Father; to be the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort. Thus we must labour to present God to us now in his right name. This name makes all other names sweet that he hath. For being once gracious and merciful, and a Father in covenant, his power is ours, his wisdom is ours, and all is ours. Then this name of God is set forth at large: 'Jehovah, Jehovah, merciful, forgiving iniquity,' &c., Exod. xxxiv. 7. 'I have declared thy name,' &c. But this I stood at large on.

What was the end of our blessed Saviour in this his gracious dealing?

'That the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them, and I in them.'

In unfolding of which words, I propounded these general heads, to omit other things. First, That God doth love Christ, because he is the first object of his love, his own image; for he represents God's attributes, and

whatsoever is good in him, every way exactly. He is the Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord. He is the true Isaac, the true matter of joy. He is the first Son, the first beloved. This was the first thing we unfolded and made use of. The second was this, That after Christ, God loves all that are Christ's with that love wherewith he loves Christ. There is a former love, indeed, of God, to give us unto Christ; but I speak of the carriage of our salvation, all which is in Christ. He loves Christ, and he loves us in Christ, and not otherwise. There is a love that moved him to give Christ, but this love must concur with the other attributes. It must be such love and mercy, and so apprehended, as must be without offering violence or-wrong to other attributes. His justice and his holiness must not be wronged. And therefore though he have love to those whom he knew before all worlds; yet in the carriage of salvation he intended actually so to set his love upon them, as that it should be in one that should make satisfaction for them, being considered as sinners in themselves. And God would have, in our salvation, the glory, as of infinite love to man, so of infinite hatred of sin, and likewise of infinite wisdom, in reconciling these together. His infinite hatred to sin, how could he show it more, than that rather than he would not have it punished, his Son must become incarnate, to be a surety for sin and to take it away? How could he show his infinite love more, than by giving such a gift as Christ, and his infinite wisdom, than to devise such a way as to bring these two together, justice and love, to reconcile them? So though God loved a certain company whom he foreknew to everlasting life, yet he intended, in the carriage of their salvation, to do it with the manifestation and glory of his attributes, that no attribute might be wronged nor complain, and that justice might fully be satisfied; but especially that his mercy and love might triumph. For what in God stirred up a fatherly heart? What stirred him up to reconcile justice and mercy, but love, that set on work all other attributes, his mercy, and love, and goodness? God loves us in Christ therefore, and only in Christ; because in Christ only his wrath is satisfied. Christ only is the mediator, the only treasury of the church to convey all to us. The adopted sons have their excellency, and all that they have, in the virtue of the natural Son. But this I have unfolded at large heretofore, and showed the use of it last day; this was the second thing.

The third general thing out of the text is this, that the love of God to vs is in Christ, loving us in him, as electing vs, and doing all good to vs in him. It is the ground of all other favours and graces whatsoever. And therefore he sots it here for all in all, 'I have declared, See., that the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them,' &c. What! doth he not say, that I might be merciful to them and pitiful, and that they may have other graces that love

me? What needs all this? He sets down the spring of all, 'I have manifested thy name,' thy gracious name, that in the apprehension of that they may find my love. And so, when we feel the love of God and of Christ, know that all other graces flow from thence; for indeed all graces wrought in us issue from God's love to us first. Whence comes pity, and mercy, and love, but from God's shining in our hearts first by his love, that doth mould and frame the heart to all duties and graces whatsoever, and to the first grace to love God? For how can we love him unless we have an apprehension of his love first? You know iron, and stones, and things that are cold of nature, if they have any heat, we say it is the sun that hath heated them, or the fire that hath warmed them, because intrinsically they have no heat. So when there is any goodness in the creature, any pity, mercy, or love to God, or to those that are his, it implies, that there hath been first the fire, the light of God's love to us. And therefore, saith Christ, 'I have manifested thy name to them, that thy love may be in them.' This love in them will be enough to set them on fire on all good things whatsoever. 'We love him, because he loves us first,' 1 John iv. 19. We know him, because he knows us first, Gal iv. 9, and we choose him, because he chooseth us first. We joy and delight in him, because he joys and delights in us first. All is a reflex from him, whatsoever of good comes from us. This was the third thing. We made thence use of it, and so brake off. To go on. The fourth thing which I propounded to speak of out of the words is this, that this love of God to us may be known, and ought to be known of us.

It may be known with an experimental and with an applicatory knowledge. The next was, that the way to know God's love to us, is the manifesting of his name in the gospel: that follows by the connection of them two together; and the last is, Christ being in us, which I cannot come to at this time. So then now, to clear this point, that we may, and it is our duty to do it, to labour to know God's love to us. We ought to labour that God's love may be in us, and that we may know it, not generally that he loves us, but that his love is in us, that it is incorporate and invested into us, to have a taste and be sensible of it. For this is the end of Christ's prayer, 'That the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them,' &c. And the next way to know it, which we shall speak of at this time among the rest, it is this, 'The manifesting of God's name by Christ.' For the first then.

Doct. 1. That we may, and ought to know God's love to us in Christ. That we ought to know it; what need I be large in the point? I will not, because it is so clear. For if it be, as I showed the last day at large, the spring

of all duties, of all other graces, which sets all on work, then surely we ought to labour for that which may make us good, and not only good, but comfortable. Now all our goodness, and comfort, it comes from this original, the knowledge of God's love to us, when that is in us, for we have no love to him until we know that we are beloved of him.

1. We cannot be thankful to God till we know that he loves us in Christ. I speak of his peculiar love as a child. Who can be thankful for that which he knows not? It overthrows all thankfulness and denies it. We ought to labour for the assurance of the love of God in Christ. For it is a duty to joy in the Lord as our portion. Now we must be certain of his love first. How else can we practise this duty of rejoicing in the Lord alway? What joy and cheerfulness can come without the love of God shining upon us and enlarging our hearts to joy? As the shining of the sun enlargeth the spirit of the poor creatures, the birds, in the spring time, to sing, so proportionably the apprehension of the sweet love of God in Christ enlargeth the spirit of a man, and makes him full of joy and thanksgiving. He breaks forth into joy, so that his whole life is matter of joy and thanksgiving.

2. Again, In suffering any cross, any opposition, who will endure to lose his temporal goods, his life and liberty, to be restrained any way, that knows not God's love? Who will abide anything for him that he loves not? What doth set us to suffer all things that may be for God? The apprehension that he loves us. What makes a man willing to end his life, and to yield up his soul to God? He knows he shall yield his soul to him as to a father that loves him, that will save his soul. Can a man be willing to leave his home here, when he knows not whether he shall have a better or no? Can a man commend his soul to one that he knows not to be his friend? No. Can he commend such a jewel to one that he knows not to be an enemy? Can he say with Simeon, 'Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?' Luke ii. 29. Doth not all joy and comfort come from the love of God in Christ? What should I enlarge the point? We can neither have grace, nor joy, nor suffer anything with thankfulness, nor end our days with joy and comfort, till we get assurance that we are in the covenant of grace, and that God's love is in us.

And therefore it is clear to anybody that knows anything in religion, or desires anything, that we ought to labour that God's love may be in us. I beseech you, therefore, make use of it to see the abominable doctrine of popery—I cannot speak too hardly of it—which teacheth that we ought to

doubt of God's love. It cuts the sinews of endeavour. Who will endeavour after the attaining of the love of God, and this assurance, when this is laid in the way, that we ought not to do it? Are we not prone enough to distrust, but we must be taught it? Is not Satan malicious enough, but we must light a candle to him, and arm his malice with this doctrine, that we ought to doubt? He is the master of doubtings; for the works of darkness, and all the discomfort and sin that he brings on us is in darkness, in this particular darkness, that we know not whether we be the children of God or no. And therefore, say some, why should we leave our gain, our profit, and our present pleasures that we have? And what doth he aim at by the sins he tempts us to, but to shake our assurance of God's love? Well, they teach the doctrine of devils in divers things, amongst which this is one that strengthens the kingdom of Satan much, that people ought to doubt, and that there is no way or means to get assurance of God's love. This is to overthrow the intent of Christ's prayer. Wherefore doth he pray here, and what doth he promise in his prayer? That God would show them his love, and that he may do it: 'I have declared thy love,' &c. So it is clear that we ought to answer Christ's aim. Why doth Christ declare his Father's name? And why are all the means of salvation, but that we may have God's love in us? Is it not our duty, then, to answer Christ's course, and his promise, and his love? Taking that, then, for a ground, that we ought to labour to have God's love to be in us, we will show that we may attain to it, and come to know that God loves us. I will not be long in it, it is a clear point, which heretofore, upon another occasion, I have spoken of.

We may attain to it. Here is the way, as I shall show in the next point, 'By the declaration of God's name.' For what is faith, which is the work of the gospel and grace of the new covenant, but the apprehension of the love of God in Christ? It is nothing else; and therefore we may attain to it in the covenant of grace. Faith is nothing but the act whereby we apprehend this effectual love of God to us in Christ. Therefore we that are Christians may attain to it, because we have the Spirit of God, which 'searcheth the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. iii. 10. Our spirit knows what is in us, and God's Spirit knows what is in God, and we have the Spirit of God to show us the things of God, and all the benefits and fruits of his love, with the affection itself. The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God, as it is in 1 Cor. ii. 10. It is a point I have heretofore followed at large. A Christian in the covenant of grace, he knows that God loves him. There is no truth in the world so illustrious, so gloriously and apparently true, as this. Would you have a better pledge of his love than Jesus Christ, the Son of his love, to be given for us,

the dearest thing that God hath? He would not have us doubt of his love that hath given such an invaluable thing as his own Son to assure us of it, besides all that comes from this; for if he have given him once, he gives all things with him. He that hath given us his Son for our Redeemer and Saviour, he gives us heaven for our inheritance, and his Spirit for our conduct, guide, and sanctifier, Rom. viii. 32. He hath given angels for our attendants. He gives us peace, and joy, and all things. In Christ, we have all. But here, because it is a main point, I will enlarge myself a little, and speak as familiarly as I can to every conscience.

Quest. 1. How shall a sinner, that is not yet converted, be persuaded of God's love to him?

Quest. 2. And how shall we, in the time of temptation, deal with sinners in the state of grace? I speak of the ordinary course, how a Christian may be persuaded of it. For the first, which is, how those that are unconverted may be drawn to the sense of the love of God, to find that they have any portion in it at all, that they may have it for the time to come, though they feel not yet any goodness in them.

Ans. 1. I answer, We must draw them to a sense that they are not yet in the love of God, by those things, that their corruptions suggest to them to measure the love of God by. As, for example, you have a company that think their case is good, because God hath given them outward blessings, and accompanies his blessings with patience and long-suffering; gives them parts and gifts, and preferments in the church; gives them place, great estimation, and such things. Hereupon they begin to reason, Certainly God is in love with me; though, if a man should search their lives and examine them, you shall find that there is no act, no evidence of God's special love to them at all. Such, therefore, must be convinced, that they must not measure God's love by these things; that that which is common to castaways cannot be a character and sign of God's love; but these things are common to castaways. Did Abraham give Ishmael, and the rest of his children, moveable things? but Isaac had the inheritance, Gen. xxv. 6, seq. Esau had his portion in the things of this life, but Jacob goes away with the blessing. The blessings of the left hand, castaways and reprobates may have in abundant measure. God fills their bellies with abundance of outward things, whose hearts he never fills with his love, as in Dives, Luke xvi. 25. Not to enlarge myself, look on such instances. What tend they to, but to show that these outward things are no evidences of God's love? and for God's patience in enduring me in such a

state as I am in, that is no argument. For God in his patience endures the vessels of wrath, who treasure up 'wrath against the day of wrath,' Rom. ii. 4, 5, God suffering them to prolong their days in judgment, that so he may pour the full vials of his wrath upon them. He suffers them, to lead them unto repentance; and they, not making a right use of it, God after justifies his vengeance and judgment the more, when he pours it upon them, so that plenty in outward things, accompanied with patience, is no true sign of God's love.

Like think of parts and gifts. Had not Judas excellent parts? Nay, the devil himself, who comes near him in the depth of understanding and policy? &c. Judas had a place in the church, he was an apostle. And for gifts, Ahithophel and Saul had gifts of government. All these are no evidences of the love of God to be in us as yet, or that he hath any interest in us. The way, therefore, to bring those that have not the love of God to love God, is to show them their vain confidence, that they trust to a broken reed, and to that which in the time of sickness, the hour of death, and the day of judgment, will deceive them, seeing they trust unto a cracked title. Well, if the consciences of such as are not yet in the state of grace be once awaked, we may thus draw them to be within the compass of the love of God. Otherwise, when they see the vanities of other things, and likewise that there is sin in them, somewhat that lays them open to the wrath of God, then Satan will help their conscience, Satan and their conscience will tell them oftentimes all, and make them reason, As for such a wretch as I, there is no hope; I had as good go on in a sinful course, and have somewhat in this world, as to want heaven and the comforts of this life too. And so Satan keeps them in darkness, because they think it is to no purpose to go about another course, and that it is impossible they should come to assurance. Such kind of conceits he hath.

But we must know, that in the covenant of grace now in the gospel, this is not put as a bar of God's love, that I am a sinner, that I have committed any degree of Bin whatsoever. None are shut out but those that will be as they are. And therefore all objections are taken away in the promulgation of the gospel. Ay, but I am guilty, and Oh, I am laden with sin! 'Be of good comfort, thou art called, thou art the man. Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' Mat. xi. 28. Oh that I might find mercy, says one. Why, 'Blessed are the hungry and thirsty; blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the mourners,' Mat. v. 3, 4; and 'He, every one that thirsteth, come,' Isa. lv. 1. There is hope for thee. He keeps open house for every one.

He shuts out none but those that shut out themselves, that think these things are too good to be true, and therefore will enjoy their pleasures, and go on still and daub with their conscience. But if their hearts be awakened, if they will go to God and cast themselves upon his mercy, whosoever is weary, whosoever is athirst, whosoever is heavy laden, God is no acceptor of persons, but at 'what time soever any sinner whatsoever repents of any sin whatsoever,' God will show mercy, if he come in and accept of the proclamation of pardon, Ezek. xviii. 22. If he come in, and will not continue in his rebellion still, but cast himself upon his mercy, and resign, and yield himself to God and to Christ's government, to be ruled by him, as a subject should be, he shall find mercy. Let the devil, therefore, keep none in bondage, in the dungeon of ignorance and unbelief, for the end of the gospel is to bring in all such, if they will.

But to come more particularly to such as have true goodness in them, and yet the devil takes all advantages to hinder the apprehension of God's love to them in Christ.

Quest. 2. How shall we in divers states and cases bring men to be persuaded of God's love in Christ, when conscience and Satan, together with some outward occurrence, urge them to unbelief and to stagger?

For instance, a sinner that is converted and in the state of grace, he may oftentimes fall into some great sin; hereupon Satan, taking advantage of the sin, together with conscience, which always helps Satan in this case, speaks bitter things.

Ans. 1. Thus we must answer such as are drawn by Satan to sin, and after accused by Satan for sin, and to whom God is presented as a hateful God, &c., that notwithstanding they should not be discouraged. We have many examples in Scripture: 'If we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus,' &c., 1 John ii. 1; and he is the propitiation for our sins. We ought not, therefore, to be discouraged from going to God, humbled as we ought to be. Here is place for humiliation, but there is no place for base discouragement, and calling God's love into question. A son under anger is a son; and therefore, though Satan presents to him an angry God for sin—for this temptation is then sharpened indeed, when it is made a weapon by Satan, by reason that God accompanies the sinner that is fallen into sin, with some judgment as a punishment—yet he ought to lay hold on the rich mercies of God in Christ. What should he else do? Shall he run away from God? No. A bastard, a slave, will do so; but he runs to God. Even as a child, when he

hath offended his father, doth not run away from him; but, knowing that his father is merciful and loving, though he have offended him, and that he is now a son, though under his wrath, he goes and studies to appease his father, casts himself upon his favour and mercy, and will endure his correction gently. Thus ought we to do. Satan, when he hath gotten us to sin, he saith, Now you had as good run on still, for God follows you with judgments; you have offended God, and there is no hope for you. So he keeps us without comfort, and God without service, by that means; whereby we run deeper and deeper into God's books. Oh come in betimes, and repent. It will be easier. Thy comfort will be stronger. God will be sooner pacified. Thy heart will not be so hardened. Do not call in question God's love to thee; for Satan tempts, and corrupts, and draws thee to sin, for that end, to call it in question. God may love thee, though he follow thee with shows of anger; for he may be angry, and yet love thee too, as we shall see afterwards.

Ans. 2. Again, Satan doth use as a weapon, to shake our sonship or adoption, and our estate in God's love, manifold temptations and crosses, and such like, to discourage us. He comes with 'If.' 'If thou wert in the love of God, and the love of God in thee, and did belong to thee any way, would God follow thee thus and thus, with these declarations of wrath and anger?'

I answer, A man may retort that upon Satan the tempter, and upon his own heart. The spirit retorts that upon the flesh: 'God corrects every son, and he is a bastard that hath not correction,' Heb. xii. 8. In this world, to thrive in a course of sin, when a man hath offended God, it is a sign of reprobation rather than otherwise. Every child God corrects; and for poverty, shame, and the like, we must not measure God's love by these, for God loves us as he loved Christ. Mark here Christ's prayer: 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.'

Quest. How was God's love in Christ? To fence him from poverty, from disgrace, from persecution, from the sense of God's wrath? No. But the first-begotten Son, the natural Son, he was persecuted as soon as he was born; he was disgraced, calumniated, slandered, and abused to the death. Nay, and he felt the wrath of God. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii. 46. We then may be in the love of God if we be no otherwise than the natural Son was, in whom the love of God was when he was at the worst. In the lowest degree of his abasement, God loved him then as much as at any other time, even when he was accompanied with the sense of the wrath of God. And therefore reject and beat back all temptations with this invincible

argument, It is no otherwise with me than it was with his natural Son. Shall I desire to be loved any otherwise of God than Christ was loved? His love to Christ did not exempt him from slander, from disgrace, from abasement, from the sense of his wrath, when yet he was the Son of God always; and I, being in this case, shall I doubt of my adoption? Shall I dishonour God? Shall I add this sin to the rest of my sins?

Satan is wonderful prone to take those weapons, to sharpen them, as I said before, of sin, desertions, sometime of temptations and outward afflictions; and so he comes with his 'If,' 'If thou wert the Son of God, would he deal thus and thus with thee?' It was always his course. We must therefore have present, to repel all such temptations, that God loves us as he loves his Son, that he chastiseth every son; and that God's love is not always and only manifested in exempting of us from these things. Let us measure God's love that he bears to us in Christ, by the best fruits of his love. What are those? An heart to seek him; to fear his name; love to his majesty; love to his children; delight in good things; hatred of that which is evil. None but his can esteem and value his love by these things. By these therefore, and the like peculiar marks and stamps of the Spirit that are in us, let us judge of his love, and not by any outward thing whatsoever; for all outward crosses whatsoever befell his own Son. And can we desire that he should love us otherwise than he loved him? We are predestinate to be conformable unto him, Rom. viii. 29, and why should we refuse to be conformable to him in abasement, with whom we hope to be conformable in glory? Let faith therefore plead against all the suggestions of Satan and accusations of conscience. By faith in the word of God persuade we ourselves that we are in the love of God. If we find any evidences of his love in our spirits, we shall come to them by and by. But, first, I will name one or two directions how we may come to have God's love in us, and how to know that his love is in us.

1. We may come to have his love in us, if we be careful to preserve ourselves under the means of salvation, and, if so we do present God to ourselves, as he is presented in our glorious gospel. When we are convinced of sin first (I speak of such as are convinced thoroughly of a sinful state, such may come to the knowledge of God's love in Christ by the gospel, and by presenting God to their souls as he is presented in the gospel, to be the Father of mercy and the Father of Christ. The devil he puts other colours upon God: he presents him as a tyrant, as a judge, as a revenger, as one that hates him.

2. Again, Labour to be such as God may love us. God loves his own image. Wherefore doth he love Christ, but because he perfectly represents him? If we would come to have God's love in us, beg of him, that by his Spirit he would stamp his likeness in us; that as he is light, we may be light; as he is love, so we may have love; as he is pitiful, so we may have our hearts enlarged; as he is free in love, so we may be free in love; and that we may be holy, as he is holy; that as he hates sin, so we may hate it; that we may joy in him, affect what he doth affect, hate that which he hates; that so he may look upon us, as his own image, and delight in us, as the representation of his own likeness.

3. Again, We may come to have God's love, by more and more sequestering ourselves and our affections from conformity with his enemies; for this helps the other. If we would be like to God, and so come to have him delight and solace himself in us, we must withal labour to be unlike the world and wicked persons, that are yet in the state of corruption and danger of damnation. Let us labour not to conform ourselves to them, but to frame ourselves clean of another fashion; for you know, if we fashion ourselves to the world, the world is not of God, but it is God's enemy. How shall God delight in us, when we delight in courses that are sinful, wretched, and worldly? The world must perish, be condemned, as Paul saith, 'God afflicts us that we should not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. xi. 32. The world lies in mischief. Our especial care, therefore, must be, that we have no correspondency with it.

4. But especially, to come to that which I intend to make a distinct point, by the Spirit, and Christ's manifesting of God himself in the gospel: 'I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.'

Exhortation. Beg of Christ, therefore, the spirit of revelation, as it is Eph. i. 17, that you may know what is the exceeding love of God in Christ; and see the height, and breadth, and depth of God's love in him. Beg of Christ to show the Father to us. You know what that holy man said in the gospel, 'Show us the Father, and it is sufficient,' John xiv. 8. So desire we no more but to see the Father once. We must go to Christ, that he would show us the Father; and we must go to God the Father to discover his Son. For either or both discover the other. God draws us to Christ. 'There is none come to me,' saith Christ, 'but the Father draws them.' And Christ opens and discovers the Father to us, and the Holy Ghost discovers them both; for as

he proceeds from both, so he shows us the love of both. He shows us the love of the Father and the Son.

Labour, therefore, for the manifestation of Christ, that Christ would manifest his Father's love to us, and that God would manifest Christ by his Spirit: that the Father would give us his Spirit, and the Son would give us his Spirit, which is his love. For God's love is always with God's Spirit. This Spirit comes from him, and his love is always with his Spirit. The same Spirit that sanctifieth us, that witnesseth, is the Spirit of love. Now Christ doth manifest this. We must not only pray, but we must know how Christ manifests himself.

Christ doth manifest God's name to us, as I said before, which is his truth. He opens the understanding by his Spirit, and then he speaks to every man's particular soul by his Spirit. 'I am thy salvation;' he gives faith, &c., Luke xxiv. 45. All knowledge of God's love is from the knowledge of the gospel, together with his Spirit. For how can I know that God loves me, but by his own word and Spirit, by his own Son, Christ? I say, the Spirit and the word, which are divine, they persuade me of God's love. That must be above nature, above Satan, and above all opposition whatsoever, that convinces my heart of God's love in Christ. The arguments must be divine, taken out of God's truth; and those truths must be set on by the Spirit of God, which is above my spirit, and by Christ, God and man, who sends his Spirit. This will silence all objections whatsoever that the heart can make, as indeed our hearts are full of cavils against the love of God. God's Spirit will do it by Christ, together with the truth, the word and Spirit going together. And therefore, because I cannot enlarge myself, beg the Spirit of revelation; and because the Spirit and word go together, attend always upon the word, and think the promises are God's promises, and desire that Christ would set the promises upon our hearts, that we may know the things that belong to us in particular.

Use. Well, if this be so, that the declaring of God's favour and mercy is the way that his love may be in us, as it is, then what shall we think of those that are enemies to the declaration of the name of God, the preaching of the gospel, to the reading of Scripture? They are enemies of our comfort and of God's glory. For how shall I know that God loves me, but by declaring his name by the word, and by the Spirit? Christ by the Spirit and by the word declares his Father's name, and so I come to know the Father's love to me. How pitiful is the estate of those souls that live where there is no means, no

word of God, no declaring of God's name? Can the love of God be in them? No; this manifesting of God's love, it is with the manifestation of the truths of the gospel. 'I have manifested thy name in the teaching of the word, that thy love may be in them.' Let us therefore be persuaded to attend upon the means of salvation, and upon the Spirit of God, together with the means. God will work together with the means of salvation, and persuade our hearts of his love to us in Christ, if we attend meekly upon them, at one time or other.

Obj. Oh, but I have attended long upon the means, and have prayed, and yet I cannot find the love of God to me.

Ans. 1. Wait, wait a while; all are not called at one hour. Josias was called when he was young, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 2; and so Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15, and Joseph when they were young; Paul when he was old. Those that were converted at Peter's sermon were men of years, Acts ii. 88. Wait; the good hour will come. God perhaps will have thee under the law a little longer before thou come under grace. He will convince thee of thy cursed estate thou art in by nature, make thee see thyself more vile; and when he hath wrought and perfected the work of humiliation, then in time call thee. Leave not the porch of wisdom's house, leave not the manifestation of God's truth; for in time God will speak to thee, and will say to thy soul that he is thy salvation. To come to an evidence or two of this estate.

1. We may know that we have the love of God in us, among other things, if we come by this love by the manifestation of God's name, the manifestation of the truth of God, which is his name revealed in the gospel; if we have the love that we pretend we have of God in us, we can say it came by the declaration and manifestation of God's truth with his Spirit; from thence I came to know God's love to me.

2. I may know it likewise in that I love God as a in freely. He hath loved me, and therefore I love him. I will not offend him, if it were to save my life. I love his truth so, I value it as a pearl, above all things. I could sell all, I could part with all, rather than with that. Therefore God's love hath been heretofore certainly made known to me, in that I so love God and value his truth.

3. Seasonable afflictions (which the devil moves us to think evidences of God's hatred), they are evidences of his love, if they be sanctified, to make us jealous of our ways, and to see the depth of our corruptions the more, that

we can never see sufficiently in this life. They are arguments of God's love. But especially this,

4. If our love to God come from the word and Spirit, and from good things, that are manifested from thence. When thou dost find God's love in thee in regard of some beginnings of faith, hope, love, hatred of evil, and that there is peace, and joy, and such like things in thee, which are peculiar, then comfort thyself in thy portion, whosoever thou art, whatsoever estate thou art in for outward things. St Paul, we see, for outward matters, what a kind of man he was. He reckons up his own afflictions and abasements; but how full of thankfulness was he, because he knew that God loved him in Christ, that God's love was in him! 2 Cor. xi. 26. Our Saviour, Christ, what did he care for all these outward things? He knew his Father loved him. Let us therefore labour to have our part and portion in this peculiar love of God, and to be assured that God's love is in us; and for other matters, let us leave them to God's wisdom, who knows what is good for us, and beg of God thus: Lord, I do not ask of thee riches, I ask not glory, I ask not preferment in the world, I ask none of these: I ask thy love, in which all is that is good. For the love of God it is a rich love, as that love that he bears to his Son. If he love me once, he loves me as he loves his Son. Now, he loves him freely, and richly, and unchangeably, and with an incomparable love. God's love both to him and us, it is an incomparable love. For what is the love of a father but a drop from his love? And what is the love of a mother? 'Can a mother forget her child? Yet if she could, I would not forget thee,' saith God, Isa. xlix. 15. So David, 'When my father and mother forsook me, God took me up,' Ps. xxvii. 10. Behold the incomparable love of God to us! And therefore if we have that, we have all that is good.

The love of God, though with afflictions, with crosses, with whatsoever in the world is contrary, yet it is the most desirable estate; for one glimpse of God's fatherly countenance in Christ, it will make us in such a case as we shall not care for any affliction whatsoever. Paul in the dungeon, God gave him a taste of his love, and what did he care for whipping? for the darksomeness, for the nastiness and noisomeness of the prison? Acts xvi. 25. He was, as it were, in paradise. God's love was in him. If God's love be in us, if we be with Daniel in the lions' den, the den shall be a kind of paradise. I say, where God is, there is paradise; yea, indeed, where God's love is, there is heaven itself. So we have God's love, it is no matter what we want; nay, it is no matter in what state of misery we are in this world.

If God have kindled love in us, there is no such sweet estate. If it come from God, it will make us digest anything. Love it will put such life in us, that we shall want or suffer anything quietly. When we feel the love of God in us, that he loves us to immortality, that he loves us to life everlasting, to an inheritance immortal and undefiled, that he loves us in things that accompany salvation, peculiar blessings, this will swallow up all discouragements whatsoever, it will make us be in heaven before our time. The sense of the love of God, when it is shed into our hearts, as it is Rom. v. 5, what will it do? It will make all tribulations, afflictions, crosses, and wants sweet unto us. 'The love of God,' saith he, 'is shed into our hearts by the Spirit.' When the Spirit of Christ Jesus is shed into our hearts, and witnesseth to us the love of God and of Christ, it makes us rejoice under hope, triumph in all tribulation, in all estates whatsoever, as he saith excellently, Rom. v. 3-5. But now to add one thing.

Quest. When doth Christ manifest his Father's love most to us by the Spirit?

Ans. I answer, This is not at all times alike. For it is with a Christian's soul as it is with the days of the year, or the seasons of the day. There is foul and fair, there is darkness and light, there is an intercourse, not always an even apprehension to us of God's love in Christ at all times. God sees reasons why it should not be so. Among many there are these,

1. To sharpen our desires of heaven, which is a constant, immutable, unchangeable estate.

2. And likewise to make its watchful, that when we have tasted of God's love we do not lose it.

3. To make us observe how we lose it at first, that so we may recover it again.

4. To be a correction to us likewise for our boldness to sin, and keeping carnal company, Sc. Many ends God hath to withhold the taste and sense of his love to us, that we may fear him at one time as well as at another.

Quest. But when is it most of all?

Ans. God's love is in us most when we stand most in need of it, in extremities. When no creature can help us, when we stand most in need of

the manifestation of God's love, we have it. When do parents show their love most of all? Is it not in the extremities of their children? Then they [be]moan them, and pity them, whom before in the time of health they corrected sharply. But now they see the child is sick and distempered, now they show all love to it. So when all comforts are taken away, then God's comforts come in place, and then especially; for then they are known to be God's, who doth all things as shall be most for his glory. Then it is most for his glory to help when none else can, and then it is most for the comfort of a poor distressed Christian; for then God comes, as it were, immediately, and doth help even to the ravishing of the soul. If a prince or a king, not sending any messenger, should come to a man immediately, in his own person, and should say to him, Fear not, you shall want nothing, you shall have the best encouragement I can, &c., Oh what a comfort would it be to any man! Yet what are all these to the sweet report of God's love in Jesus Christ? When nothing else can help us, then God's Spirit comes immediately to us, and tells us, Be of good comfort, heaven is yours, God is yours, Christ is yours: all is yours to work for your good. And he doth not only feed them with promises, but enlargeth the soul with present comfort.

Who would therefore be discouraged from enduring anything for God's name, being cast into extremity, when that is the time specially to feel God's love more than at other times? the sense and feeling whereof in Christ is the best estate in the world. There is no estate comparable to the sense of God's love. What makes heaven heaven, as it were, but the sense of his love? of his sweet fatherly face in Christ shining upon us in his Son, and persuading of us that we are his sons? Why, this divine comfort that comes from the favour of God, it is that that makes all nothing, commands all the creatures, rebukes all, Satan and all. The beams of such a rich and gracious God is above all discouragements; for they are human or diabolical; they go no higher; and if they be discouragements from the sense of the wrath of God, from divine desertion, when God shows himself an enemy, yet when he discovers himself a friend and a father in Christ, they all vanish, even as a cloud, as a mist, before the sun. What are all earthly discouragements to the sense of God's love in Christ? Thus we see how God's love is manifested to us by manifesting of God's name by Christ, and when especially, and to what end: 'That thy love may be in them,' saith Christ.

Use 1. Do but raise these thoughts in your meditations, what a comprehensive thing this is that Christ aims at in his prayer, and in his endeavour; 'I have declared thy name, and I will,' &c.

Is not this therefore a main thing that we should aim at, that Christ aims at? Must not this needs be an excellent state, to have the love of God in us? Let us therefore, to conclude all for this time, have it in our thoughts, and in our aims, that God's love may be in us. It is no matter who hates us, if God loves us; if God and his love be present with us, it is no matter what troubles be present. Though we be in the valley of the shadow of death, if God be with us, and the assurance of his love to our hearts, it is an heaven upon earth. Rejoice in your portion, whosoever you be, that find the love of God to you in regard of the best things.

We see it is the aim of Christ's prayer, and of his endeavour. It is the aim of the declaration of the gospel, that God's love may be in you; that when God, in regard of his Spirit, and grace, and comfort, is in you, you may have a rich portion. Would you have more than God himself, and his love? What if you want a beam? You have the sun itself, God's love. You want perhaps riches or friends; ay, but you have God's love, which is a wise love. If he saw it were for your good, you should not want them. If you want a stream, you have the spring itself. Rejoice therefore in this your portion; let it be an argument to comfort you, and an argument and motive of endeavour to us all, to labour to find this love of God in us; and to root and purge out of your souls all other things that cannot stand with the love of God. Desire God by his Spirit to subdue in us, and to work out of us mightily, by the strong operation of his blessed Spirit, whatsoever cannot stand with his love in Christ; that he would reign and rule in us by his blessed Spirit; that he would make us such, that he might, as it were, keep his court in us; that he would make our hearts, as it were, an heaven for himself to dwell in; that he would cast down all high and proud thoughts whatsoever; that his love may be in us.

Use 2. And when we want any grace, pitiful hearts, love to men or God, we must take the method here laid down. I know all this comes from the want of the feeling of God's love to me; for if God's love were rooted in my heart, if it were as hard as steel, it would make it flexible, pliable, pitiful, and tender to others, and I should love God again. My heart is cold and dead; what is the reason of it? I feel not God's love, and therefore it should edge our prayers thus: 'Lord, let me feel thy love in Christ; I cannot love holy duties without the manifestation of thy love; and therefore manifest thy love to my soul.' 'I give you a new commandment,' saith Christ, 'that ye love one another,' John xiii. 34.

Quest. Why, whence comes this commandment of love to the brethren in the gospel to be a new commandment?

Sol. Because the declaring of the name of God, of his mercy, and of his love in Christ, gives us new hearts; and where there is more manifestation of God's mercy, there is more love to others; and therefore, because there is a new enlargement of God's love in Christ, therefore it is a new commandment. The heart is set on fire now with the love of God, which is manifested in Christ, which was not declared before.

And therefore, if we would have new hearts for this new commandment, this love to God and to others, let us labour to have the declaration of the name of God; more of the mercy of God in Christ; more declaration by his word and Spirit; that so by his sanctified means, having his love in us, we may have new hearts, new love, and new affections to one another. This is the way, in the want of grace, to come to get the love of God in Christ; desire him that he would by his Spirit reveal himself, and reveal Christ to us; and that we may see the dimensions of his love, 'the height, and breadth, &c., of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,' Eph. iii. 19, and then all our grace and comfort will follow.

When we are in darkness we are glad to come into the light of the sun; so when we have any distemper in our souls, let us come to this light of God's love in Christ, and by oft meditation of God's word, see there how he presents himself to us a father in covenant; not only a friend, but a father, a gracious father; beg with all means, with reading, with hearing, with conference, with God's Spirit, to reveal his fatherly affection in Christ, and for other things they will be easy.

I speak this the rather, because men go plodding upon duties, and take not a right method. When we find any distemper and deadness of spirit, search what is the cause of it. If it be negligence, irreverence, or any such thing, let us repent, and do the first works. But let us always take this in: 'Lord, show thyself, show thy love; thy pardoning love first, and then thy curing love; thy forgiving love, and then thy giving love. I am in a sinful state, forgive that which is amiss, and give me that which I want; show thy large love every way, both in giving and forgiving; heal me and cure me; let me feel this thy love in the sweetest peculiar fruits of it;' and then reformation will follow upon all, then our care will be continual, when we have the love of God so to walk as that we may abide in that love, and that love in us, that we do not displease him, nor give occasion of distaste.

Therefore there must be a great deal of reverence and love, much humility and watchfulness, if we would preserve ourselves in the love of God. For when one hath once tasted of his love, it is his desire always to taste it, to taste how gracious the Lord is, Ps. xxxiv. 8. If we therefore would so do, let us watch narrowly, as he that would keep his acquaintance and love with a great person. For we must know the distance between the great God and us. There must be humility. Humble thyself, and walk with thy God, and 'make an end of your salvation with fear and trembling,' Philip, ii. 12. With a fear of jealousy, especially that we grieve not the Spirit, that 'seals us to the day of redemption,' Ephes. iv. 30. And therefore, if we have the Spirit witnessing this love, which is the cause of all comfort and all grace, grieve not the Spirit, quench not the Spirit. When the motions of it come, resist not the gracious Spirit with carnal delights; let the Spirit have a full work; let us lie open to the Spirit of God. God's love reigns in us then, when we will do nothing contrary to it.

Now the sweetest fruit of it in us is his Spirit. Let us not quench nor resist the Spirit, but cherish it by all duties, and by all holy means. One day led thus by a Christian, though with some conflict with corruption, in the taste and sense of God's love to him in Christ, is worth all contentment that this world can afford. And therefore David knew well enough what he wished, Ps. iv. 6, when he desires 'neither corn, nor wine, nor oil.' Let them, saith he, desire what they will, but, 'Lord, show me the light of thy countenance,' and in it I shall have all that I desire to have; and without that I care neither for corn, nor wine, nor oil, nor any thing.

So let it be our prayer that God would show his love and mercy, that he would show his love to us in Christ, which is better than life itself. And then for other things, be at a point, be indifferent. We see the apostles' prayers in their epistles, all of them being led by the same Spirit. They pray for grace, and mercy, and peace. Why do they not pray for all other things? To show if they had grace, and mercy, and the love of God, they have all. If we have not that, it is no matter what we have. But some other things there are to be unfolded, which must be referred till another time.

Sermon II

That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.—John XVII. 26.

I have spoken at several times of this verse. We propounded formerly out of it these points to be handled:

First, That the love wherewith God loves his own Son is the love wherewith he loves those that he in him.

Secondly, That God loves his own Son host and first.

Thirdly, That the love of God is the cause of all good to us.

Fourthly, That this love of God may he known.

Fifthly, That one way and ground to know that God loves us with that love he loves his own Son, is the manifestation of God's name: the manifestation of God's truth in the gospel. By that we come to know that God loves us; for this is the coherence of the text, 'I have manifested thy name to them, that thy love may be in them.' So then, the scope, as we see hence, of the gospel, and the manifesting of it, is to lay open the riches of God's love to us, that we may know that God loves us in his beloved Son Christ Jesus. Indeed, so it is. For we have a throne of grace discovered to us in the gospel—God reconciled in Jesus Christ. All is love and mercy to those that are in Christ. 'I have manifested thy name, that thy love may be in them.' The more, therefore, God's name is manifested, God's truth and the covenant of grace, his love and mercy, his name whereby he is now known in the gospel, the more, I say, it is discovered and laid open, surely the more we know God's love, which is as a banner, Cant. ii. 4, 'displayed over us' in the gospel. The use of a banner, you know, was to draw swords under it. Now God's love in the gospel is displayed as a banner; and therefore it hath an attractive, drawing force, to bring us under the sweet government of God in the gospel, because there we are under God's love; and his love, where it is displayed, is like a banner. But this I shall have occasion to touch hereafter.

The point that I am now to take in hand is this: That Christ doth manifest his Father's name, his love, his mercy, his goodness and truth, 'that God's love may be in them, and himself in them.'

We see, then, that God's love and Christ do go together. Wheresoever his love is in the best things, there it is in Christ, and with Christ: 'That thy love may be in them, and I in them. 'This is eternal life, to know thee, and whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ,' John xvii. 3. All comes from God's love to us, together with Christ and in Christ. Where Christ is not, there is not the

love of God; and where the love of God is, there is Christ. The sweet combination of the Trinity is not only a pattern of love and agreement to us, that we should love one another, but a main ground of comfort likewise; for they join in love for our good. The Father loves us as he loves his Son, and with his Son. Where Christ is, there is his Father's love; and where his Father's love is, there is Christ. 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me,' John x. 38. All that the Father hath is mine, and all that I have is the Father's.

I say, it is not only a pattern of agreement, that we should labour to agree as the Trinity, which is an exact form of unity, but it is a ground of special comfort; they agree in our good and eternal salvation. The Father looks upon us as we are in his Son; as he hath given us to him to bring us to salvation by his merit and passion. Christ looks on us as we are in the Father's love. 'Thou gavest them me;' and we look on ourselves, first, in Christ, and then in God's love, when we see ourselves in Christ. So that there is this mutual interview, God loves us as we are in his Son: he is in the Father, and we in Christ. We see ourselves in Christ, know ourselves in him, and love ourselves in him, as having our being and living in him, and we are known by him, and his love is known by us, because they go both together. 'That thy love may be in them, and I in them.'

'And I in them.'

We are in Christ, as the branch in the vine, as the members in the head, knit to it in the body; and he is in us as the vine is in every particular branch; as the head is in the members by his influence, imparting unto them life, regiment, and motion. 'In them;' that is, for the explication of the term, 'that I may be in them,' and dwell in them as in a temple, in a house; that I may infuse strength into them, as the vine into the branches; that I may impart spiritual life into them, as the head into the members. This is the end of my manifesting thy name, that I may be in them, that so thy love may be in them. I might hence observe—I will but touch it—that whosoever knows not Christ, nor hath a being in him, hath nothing to do with the Father, by combining of these two parts together, 'That thy love may be in them, and I in them.'

'I in them.'

Doct. The end of Christ's manifesting his Father's name is, that he may be in them, and that his Father's love may be in them. To unfold the connection a little.

Quest. How doth this hang together, 'I have manifested thy name to them, that I may be in them'?

As thus:

Sol. God's mercy and truth in the gospel, the covenant of grace, are all in Christ, and for Christ. This being discovered and manifested to the soul, the soul sees the love of God in the gospel. There it is opened and discovered. There is offered God's love and mercy in forgiving sins, and in giving all privileges in Christ, not only discovered, but offered to all believers that will receive Christ. Thus all the good in him being discovered and offered to the soul, hereupon it comes to lay hold upon Christ, and to embrace him, as offered of the Father, and presented unto it by the Spirit of God, given together with the gospel and the manifestation of it. The Spirit works faith and belief in the heart, which closeth with Christ thus offered; so Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Faith ascends to heaven, and lays hold on Christ; faith goes back to Christ crucified, and Christ dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Upon the manifestation and discovery of the Spirit, it being given with manifestation, faith is wrought, by which Christ dwells in the heart. 'I have manifested thy name, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them,' &c. Now, for some observable points, observe this,

Doct. 2. Christ is in all believers.

His further dwelling and discovering himself to believers is the end of this manifestation of God's name in the gospel. Christ is in them, as the vine is in the branches; as the head is in the members, Christ is in them all.

Christ is in all believers.

Here is a notable bond of union between them, Christ by his Spirit is in them all, therefore they should all labour to be one. Christ is one in them all, not divided; his Spirit is the same spirit in them all. It were an excellent thing, if all the men in the world had the same thoughts, the same religion, the same aims, the same affection to good things, all as one man. How strongly would they then be carried against any opposition whatsoever! And how comfortable would they be in themselves, if all had one heart, one affection, one aim! This should be, and this is the end of Christ's prayer. It is the end of all, to bring us all to be one in ourselves, to be one in him and in the Father. Now here is one argument to enforce it, that all may agree in good things, in our aims, love, and affections. There is one Christ, there is one head of all the

members. 'I in them.' We must take heed that we do not think this phrase to be a shallow phrase, as it is in common life. We say of two friends, there is one soul in two bodies, because the soul lives in the party loved; and so to make it nothing but a matter of affection. No; 'I in them' that is, I dwell in them, because I love them; so it would be, that we are in Christ because we love him; and so Christ and we make one soul in two bodies, as though it were nothing but an unity, a dwelling in regard of the affection he bears to us. No; I am in them, and I have manifested thy truth, that I may be further in them. It argues more than union in affection, as in marriage there is. more than the union of love, there is the bond that interesteth the wife in all the goods of her husband. Christ is in us more than in love, for he is in us indeed.

Quest. Ay, but is he in us body and soul, and Godhead, and all? What need this, as the papists will have him in the sacrament?

Sol. No; but he is in us in regard of his human nature, because his Spirit is in us, and the same Spirit that sanctified that nature, the same Spirit sanctifieth us. So there is an union between us and his human nature, though it be in heaven. As I said, the last day, of the sun; the sun is in the house when the beams of the sun is there; so when we find the efficacy of Christ, that Christ dwells in us by his Spirit, though his human nature be not there, yet, notwithstanding, the power of the grace of Christ is there, because the same Spirit that sanctified his human nature sanctifies and comforts us, and doth all. It is a wonderful working and operative being when Christ is said to be in us. Even as the vine doth transfuse juice and life to the branch, whereupon it comes to be fruitful, so we must conceive deeply of this phrase, 'I in them.' To omit other things;

Quest. How shall we know that Christ is in us?

Sol. 1. This is one way, if Christ be born in us once. If he be in us by his Spirit, he will work great matters in us, there will presently be tumults in the soul. For Christ when he is in us, he comes not to friends, but he finds all in rebellion and in opposition; when he is in us therefore, presently there are stirs in the soul. Even as, as soon as ever he was born into the world, you know Herod was mightily troubled and all Jerusalem with him, Mat. ii. 3. Herod had little cause, but much troubled he was. He thought one was born that would have dispossessed him, and therefore he was jealous, much troubled, and labours to kill him if he could. So it is when Christ is born in the soul, there are tumults. Those lusts that bare sway before, those desires,

down they go, they plead prescription, and are loath to yield. Natural desires, that have been from before, are loath to yield to Christ, a new comer. He is as a new conqueror that comes with new laws, fundamentally new. He overturns all the laws of lust and of the flesh. He comes in more strongly; and thereupon in conversion, wheresoever Christ is born, there is first a strife, the soul doth not presently yield to him. This is spoken of those that have not been converted from the beginning. There are some now in the bosom of the church, that have no violent conversion from a wicked estate to a good. But from a less degree to a greater, they grow more and more. They have the Spirit of Christ from the beginning. They are not much troubled with such inward oppositions.

2. Where Christ is, he will drive out all that is contrary. As when he entered into the temple, he drove out the money-changers, and whipped out those corrupt persons there, Mat. i. 12, so, as soon as ever he comes into the soul by his Spirit, out go those lusts, those desires that were there before, worldliness, profaneness, fury, and rage, wherewith the soul was transported before, that possessed the habitation that God should dwell in. When Christ comes in, he scourgeth out all. Where these therefore are in any force, there certainly Christ is not.

3. Again, Where Christ is, he cloth rule; for he takes the keys of the house himself, and governs all in some measure. He gets into the heart, rules, and sets up a throne there. For I make account if he go no deeper than the brain and tongue; that is, to give him no better entertainment than he had when he was born, to be put in a manger. No; where he is—I mean, where he is in the heart and affections—there he rules; and 'where he takes not his lodging in the affections and in the heart, in the joy, desire, and delight, he is not at all to any purpose. To have him in the brain to talk, and in the tongue to discourse, and to keep the heart for worldly lusts and such things, I account not this an inbeing of Christ to any purpose, to any comfort. Where Christ is comfortably, he takes his throne and lodging in the heart, he dwells in it by faith. By heart, I mean, especially, the will and affections. He draws the will to cleave to him, to choose him for the best good. And therefore where Christ dwells, there is an admiring of the excellencies, and of the good things that are in him, and contentment in him above all things in the world. For he dwells in the heart and affections, especially in the will. The will chooseth him to be an head and husband. It cleaves to him as the chief good. The affection of joy, it joys in him above all things. The affection of love and desire, of zeal in his cause, is strong against those that oppose him and his

truth. Thus he takes up his seat and his throne in the heart wheresoever he is in truth.

4. And, therefore, this follows upon that too. Where Christ is in the heart by faith, and takes up the affections, there is a base esteem of ail the excellencies in this world whatsoever. Moses did but see afar off the excellency that came by Christ, and he accounted all the pleasures of sin for a season to be nothing, Heb. xi. 27, and took upon him the rebuke of Christ rather. St Paul accounted all but dung and dross, Philip, iii. 8; all his former works, all his pharisaical excellency, and all things else he accounted as nothing, and of no value, having in his heart and soul an admiration of the all-sufficiency and excellency in Christ. Zaccheus, as soon as ever Christ came once into his house—but he was in his heart before he was in his house, or else he had never done it—he grew liberal: ‘Half my goods,’ saith he, ‘I give unto the poor,’ Luke xix. 8. He loved extortion and base courses before, but now down they go, he will be no base dealer, no oppressor any more. No; the half of his goods he gives to the poor, and he satisfies those whom he had wronged.

And so the disciples, howsoever they were busied before, when Christ once took up his lodging in their hearts, and opened their spirits by his Spirit, to see wherefore he came into the world ‘to save sinners,’ and opened their eyes to see the excellency that was in him, away goes all the trash that they were exercised in before, that they might follow Christ. Matthew follows him presently, Luke v. 27; and so the rest. It is impossible that the heart which entertains our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ into it, should have in over-much admiration any earthly excellency whatsoever. For it is the nature of the soul, upon the discovery of better things, to let the estimation of other things of less value to fall down presently. As we see in civil things, children, when they come to be men, they are ashamed of childish toys. So it is with a man that is converted: when Christ enters he so opens the understanding, and enlargeth the heart to see and admire better things, that presently it begins to care nothing for this world in comparison. Thus we see how we may know whether Christ hath taken his scat and lodging in us or no.

5. To go on a little further. If Christ he in us, he cloth frame us to himself. He doth transform us to his own likeness, where he rules by the Spirit; for he is such a head as changeth his members, such an husband as changeth his spouse, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Moses could not change the complexion of his Ethiopian wife: she was black, and he left her black. But Christ renews

and changeth his spouse. He is such a head as quickens his members; such a vine as puts life in the branches. And therefore you may know by this altering, changing, transforming power, whether he be in you or not. He alters and changeth us to his own likeness, that as he is set down in the gospel in his life, conversation, and disposition, so, if we have entertained him and he be in us, we should have the same disposition, the same mind, and the same will with him; for he will alter us to himself, that he may take the more delight in us. We shall judge of things as he judgeth of them, we shall judge meanly of outward things. There will be a delight to do our Father's will, as it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, John iv. 3-1. We shall have a spirit of obedience, as he had, to look to our Father's glory, and to his commandment in all things. We shall have compassion and melting hearts to the misery of others, as he had bowels yearning to see sheep without a shepherd. We shall have humble and meek hearts, as he had. 'Come, learn of me, for I am humble and meek,' Mat. xi. 20. For where he dwells, I say, and takes up his throne, he alters and changes the disposition in all things to be like his own. For when he comes to the soul, he takes up all the parts thereof, and keeps out all that may hinder his work. He takes up the eyes, the ears, the understanding, and the affections; and even as we shut up the doors and windows against all that is contrary to us, so the Spirit of Christ, where he is, shuts the door of the senses both to Satan and all his suggestions, and whatsoever else might hurt us.

G. Where he enters likewise, he possesseth the whole inward and outward man to himself. He changeth it like to himself; he rules the eyes, the ears, the hands; he renews all, that our delights are clean other than they were before. If there be such a power in his truth, that, like a scion engrafted, it doth change us into itself, certainly where Christ dwells, he hath as much power as his word. His word is like leaven, which alters the whole lump to be like itself. For the word engrafted makes the soul that believes it heavenly like itself, 1 Cor. v. 7. How is this? Because Christ comes with his word, leavens, alters, changeth, and turns the soul. Christ by his Spirit and word is said to do it, because the Spirit of Christ comes with the word, which doth all. Those therefore whose dispositions are contrary to Christ, Christ is not begotten in them. For certainly he doth alter and change and fit his temple for himself, and drives out and chaseth thence, as I said before, all that is contrary; and keeps the door of the senses, and possession against all. He useth every member as an instrument of the Spirit and weapon of defence.

7. Again, You may know who dwells within, by what servants come out of the house, and who comes in. Would you know who dwells in the soul? See what comes from within the house: filthy thoughts, blasphemous words, oaths, rotten discourse; eyes full of adultery, ears open to receive that which may taint the soul. Who dwells here? Christ? No; where nothing but filth comes out, the devil dwells there. These two are immediate opposites; there is no third; either Christ or the devil dwells in us. Now when nothing comes out of a man but scorning of goodness, and that which is rotten and offensive—if there be other things, they come from the brain, and not from the heart; they have no seat there—the devil is there; Christ and his messengers are not there. There come no good thoughts, no good desires, no good speeches; and is Christ there? Is Christ in the heart, that drinks in corruption at all the senses? that lets open all the senses to all that is naught, to hear all kinds of things that may cherish corruption, that will be at these corrupting exercises, that will see all that may blow up the flesh? What is this within that is thus cherished? Is Christ fed with filthy discourse, with filthy spectacles? Doth Christ, in us, delight in these things? Oh no! Who dwells there, then, that is thus fed? Sure the spirit that is there fed is the devil. The devil dwells in our spirits, and in our corruptions, which are like the devil, in that proportion that he dwells in us, and stirs us up to feed him with these things, to the destruction of the soul. No, no, from the heart where Christ is proceed often prayer, sighs, and groans to God, and fruitful discourses to others; and all the senses and passages of the body are open for good things. He hath desires to see that which is good, which may edify. He desires to speak, and to have others to speak, that which may feed the soul. The lips of the wise feed many, saith Solomon, Prov. x. 21. So where Christ is, Christ's Spirit is thus fed. Thus familiarly have I discovered to you how you may know whether Christ be in you or no.

Quest. What if he be not?

Sol. He must be, or else you are reprobates. So saith the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Know you not that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?' he means not eternal reprobates, but this, If Christ be not in you, the devil and corruption are. Anatomise a carnal man, and what is in him? In his brain, a company of wicked plots and devices of the world; in his heart, a deal of love of the world, and of money; in his memory, matter of revenge; in his conscience, that which will stare upon him at the day of death, and that which will damn him unless he repent. Examine yourselves, therefore. If Christ be not in you, you are reprobates; and he that hath not the Spirit of

Christ, he is none of his. I beseech you, therefore, take a trial, and enlarge the point in your own meditations. Examine what spirit is in you. If we find the Spirit of Christ to be in us, as, indeed, he is in all his in some measure, what a comfortable state is this! He is the best guest that ever we could entertain in this world, for he doth that to the soul that the soul doth to the body. What doth the soul to the body? Whence hath the body the beauty that it hath? whence the vigour that it hath to work with? to move from place to place? whence hath it government to rule itself? whence all that is excellent, good and useful? From the guest that dwells in it, the soul—the reasonable, understanding soul. For as soon as the soul is out of the body, the body is an ugly, deformed thing, a dead creature, unfit for anything. It cannot stir itself, a loathsome thing; it cannot rule itself, a mere lump of earth. Now, as the soul is to the body, so is Christ to the soul, if he dwell there. For he gives beauty and loveliness unto it. He transforms it to his own likeness and image, that it may be the object of God's love; that he may love us, not only because we are in his Son, but because his Son's image is in us. We have not only beauty from Christ dwelling in us, but where he is he works and stirs us to all holy and heavenly duties.

8. Where the Spirit is, there is often prayer, as Christ often prayed; a perpetual endeavour of doing good, as his Spirit in him stirred him to go from place to place to do good. Where his Spirit is, there is holiness. If we consider what a sweet guest Christ is, where he is there is all beauty, work, comfort, strength, and all. And where he is, he is for ever. He never forsakes his lodging, he never forsakes his house and temple. He had we temples built with stone; one by Solomon, and another after the captivity. Both lie now in the rubbish, and are demolished for ever, and shall never be repaired again. But his spiritual temples he never leaves wholly; for whose souls he now dwells in, he will take them by that Spirit that dwells in them, and carry them to heaven, to be where he is. The divine Spirit, that dwells in our souls now, shall quicken our dead bodies, and make them like to his glorious body.

What an excellent honour and happiness is this, to entertain such an one as will rule, govern, and adorn our souls while we live, and carry them to himself and to his Father in heaven, and will quicken our bodies likewise! An everlasting inhabitant he is. If Christ be in us, therefore, we may comfort ourselves. But here must be an objection answered.

Obj. Christ doth seem oftentimes to be absent from the soul to which he was present before; he seems to leave his house and his temple sometimes.

Sol. I answer, He is said to leave that soul into which, shutting the door to his knocks, and resisting the sweet motions of his Holy Spirit, he never actually entered. But he never leaves that soul into which he is once entered to dwell. Indeed, sometimes he conveys himself into a corner of the soul; for when he does not entertain him and respect him as he should, and preserve the motions, comforts, and graces of his Spirit, but give way to the suggestions and temptations of the devil and ill company, &c., then he retires himself; but he is still in the soul. For even as God the Father, when he would have his own beloved Son Christ Jesus to be abased on the cross, withdrew not his divinity, but the sense and comforts thereof from Christ's human nature, that he might suffer for us on the cross, Matt, xxvii. 46—loving him still notwithstanding, so that the divinity did not forsake him, but only did rest and cease to support and comfort him at that time, that he might perform the work of satisfaction for our sins—so it is with us, though it be a different case, when God humbles us for our rashness, want of reverence, of careful walking before God, and preserving the sweet work of his Holy Spirit: then Christ hides himself only, takes not himself away.

Christ was God on the cross, but the comfort was withdrawn, that he might suffer. So the comfort of Christ's presence is withdrawn, that he may humble us for our former sins; that we might make more of this guest than we did before; that we may be stirred up to entertain him better, and might be more careful for the time to come, to cleave closer unto him. So much for the answer of that, that Christ is oftentimes in the soul, when he discovers not himself to be there; as he was near unto Mary, though her eyes being full of tears, she could not discern him, John xx. 15.

Quest. But how shall I know that he is there by any discovery at all, that he hath any being at all in the soul at such a time?

Sol. 1. Yes; a man may know he is there. There will be some pulses, some beating of the soul. Where Christ and the love of God is, they ever go together. Is there any love of God, any love to him? Again, Is there a longing after Christ's presence? Is there a grieving, when we feel not the comfort we had before? Oh this is a sign he hath been there. He hath left somewhat there by his Spirit. Though he be retired into a corner of the soul, yet he hath left somewhat behind him to work a desire of further communion and

fellowship with him. As it is Cant. v. 5, when he left knocking at the door, when the spouse would not open, he left somewhat behind, the droppings of his fingers, that drew the love of the spouse to him. So that he never leaves us, no, not for to humble and abase us for our bold walking, but he leaves somewhat in the soul, some desires, some sense of his love, that they think their estate is not good till they have recovered their former estate. They linger after him, they are never pleased with earthly contentments in this temper of the soul. In desertion they are not themselves, they are not quiet, because they think Christ is lost. As Christ's mother, when she thought he was lost, was full of woe, Luke ii. 48, so a Christian soul, when it conceits that it hath lost Christ, it is never quiet till it have found him again.

Sol. 2. Again, Christ may be very near, and dwell in us sometimes, and we see him not: because we may so dwell upon corruption, and be so full [of] grief in affliction, that we forget Christ; as Mary, who, though Christ was near her, yet could not discern him, her eyes were so full of tears, John xx. 15; and as Hagar, who was so full of grief, that she could not see the fountain appear, Gen. xxi. 16. There may be, I say, in desertion of soul such grief for our other things, crosses, losses, fears, &c., that a man may forget Christ, till he recover himself by meditation, prayer, and conference with others that are more skilful than himself, that can tell what is in him by his pulses, discourse, and desires. Sometimes we must trust the judgment of others better than our own, to know what is in us. But I will not enlarge myself in this. Thus we may know that Christ is in us, which is a point of especial comfort.

Obj. But the soul thinks, Is the Spirit of Christ in us? Will such an Holy Spirit, as that we cannot conceive him in the height of his holiness and greatness, vouchsafe to dwell in such sinful spirits? We cannot conceive how the Spirit of Christ should dwell in us, that are so corrupt as we are.

Sol. Indeed, I must needs say, it is an argument of wonderful love, that infinite holiness should be joined with such corruption, that greatness will be in such narrow' straits, that glory will be in such an obscure place and habitation as our souls. Here is a wondrous condescending; admirable mercy it must needs be. But let us not be discouraged; Christ by his Spirit is in us, notwithstanding our corruption, because he cannot be a whit corrupted by it. The Spirit is an active thing, it suffers nothing. The spirit is as fire, which endures nothing; it is always doing, always in action, it is an active element. So the Spirit of Christ in us, though it be in us, yet it joins not with our corruptions. As the sunbeams are pure still, though they shine upon impure

and filthy places, so Christ's Spirit, it is a working, fiery thing. As fire consumes dross, so the Spirit, being like fire, though it be where corruption is, yet it is there, as an enemy to it, opposing, consuming, and wasting it by little and little.

Quest. But why doth he not do it all at once?

Sol. There are divers reasons: God will have us to have matter of abasement here, to make us desire to be with him. Yet in the mean time Christ will be so in the Church his spouse, cleansing and fitting her for himself, as that by his Spirit dwelling in her she shall daily oppose, and by little and little subdue and bring under all corruption whatsoever, till at last she have gotten a full and perfect conquest and triumph over all. All the imaginations, desires, and lusts, that exalt themselves against the Spirit of Christ, shall be brought down at last; the Spirit will subdue all. Stronger is the Spirit that is in us, than the spirit that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4, though it be in never so little a measure; and therefore by little and little will conquer all within us, without us, the devil and all at the last. Thus much to answer that doubt.

Use 1. That which further ariseth from hence, that Christ is in us, is not only matter of comfort, but likewise it shows and directs us how to look on other Christians; to look upon them as the temples and, houses where Christ dwells. Why should we not reverence and respect Christians for the guest that is in them, the Spirit of Christ? If Christ vouchsafe to dwell in such a man, shall he not dwell in our love? Shall not one place contain us here, that heaven must contain ere long? We shall be all together in heaven, and shall we not be loving together here? Thus considering that Christ is in all his, how should we respect Christians, that are the habitation of Christ, the second heaven? For Christ hath but two heavens; the heaven where he is, and the heart of a believing Christian, where Christ is, and rules in a comfortable measure, and will rule more and more. How should we value such! Not as many cursed devilish spirits, that disgrace and oppose Christ in his members. That which they do to his image in his children, that they would to him himself, if they had him in their power.

Use 2. The last use shall be an use of direction, how to keep Christ, and to preserve him, and the sense of his being in us with comfort, seeing it is so comfortable an estate to have Christ in us, and that yet oftentimes we want the sweet comfort of his presence. In a word, mark here the dependence, 'I have manifested thy name, that thy love may be in them and I in them.' Christ is in

us then, by manifesting of divine truth. He conveys himself into our hearts, by our understandings; he manifests his truth, the means of salvation, by his ordinance; he manifests divine truths to the understanding by his Spirit, which goes together with his word. From the understanding he goes to the heart, and there he dwells; for manifesting of divine truths, and Christ being in us, go together.

1. Those that care not for the discovery and manifesting of Christ's truth in the gospel, let them never think to entertain Christ into their hearts, for he will come with his word and with his own ordinance; his word and Spirit always go together. Therefore let this be one chief direction. If we will have Christ to be in us, to fill our hearts, and remain with us, let us attend upon the blessed means of salvation, and be where he is, and then he will be with us. He is in the church, and he is in every particular member; but especially where his ordinance is, there is he with the Spirit. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all there if we have Christ in us. And therefore oft attend upon the ordinances of God, and communion of saints, and then you shall find experience of Christ. Christ joined with the two disciples when they were talking of him, as they were going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 15; so let us oft stir up the grace of Christ in us by conferring of good things, and Christ will be with us, joining with good company, &c.

2. Again, Would we preserve Christ's presence in us? Labour then that he may dwell largely in our hearts. Now that which enlargeth the soul is humility. For it empties the soul, and makes it large. Pride swells the soul up, and drives out Christ. God gives grace to the humble; Christ dwells in the humble soul. You know he was born in an humble virgin's womb, and he is new born in the womb of an humble soul. Preserve therefore humble, base conceits of ourselves; that in us there is nothing that is good, nothing worthy to be respected, that so Christ may dwell largely in our hearts. Let us have no wit, no reason of our own, contrary to Christ. Let us have no wills, no desires contrary to his. Let us even give up the keys and the regiment of our souls to him, and then he will dwell largely there. Humility keeps him there. If his word be our reason, his commandment our will, and his comfort our joy and delight, then he will dwell largely in us, for there is nothing in us to oppose him. But if we have several states of soul, distinct from his government, it is no wonder we banish him, when we will not live by faith in him, but by our wits, shifts, tricks, lusts, the examples of others, and by the spirit of the world. It is no wonder, I say, that we savour only of earthly things if we live thus. It is no wonder that Christ is not preserved in us if we be not ruled by

his Spirit. It is no wonder that he departs from us when we set ourselves contrary to him, and have wills and reasons of our own repugnant and disagreeable to his, and ways to get wealth, and to raise ourselves contrary to his gospel and truth. Will Christ rule in such a soul? No. He subdues all. The Spirit of Christ is like a mighty wind, as it is compared by Christ to Nicodemus, John iii. 8, that beats all down before it. If we cherish contrary desires and contrary delights to Christ, it is no wonder if he delight not to dwell in such a soul.

B. Beg of Christ likewise that he would stay with us; as they in the gospel, when he made as if he would have gone forward from them, Luke xxiv. 29, constrained him to stay, saying, 'Abide with us: for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent;' and he went in to tarry with them. So, lay we hold on Christ, by the means of salvation; stay him with us by prayer and importunity, especially when the night of death, and error, and superstition comes. Say, 'Lord, night is near, stay with us, depart not from us.' Lay an holy violence upon God, as Jacob did: 'Thou shalt not go hence.' Lay hold on him by prayer, and do not leave him till we have drawn virtue and got some blessing from him; he must be kept by entreaty.

4. And then desire him to perfume our souls for his dwelling, as the church, Cant. iv. 16, 'Arise, O north wind; and blow, O south; that my beloved may come into his garden.' Desire Christ by his Spirit to blow upon us, that our beloved may come into his garden, that he may find somewhat there to solace himself withal—humility, love, pity, large and loving hearts, as himself had, to do all good. Desire him to plant those blessed spices of grace in our hearts, and that he would blow upon them by his Spirit, that they may prosper and thrive, that so he may come into his garden and solace himself. Let us still desire further and further communion with him; never be content. As the church, Cant. i. 1, 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.' He hath been familiar, but I desire more still. So every Christian soul that hath once entertained Christ is never content till it be with Christ in heaven, but still desires a fuller measure of comfort, grace, strength, and assurance. And why doth the soul thus desire after him? 'Oh his love is better than wine,' Cant. i. 2.

So saith the church, having had a sense and feeling of his love. 'Thy love is sweeter than wine,' and therefore 'let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.' Desire therefore a more nearer communion in his love; for it is sweeter than wine, being once tasted.

5. And having got enjoyment of communion with God, shut the soul to other things. The comfort of his presence is a heaven upon earth, sweeter than wine, and above all other things to be desired. Take we heed therefore that we grieve not his good Spirit, and force him to retire himself; that we quench not his sweet motions by anything contrary to him. Those that have guests which they respect will do nothing that may be offensive to them. So let us watch over our souls, that nothing come in that may grieve Christ, nor anything come forth to grieve his Spirit in us. Let us not thrust ourselves into such occasions and company as may do or speak such things as may grieve the Spirit of God in us. Let us neither grieve the Spirit in ourselves, by cherishing that which is evil in our own hearts, nor by thrusting ourselves into the company of those whom we know by experience will grieve the Spirit. A man cannot go into bad company, but he must either be grieved, or tainted, and corrupted. Who would redeem familiarity and favour with them? exchange comfort and sense of Christ's Spirit for the favour of such men as grieve the Spirit in us? No; a soul that walks in the strength of the comfort of Christ's dwelling in him must be watchful and jealous over himself, and preserve heavenly motions, cherish them, and make them strong, and banish all that is contrary.

Quest. But how shall I recover him again, if I have grieved the Spirit, and lost the sense of his being in me?

Sol. -I will name but one means. Observe how thou lost it, and recover him by the contrary. If thou wilt renew the experience of his love, and his dwelling in thee comfortably, consider how didst thou lose him? Was it by negligence? by omission of duties? Didst thou not read when thou mightest, or hear when thou mightest? or gavest thou thy thoughts liberty to range? or didst thou not walk with God as thou shouldst? didst thou cast thyself into ill company, or cherish carnal desires? Take a contrary course then; converse with those that are good; stir up the grace of God in thee by meditation, and by renewing thy purposes and resolutions; hear as much as thou canst; speak to God as much as thou canst; maintain communion with saints, Ac. As thou lost it, so endeavour the recovery by a contrary way, and then Christ will come again to the soul. We see, Cant. v. 13-6, that after Christ had stood knocking and calling to his spouse, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled,' till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, but found no entrance, he retired, and withdrew himself, because she would not rise and put on her coat. But afterward, when she endeavoured herself, and used contrary means to her former sluggishness,

seeking him, and saying, 'What is become of my beloved?' Arc., then Christ came again into his garden, returned to his spouse, and forgot the former unkindness.

We deal with such a Saviour, that though we lose the sense of his presence for a time, yet if we use contrary means, and knit ourselves to his ordinances, at last we shall refind his love to our souls. Nay, he is so loving, so indulgent, that he never upbraids us with our former sins; as we see in Peter, whom he upbraided not with his former denial. Who would not maintain love, respect, and communion with such a Saviour as this, especially considering what a sweet estate it is to have Christ with us at all times, and in all estates, and so to have the love of God, for both go together? And what are all discouragements where the love of God in Christ is? What are all the creatures to God's love, to Christ? Where the soul is persuaded that it is in covenant and peace with God through Christ, and when it knows that Christ's Spirit is in it, this is a comfort above all discouragements whatsoever. Discouragements are carnal, outward things; the comforts are the presence of divine things. The Spirit of Christ, whose presence drowns all things, it is precious above all creatures, strength, beauty, wit, &c., yea, and prevalent above all the afflictions and sufferings in the world.

All afflictions cannot hinder the life of reason, and can they hinder the life of grace? No. Paul saith excellently, the more 'our outward man decays,' the more we suffer in our outward man, 'the more the life of Christ is manifest in us,' 2 Cor. iv. 16. So far are we from being hurt by any outward sufferings in the world, or discouraged by them, that the life and presence of Christ in us is thereby made more glorious, Christ triumphs and rules the more, by how much the more outward opposition we have.

If God's love, and consequently Christ, be in us, what if all the creatures were against us? Is there not more in God and Christ, than in all the creatures? Made he not all things of nothing? What made the martyrs in the primitive church to sacrifice their blood so willingly and cheerfully? Because the love of God was manifested to them in Christ Jesus. His name was manifested and declared as a sweet ointment poured forth, which caused those virgins to follow him. The sense and apprehension of the love of God, manifested by the Spirit of Christ, begat in them such a love to God again, that was strong even to death. It engendered such an heat within, that made them endure all the heat and flame without; so that all the torments which the malice and wit of persecutors could devise, could not daunt their

invincible spirit; but in all these things they were more than conquerors, through him that loved them. A sweet state it is.

I beseech you, therefore, every day examine whether Christ be in you, and in what measure he is in you; and labour to give him more room in your hearts. Will not the contrary daunt us? else we are reprobates, refuse creatures, and the devil is in us. But contrariwise, if he be in us, he will fit us to be with him. He comes to us, that we may come to be with him; for why doth he dwell in us? One main reason is, to fit us for heaven. Let us labour, then, that he may be in us, that he may fit us for himself, to dwell with him in heaven. Labour that none may rule us but his Spirit. In death, what a comfort will it be, that Christ is in us. The Spirit of Christ, that hath ruled me all my life, shall carry my soul to heaven, and shall raise my dead body. If Christ be in us, what need we fear judgment? Will the head condemn the members? Christ is in us while we live, and therefore joyfully we may expect judgment. Why? Our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Head, our Husband, will be our Judge. Therefore, of all estates in the world, get into Christ, and labour by all means to get Christ into us, by prayer, by getting grace, &c., that he may delight and solace himself in us. It is the best estate in the world.

Out of Christ, a man is as a branch cut from the vine, subject to the fire. Out of him, a man is as a member cut from the head, cut from the body, good for nothing, neither lively nor fruitful. Get into Christ: it is a state of all grace, for all grace is derived to us from him. It is a state of comfort in life and death, and for ever. He is the 'second Adam and as all our misery is derived and communicated by being born of the first, from whom sin and corruption is derived, and misery with sin, mortal diseases, and all other misery, so, as soon as the 'second Adam,' Christ, is got into us, his Spirit reigns to glory with us: he never leaves us till he have made us as himself. It should be our main endeavour in this world, therefore, to get out of the cursed estate we are in by nature, and to get into Christ, the 'second Adam,' and then we are safe. For there is more comfort in him than there was sin and misery in the first.

A Heavenly Conference

To the Reader

The scope and business of this epistle is not so much to commend the workman—whose name is a sweet savour in the church—as to give thee a short summary-view of the generals handled in this treatise. Though much might be said of this eminent saint, if either detraction had fastened her venomous nails in his precious name, or the testimony of the subscribers of this epistle might give the book a freer admission into thy hands. This only we shall crave leave to mind the reader of, that this bright star, who sometimes with his light refreshed the souls of God's people while he shone in the horizon of our church, set, as we may say, between the evening of many shadows and the morning of a bright hoped-for Reformation; which, though it be for the present overcast, yet being so agreeable to the mind of Jesus Christ, and ushered in with the groans and prayers of so many of his saints, we doubt not but will in God's own time break forth gloriously, to the dissipating of those clouds and fogs which at the present do eclipse and darken it.

Now, as it is the wisdom of God, in bringing about his own designs, to raise up fit and suitable instruments for the work of every generation, so it is also the gracious dispensation of God to put seasonable words into the mouths of those his servants, who by faith do fix their eyes on him for the guidance of his blessed Spirit; as every judicious reader may observe in the works of this reverend divine, who foreseeing, as it wore, what a degeneracy of spirit professors in his time were falling apace into, that itch of questions and disputings, like a noxious humour, beginning then to break forth among professors, like a skilful physician, applied himself to preserve the vitals and essentials of religion, that the souls of his hearers, being captivated with the inward beauty and glory of Christ, and being led into an experimental knowledge of heavenly truths, their spirits might not evaporate and discharge themselves in endless, gainless, soul-unedifying, and conscience-perplexing questions. For as it is in nature, a man that hath tasted the sweetness of honey will not easily be persuaded that honey is hitter, but he that hath only taken it up upon credit may soon be baffled out of it, because no act can go higher than its principles; and so it is in religion. For those good souls that have embraced the truths of Jesus Christ upon a supernatural principle, and experimented not only the truth, but the goodness of them in their own

souls, they are the clinched Christians, the good hold-fast men, as Mr Fox styles some Christians in his days; they are the even and steady walkers. Whereas those that have only a 'form of godliness,' 2 Tim. iii. 5, a slight tincture—who have only out of novelty and curiosity, or pride and ambition, or other self ends, professed religion—will prove giddy and unconstant, 'like clouds carried about with every blast,' Eph. iv. 14, and while they promise themselves liberty, be a prey to the net of every fancy and opinion.

To the sound and practical Christian that is not queasy-stomached, will the truths in this treatise be grateful. Supposing therefore and desiring, if thou art not, thou mayest be such a one, here is offered to thy consideration a divine and heavenly discourse betwixt Christ and Mary, between a soul-burthened sinner and a burthen-removing Saviour.

That thou mayest here see how diligent Mary is to seek, how ready Christ is to be found. Mary hath her heart brimful of sorrow; Christ comes, as it were, 'leaping over the mountains,' Cant. ii. 8, with comfort and bowels of compassion. Mary was in a strong pang of affection, nay, her affections were wound so high that her expressions seem broken; and her actions might seem to savour of irregularity, were it not that the excellency of the object did warrant the height of her affection, and the compassion of Christ was large enough, not only to interpret for the host, but also to pardon and cover all her infirmities. The woman was better at her affections than expressions. 'They have taken away my Lord.' She speaks at random, names nobody, whether Jews, or disciples, or soldiers. But see the strength of her faith. She is not ashamed to call him 'Lord,' even in the lowest state of humiliation. Though Christ be reproached, persecuted, despised, rejected, dead, buried, yet he shall be Mary's Lord. Again, 'I know not where they have laid him.' She dreams of a bodily carrying away, and resting of Christ somewhere, and speaks with indignation, as if she looked upon it as an indignity or incivility, nay, of cruelty—*Savitum est in cadavera, scevillum est in ossa, savitum est in cineres* (Cyprian)—of the Roman emperors' cruelty, to remove a dead body. What was done to Christ, Mary takes it as done to her; and, good heart, she thinks she hath so much right to him, that he should not be stirred without her knowledge. And 'I know not where,' &c.

Now while Mary is seeking Christ—who is never far absent from a seeking soul—he stands at her back. Christ is nearer to us many times than we think of. Sometimes a poor soul wants the sight of comfort more than matter of comfort, and is, like Hagar, weeping for water when the well is

hard by. Seeking of Christ is the soul's duty; but Christ manifesting himself is the soul's comfort. Mary turned herself, and she saw Jesus. Gerson saith, the angels rose up at the presence of Christ, which Mary seeing, made her turn about. But omitting that conjecture, the original word *στρέφεισθαι* is sometimes used for a turning of the face, but most frequently for a turning of the whole body. But to put it out of doubt here, it is said exegetically, *ἐστραφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω*, 'she turned herself back.' The same phrase the Septuagint use of Lot's wife looking back. Many times Christ hath his face towards us, when we have our backs upon him; and therefore if thou wouldst find Christ, turn thyself to him.

Again, Here thou mayest see the true Joseph. He knows Mary when she knows not him, but takes him for the gardener. Christ is always beforehand with us in his grace. He loves us before we love him, and calls us before we call him. Mary travails with desires to find Christ, and Christ is full of yearnings towards her. Like Joseph, he could restrain no longer, and because the general manifestations of Christ wrought little, he calls her by her name, 'Mary and she being a sheep of Christ, 'knows his voice,' and answers him with a title of dignity, *Rabboni*; that is to say, 'My Master.'

We may see here that discoveries of grace are not fruitless. They stir up believers' reverence and obedience. 'Let us sin because grace abounds,' is the devil's application of Christ's doctrine, Rom. vi. 1.

These and several other particulars are with much brevity, spirituality, and perspicuity handled in this treatise, and with that liveliness that they show they come from one whose own heart savoured what he taught to others. The largest part of this book is spent upon that sweet doctrine, viz., a believers interest in God as a Father, and the comforts that flow from that sweet relation. The foundation of our relation to God is here handled, and how God is first a Father to Christ, and in him to us. What can be more comfortable in this earthly, interest-shaking, disjoining, confounding age, than to clear up our soul's interest in God? *Tolle meum, et tolle deum*, as he said. It were better for me there were no God, than that he should not be my God. This will be thy comfort, that when thou canst not say, *My state, my liberty, my house, my land, my friend, my trade*, thou mayest be able to say, 'My Father, my God.' If therefore thou savourest the things of God, this subject will be acceptable and grateful to thee; and if this treatise may be any ways instrumental for putting thee upon study how to get it, or upon practice how' to improve it, or in case thy soul sits in darkness, how to endear and

clear thy interest, the publishers shall have much of their aim, and thou wilt have no cause to repent thy cost in buying, or thy pains in reading. We shall add no more than this. Blessed is that man or woman that hath an interest in him who is the Father of Jesus Christ by eternal generation, and of all believers in Christ by adoption and regeneration; in which inheritance and portion, that thou mayest have a share, shall be the prayer of Thy soul's and thy faith's servants in the work of the ministry for Jesus' sake,

Simon Ash.

James Nalton.

Joseph Church.

A Heavenly Discourse Between Christ and Mary, After His Resurrection

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and said to him, Rabboni: that is to say, Master. And Jesus said to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.— John XX. 10.

The same love of Christ that drew him from heaven to the womb of the virgin, from the womb of the virgin to the cross, and from the cross to the grave, the same love of Christ moved him to discover himself after he was risen from the grave to them that he knew did entirely and wonderfully love him. And therefore, before he would ascend to heaven, he did vouchsafe many apparitions and discoveries of himself, partly to instruct them in the certainty of his resurrection, and partly, but especially, to comfort them: those that he knew did love him.

His first apparition of all was made to Mary, the woman out of whom he had cast seven devils, Luke viii. 2. She was much beholding to him, and therefore loved much, Luke vii. 47. No sex may discourage any sinner from Christ. She expresseth her love of Christ by her desire of finding him, by her seeking and weeping, notwithstanding all impediments, before she found him. As she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and there saw two angels in white: a colour of glory, purity, and joy, because it was a time of joy. They were one at the head, and the other at the feet. As in the law, when the mercy-seat was made, two cherubims were also framed, and placed one at the one end, and the other at the other end thereof, with their faces looking one towards another, Exod. xxv. 20. And when Christ

was risen, there were two angels, one at the head, another at the feet, to show that peace was to be expected in the true propitiatory, Jesus Christ.

One at the head, the other at the feet of the body of Jesus. And they sat there. It was a time of peace. Peace was made between heaven and earth, God and man; and here is a posture of peace, 'They sat quietly.' In Christ, angels and we are at one; God, and we, and all. There is a recapitulation and gathering of all things in heaven and earth, Col. i. 20.

The angels, they attended on Christ in all the passages of his life and death till they brought him to heaven. They brought news of his birth, comforted him in his agony; they were at his resurrection, and you see here they attend. At his ascension they accompany him. And as they did to the Plead, so they will to the members. In our infancy, they take charge of our tender years; in our dangers, they pitch their tents about us; in our deaths, they carry our souls to Abraham's bosom, a place of happiness. At our resurrection, their office is to gather our bodies together. That service and attendance they afforded the Head they afford to the members; to mystical Christ as well as natural. Therefore let us comfort ourselves in the service they did to Christ.

Now, besides the apparition of the angels, here is the speech of the angels: "Woman, why weepest thou?" They knew she had no cause of weeping, for Christ whom she sought was risen again.

She answereth, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' If it had been as she supposed, there had been cause enough of her weeping, if her Lord had been taken away; for when the Lord is taken away, what remaineth that is comfortable? And if the Lord be not taken away, it matters not what is taken away. For he is all in all. Carnal people, so they have their wealth, and friends, and comforts in the world, they care not what is taken away. But she is of another mind. 'They have taken away my Lord,' and what comfort can I have if my Lord be taken away?

But it was but the speech of an opinion; she did but think it. And there were two things might lead her, truth and probability, which is the foundation of opinion. Probability: he is not here, therefore he is taken away. Truth: Christ promised he would rise again, therefore he would take away himself. There was certain truth to ground faith, and weak probability to ground opinion. Yet such is the nature of weak persons in distress. If there

be probability and certain truth, yet they will be sure to cleave to their probabilities. Oh, theirs be great sin! Ay, but there is greater mercy for faith to lay hold upon. So the presumptuous sinner saith, 'God is merciful.' Ay, but God hath excluded thee from heaven; thou art an adulterer, a swearer, a filthy person; thy opinion is grounded scarce upon probability. 'God is merciful,' but not to such sinners as live in sins against reconciliation as thou dost, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Therefore, when one hath but probability to ground opinion, and the other certain truth to ground faith, be so wise for our souls as to take the best and leave the other. If she had remembered his promise to raise himself out of the grave, she needed not to have doubted.

'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' 'They have taken away.' She instanceth none. And when she had thus said, she turneth her back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. The angels hold their peace when Christ speaks, and it is their place so to do.

But she knew not that it was Jesus in respect of her passion. Her senses were held partly by the power of God, and partly by a kind of passion that was a cloud between her and Jesus, that she knew him not at that time.

What doth Jesus say to her?

'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?' The first words that ever Christ spake after his resurrection to them he appeared to, is, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' It is a good question after Christ's resurrection. What cause of weeping when Christ is risen? Our sins are forgiven, because he, our head and surety, hath suffered death for us; and if Christ be risen again, why weep we? If we be broken-hearted, humbled sinners, that have interest in his death and resurrection, we have no cause to grieve. It is therefore a good question to them that believe, 'Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?' They were questions, not for satisfaction to him—he knew it well enough—but to draw out her mind, and to draw out by confession what God had hid in her heart, that he might comfort her afterwards.

'But she, supposing him to be the gardener, said, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me,' &c.

She had a misconceit of Christ, as if he had been the gardener. Beloved, so it is with a sinner, especially in times of desolation of spirit and disconsolate condition. They present Christ to themselves as an enemy. She

in passion thinks Christ the gardener. Do not many, when they be melancholy of body and troubled in mind, conceive of Christ as an austere judge, that will undoubtedly damn such wretches as they are, who present Christ to themselves in that fashion, that the Scripture doth not? Doth not he bid all that be weary and heavy laden come to him? Mat. xi. 28. And yet they, out of passion, will present Christ to be an austere judge, that will take them at their disadvantage, observe all their ways, and will surely damn them.

It is a great violence that passion and opinion offers to truth, and to saving truth, and the hardest matter in the world for a distressed conscience to apprehend God aright, and to apprehend Christ aright. Secure persons apprehend God under a false notion. They apprehend God as a God all of mercy, and Christ as if he were not adjudge of the world; as if he observed them not, nor their sinful courses; and therefore they care not whether they serve him or no, Acts xvii. 31. And Satan presenteth Christ all of mercy, and Satan and their hearts meeting together, the mistake is dangerous. It is a great art of faith, and an excellent skill, to apprehend Christ suitable to our condition that we are in. When we be in any sin, then think him a judge; then think of Moses rather than of Christ; then think of Christ as one that will judge both quick and dead for their hard and wicked actions. But when we be humble and brokenhearted, and touched with sense of sin, present him as a sweet Saviour, inviting and alluring all to come to him: 'Come to me, all ye,' &c., Mat. xi. 28; present him as a gentle shepherd; present him in all the sweet relations he names himself by in the Scriptures, lest otherwise we do Christ dishonour, and ourselves wrong, Isa. xl. 11.

'If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.'

She was a likely woman indeed to take Christ away; for a weak woman to take a heavy body away! But love thinks nothing impossible. Faith and love agree in this, nothing is impossible. 'Love is strong as death,' Cant. viii. 6. Neither love nor faith care for difficulties; they arm the soul to break through all.

'Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.'

One would think the dead body might have frightened the woman, and the heavy body might have been above her strength. But she was in such an ecstasy of love and desire, and grief for want of desire, that she considered not well what she said.

They be words of passion; and, indeed, if you observe the story of Mary Magdalene, she was a woman of extremity in all conditions. Like Jonah, when he grieves, he grieves exceedingly; when he rejoices, his joy is wound to the highest pitch. So she was full of love when she loved, and full of grief when she grieved, and full of joy when she joyed. She had large affections. All were in the highest measure, and strained to the highest pin in her; and that made her say, 'If thou hast,' &c.

Jesus could not endure [to keep] her longer in this perplexed condition. He was too merciful; and therefore saith, 'Mary.' She turned to him, and saith, 'Rabboni,' which is to say, Master.

And Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

The words are a sweet and loving intercourse between Christ and Mary. In a seasonable time, when she was in all her perplexity and depth of sorrow for loss of her Lord, Christ seasonably at length, as not being able to hold any longer, but must needs discover himself, saith to her, 'Mary.'

You see, first of all, Christ beginneth, and saith, 'Mary she answereth, in the second place, and saith, 'Rabboni;' and till Christ begins, no voice in the world can do any good. The angels they spake to her, but till Christ spake nothing could comfort her. Christ began, and till Christ began nothing would comfort Mary. Christ began himself, and used but one word. It is a word, and but one word. Nothing will comfort but the word of Christ. The word that comforted her when he spake, and it was but one word, and yet enough, there was such fulness of spirit and comfort in that one word. And she answereth with one word again.

You may ask why they spake but one word. Beloved, he was full of affection, and she was full of affection also, too full to express themselves in many words. As it is in grief, grief sometimes may be so great that scarce any words are able to express it: *ingentes dolores stupent*; and if any words, then broken words, which show fulness of affection rather than any distinct sense. Christ was so full, and she so full, that a word discovers. And indeed there was so much sense, and so much love, so much contained in these little words 'Mary' and 'Rabboni,' that it is impossible to express them shorter; and her passion would not stay any longer discourse. It was by words, and by one word, 'Mary.' It was by a word which showeth he took notice of her. Christ knows the names of the stars; he knows everything by name. He knows

everything of a man, to the very hair. He knows their parts, and their very excrements of their parts. He knew her, and acknowledged her too: 'Mary.'

1. It is a word of knowledge, and familiar acquaintance, and acknowledgment.

2. It is a word of compassion; because he had held her long, and now could not longer. He pitieth the state she was in. He saw her ready to sink for grief and melt for sorrow, and therefore he said, 'Mary.'

3. As it is a word of compassion, so it is a word full of exceeding love.

4. And it is a word of peculiar appropriation, 'Mary,' whom I have so much respected heretofore. And a word of satisfaction on his part, out of his pity, and out of his love, and former familiarity and acquaintance.

'Mary,' I am the man that thou seekest; I know what all thy seekings tend to. Thou wantest him whom thou lovest; thou wantest me. I am he whom thou seekest.

She answered him again, 'Rabboni,' which is interpreted, Master. She returned him an answer again; she spake to him. He first began, then she follows. She found the virtue of his speech in her heart. There was an influence of it to her heart; and his love witnessing to her heart, raised her love to him again. So it was an answer of Christ's speech, and from the same affection: an answer of love, and an answer of exceeding large affection and satisfaction to her soul. O my 'Rabboni,' the soul of my soul, the life of my life, my joy, my rock, my all that can' be dear to me.

'Rabboni,' I have enough. As he desired to give her satisfaction, so she takes satisfaction in the word. And yet it was not full satisfaction; for after she clasps about him, and would not let him go. It was an affection that stirred up much desire more and more to have communion with him, so that he was fain to check her afterward: 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' She had not enough; as indeed a believing, affectionate soul hath never enough till it be in heaven.

And thus you see the sweet intercourse upon the apparition and first discovery of Christ to Mary. He spake to her, and she answered him again with the same affection. And it is a word of dependence, as it is fit, 'Rabboni, my Master.' It is not only a word of honour, not any superior, but a superior

in way of teaching. There was submission of conscience to the 'Rabboni,' as the 'Rabboni,' labouring to sit in the consciences of people. It is a Syriac word, which signifieth in the original, 'multiplication of knowledge' in him that speaketh, and that labourereth to breed much knowledge in him that is spoken to; and therefore it is a word of great respect and dependence.

She might well call him 'Rabboni,' for he was 'Master of masters,' 'Rabboni of rabbonis,' the angel of the covenant, the great doctor of the church, the great 'Gamaliel,' at whose feet all must sit and be taught. So you see what sense and affections are in these little words. The fulness of heart that was in this couple cannot be expressed, were it possible to say all that could be said. And therefore we leave the hypothesis, and come to make application of it to ourselves.

Obs. 1. First, he may learn here, that till Christ himself discovers himself, no teaching will serve the turn. No. The teaching of angels will not serve the turn, till Christ himself by his Holy Spirit discovers himself. When Christ doth it, it is done. And therefore it should teach us so to attend upon the ministry as to look up to the great doctor that hath his chair in heaven, and teacheth the heart. If he teach, it is no matter how dull the scholar is. He is able to make any scholar, if he instruct. I will not enlarge the point, because there be particular places wherein they will be enlarged.

Obs. 2. The second thing I will observe is this, that Christ, when he teacheth, he doth it by words, not by crucifixes, not by sights. We lost our salvation and all our happiness by the ear, and we must come to it by the ear again. Adam, by hearkening to Eve, and Eve to the serpent, lost all; and we must recover salvation therefore by the ear. As we have heard, so we shall see. We must first hear, and then see. Life cometh in at the ear as well as death. Faith, you know, is the quickening of a Christian, the spiritual life of a Christian. Now, faith comes by hearing; and therefore I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, set aside prejudice, and meekly attend God's ordinances. He not consider who we are; we are but poor ministers, frail men as yourselves. But consider the Lord, that is pleased to convey life, and salvation, and grace, and whatsoever is fit to bring to heaven, this way. Therefore they that despise this way, set light by salvation; as the apostle saith, Acts xiii. 40, 'They judge themselves unworthy of the kingdom of heaven.' They can read at home, but is that the way God hath sanctified? Did not the manna stink when gathered on the Sabbath day? There is a curse upon all private industry and devotion when it is with neglect of public

ordinances. She could have no comfort till Christ spake. Nay, the very sight of Christ could not comfort her. Let this, I pray you, be enough, that I may not enlarge the point any further. This is the way for comfort. We must hear him in his ministers here, if we will hear him comfortably speaking to us hereafter, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' &c., Mat. xxv. 34.

Obs. 3. It was but one word, 'Mary;' and is there so much force in one word? Yea, when it is uttered by Christ. One word coming from Christ, and set on the heart by the Spirit of Christ, hath a mighty efficacy. The word hath an efficacy in creating all things, fiat, fuit. Let it be done: it was done; 'Let there be light: there was light.' So let there be light in the understanding, and there it shall be presently. So in all Christ's cures, he said the word, and it was done. So in all spiritual cures, let him say the word, it is done. Nay, a very look of Christ, if the Spirit go along with it, is able to convert the soul. *Respexit Christus, flevit Petrus amare*: Christ looked on Peter, he wept bitterly. What will his word do, when his look will do so much? It was but a word, and but one word: 'Say but the word,' saith he in the gospel, 'and my servant shall be healed,' Mat. viii. 8. This should make us desire that Christ would speak though but few words to the soul; that he would clothe the words of men mightily with his word and with his Spirit; and then they will be mighty in operation and works. One word, but it was a pregnant word. It was full of affection. She knew it well enough: 'Mary.' What! to call her so familiarly, so sweetly, by her accustomed name? It wrought on her bowels presently.

Obs. 4. But to go on. You see here again, that Christ must begin to us before we can answer him. He began to 'Mary,' and then she said 'Rabboni.' All the passages of salvation are done by way of covenant, by way of commerce and intercourse between God and man, but God begins first. In election, indeed, we choose him; but he chooseth us first. And he knoweth who are his, and we know him; but he knows us first. And in calling, we answer, Ay; but he calleth first, and we do but echo to his call. In justification, forgiveness of sins, we accept of justification, and submit to the righteousness of Christ, and God's purpose of saving man that way; but he giveth faith first, for faith is the gift of God. We glorify him here on earth, but it is from a result of God's glorifying us in heaven. Some earnest we have, but they are of God's giving. All we do is but reflection of his love first, or his knowledge first.

The Christian soul saith, 'Thou art my God;' ay, but he saith first, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3. As Austin saith, *Non frustra dicit anima, Deus salus tua*: when God saith, 'I am thy salvation,' it is easy for the soul to say, 'Thou art my God'. And this may teach us in our devotions, when we are to deal with God, when we are to bring to him any request, to desire him first to reveal himself to us, desire Christ to reveal himself by his Spirit to us. It is an error in the case of men's devotions. They think to bring something of their own strength, and to break in, as it were, upon God, without his discovery first. But Paul saith, Gal. iv. 9, 'We know God, or rather, are known of him.' We must desire that he would make known his heart to us first, and then we shall know him again; that he would speak to us by his Spirit, and then we shall answer to him again. That he would say to our souls, he 'is our salvation and then we may lay claim to him, 'he is our God.' Desire the 'Spirit of revelation,' to reveal his bowels and love to us in Christ by his Holy Spirit; for certainly, in every return of ours to Christ, God begins to us, all in all, though not sensibly. But we ought to pray, every day more and more, for a sensible revelation, that God would reveal his love to us in Christ. And we cannot but answer. If Christ saith, 'Mary,' Mary cannot but answer, 'Rabboni.'

Obj. But you will say then, It is not our fault, but Christ's fault, if he must begin. If God begins, we shall answer.

Ans. I answer briefly, that God doth always begin to us, and is beforehand with us in all dealings with ourselves. He giveth us many motions, and never withdraweth himself from us, but when he is despised and slighted first; therefore, let us take heed that we labour to answer Christ's call when he doth call. If we slight it, then in a judicious course he ceaseth to speak further to us, if we slight his beginnings of revelations. There be many degrees and passages to faith and assurance. If we do not observe the beginning, how God begins to reveal himself to us by little and little, speaking to us by his Spirit in our hearts when he begins, then in a spiritual judgment sometimes he leaves us to ourselves. And therefore let us regard all the motions of the Spirit, and all the speeches of the Spirit of Christ, for he begins by little and little, else our consciences will say afterward, we are not saved, because we would not be saved. We would not yield to all the passages of salvation; but when he was beforehand with us, and offered many sweet motions, yet we loved our sins better than our souls, and so repelled all. Therefore, I beseech you, do not refuse the sweet messages from heaven, the gracious and sweet motions of the Spirit of Christ. Make much of them. God

hath begun to you, be sure to answer. Learn it of Mary. When Christ began, she set not her heart and infidelity against it, but she opened her heart, and said, 'Rabboni;' learn, therefore, the duty of spiritual obedience. When God speaks, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,' 1 Sam. iii. 10. Do not shut your ears to the motions of God's blessed Spirit; do not harden your hearts against his voice, but open your hearts as she did: 'Rabboni.'

Our Saviour Christ here saith, 'Mary;' but when? After he had concealed himself from her a long time. It is not presently 'Mary,' nor 'Rabboni.' He had concealed himself a great while. Christ doth not usually open himself fully at first, though at first he doth in some degree; but he observeth degrees, as in the church in general. You see how that he discovers himself in his gracious promises by little and little; darkly at first, and at last the Sun of righteousness ariseth clearly. So the day-star ariseth in our hearts by degrees. It is a great while before Mary heareth the satisfying speech of Christ, 'Mary.'

Quest. But why doth Christ thus conceal himself in regard of his fuller manifestation?

It is partly to try and exercise our faith and other graces; and therefore God doth seem to withdraw himself in the sense of his love.

1. To see whether we can live by faith, or whether we be altogether addicted to sense, as the world is, who live altogether by sense, and not by faith.

2. He would have our patience tried to the utmost. He would have 'patience have its perfect work,' James i. 4. She had much patience to endure all this. But her patience had not a perfect work till Christ spake.

3. Christ will stir up and quicken zeal and fervency in his children; and therefore he seemed to deny the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 21, seq., and Mark vii. 27, 28; first, he giveth no answer but an harsh answer, 'A dog.' And she works upon it: 'Though I am a dog, yet dogs have crumbs.' All which denial was only to stir up zeal and earnestness. And therefore though Christ doth not manifest himself to us at first, yet it is to stir up zeal and affection to seek after him more earnestly. A notable passage there is of this, Cant. iii. 16. The soul sought Christ, and sought long, and sought in the use of all means; but at length she waited, and in waiting she found him.

4. Christ doth this to set a better price upon his presence when he comes; to make his presence highly valued when he doth discover himself. *Desiderata diu magis placent*: things long desired please more sweetly. And things, when wanted, are ingratiated to us, as warmth after cold, and meat after hunger; and so in every particular of this life. And therefore God, to set a greater price on his presence, and that he would be held more strongly when he doth reveal himself, he defers a long time. That is one reason why he did defer revealing himself to Mary, that she might have the more sweet contentment in him when he did reveal himself, as indeed she had. Long deferring of a thing doth but enlarge the soul. Want enlargeth the desire and capacity of the soul, so doth love. Now, when we want that we love, that emptieth the soul marvellously much; it mortifieth affection. When God keeps off a long time, and we see it is God only must do it, then the affection is taken off from earthly things, and the heart enlarged to God by love, and the want of the thing we love. And therefore we set a price on the thing, so that we are wonderfully pleasing to God. It is very beneficial to ourselves. What lost Mary by it? So shall we lose nothing. We have it at last more abundantly. We have it as a mighty favour. Mary taketh this as a now blessing altogether. When things are kept long from us, and God only must discover, when the heart is kept from second causes, the heart is enlarged. Certainly this comes from God, and God should have all the glory of it. God is wise; and therefore makes us to stay a long time for that we do desire.

' We all of us are in Mary's case in a spiritual sense. Some times or other we miss Christ, I mean the sweet sense of Christ. Lay this down for a rule, that Christians ought to walk in sweet communion with God and Christ, and that it ought to be the life of a Christian to maintain the communion that Christ hath vouchsafed between us and himself. Then, certainly, we lose Christ wonderfully; and not against our minds, but willingly, by our own slighting of him, and by our own undervaluing of him, or by our negligence or presumption. Christ, though he be low, yet he is great, and he will have us to know his greatness. There must be communion with due respect. One way or other we deprive ourselves of the sense and sweetness of communion with Christ. What must we do, then? We must do as the woman did: turn over every stone; use all kind of means; leave not one till we find him; and when all means are used, wait still. Persevere in waiting, as Peter speaks. Believers, wait; hold out in waiting, for Christ in his time will come. He cannot hold long. As Joseph did suppress his love and affection for politic ends a great while, Gen. xlv. 8, but his pity towards his brethren was such that his bowels would not suffer him to conceal himself longer; his passion

was above his policy: 'I am Joseph.' And so let us in the use of all things seek Christ and the sweet sense of his love, which is better than life itself. And, indeed, what is all without Christ? Christ is so full of compassion, he will not long suffer us to be prolonged, but will at length satisfy the hungry soul, Ps. lxiii. 5. How many promises have we to this end!

Take heed of such a temper of soul, as cares not whether we find Christ or no. Oh take heed of that! If we will seek him, seek him as Mary. She sought him early in the morning; she brake her sleep and sought him with tears. If anything be to be sought with tears, it is Christ and communion with him. She sought him instantly and constantly. She sought him so, that no impediment could hinder her, she was so full of grief and love. She sought him with her whole heart, she waited in seeking. That is the way to find Christ. Seek him early, in our younger times, in the morning of our years. Oh that we could seek Christ as we seek our pleasures. We should find more pleasure in Christ than in all the pleasures of the world, if we could persuade our base hearts so much. Seek him above all other things. Awake with this resolution in our hearts, to find Christ, never to be quiet till we may say with some comfort, 'I am Christ's, and Christ is mine.' When we have him, we have all. Seek him with tears, at length we are sure to find him. He hath bound himself, that if we knock he will open; and if we seek we shall find: if we seek wisdom early with our whole hearts, entirely, sincerely. Seek Christ for Christ, and then we shall be sure to find him, as she did. Thus seek him in the word and sacraments, wherein he discovers himself familiarly. Seek him in the temple—'Christ was found in the temple,' Luke ii. 46—and then we shall be sure to find him both here and hereafter. Specially we shall find him in our hearts. You see how familiarly he comes to us in the word, speaks to us by a man like ourselves. And how familiarly by the sacrament, by common bread and common wine, sanctified to do great matters above nature, to strengthen faith. He cometh to us through our faces, into our souls in the sacrament. He cometh to us, through our ears in hearing the word, through our sight in seeing the bread broken. He comes by familiar things, and by a familiar manner of conveying, as if he should name every one, 'I come to thee, and give thee my body.' Think with ourselves, Now Christ cometh to me; when the minister reacheth the bread and comes to me, think of heavenly-bread, and of the gift of Christ to me by means. And can he do it more familiarly? Is it not as if he would say, 'Mary'? And that is the excellency of the sacrament. It conveyeth Christ to all the saints, and to every one in particular, as if he named every one. And what an encouragement is this to answer again, to open our hearts to receive him, together with the

elements! to embrace Christ, join with Christ, and then to keep him when we have him! Do not lose him. He will not be so dealt withal. Remember the covenant we have made to him. I beseech you, let these sweet considerations of Christ dwell in us, and work on every one of our hearts. If they do good on us here on earth, if we by faith lay hold on him, and have intercourse with him, what will it be in the day of judgment! How comfortable will it be to hear him say to every one in particular, ‘Come thou, and thou, stand on my right hand, sit and judge the world with me?’ 1 Cor. vi. 2. Doth he know our names now on earth, and giveth to every one particularly by himself, if we come worthily? and will not he know us then? Oh, that is far more worth than the world’s good, to know us then and to call us by our names! Therefore, I beseech you, be acquainted with Christ. Have intercourse, all we can, with him in the word and sacraments, and never rest till we find this sweet result in the use of the means, ‘that he is ours, and we are his.’

Take heed therefore in these times, desperately addicted to formality and popery. I say, take heed, we do depend not upon any outward thing, but look to Christ in all his ordinances, look to the Spirit. All God’s children, the church of the first-born, they are θεοδιδάχτος, such as are ‘taught of God.’ Who can take away the opposite disposition of man’s nature to goodness, but God by his Spirit? Who can shine into the soul, and quicken the soul, but Christ by his Spirit? Who is above the heart and conscience, but Christ by his Spirit? Therefore take heed of formality; submit your hearts to the great prophet of the church, that Moses speaketh of, Deut. xviii. 18, who shall be the great teacher of the church; lift up our hearts to him, that he would teach our hearts, and remove the natural disposition that is in us; that he would ‘take off the veil from our hearts,’ and teach not only what to do, but teach the very doing of them. Teach us to hate what is ill, teach us to believe, and to resist all Satan’s temptations. Who can teach but the great teacher, whose chair is in heaven? Therefore take heed of depending on formal things. Lift your hearts to God, that he would join his teaching with all other teachings. This cannot be too much stood upon. I beseech you, therefore, take it to heart.

Give me leave, therefore, to add a few things more. If Christ speaketh in general to Mary, she answereth in general; and when he speaks aloof to her, she answereth aloof to him, afar off, and never gave him a direct answer, till he gave a direct word to her. When he said, ‘Mary,’ she gave him a direct answer, ‘Rabboni;’ not before. I beseech you, therefore, let us not rest in general promises and the general graces, that be so much stood on by some,

that God hath a like respect to all. Trust not to that. We must not enter into his secrets, but let us obey his precepts and commandments. And withal remember this, when we hear of a general mercy and commandment for all nations to believe, and that Christ came to save a world of sinners, alas! what is that to me, unless thou by thy Holy Spirit speakest to my soul, and sayest in particular, 'I am thy salvation,' and speakest familiarly to my soul? Generals are in some degrees comfortable. But if I find not particular interest by the witness of thy Holy Spirit to my soul, if thou sayest not to my soul, 'I am thine, and thou art mine,' all is to little purpose. Therefore in the desires of our souls in prayer, let us desire the Lord to reveal himself in particular. We trust too much in generals. God is merciful, and Christ came to redeem the world. They be truths, and good foundations for to found faith upon, but they will not do the deed, till by daily prayer we seek to the Lord, that he would in a particular manner reveal himself to us. This doth Paul pray for, Eph. i. 17, 'that God would vouchsafe to them the Spirit of revelation.' And this is the office of the Holy Spirit. His special office is, to reveal to every one in particular his estate and condition God-ward. The Holy Ghost knoweth the secrets in the breast of God, and in our own hearts. Now the Holy Ghost can reveal the particular love that lieth in God's breast to our particular souls. And therefore we should desire God, that the Holy Spirit may be sent to seal to us our particular salvation, and never be quiet till we be sealed in particular assurance, that we be they whom Christ came to save. This we ought to labour for. If we labour for it, we shall have it some time or other, for God loveth to be familiar with his children. He loveth not to be strange to them, if they seek his love, but to reveal himself first or last. And few seek it, but God revealeth himself by his Spirit to them before they die; if he doth not, they are sure of it in heaven. And therefore they that be against particulars, they are enemies to their own salvation. Mary regarded not, while Christ spake of generals, but when he came to particulars, then 'Rabboni,' and not before.

'Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; I am not yet ascended to my Father,' &c.

This verse containeth Christ's prohibition, or Christ's commission or charge. His prohibition, 'Touch me not;' and his reason, 'for I am not yet ascended to my Father.'

His charge, 'Go to my brethren and then directeth what to say to them: 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.'

The words be very natural, and need no breaking up to you. But I shall handle them, as they follow one another.

‘Jesus said to her, ‘Touch me not.’

‘Touch me not.’ Why? He would have Thomas not only touch, but to put his finger into his side; that is more than touching him, John xx. 27. But our Saviour’s intent is to meet with a disposition in Mary something carnal, something low and mean, in regard of this glorious occasion, Christ being now risen and glorified, for his resurrection was the first degree of his glorification. And therefore, ‘Touch me not.’ She came with too much a carnal mind to touch him, when she said, Rabboni. It was not satisfaction enough for her to answer, ‘Rabboni,’ but she runneth to him, and claspeth him, and clingeth about him, as the affection of love did dictate to her. But saith he, ‘Touch me not’ in such a manner. This is not a fit manner for thee to touch me in, now I am risen again. In a word, she had thought to converse with Christ in as familiar a manner as before, when she poured ointment on his head. He was the same person, but the case is altered. That was in the days of his humiliation; now he was risen again, and it was the first degree of his glorification. There was another manner of converse duo to him; and therefore, ‘Touch me not.’ Thou thinkest to touch me as thou didst before, but thou must not do it. She was too much addicted to his bodily presence.

1. It is that that men will labour after, and have laboured for, even from the beginning of the world, to be too much addicted to present things, and to sense. They will worship Christ, but they must have a picture before them. They will adore Christ, but they must bring his body down to a piece of bread; they must have a presence. And so instead of raising their hearts to God and Christ in a heavenly manner, they pull down God and Christ to them. This the pride and base earthliness of man will do. And therefore saith Christ, ‘Touch me not’ in that manner; it is not with me now as it was before. "We must take heed of mean and base conceits of Christ. What saith Paul, 2 Cor v. 10? ‘I know no man now, according to the flesh; no, not Christ himself, now he is risen.’ Christ was of such a tribe, stature, had such gifts and qualities. What is that to me? Christ is now Lord of lords, and King of kings. He is glorious in heaven, and so I conceive of him: ‘I know no man after the flesh; no, not Christ himself.’ I forget what he was on earth, and think of him what he is now in heaven. Therefore to bring him down to our base conceits, to sense, and the like, this is the humour of men that labour to cross the scope of the gospel. For why are men so addicted to outward

things, outward compliments? It is pride, it is Satanical pride. They think that God is delighted with whatsoever their folly is delighted withal. Because amongst men there must be a deal a-doing, therefore they think God is well pleased with such things. God is a Spirit, and though outward things be necessary, yet all must not be turned outward, as in popery. We must not bring God down to our foolish conceits, as if he were delighted as we are, Joshua iv. 24.

2. It is wonderful easy too. All outward things, any naughty men have them with their sins. Let a man perform a little outward compliment, he may be what he will be, let him live as he will, and he possessed that outward things will serve the turn. He is safe; his conscience is daubed up, till God by sense of wrath awakeneth conscience; and then they shall find it another matter to deal with God than by compliment.

3. There is also a great glory in outward things. There is commendations, and men's observance of them, as in the Pharisees, and in popery. But the spiritual worship of Christ hath no observance to the eye of the world. It is between God and the soul. Men naturally love those things that be glorious. It is said of Ephraim, that he loved to tread out the corn, but not to plough, Hosea x. 11; that is, Ephraim will take that which is easy, but not that in God's worship which is hard. There be two things in God's service: an easy thing, which is outward compliment; an hard thing, which is to trust him, to deny ourselves, to rely upon him and live by faith.]; And that Ephraim will not do. Ephraim will tread the corn, because the heifer may eat corn; but there be hard things in religion which he will not practise. He will not plough. 'Touch me not,' saith Christ. 'Thou hast not conceits spiritual enough to deal with me, now I am risen.

But what is the reason? 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' That seemeth to be a strong reason. But it seemeth to be a contrary reason. Touch me not now, when my body is present; but touch me when I am gone, and removed out of sight of all flesh. Touch me not now, when thou mayest touch me; and touch me when there is an impossibility of touching me. This is seemingly strange. But indeed there is no contrariety in it: 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to the Father.'

There is a double meaning of the words. First of all, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended,' &c. 'Thou needest not clasp and cling about me, as if I would stay no more with you below; 'I am not yet ascended to the Father.' There will be time enough afterwards. For the word 'touch,' in the original,

doth not signify merely to touch, but clasp, associate, join, and solder with a thing. The Scripture speaking of the evil man, you shall not touch him; that is, not make him one with him. The devil shall not take him from Christ and make him one with himself. It is a strange word in the original: 'Thou claspest about me, thou dost more than touch me, thou clingest to me and wilt not leave me, as if I would go presently to the Father; but I am not yet ascended to the Father.' That is one part of the meaning.

But there is a farther than that, 'I am not yet ascended to the Father; touch me not.' That is, it is another manner of touch that I look for— better for thee, and in some regard for me—to touch me by the hand of faith when I am ascended to the Father. Then touch me, and take thy full of touching me. But for the present I am not ascended; I have not done all; I have not manifested myself to my disciples in full. When I am ascended, all is done, and then there is place for touch. And that I take is meant here, I am not yet ascended to the Father. Thou thinkest I have done all that is to be done, but thou art deceived. I must ascend to the Father, and when I am there I expect to be touched after another manner, after a gracious, spiritual manner, which is by faith; as Augustine saith well, 'Send up thy faith to heaven, and then thou touchest Christ.' 'As he said in the sacrament,' *Quid paras dentem et ventrem? Crede, et manducasti:* What dost thou prepare thy teeth and stomach for? Believe, and thou hast eaten'. So the best communion with Christ is to believe, till we come to heaven to have eternal communion with him.

This touch will do thee little good, and it pleaseth me as little. When I am ascended to the Father, then touch me at the full. So you see what Christ meaneth.

The life of a Christian here, and the manner of the dispensation of Christ here, is by promise, and by his Spirit; that we should live by faith, and not by sense. The life of sight is reserved for another world, when we are fitted for it. She was not fit for a life of sense, but was to expect the Holy Ghost from heaven; to be filled with that, and then to be filled with faith and love; and then to have an holy communion with him in heaven. But 'I am not yet ascended.' Thus you see the meaning, 'Touch me not.'

There be two reasons of Christ's prohibition.

1. Her respects were too carnal and ordinary, considering he was in the state of glory. And then,

2. For that there trill be time enough. Do not stand embracing of me, there is a greater work for thee to do. Christ preferred the great work of giving notice to his disciples of his resurrection, before the office of respect and service to himself. Go about a duty, that I more regard a great deal: 'Go, tell my brethren I ascend,' &c. So that every part of the text yields satisfaction to that prohibition.

'Go,' saith he, 'to my brethren.' I have another work for thee to do, 'Touch me not.' Thou clasps about me as if thou hadst nothing to do. There is another work to do that pleaseth me better, and more fit for thee: to comfort them that are in distress, my poor brethren and disciples. And therefore 'go to my brethren, and say unto them.' So that Christ prefers a work of charity to his poor disciples before a work of compliment to his own person. She clingeth about him; but 'this is not it I would have.' Those poor souls are mourning and disconsolate for me, as if I were clean taken away; go to them, and prevent then farther sorrow.

God hath a wonderful respect to others. It is strange that Christ should say, 'Go and be reconciled to thy brethren, and then offer thy sacrifice,' Mat. v. 24. As if he would have his own sacrifice neglected, rather than we should not be reconciled to others. And so a work of charity and love is preferred before an officium and compliment to himself. Let us show our love to the first table in the second, our love to God by our love to man. Everything hath its measure and time. Away therefore with this over-much embracing and touching. Go thy way, thou hast another work to do: 'Go to my brethren.' And so you see, as I take it, the full meaning of the words.

Observe the circumstances. Who must go? Here is a commission and command. And to whom? To the disciples of Christ. And when doth Christ bid her go? When he was risen, and in the first estate of glory. What is the message? 'Tell my brethren I am ascending to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.' It is worth your considering a little.

1. Who is sent? A woman. A woman to be the apostle of apostles, to be the teacher of the great teachers in the world. Mary Magdalene was sent to instruct the apostles in the great articles of Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven. By a woman death came into the world, and by a woman life was preached to the apostles; because indeed she was more affectionate, and affection taketh all. And that makes that sex more addicted to religion, by the advantage of their affection; for religion is merely a matter of affection. Though it must have judgment shine before it, yet it is specially

in the heart and affections. And she had showed a great deal of affection. She stood out when the rest went away, John six. 25. She was constant, and broke through all difficulties; and then God honoured her to be the first preacher of his resurrection.

God's course is to trust secrets in earthen vessels, that earthen vessels should carry heavenly treasure; and therefore stick not at the vessel, but look to the treasure, 2 Cor. iv. 7. A woman may teach the greatest apostle. Look not to the man, but to the message. Elias will not refuse the meat because the raven brought it, 1 Kings xvii. 4. And a condemned man will not refuse a pardon, because a mean man bringeth it. Take off pride in spiritual respects. When God honours any man to bring news of reconciliation, stoop to him, of what condition soever he be.

2. To whom must she go? 'Go, tell my brethren,' the apostles. Go to the apostles, that are disconsolate men, now orphans, deprived of their Master and Lord. Disconsolate men, and not in vain, so not without cause; for they had reason to be discomfited, not only for their want of Christ, but for their own ill carriage towards Christ. One of them denieth him, and the rest forsake him; and yet 'my brethren,' 'go tell my brethren.'

3. When did he speak this? After his resurrection, in the state of glory; in the beginning of it, and when he is ascending to heaven; and yet he owneth them as brethren, though such brethren as had dealt most unbrotherly with him.

But how came they to be his brethren? And how come we to be Christ's brother. Christ is the first-born of many brethren, Rom. viii. 29. He is the Son of God by nature; and all others now, by grace and adoption, Rom. viii. 17. Christ is the primo-genitus amongst many brethren; and in Christ we have one Father with Christ. We have one honour, and we shall be all kings and heirs of heaven, as he is. 'If sons, then heirs,' Gal. iv. 7; the apostle makes the coherence. Now we are all in Christ sons of God, heirs with him. To go to the condition of nature that he took, our nature; and therefore having our flesh, he is our brother, Heb. ii. 14. The very reprobate may say so. Yet that is a ground of comfort, that he is a man as we are. But that is not the main thing considerable. He is our brother in a spiritual respect, in regard of adoption. He is the first Son of God, and we in him sons. He is the first heir of God, and we in him are heirs. And therefore 'go to my brethren.'

Beloved, it is a point of marvellous comfort, that Christ was not ashamed to call them brethren, Ps. xxii. 22: 'I will declare thy name amongst thy brethren,' saith Christ. Our Saviour Christ alluded to that psalm in this passage; and so it is read, Heb. ii. 12, out of that psalm. Christ hath taken all relations, that are comfortable, upon him towards us. 'He is the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace,' Isa. ix. 6. He is 'a second Adam,' and therefore a father in that regard. The first Adam is the father of all that perish; the second Adam is the father of all that shall be saved. As he is our brother, so our husband. He could not be our husband, except he were our brother. He must take our nature, and be one with us, before we can be one with him. He is our friend. Before this time he called them friends, as you see in John: 'I will call you friends,' John xv. 15. But here is a sweeter term, 'brethren.' There is no relation that hath any comfort in it, but Christ hath taken it on him. He is our head, husband, friend, father, brother, and whatsoever can convey comfort to us. And the truth of it is, he is these things more truly than any relation is made true on earth. For these relations of husband and wife, and brother and sister, and father and child, are but shadows of that everlasting relation that Christ hath taken upon him; the reality and truth itself is in Christ. We think there is no brother, but the brother in flesh; no father, but the father in flesh. Alas! these are but shadows, and quickly cease: 'the fashion of the world passeth away,' 1 Cor. vii. 31. Brother is another relation, whereof these are but shadows. These do but represent the best things that are in heaven. Christ is the father, brother, friend, and whatsoever is comfortable in heaven; therefore 'go tell my brethren.'

Obj. Ay, but saith the poor soul, I that have been so sinful, so unworthy a wretch, shall I have comfort in this, that Christ is my brother, and I am Christ's? I cannot do it.

Ans. 1. I profess thou canst not do it, 'flesh and blood must not teach it thee,' thou must be taught by the Spirit of Christ. But consider how the apostles used Christ. Thou canst not call Christ brother, because thou hast been a sinner, and hast carried thyself unkindly to Christ. And did not the disciples so? Did not they leave him, and one of them deny him, and that with oaths? Therefore, whatsoever our sins have been, deny not our relation to Christ. The poor prodigal said, 'I am not worthy to be called a son,' I am not worthy to be called a servant, Luke xv. 21.

He denied not that he was a son, but he was unworthy of it. And so I am unworthy to be a spouse and brother of Christ, yet do not our unfaithful hearts so much pleasure, as to deny our relation.

The apostles were so dignified, as to be called the ‘pillars of the world,’ Gal. ii. 9. But these left him, and yet for all that, in this time of their desertion of him, ‘go tell my brethren.’ Therefore be not discouraged. Go to Christ in our worst condition, in our greatest temptations, when our hearts misgive us most that we have used God most unkindly, and Satan plied us most with desperate temptations; yet own him for our brother, who owned his disciples when they dealt most unkindly with him. I beseech you, count it a comfort unvaluable, which no tongue is able to express, that Christ after his resurrection should call ‘brethren.’ He might well call them brethren after his resurrection, because then all debts were discharged by his death. He had paid their debts, and now the acquittance was due to them, because Christ as surety had paid all. Now I am risen, ‘go and tell my brethren so.’ If we can make use of the death and resurrection of Christ, and say, Christ hath died for my sins, and rose again for my justification; I will interest myself in his death, I will claim the virtue of his resurrection; then take the comfort of this. In popery, they had much comfort in those dark times, when a company of proud, carnal, beastly men ruled the roast according to their own lusts. These clergymen made a great pother with fraternity and brotherhood. And if they were of such a fraternity of Dominic or Francis, or merely in a friar’s cowl, it was not only satisfactory, but meritorious, they could not do amiss. Away with these shadows. Here is the brotherhood that must comfort Christians, that Christ owned us for brethren after his resurrection. He paid dear for it, alas! Are we worth so much, that God should become man to die for us, to rise again for us, to justify us, and make us brethren? That infinite love, that God became man and died for us, and rose again to own us for his brethren, will satisfy all doubts. Shall we doubt anything of that love? When he out of his free love will own us as brethren, shall not we own him? I confess it is a marvellous thing, in times of temptation it is difficult to make use of it. Oh, but pray with the good apostle, ‘Lord, increase our faith,’ Luke xvii. 5; with the poor man in the gospel, ‘I believe; Lord, help my unbelief,’ Mark ix. 24. So when any temptation cometh for our unworthiness and our undeserving, then think Christ after his resurrection called his apostles ‘brethren,’ and he will be content to be my brother, if I will believe he died for me, and I will cast myself upon him; therefore away with all doubts.

There be many other observations out of the words.

'(1.) Will you have the first words in estate of glory, his first words after death? 'Go and tell my brethren.' Think in a desperate extremity, think of the sweet message he sent by Mary Magdalene to his unworthy 'brethren,' that he died for, and [had] given his blood to make them his brethren. Think of his free love to you. It is not for your worthiness or unworthiness, but of his own free love, that he came from heaven to take your nature. It is his own free love that he came to die; and therefore conceive not of worthiness nor unworthiness, but consider the command of God to believe; and if we perish, perish there. Cast ourselves on our brother, that will own us in our worst condition. That is the grand use.

(2.) Again, If God owns us in his glorious condition, shall we be ashamed of the doctrine of Christ, of the children of God, to own them? What saith Christ? It is a terrible thunderbolt. 'He that is ashamed of me and of my word before men, I will be ashamed of him before my heavenly Father,' Mark viii. 38. Take heed of being ashamed to stand out a good cause, in matters of religion. Christ was not ashamed to call us brethren when we were at the worst, and he himself in a glorious condition'; he was in glory, and the disciples drooping in consideration of their guilt, that they had forsaken him, and yet 'brethren' still. And shall not we own him, that owneth us in state of glory? How shall we look that he will own us hereafter, when he trusteth us with his cause and glory, and we betray all to pleasure such and such? Can we look Christ in the face with comfort, if we neglect his cause, his truth, and his church?

(3.) Again, Make this use of it, Christ is our brother, and will not he take our parts? Absalom was a disobedient son, yet Absalom would not let his sister Tamar be abused; he would be revenged of that. And will Christ suffer his sister, his spouse, his church to be abused long? Nay, will he leave his 'dove, his love, his undefiled one,' Cant. v. 2, where he hath placed all his joy and contentment, to the malice and fury of the enemy long? Certainly he will not. Certainly he will be avenged on his enemies. If nature, that he hath put into the wicked, sinful men, teach them to revenge indignities offered to their kindred, will Christ suffer his brethren, his sisters, to be abused? 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Acts ix. 4. Now he is in heaven, the church's case is his own. And therefore comfort ourselves with that sweet relation. Christ hath undertaken to be our brother in state of glory. What a comfort is it that we have a brother in heaven! What a comfort was it to the poor patriarchs, when they thought with themselves, we have a brother, Joseph, that is the second man in the kingdom! And so, what a great comfort is it for poor

Christians to think, that the second in heaven, that sitteth at God's right hand, that is King of kings and Lord of lords, and that ruleth all, is our brother! Is not this a main comfort, yea, beyond all expression, if we could make use of it by faith answerable to our trouble? Therefore go to Joseph, that hath laid up comfort for us. He hath comfort enough for us, he hath treasures of comfort. Whatsoever is necessary for us, we may have in Christ our elder brother. And therefore 'go to my brethren.'

I beseech you, let us make a use of exhortation, to be stirred up, to labour by faith to be one with Christ; and then he will be our head, our husband, our brother, our friend, our all. Say what you can, Christ will be 'all in all' to all his. He hath enough in him: 'Of his fulness we shall receive, and grace for grace.' Oh labour to be one with Christ. Do not lose such a comfort as is offered. He offereth himself first to be our Saviour and Redeemer, and then our brother; never rest therefore till we have part in Christ. And then labour to make use of, in all temptations catch fast hold of, everything that is useful, as it is the nature of faith to do, like Benhadad's servants, who made use of that word 'brother.' He is my 'brother,' said the king of Israel, as common offices make kindred, 1 Kings xx. 83. He had but let pass the term of 'brother,' and they would not let it go, but catch at it: 'Thy brother Benhadad.' We see what wisdom flesh and blood can teach, to make an improvement of any comfort in the world, if by kindred, or office, or any relation in the world, they make use of them. And when we be in Christ, shall not we make use of them, when we be troubled with sense of sin, or in desperate conditions? When Christ calleth us brother, shall not we answer, 'I am thy brother?' Blessed be thy mercy and love, that descended so low as to make me thy brother! I beseech you, let us not lose the comforts we may have in the disciples' being called Christ's brethren, when they were in some sort enemies. But he knew their hearts were sound, and it was but their weakness; therefore let no weakness discourage thee. He will not 'quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed,' Mat. xii. 20. Is thy heart right to Christ? art thou not a false hypocrite, a secret traitor to Christ, and to his cause and church? Then he of good comfort; thou mayest go to Christ as to thy brother. Though Peter denied him with his mouth, yet he confessed him with his heart. And therefore 'go tell my disciples,' and Peter—he hath most guilt, and therefore he hath most need of comfort. Be thy guilt never so great, if thou wilt come into covenant with God, here is mercy for thee, and therefore make this use of it. Never forget, in your worst condition that may be, since Christ will stoop so low to own you to be brethren, to make use of it, if your hearts be right towards him.

‘Go to my brethren.’ Now I come to the commission or charge given to her. ‘Go to my brethren.’ Who is the party charged? ‘Mary.’ And what is her charge? ‘To go to the apostles under the sweet term of ‘brethren.’ When doth he call them so? After his resurrection; when he was in the state of glory. What is the message? It is very sweet. Go, say to them, ‘I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.’ ‘I ascend;’ that is, I presently am to ascend, in a very short time I shall ascend. It was but forty days between Easter and Ascension, and all that time Christ appeared now and then. It is the nature of faith, where it is glorious, for to present future things as if present, especially when they be near. ‘I ascend;’ that is, I shall very shortly ascend, and it is all one as if I ascend presently. To whom do I ascend? ‘I ascend to my Father.’ To ‘my Father.’ That is not comfort enough. Therefore ‘to your Father too.’ ‘I ascend to God.’ That is not comfort enough. Therefore ‘to my God, and your God.’ We shall unfold the words as we come at them.

First, Mary Magdalene, a woman, a sinner, is used in the great work of an apostle, to be an apostle to the apostles. I would there were that love in all men to teach what they know; and that humility in others, to be instructed in what they know not. It were a sweet conjunction if it were so. She was a mean person to instruct the great apostles. But, beloved, where there is a great deal of love, there they will teach what they know; and where there is humility, there they will be taught what they know not, though they be never so great. And God will humble the greatest to learn of the meanest sometimes. Therefore he sendeth Mary to the apostles.

I beseech you, in matters of salvation, stand not on terms. Let us take truth from Christ, let us see God and Christ in it, see our own comfort in it, not stand upon persons. Aquila and Priscilla teach the great men knowledge, Acts xviii. 2, seq. And so it is. Sometimes mean persons are honoured to be instruments of great comforts to persons greater than themselves. She is to go to the apostles under the name of brethren: ‘Go tell my brethren.’ And she must go to the apostles that were Christ’s brethren, and owned to be so now, when he was in glory, when he was risen and exempt from all abasements of the cross and grave, where he was held captive three days under the dominion of sin, when he was freed from all enemies of salvation, and had triumphed over all. ‘Go tell my brethren.’ So you see there is a sweet affinity and nearness between Christ and his. Christ took our nature on him for this end: he became flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, that we spiritually might be flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. It is no comfort

at all; an inducing comfort it is, but no actual, present comfort, that Christ was incarnate for us; for all the world might have comfort in that, Turks, Jews, Pagans, that had the nature of man in them. And all have some comfort in it, as their nature is dignified; and that he took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man, his spouse, his church it is that hath the comfort of it. Therefore it is not sufficient that he be bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; but we must be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. We must be ingrafted and baptised into him by faith, and then the term holdeth, and never till then; so that there is a sweet nearness between Christ and his. 'Brother' is a most comfortable relation. It is a comfort that he took our nature upon him, that God would take 'dust and ashes,' earth, into the unity of his person. For God to become man is a great dignifying of man's nature. But to take not only our nature on him, but to take our person particularly near to him; thou and thou to be a member of Christ, there is the honour of it. It induceth us to come to Christ that hath loved our nature so much. But the other is an actual, present comfort, when we can say, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.'

Our hearts are too narrow a great deal to embrace the whole comfort that this word affords unto us, that Christ should own us as his brother after his resurrection, for that showeth a reconciliation. 'Brother' is a term of friendship, nay, more than a term of reconciliation, for a man may be reconciled to an enemy; but it is a term of amity, to show that when we believe in Christ and are one with him, our sins are quitted; death is overcome; Satan's head is crushed when God is reconciled. What have they to do with us? They are only to serve our turns to bring us to heaven, and fit us for it. I beseech you, consider of the excellent freedom and dignity of a Christian; his freedom in that he is the brother of Christ; free from all, being owned by Christ after his resurrection, all being quit by his death who was our surety, else he should be in the grave to this day. And then think of our dignity, to be brother to him that is King of heaven, Lord of lords, ruler of the whole world; that hath all things subject to him. Oh that our hearts were enlarged to conceive the wonderful comfort that every Christian hath in this relation! 'Go tell my apostles,' under the sweet term of 'brethren.'

Who art thou, will Satan say, flesh and blood, a piece of earth, wretched sot; wilt thou claim kindred of Christ?

Ay, saith the Christian, believing soul, it is true. If it were my own worthiness it were another matter, but I will give him the lie. When he owned

me for his brother after his resurrection, shall I deny the relation? Therefore never believe Satan's tempting words and sinful flesh; for Satan cometh to us in our own flesh, and maketh us think God and Christ to be such and such. Ay, but what saith Christ himself? Believe him and not Satan, that cometh to thee in thy own despairing, dark, doubting flesh. Believe the word of Christ, who calleth thee brother, if thou believest on him, and castest thyself upon him.

This showeth the dignity of a Christian when he is once in Christ, the excellent, super-excellent, transcendent glory of a Christian. When they told our Saviour Christ that his mother and brethren were to speak with him, saith he, 'They that hear my word and do it, they are my brother, and sister, and my mother,' Luke viii. 21. This is the excellency of a Christian, that he is of so near a kin to Christ. When we believe Christ, it is all one as if we conceived Christ, as if we were brothers to Christ, as if we were of the nearest kindred to him. Nay, it is more; he preferreth mother before mother, brother before brother; mother in spirit before mother in the flesh, and brother in spirit before all other brothers. Therefore an excellent thing to be a Christian! When once a Christian giveth himself to Christ, and denieth his own doubting, despairing heart, which is the greatest enemy he hath, 1. Then what belongeth to him? Then God is his, and Christ is his; he must have an inheritance; he is fellow-heir without; all are his. 2. What carrieth he in him? He carrieth in him the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and the graces of the Spirit, which make him lovely to God. 3. What cometh from him? Having the precious graces of the Holy Ghost in him, what can come from him as a Christian but grace and comfort to others? He is a tree of righteousness; and what can come from a good tree but good fruit? So far he is so.

So if you regard what belongeth to them, what is in them, the inheritance they shall have, or what cometh from a Christian, that is, brother of Christ, he is an excellent person, more excellent than his neighbour. There is no man in the world, never so great, but is a base person in comparison of a Christian. What will all be ere long? If a man be not in Christ, these things will add to our vexation. It will be a misery to have had happiness; the greater will be the misery when they must be parted withal. And therefore raise your hearts to consider of the excellent condition of a Christian when he is once the brother of Christ.

I confess it is an hidden dignity; as Paul saith, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 8. We have a life, a glorious life, but it is hid. It is dark;

sometimes under melancholy, sometimes under temptations, sometimes under the afflictions of the world and disgrace, and so it is an hidden excellency, but it is a true excellency. The world knoweth us not more than they know God and Christ. But it is no matter, God knoweth us by name. He knew Mary by name, as it is said in Isaiah, 'I have called thee by name,' xlv. 3. He is a shepherd, that knoweth his sheep by name, and is known of them. He knoweth thee, and thee, and thee, by name; yea, and the hairs of thy head are numbered; and therefore it matters not though thy dignities be hid with the world. Yet God knoweth them. He hath written all thy members in a book, and he hath a book of remembrance of thee. And therefore it is no matter though it be an hidden dignity. It is a true dignity to be a brother of Christ.

Let us oppose this to the disgrace of the world, and to all temptations of discouragement whatsoever. What are all discouragements to this? They fall all before this, that we are the sons of God and brethren of Christ. What can discourage a man that is thus apprehensive of this excellency upon good terms? I will enlarge the point no further, but leave it to your own meditations, and the Spirit of God work with it!

'Go to my brethren.' When doth he bid her go? Now after his resurrection, when he was to ascend to heaven. The first degree of his glory was his resurrection, after his lowest abasement in the grave. You see that honour doth not change Christ's disposition, as it doth amongst men. When they be advanced to great places, they will not look on their old friends and acquaintance; but Christ hath no such disposition, he owneth his poor disciples in their greatest abasements: 'Go tell my brethren.' Now when he was in a state of glory, ready to go to heaven, and he giveth them a more comfortable title now than ever before. In the gospel he called them 'servants,' and 'friends,' and 'apostles,' and 'disciples;' but now 'brethren,' a word of all sweetness, and nothing but sweetness. 'Go tell my brethren' presently; Christ would have no delay, for he saw they had present need. Christ's love is a quickening love, and the fruits of it are very speedy. There is more than angelical swiftness in Christ when there is need of him. God helpeth at need, in the most seasonable time, and he knoweth the time best of all. He did but rise in the morning, and the very same day, 'Go tell my brethren.' Ye have Cant. ii. 8, that Christ cometh 'leaping upon the mountains.' When he was to help his church, 'he leaped over the mountains;' as in the eighth verse, 'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.' He cometh from heaven to

earth, from earth to the grave; and now he is risen, he is all in haste, he maketh no stay, because his manner of despatch is, to help and comfort by the ministry of others. Go quickly; do not stand embracing of me, but 'go and tell my brethren.'

Obj. But why then do not we find comfort sooner, that are afflicted?

Ans. Beloved, where is the fault? Is it in Christ? You stand out at staves-end with Christ; you will not embrace comforts when they be offered, or else you be not sufficiently humbled; for he is wise as he is swift, he knoweth which be the best times.

You see then that Christ, so soon as ever it is fit for him, he will come. If he should come sooner, he would come too soon; if afterward, it would be too late. He is the best discerner of times and seasons that can be, and therefore wait his leisure. If thou want comfort, humble soul, whosoever thou art, wait his leisure. Certainly he knoweth the best time, and when the time is come, he will come. 'He that will come shall come,' Hob. x. 37, there is no question of that.

Now as he sent her in all haste, preferring it before any compliment to his own person, so it is a constant love. As it is a quick love that God bears to his children, so it is a constant, invincible love. They had dealt most unbrotherly with him, for every one had forsaken him, and Peter had denied him; yet, 'Go tell my brethren.' One would think this water would have quenched this fire; this unkind and unbrotherly dealing would have quenched this love in Christ's breast. It is true, if it had been the mere love of man, it had been something; but it was the love of an infinite person, that took our nature out of love, and therefore it was a constant and invincible love. Nothing could conquer it, not the thoughts of their unkind dealings, no, not their denying and forsaking of him. But still, 'Go tell my brethren.' 'Love is strong as death,' Cant. viii. 6. Death could not hold Christ in the grave, but love held him on the cross. When he came to the work of our redemption, love then held him on earth; but when he was in the grave, it brake through all there. Indeed, it was stronger than death, in Christ.

Quest. Why is Christ's love so constant, so invincible, that nothing can alter it?

Resolution. The ground of it is, it is free love. He fetcheth the ground of his love from his own heart; not from our worthiness or unworthiness, but

from his own freedom, and God's eternal purpose. God hath purposed to save so many, and those and no more he giveth to Christ to save. And God looketh on his own purpose, Christ's free love, and that is the ground of all. And therefore whom he loveth he loveth to the end, because he looked on us in his election. The Lord knoweth who are his; the foundation is so sure, if once we be God's we are ever God's. For Christ looks on us in God's election. Therefore, if ever he showeth his love to us, once his love and for ever his love. If anything in man could hinder it, it would have hindered it at our first conversion, when we were at worst, even enemies; if nothing could hinder it then, what can hinder it afterwards? as the apostle reasoneth strongly: Rom. v. 10, if we be reconciled by his death, much more will he save us by his life. 'If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, now much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.' If when we had no goodness, but opposition and rebellion in us, we were saved by his death, Christ is much more able to save us now by his life, triumphing over death and being glorious in the heavens.

Obj. Oh but, saith the poor soul, I am a poor weak creature, and ready to fall away every day.

Ans. Ay but Christ's love is constant. 'Whom he loveth he loveth to the end.' What saith the apostle? Rom. viii. 38, 'Neither things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ and therefore be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; do not trust to yourselves, nor trouble yourselves for things to come. If you be free from guilt of former sins, never question time to come. God is unchangeable in his nature, unchangeable in his love. He is 'Jehovah, I am,' always; not 'I was or will be,' but 'I am always.' If ever he loved thee, he will love thee for ever. You see the constancy of Christ's love, 'Go tell my brethren.' Now when they had most deeply offended him, they were renegadoes, having all left him; and then when he had most need of their comfort, being in greatest extremity; and yet 'Go tell my brethren.'

Beloved, let us not lose the comfort of the constancy and immutability of Christ's love. Let us conceive that all the sweet links of salvation are held on God's part strong, not on ours; the firmness is on God's part, not on ours. Election is firm on God's part, not on ours. We choose indeed as he chooseth us, but the firmness is of his choosing; so he calleth us, we answer, but the firmness is of his action. He justifieth; we are made righteous, but the firmness is of his imputation. Will he forgive sins to-day, and bring us into

court and damn us to-morrow? No. The firmness is of his action. We are ready to run into new debts every day, but whom he justifieth he will glorify. The whole chain so holdeth, that all the creatures in heaven and earth cannot break a link of it. Whom he calleth he will justify and glorify. Therefore never doubt of continuance, for it holds firm on God's part, not thine. God embraceth us in the arms of his everlasting love, not that we embraced him first. When the child falleth not, it is from the mother's holding the child, and not from the child's holding the mother. So it is God's holding of us, knowing of us, embracing of us, and justifying of us that maketh the state firm, and not ours; for ours is but a reflection and result of his, which is unvariable. The sight of the sun varieth, but the sun in the firmament keepeth always his constant course. So God's love is as the sun, invariable, and for ever the same. I only touch it, as the foundation of wonderful comfort, which they undermine that hold the contrary.

The next point is, that Christ chose Mary to go tell his brethren, and under the sweet title of 'brethren,' to deliver this sweet message, 'I am going to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.' He telleth them the sweetest words in the worst times.

This point differeth from the former thus. The former was, that Christ's love is constant, and always the same. But now Christ most showeth his love when we are most cast down: in the worst times, if our casting down be with repentance. He never said 'brethren' before, but reserved the term of 'brethren' for the worst time of all. The sweetest discoveries of Christ are in the worst times of all to his children. Mothers will bring out any thing to their children, that is sweet and comfortable to them, in their sickness. Though they frowned on them before, yet the exigency of the child requires it. When there is need, any thing cometh out that may please the child. The poor disciples were not only in affliction, being the scorn of the world, the shepherd being smitten and the sheep scattered, but their in-ward grief was greater. They were inwardly confounded and ashamed to see Christ come to such an end. They were full of unbelief. Though Christ had told them he would rise again, they could not believe; and so what with fear, and what with doubt, and what with grief for their using of Christ so unkindly and leaving him, certainly they were in a perplexed and disconsolate condition; yet now, 'Go and tell my brethren.' We see, then, that after relapses, when we be in state of grace, to deal unkindly with Christ, must needs be matter of grief and shame; yet if we be humbled for it and cast down, even then Christ hath a sweet message for us by his Holy Spirit: 'Go, tell my brethren.' In the

Canticles, the church, the spouse of Christ, had dealt unkindly with Christ, by losing him and forsaking him, chap. iii. 5. In the third chapter, she had lost him, and sought him on her bed, but found him not. She rose, and went to the watchmen, and then went through the city, but found him not. At length she found him whom her soul loved. Then Christ speaks most sweetly and comfortably to her in the beginning of the fourth chapter, but especially in the sixth chapter, after she had dealt most unkindly with Christ. He standeth at the door knocking and waiting, till his locks dropped with rain, in resemblance of a lover that standeth at the door, and is not suffered to come in. Afterwards he leaveth her for this unkindness, yet not so, but that there was some sweet relish left upon the door. God always leaveth something in his children to long after him; and at length, after much longing, Christ manifesteth himself sweetly to her, chap. vi. 4, and breaketh out, 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners; turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me; thy hair is as a flock of goats,' &c., and so goeth on, 'My love, my dove, my undefiled one.' He could not satisfy himself in the commendations of his church, being, as it were, overcome with love. And this showeth, that after we have dealt unkindly with Christ, and our consciences are ashamed and abashed with it, as it is fit they should, yet if we will wait a while, and be content, nor be desperate, nor yield to temptation, if we stay but a while, Christ will manifest himself to us, and show that he valueth and prizeth the hidden graces we cannot see. He can see gold in ore. He can see hidden love, and hidden faith and grace, that we cannot see in temptations; and he will manifest all at length, and show his love when we stand most in need of it. We see it in David, who was deeply humbled for his folly with Bathsheba, for there was not one, but many sins, as murder and adultery, &c.; yet being now humbled, God sent him and Bathsheba wise Solomon, to succeed him in his kingdom. He forgetteth all; and so you see our Saviour Christ forgetteth all their unkindness. He biddeth her not 'Go, tell my renegade disciples, that owned not me; they care not for me: I care not for them; I am above death and all, and now will use them as they did me.' Oh no. But 'Go, tell my brethren,' without mentioning any thing that they have done unkindly.

What is the reason? It is sufficient to a gracious soul that it is thus; it is the course of God. But there be reasons to give satisfaction.

Reason 1. First, The love of Christ to a poor, disconsolate, afflicted soul is most seasonable. When they have relapsed and dealt unkindly with Christ, then Christ not only forgiveth, but forgets all; nay, and calleth them under

the term of 'brethren,' which is more than forgiving or forgetting. Oh now it is seasonable. For there is a wonderful dejection of spirit after unkind usage of Christ, in a soul that knows what Christ means. It is as a shower of rain after great drought. It falleth weighty upon the soul.

Reason 2. Secondly, The freedom of Christ's love most appeareth then, when no desert of ours can move it. For is not that love free, when we have dealt unkindly with him, and joined with the world and with the flesh, and dealt slipperily with him, that then he would speak kindly to us and make love to us? Lord, if I had had my due, what would have become of me? If he had sent them word according to their deserts, he might have said, 'Go, tell the apostate, base people that have dealt unworthily with me, whom I will send to hell.' Oh no. But 'tell my brethren.' His free love appeareth most at such times, when our souls are most dejected.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Satan roareth then most, then he most of all showeth his horns, when we are relapsed. Oh, saith he, if thou hadst never found kindness, it had been something; but thou hast dealt unworthily that hast had so many favours, and dost thou so requite the Lord of glory? Now this love of Christ doth exceedingly confound Satan, and trouble his plots. He knoweth then that God leaveth men, and he joineth with a guilty conscience, and a guilty conscience maketh them to fear all they have deserved, Shall I look God in the face, and Christ in the face when I have used them thus? Shall I receive the sacrament and join with God's people? Now Satan doth join with guilt of conscience, and carrieth it further; and when God seeth them dejected and humbled for this, he speaketh more comfort to them than ever before.

There is none of us all, I can except none, but had need of this. Have we dealt so unkindly with Christ since our conversion? Have not we dealt proudly, and unkindly, and carelessly with him? And if we have the love of Christ in our breasts, it will shame and abash us. Now if we have joined with a temptation, Satan will say, Will you go to God, and to prayer, that have served God thus? Shall I yield to this temptation? If we can shame ourselves and say, Lord, I take all shame to myself, I have dealt most unworthily with thee, we shall hear a voice of comfort presently. And therefore whatsoever our conditions be, be invited to repentance, though thou hast fallen and fallen again. 'I have dealt unkindly.' Hid not Peter so? and yet, 'Go, tell my disciples, and tell Peter.' The pope will have him head of the church. I am sure he was head in forsaking of Christ, and indeed Christ never upbraided

Peter with forsaking of him. Now only he biddeth him feed, feed, feed, that he might take more notice of it; but he was so kind that he never cast it into his teeth, John xxi. 15-17.

Obj. But saith the poor drooping soul, If I had never tasted of mercy it had been something.

Ans. But object not that, for though Peter's offence was great, yet his repentance was great; and though thy sins be great, yet if thy repentance and humiliation be answerable, thou shalt have most comfort of all. And therefore let no man be discouraged.

If we go on in sinful, desperate courses, as the fashion of the world is, speak what we can, if we speak out our lungs, many will not leave an oath, nor their profane base courses and filthy ways; ill they have been already, and ill they will be till they come to hell. Some such there be, but better we are to speak too. Whosoever thou art, that are weary of thy profane, base, godless courses, be humbled for them. When thou art humbled and broken-hearted, then think of Christ, as he offers himself; think of nothing but love, nothing but mercy. Satan will picture him thus and thus, but when thou beest humbled and broken-hearted, he is readier to entertain thee than thou art to fly to him. And therefore at such times consider how Christ offereth himself to thee. He that died for his enemies, and seeks them that never sought him, that is found of them that sought him not, will he refuse them that seek him? If thou hast an heart humbled, and hast a desire of favour, will he refuse thee, that receiveth many in the world. Therefore do not despair. We as ambassadors beseech you, saith the apostle. Thou desirest God's favour and Christ's love. Thou desirest them, and Christ entreateth thee, and then thou art well met. Thou wouldst fain have pardon and mercy, so would Christ fain bestow it upon thee. Therefore join not to Satan. Take heed of temptations in such a case as this is. Take heed of refusing our own mercies. When God offers mercy in the bowels of his compassion, refuse it not. Christ is ready to show great kindness in our greatest unkindness, if we be humbled for it.

But this belongeth to those that be broken-hearted, that can prize and value Christ. They that go on in presumptuous courses shall find Christ in another manner of majesty. They shall find him as a judge whom they despised as a brother; and they that will not come in and subject themselves to his mercy, they shall find his justice. If they will not come under this sceptre, they shall find his rod of iron to crush them to pieces. And therefore let no corrupt, careless person, that will go on, fortify their presumption

from hence. It belongeth only to them to be humbled and abased with the sight of sin, and consideration of their unkindness and unworthy dealing with Christ. I know such as are most subject to discouragement, and Satan is most ready to close with them in strong temptations above all. Oh, but never let them despair, but consider what the apostle saith: 'While sin aboundeth, grace aboundeth much more,' Rom. v. 20. If there be height, depth, and breadth of sin in us, there is now more height, and depth, and breadth of mercy in Christ; yea, more than we can receive.

I have fallen from God, saith the soul. What if thou hast? but God is not fallen from thee. Peter denied Christ, but did Christ deny Peter? No. Christ hath not denied thee. What saith the Lord in Jeremiah? 'Will the husband take the wife when she hath been naught? no; yet return to me, O Israel,' Jer. iii. 1. But say, thou hast been false, and committed such and such sins; whatsoever they be, though adultery, yet return to me.

Quest. Oh, but is it possible God should do it?

Resol. Yea, it is possible with him: 'His thoughts are not as thy thoughts; his thoughts are as far above thine as heaven is above earth,' Isa. lv. 8.

Obj. Why, no man will do it.

Ans. Ay, but here is the mercy of a God, 'I am God, and not man;' therefore his comforts fail not. If he were so, he would not regard one that hath been so unkind; but he is God, and not man.

'Go to my brethren.' I come now to the matter of the commission. Tell them, 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God,' which is all included in 'brethren;' for if we be God's in Christ, then God is our Father. But we must not deal in few words with disconsolate souls, but come again and again with the same words. As how many times have you the comfort of the Messiah in Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, again and again? Our hearts are so prone to doubt of God's mercy, of Christ's love, especially after guilt, that all is little enough; and therefore our Saviour studieth to speak sweetly to the heart, 'Go, tell my brethren.' That which a carnal heart and curious head would count tautology and superfluity of words, a gracious heart thinks to be scantiness. Oh, more of that still; I have not enough! This is the pride of men, that will have all things to satisfy the curious ear; but a gracious heart hath never enough. And therefore Christ addeth comfort to comfort: 'Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and

their Father; to my God, and their God.’ The message itself is Christ’s ascension. The place whither is to the Father, a common Father to him and them. Every word hath comfort.

‘I ascend.’

I ascend to the Father, and to my Father and your Father too. Now I have quitted myself of death, and sin imputed to me as a surety, and I am going to heaven to make an end of all there: ‘I ascend to God, to my God and to your God.’ We have all one common Father, and one common God.

First, For his ascension. He did not yet ascend. Why then doth he speak for the present? ‘I ascend;’ that is, I am shortly so to do. And it was in his mind, it was certainly so to be; and therefore he speaks of it in present. It is the phrase of faith, to speak of things to come as if they were present. Faith makes them so to the soul, for it looketh on the word and all things as they are in that Word, who will make good whatsoever he saith. And therefore it is the evidence of things that are not yet, yet they be evident to a faithful soul. If we could learn this aright, to make things to come present, what kind of people should we be! Could we think of our resurrection and ascension and glory to come as present, they would be present to our faith; the things present, or sense, could not withdraw us. If we could set hell before us, could the pleasures of hell bewitch us? If the time to come were present, could anything in the world withdraw us? It could not be. And therefore it is an excellent skill of faith to set things to come before us as present.

He ascendeth. He implieth that he was risen. That was past, and therefore he nameth it not. All Christ’s mind was on ascending. Those that are risen together with Christ, their mind is all on ascension, all on heaven. And this is one main reason, because where anything is imperfect, there the spirit resteth not till it attaineth to that perfection that it is destined unto. When anything hath a proper clement and place where it must rest, it resteth not till it be in its own proper place and element. The perfection of the soul is in heaven, to see Christ face to face, and God in Christ. Heaven is the element of a Christian. It is his proper region. He is never well till there; and there is his rest, his solace and contentment, and there all his desires are satiated to the utmost. Till we be in heaven, we be under desires; for we be under imperfections. All the while we are in imperfections we are in an uncomfortable estate; and while we be so, we are not as we should be. And therefore wheresoever any are partakers of Christ’s resurrection, they mind

the ascension as present. Where any grace is, there the thoughts are for heaven presently.

Let us take a scanting of our dispositions from hence. There be many that think it good to be here always; they never think of ascending. If they could live here always, they would with all their hearts, but it is not so with a Christian. It is his desire to be where his happiness, his Saviour, his God and Father is, where his country and inheritance is, and therefore he mindeth ascension and things to come. When anything is done, he thinks that what is done is not yet enough. As your great conquerors in the world, they forget what they have conquered, and remember what they have yet to do; so Christ, having got conquest over death, he thinks now of ascension, to conquer in the eyes of all; for it is not enough to conquer in the field, but he will conquer in the city; he will conquer to heaven, and make show of his conquest. I ascend to lead captivity captive, 'to make a show,' as it is expressed, Col. ii. 15. While anything is to do or receive, our souls should not be satisfied, but still stretched out to desire further and further still, more and more still, till we be there where our souls shall be filled to the uttermost; and there is no place of further desire, as heaven is the place to satiate, and fill all the comers of the soul.

Quest. But how shall we know whether we be risen with Christ or no?

Resol. Partly we may know it by our former courses. Christ when he was risen, all the clothes were laid together in the grave. He left them behind, and rose with an earthquake. There was a commotion; and after his resurrection he minded heaven. So if ye be risen with Christ, your former vile courses lie in the grave; your oaths are gone; profaneness and wickedness of life gone. Tell you me, you are risen, while you carry the bonds of your sins about you? You profane, wretched, swearing, ungodly persons, filthy speakers, that have an heart more filthy, vile in body and soul, can they have any part in Christ? Where is that that bound you before? You carry it about still. Therefore you he in the bonds of the devil; you be in the grave of sin; there is no rising. Resurrection is with commotion. There was an earthquake when Christ arose; and there is an heartquake when the soul riseth. Can the soul rise from sin without commotion? In the inward man there will be division between flesh and spirit, without any ado at all? And therefore they that find nothing to do in their spirits, where is their rising again?

But that which is proper to the occasion in hand is the third. Where grace is begun, there will be an inward proceeding and ascending with Christ. How shall I know therefore whether I ascend?

1. First, By minding things above. The apostle telleth us directly, Col. iii. 1, 'Mind things above,' be heavenly-minded in some sort, live the life that Christ did, after his resurrection. All his discourse was, after his resurrection, of the kingdom of heaven, and his mind was on the place whither he was to go; and so a true Christian indeed, that is truly risen, his thoughts and discourse is, when he is himself, heavenly. Other things he useth as if he did not; as while we be in the world, we must deal with worldly things; but we must deal with them as that which is not our proper element, 1 Cor. vii. 37, 'They used the world, as if they used it not; and they married, as if they did not; for they knew the fashion of this world passeth away.' And therefore they that affect earthly glory, carnal affections and delights, they cannot think of these things with any comfort. They be moles which grovel in the earth. Some make a profession, and they ascend higher as kites do, but they look low; they make high professions, but their aims are low. The true eagles that ascend to Christ, as they ascend, so they look upward and upward still. They do not mind things below; they do not take a high pitch, and still continue earthly-minded; but they look high, as well as ascend high. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves.

2. Yet more particularly, those that ascend with Christ, they that are in heaven and they that are on earth do the same things, though in different degrees and measure. What do they in heaven? There they meddle not with defilements of the world; and so, though a Christian be on earth, he defileth himself not with the world, or ill company. He will converse with them, but not defile himself with them. They that be in heaven are praising God, and so be they much in praising of God here. They that be in heaven love to see the face of God, they joy in it. And they that be heavenly-minded here joy in the presence of God, in the word, the sacraments, and his children. If they be ascended in any degree and measure, this they will do. And then they will joy in communion with God all they can, as they do in heaven. You have some carnal dispositions that are never themselves but in carnal company like themselves. If ever we mean to be in heaven, we must joy in heaven on earth; that is, in them that be heavenly in their dispositions. If we cannot endure them here, how shall we ever live with them in heaven?

What was Christ to ascend for? What is the end of his ascension?

The end of his ascension was to take possession of heaven in his body, which had never been there before?

1. And he was to take possession of heaven in his body for his church; that is, his mystical body. So he ascended to heaven, carried his blessed body that he took in the virgin's womb with him.

2. And likewise he ascended to heaven, to take up heaven in behalf of his spouse, his church; as the husband takes up land in another country in behalf of his wife, therefore he did ascend.

3. And likewise he ascended to leave his Spirit, that he might send the Comforter. He taketh away himself, that was the great Comforter, while he was below. He was the bridegroom; and while the bridegroom was present, they had not such a measure of the Spirit. Christ's presence supplied all. But Christ ascended to heaven that his departure from them might not be prejudicial to them, but that they might have comfort through the God of comfort, the Spirit of comfort, the Holy Ghost: 'I will send the Comforter,' John xiv. 16, seq.

And though there was no loss by the ascension of Christ, they might fear by losing of Christ that all their comfort was gone. Ay, but Christ telleth them, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' He goeth to take up heaven for his church, and then to send his Spirit. What a blessed intercourse is there now, since Christ's ascension, between heaven and earth! Our body is in heaven, and the Spirit of God is here on earth. The flesh that he hath taken into heaven is a pledge that all our flesh and bodies shall be where he is ere long. In the mean time, we have the Spirit to comfort us, and never to leave us till we be brought to the place where Christ is. This is great comfort, and this is the main end why Christ ascended to the Father, that he might send the Comforter. And comfort might well come now in more abundance than before, because by the death of Christ all enemies were conquered, and by the resurrection of Christ it was discovered that God was appeased. The resurrection of Christ manifested to the world what was done by death; and now, all enemies being conquered, and God being appeased, what remains but the sweetest gift next to Christ, the Holy Ghost? And that is the reason why the Holy Ghost was more abundant after Christ's resurrection, because God was fully satisfied, and declared by the rising of Christ to be fully satisfied, and all enemies to be conquered.

4. One end likewise of his resurrection was 'to make a show of his conquest.' There is a double victory over the enemy. There is a victory in the field, and triumph together with it. And then there is triumphing in civitate regia, a triumphing in the kingly city. So Christ did conquer in his death, and showed his conquest by resurrection; but he did not lead captivity captive and make show thereof till he ascended; and then he made open show of his victorious triumph in civitate regia.

5. One special end, likewise, why he would have this message sent, that he was to ascend, was that he might appear there in heaven for us, as Heb. ix. 11, seq., 'He appears for ever in heaven for us, and maketh intercession for us.' When the high priest was to enter into the holy of holies, which was a type of heaven, he carried the names of the twelve tribes engraven in stone upon his breast. Christ, our true high priest, being entered into the holy of holies, earned the names of all his elect in his breast into heaven, and there appeareth before God for us. He carrieth us in his heart. Christ doth fulfil that which in John xvii. he prayeth for, appearing in heaven before his Father by virtue of his blood shed, and that blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. It speaks mercy and pardon. The blood of Abel crieth for vengeance and justice; but the blood of Christ saith, Here is one that I shed my blood for. And when we pray to God, God accepts of our prayers; and by virtue of Christ's blood shed, there is mercy, and pardon, and favour procured, which is sprinkled by faith upon the soul; God manifesting to the soul by his Spirit, that Christ died in particular for such a soul, which soul praying to God in the name of Christ, that blood not only in heaven, but sprinkled upon the soul, speaketh peace there. The Spirit saith that to the soul, which Christ doth in heaven. Christ saith in heaven, I died for such a soul; the Spirit saith in the soul, Christ died for me; and the blood of Christ is sprinkled on every particular soul. As Christ in heaven appears and intercedeth for me, so the Spirit intercedeth in mine own guilty heart, that always speaks discomfort, till it be satisfied with particular assurance. Christ died for me, and God is mine, and Christ is mine. Thus particular faith sprinkleth the blood of Christ upon the soul. So that now my sins are not only pardoned in heaven, but in my soul. There is not only intercession in heaven, but in my soul. My soul goeth to God for pardon and for mercy, and rejoiceth in all the mercies it hath and hopeth to have. What is done in heaven, is done in a man's soul by the Spirit in some measure.

G. The last end is, that he might show that our salvation is exactly wrought, that God is perfectly satisfied to the full, else he should never have

risen, much less ascended to heaven. And therefore if we once believe in Christ for forgiveness of sins, and yet say, I doubt of salvation, it is all one as if you should go about to pluck Christ from heaven. The doubtful, distrustful heart, till it be subdued by a spirit of faith, saith, 'Who shall ascend to heaven, to tell me whether I shall go to heaven?' or 'Who shall enter into the deep, to tell me I am freed from hell?' I am afraid I shall be damned, saith the guilty heart, till the Spirit of God hath brought it under and persuaded it of God's love in Christ. Say not, "'Who shall ascend up to heaven? for that is to bring Christ down from heaven,' Rom. x. 7. And what an injurious thing is it to bring Christ down from heaven, to suffer on the cross! This is a great indignity, though we think not of it, to doubt of our salvation, and not cast ourselves on his mercy. For as verily as he is there, we shall be there. He is gone to take up a place for us. He is there in our name, as the husband taketh a place for his spouse. And if we doubt whether we shall come there or no, we doubt whether he be there or no. And if we doubt of that, we doubt whether he hath wrought salvation or no, and so we bring him down to the cross again. Who shall descend to the deep? that is, to bring Christ from the dead again. Such is the danger of a distrustful heart. So that by Christ's ascending into heaven, we may know all is done and accomplished; all our enemies are subdued; God is appeased and fully satisfied, heaven is taken up in our room, and therefore labour for a large heart answerable to the large unchangeable grounds we have, for faith to pitch and bottom itself upon it. Therefore make this farther use of this ascension of Christ, and thereupon his intercession in heaven for us. He is there to plead our cause. He is there as our surety to appear for us, and not only so, but as a counsellor to plead for us; and not only so, but one of us, as if a brother should plead for a brother; and not only so, but a favourite there too. All favourites are not so excellent at counselling perhaps, but we have one that is favourite in heaven, and is excellent at pleading, that can non-suit all accusations laid against us by the devil. He is the Son of God, and he is one of us; he appeareth not as a stranger, for a stranger, as the counsellor is perhaps for his client, but he appears as our brother, Apoc. xii. 10. Let us think of the comforts of it. He appears for us to plead our cause, with acceptation of his person and cause. For he, before whom he pleadeth, God the Father, sent him to take our nature, die, and ascend into heaven for us, to sustain the persons of particular offenders. He must needs hear Christ, that sent him for that purpose. Where the judge appoints a counsel, it is a sign he favoureth the cause. Perhaps we cannot pray, are disconsolate, and vexed with Satan's temptations. The poor client hath a good cause, but cannot make a good cause of it. But if he get a skilful lawyer, that is favourable to him, and before a favourable judge, his

comfort is, his advocate can make his cause good. If we would confess our sins, as that we must do, we must take shame to ourselves in all our distress and disconsolation of spirit; and we must lay open our estates to God, and complain; and then desire God to look upon us, and Christ to plead our cause for us and answer Satan; and when Satan is very malicious and subtle, as he is a very cunning enemy to allege all advantages against us, to make us despair, remember this, we have one in heaven that is more skilful than he 'that is the accuser of brethren,' Rev. xii. 10, that accuseth us to God and to our own souls, that accuseth every man to himself and maketh him an enemy to himself. But we have a pleader in heaven that will take our part against the accuser of our brethren, and quiet us at length in our consciences. Perhaps we may be troubled a while, to humble us; but remember that he is in heaven purposely to plead our cause.

It is a good plea to God, 'Lord, I know not what to say; my sins are more than the hairs of my head. Satan layeth hard to me. I cannot answer one of a thousand. I confess all my sins. Hear me, and hear thy Son for my sake. He is now at thy right hand, and pleadeth for me.' And desire Christ to plead for us. We have not only all the church to pray for us, 'Our Father;' but we have Christ himself to plead for us and make our cause good, if Christ saith, I shed my blood for this person, and [he] appears now by virtue of my redemption. And the condition of the covenant is, if we confess our sins, he is merciful to forgive. And if we sin, we have an advocate in heaven, to whom we must lay claim, 1 John ii. 1. The party hath confessed the debt; and therefore the bond must be cancelled. He hath performed the conditions on his part; and therefore make it good on thine own part. And being the Spirit hath shamed thee for thy sins, what can the devil say? What saith Paid? 'It is God that justifieth; who shall condemn?' Rom. viii. 33. If God, the party offended, do justify, who shall condemn? It is Christ that died. That is not enough. 'That is risen again.' That is not enough. It is Christ that rose again, 'and sitteth at the right hand of God for us,' and maketh intercession for us. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Let the devil accuse what he will, Christ is risen, to show that he hath satisfied; and is now in heaven, there appearing for us. Oh that we had hearts large enough for these comforts! then should we never yield to base temptations.

It is against the pleasure of God that we should be disconsolate? Therefore we wrong our own souls, and sin against our own comfort, when we let the reins loose by inordinate and extreme sorrow. We lose that sweetness that we might enjoy, by giving way to discomfortable thoughts.

Indeed, if a man examine his life from the beginning of his conversion to the end thereof, he may thank himself for all his trouble. The sin against the holy gospel is a kind of rebellion against God, though we think not so, when we will not be comforted, nor embrace grounds of comfort when we have them. The comforts of God ought not to be of small esteem to us. The sweet comforts, large, exceeding, eternal comforts of God, we ought to esteem of them as they be; and therefore our Saviour Christ sendeth to them speedily.

All Scripture is to this end, for consolation, even the Scripture that tendeth to instruction and direction, that so men may be in a state of comfort; for cordials are not good, but where there is purgation before. So all Scriptures that are purging, to tell us our faults, they be to bring us unto a comfortable condition. Other Scriptures, that tend to instruct our judgments and settle us in faith, what is the end of all, if we walk not comfortably towards God and strongly in our places? Therefore, when we look not to comfort and joy in all conditions, we abuse the intendments of God.

But, I beseech you, make not a bad use of it; for if you know it to be so, if it worketh not graciously in you, and winneth you to respect God the more, and love him that is thus indulgent and gracious, but go on in offending conscience, and break peace off, then at length conscience will admit no comfort. Many that have excellent comforts have made havoc of their consciences, and will go on in spite of ministers, in spite of their consciences and God's Spirit joined with conscience. At length it is just with God to give them up to despair, wicked sinners that trample the blood of Christ under their feet. But for all other that strive against corruption, and would be better, it is a ground of marvellous comfort.

I shall come to the message itself. Tell them, 'I ascend.' He speaketh of that as present which was surely to be. So we should think of our future estate as if we were presently to go to heaven. Faith hath this force, to make things to come present. If we could keep it in us, and exercise it, could we live in any sin? But that it is distant, that is the cause of sinning. We put off things in a distance. If it be at the day of judgment, that is far off; and therefore they will not leave their present pleasure for that that shall not be, they know not when. But look on things in the word of a God that is Jehovah, that giveth a being to all, who hath spoken of things to come as if present, and then you will be of another mind. Faith is the privilege of a Christian, which maketh things afar off present. No wicked man but would leave his swearing and profaneness if he saw the joys of heaven and pains of

hell; and it were no thanks to him. But to believe God on his word, that these things shall be, that is the commendations of a man, and the excellency of a Christian above another man. Another man doth all by sense; but the Christian will trust God on his word. 'I ascend,' saith Christ.

We must not think of the ascension of Christ as a severed thing from us, but if we would have the comfort of it, we must think of it as ourselves ascending with him. Think of Christ as a public person and surety for us, and then we shall have great comfort in that, that he saith, 'I ascend.' God prepared paradise before he made the creature. He would have him to come into a place of honour and pleasure. And so God, before ever we were born, provided a place and paradise for us in heaven, that we might end our days with greater comfort. We may be straitened here. Many a good Christian hath scarce where to lay his head; but Christ is gone to prepare a place for them in heaven. And this may comfort us in the consideration of all our sins; for sin past, and for corruption present, and sin that we may commit for time to come. For any thing that is past, if we confess our sins to God, he will forgive them. 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sins,' 1 John i. 7, even from the present corruptions that attend on us. We have one that stands between God and us as a surety; and he will give us his Spirit to subdue our corruptions, and at length make us like himself, a glorious spouse, Eph. v. 27. If we were perfect men, we need not a mediator; and this may teach us comfort, rather because we are sinners, and daily subject to offend God. We have one to make our peace for time to come; if we sin, we have an advocate, 1 John ii. 1. When Christ taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our daily trespasses,' he supposed we should run daily into sins, Mat. vi. 12. We have an advocate in heaven every day to stand between God and us, to answer God, do undertake that at length we should cease to offend him; and for the present, we are such as he shed his precious blood for; and he appeareth for us by virtue of his death, which is a marvellous comfort.

We think if we commit sin there is no hope. But what needs a mediator, but to make peace between the parties disagreeing? If all things were made up between God and us, what need of an intercessor? But God knoweth well enough we run into daily sins, by reason of a spring of corruption in us, which is never idle. And therefore we may daily go to God in the name of our advocate, and desire God for Christ's sake to pardon, and desire Christ to intercede for us. Let us therefore shame ourselves.

There is not a Christian but will be in himself apprehensive of being thrown into hell every day. There is a spring of corruption in him, and should God take a forfeiture of his daily rebellions, his conscience tells him it were just. And therefore we must every day live upon this branch of his priestly office, his mediation. We must live by faith in this branch of Christ, and make use of it continually, for this will keep us from hell. And therefore if we sin every day, go to God in the name of Christ, and desire him to pardon us. This is to feed on Christ; and therefore we should more willingly come to the sacrament. When we be in heaven, we shall need a mediator no longer, for we shall be perfectly holy. We cannot think of these things too much. They be the life of religion and of comforts; and it may teach us to make a true use of Christ in all our conditions. Poor souls that are not acquainted with the gospel, they think God will cast them into hell for every sin, and they live as if they had not an high priest in heaven to appear for them.

The matter of the message is, Christ ascended to God, as a common Father and God to him and them. He doth not say, I ascend to the Father. That were no great comfort; for what were that to them? or to my Father only. Neither doth he say, 'I ascend to our Father,' for that is true in the order of it: for he is not in equal respect the God and Father of Christ, and the God and Father of us. And therefore he speaks of himself in the first place: 'I go to my God and your God.' For he is first and specially Christ's Father and Christ's God, and then ours; as we shall see in the particulars. We have a common Father and a common God with Christ. God the Father is Christ's Father by eternal generation, as he is God and man. We have therefore the nature of Christ as he is God and man.

There is this difference between God's being Christ's Father and the Father of any else.

First of all, God is Christ's Father from eternity. God had a being and was a Father from all eternity. There is no man of equal standing with his father. He is born after his father cometh to be a man. But Christ is of God from all eternity. His generation is eternal; and therefore there is a grand difference.

Then Christ is co-equal with the Father in glory and majesty every day. The son is not equal with the father, but Christ is with his Father.

Again, The son in other generations comes of the father, and is like the father, taken out of his substance, but of a different substance from the

father. But Christ and the Father, both the persons are in one substance, in one essence. The essence of the Father differeth not from the essence of the Son. We must remember this, to give Christ the prerogative and pre-eminency, that God is his Father in another manner than ours. He is his Father by nature, ours by adoption. What he is by nature, we are by grace. Though Christ was intent upon his ascension, yet he forgetteth not this grand difference here, but mentioneth it: 'Go to my brethren.' We must not call him brother again. We may think of him as our brother; but 'My God and my Lord,' as Thomas saith, John xx. 28. If the greatest person should call us brother, yet it is most behoveful for the inferior to say, 'My God, my Lord;' to acknowledge Christ as a great person, and to make use of his love to strengthen our faith, not to diminish our respect to him in any way. It is his infinite mercy to term us brethren. But when we go to him we must have other terms.

Thus we see how to conceive of Christ after his resurrection. When he hath triumphed over all his enemies, and reconciled God by his death, then 'I go to my Father and your Father.' Then he is a common Father, by virtue of Christ's satisfaction to divine wrath and justice, and victory and triumphing over all his enemies. So we must not conceive of God as our Father, but in reference to Christ's victory over death. God is our Father by virtue of Christ's satisfaction to justice and conquest over all our enemies. 'The God of peace,' saith the holy apostle Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews, in the conclusion of that excellent epistle, 'that brought you from death to life through our Lord Jesus Christ,' John v. 24. How cometh he to be the God of peace to us, which brought us from death to life by our Lord Jesus? Why, the resurrection of Christ makes him the God of peace. Who raised him? He raised himself. But who together with himself? The Father raised him. And could the Father raise him if he were not reconciled? But now he is the 'God of peace;' for peace is made by the cross and blood of Christ, Col. iii. 15, the great peace-maker of heaven and earth; now we may conceive of God under the sweet relation of a Father.

Now this relation of a father teacheth us as what we may expect from God, so what we ought to return to God again, and how we ought to carry ourselves one towards another.

I. What we may expect from God being a Father.

(1.) We may expect whatsoever a child may expect from a father. God taketh not upon him empty names. He saith he will be a Father, not only

called a Father, 'but I will be your Father, and you shall be my sons,' 2 Cor. vi. 18. All the fatherhood, and all the kindred in heaven and earth that is spiritual, the comfort of it cometh from God the Father, reconciled to us in Christ. The word in the original is so strong that we cannot express it in English. Fathers on earth are but poor fathers, and they be but beams of the fatherly affection that is in God. God will let us see by these beams of compassion that is in a father to a child, what real compassion he beareth to us. The true reality of fatherhood is in God. And therefore, when we hear of father, think of whatsoever lieth in the bowels of a father to a child; and that we may expect from God our Father, and infinite more. It is a great indulgence; as a hither pitieth his child, so God will pity us, Mal. iii. 17. Will a father cast off his child? Indeed, he will cleanse the child. So God will take away our abominations, and purge us when we defile ourselves. It is because of an eternal relation he casteth us not off. We may expect from him indulgence; and it is an indulgence of indulgence. God needed no son when he made us sons. Yet he had his Son and angels to praise himself withal. Can we pity and pardon a child? and will not God pardon and pity us? Why should we conceive worse of him than of ourselves? Will we give pity to a father, and not pity to the Father of all bowels and compassion? And therefore think not that God will cast us off. God pardons us, and healeth our infirmities, and pitieth us as a father pitieth his own child, Ps. ciii. 13. It is a name under which no man must despair. "What! Despair under the name of a father? Despair of mercy when we have a Father to go to? The poor prodigal, when he had spent his patrimony, his body, his good name, had lost all, and nothing left, yet he had a father, and 'I will go to him,' Luke xv. 18. And so, when we be at the last cast, and have spent all, we have a Father. Therefore go to him. What saith the church? Isa. lxiii. lxiv., 'Doubtless thou art our Father,' when the church was in a poor condition; 'Though our righteousness be as a menstruous cloth, and we be defiled, yet thou art our Father; we are the clay, thou art the potter,' &c. So that it is a name of his indulgence.

You have his disposition set down by the father of the prodigal. The son saith, he will go to the father; the father runneth to him and meeteth him when he is coming. God runneth to us, and is ready to meet us, when we begin to repent of sin, and are sensible of our faults. He is more ready to pardon, than we to ask pardon.

I touch only some principal things, that you may remember against the evil day and hour of temptation. He taketh not on him the relation of a Father for nought, but will fill it up to the uttermost. It is no empty relation.

(2.) It is a name likewise of comfort. It is the speech of a natural man, 'A little punishment is enough from a father.' 'He knoweth whereof we are made, he remembers we are but dust,' Ps. ciii. 14, and Heb. xii. 6; he knoweth we are not iron or steel; he knoweth our making; and therefore he will deal gently with us when he doth correct us. It is as necessary as our daily bread to have gentle correction, to wean us from the world; yet he doth it gently. A little punishment will serve from a gracious father.

(3.) It is a name likewise of provision, that we may expect from God; that he will in all our exigences and necessities provide for us whatsoever shall be needful. What saith our Saviour Christ to the poor disciples doubting of want? 'It is your Father's good will to give you the kingdom.' What then? 'Fear not, little flock,' Luke xii. 32. He that will give you a kingdom, will not he give you daily bread, viaticum, provision for a journey? He that intendeth us heaven, certainly he will provide for us here. And therefore in the Lord's prayer, before all petitions, as a ground of all, he putteth in 'our Father'; and therefore, 'Give us our daily bread, our Father.' And therefore he will give us grace to sanctify his name, and do his will, and forgive us our sins. Expect all from our Father, which is the ground of all. Christ had much ado to persuade his disciples that they should not want necessities; and therefore he makes whole sermons to strengthen their faith in this: 'Your heavenly Father knoweth what you stand in need of,' Mat. vi. 8. The son cannot ask, but the Father can interpret any sigh, any groan, and knoweth what we would have. And therefore being God's children, we may fetch provision from him in all conditions.

(4.) And with provisions, protection likewise; and therefore make this use of it. In the temptations of Satan, lie under the wing of our Father. We have a Father to go to; make use of him, make use of his protection, that God would shield us, that he would be a tower, as he is a tower, and 'the righteous man may fly to him,' Prov. xi. 8. Lie under his wings. He is a gracious Father, and he hath taken this sweet relation on him for this purpose, that we may have comfort in all conditions. You see then what we may expect from God, by this sweet relation he hath taken on him in Christ, to be our Father.

II. This word, it is a word of relation. It bindeth God to us and us to God, We are to honour him as our Father. This one word is sufficient to express our duty to a father, and that is a word of reverence; for it includeth a mixed affection of fear and love. And it is an affection of an inferior to a superior. He is great, therefore we ought to fear him. He is good, therefore we ought to love him. There is with him beams of majesty and bowels of compassion. As there is beams of majesty, we ought to fear him; as bowels of compassion, we ought to love him. So that fear and love mixed together is the affection we owe to God as our Father. If we tremble, and are afraid to go to him, we know not he is loving. If we go to him over-boldly and saucily, we forget that he is great. Therefore we must think of his greatness, that we forget not his goodness. We must so think of his goodness, that we forget not his greatness. Therefore go boldly to him, with reverence to the throne of Christ. In the word 'Father,' there is more saving power than in ten thousand. It toucheth his very bowels. When a child wanteth anything, and is in distress, let it but say, Father, or Mother, and the parents yearn upon him. If God be our Father, go to him boldly; but with reverence go with affiance to his bowels. Oh, it is a persuasive word! What cannot we look from that majesty that hath condescended to be called 'Father,' and to be a Father to us in all our necessities? Either we shall have what we want and lack, or else we shall have that which is better. He is a wise Father. He answereth not always according to our wills, but always according to our good. He seeth it is for our good that we are not presently comforted. The physician giveth a sharp potion. Oh, I cannot endure! And the surgeon lanceth. Oh, I cannot endure it! But the surgeon knoweth it is not healing time. Even so we would be presently taken off from under crosses; but God is a wise Father, and knoweth how long it is fit for us to continue under the cross.

Come to him boldly therefore, under the name of a father, that he may move his bowels, and surely will hoar us. For in Ps. xxvii. 10, when all forsook me, 'My father and mother forsook me, but the Lord took me up.' Fathers in the flesh, and mothers, die, but the Lord taketh us up. He is an eternal Father, and therefore a ground of eternal boldness with God, and of everlasting comfort. He was our Father before we had a father in the world, and he will be our Father when we shall cease to be in the world, They be but instruments under God to bring us into the world. God is our true Father. Our other fathers are but under God, to give us a being, to fit us for heaven. He provideth the best inheritance and paternity for us in heaven. And therefore never be disconsolate, but remember, 'I go to my Father and your Father,' which is a word of eternal comfort. He was our Father from eternity

in election; he will be our Father to eternity in glorification. 'Can a mother forget her child? yea, though she should, yet can I not forget thee, thou art written in the palm of my hand,' Isa. xlix. 15, 16. God hath us always in his eye. A mother cannot always think of her child. She sleepeth sometimes; but God is a Father that never sleepeth. 'The keeper of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,' Ps. cxxi. 4. And this is our comfort in all times and for eternity. And therefore we ought to carry ourselves to God reverently, and go boldly to him, and always make use of him.

And this we should learn likewise, to maintain a sweet frame between God and us. Shall God open such an advantage to us? Shall God be our Father, and bear the gracious eternal affection of a father? and shall not we, by prayer and faith, fetch from our Father all we stand in need of? As our Saviour saith, 'You that be earthly fathers, when your children ask such a thing, will you deny?' Mat. vii. 9, 10. And have we a Father so rich, so loving, and shall not we have intercourse with him in our daily necessities? What a trade is open to us, if we know what a comfort is laid up in the sweet relation of a father! 'Your Father knoweth what we stand in need of,' Mat. vi. 8, and he will give thee the spring of all graces, not only a broken heart, a spirit of life and vigour in his service, but go to God and he will give thee his Holy Spirit, which is the best thing next Christ that can be. And therefore be encouraged to make intercourse between thee and God, considering we have a brother in heaven, our nature is there, and our spirit is below. We have the best things in heaven, next Christ, on earth, and God hath our flesh in heaven by Christ; and therefore why should we not be much in prayer, and much in praises in all our necessities? Beloved, it is a comfort of that largeness that I cannot express it. I rather leave it to your admiration, that you may see what use to make of this sweet relation of a father.

(1.) But we must know, that every one cannot say, 'my Father,' for there are a company of men in the world that may say, in some respects, 'our Father;' but in other respects they cannot. As our Saviour Christ saith peremptorily, John viii. 44, 'You are of your father the devil.' They bragged of God their Father, and they were of their 'father the devil.' Therefore, consider who is fit to take this name into their mouths, 'My Father.' Mark the disposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, and then you shall see who be fit to brag of God as their Father. They be very formal men, look to their outward devotion, who so devout as they? They studied it; but what were they for the inside? They were malicious men, they were Satanical men, men opposite to the power of religion, arrant hypocrites, painted sepulchres. It is no matter

for compliment or formality. An hypocrite may have much of that in the eyes of the world, yet may be a child of the devil for all that, and a Pharisee for all that. Thou mayest be malicious against the truth, as the Pharisees sought Christ's blood. A man may be like Herod, seeking the blood of Christ in his members, persecuting Christ, as all cruel men do. They seek to devour Christ in his professors. What they can, they disparage and dishearten them. They are enemies to the power of religion and to the ordinances of God. They be the children of the devil, and therefore have no reason at all to brag that God is their Father. Indeed, an inward bitter disposition against the power of religion, though under any formality, is a character of a Satanical spirit, and such cannot say, 'Our Father.' If they do, it is an usurpation, for their true father is the devil.

(2.) Who can say, Oar Father? Those that by the Spirit of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost, are ingrafted into Christ by a spirit of adoption, and have the stamp of the Father upon them. The likeness of the Father and of Christ, whom God begets to his own likeness, that are, in a word, like Christ. Christ is the first Son, and in him, and for his sake, we are sons. He is the natural Son, and they may say 'Our Father' that labour to express the disposition of Christ, who is the first Son. See this disposition of Christ in the gospel, how marvellously patient he was under the hand of his Father, obedient to the death of his cross, humbled, full of love, full of goodness. 'He went about doing good,' Acts x. 38. Do we then walk as Christ did? Carry we the image of the 'second Adam'? Have we the patient, humble, meek disposition of Christ in our measure? Do we love Christ in his members, God in his image? Do we love the ordinances and the power of religion? This showeth what we are. And is our conversation suitable to our inward disposition? Do we walk in light? Do we show by our conversation whose children we are? Do our speeches give a character of the inward man? If this be in us, though in never so small a measure, with comfort we may say, 'Our Father.'

But may not another man, that is not in Christ, come to God under the sweet name of 'our Father?' Yea, he may come to him as his father by creation and providence, or sacramentally a father, or as brought into the church, and having God to create him and to provide for him. Lord, thou hast showed thyself a gracious Father thus far, though I cannot from any inward persuasion say, 'My Father.' Thus far as I can I say, 'My Father.' Strive against our spiritual infidelity, believe God and cast ourselves on his gracious promises in Christ. God will meet us at the same time, and he will

send us his Spirit to make us his sons. And therefore let no man that hath been a wicked liver be discouraged from going to God in the name of a father, in that wherein he is a father. Lord, thou hast created me and preserved me, and it is thy mercy I am not in hell. Yet thou offerest to be my Father in Christ—thou hast made gracious promises and invited me; and upon this, when the heart yieldeth to the gracious apprehensions of God as a Father, there is a spirit of faith wrought in the heart presently. Therefore think of the name of a father, and the very thoughts of it will bring the spirit of adoption.

Only it speaks no comfort to the bitter malicious satanical enemies of Christ, and the power of religion. They be children of the devil. But now poor souls, that groan under the burden of sin, let them think that God is a Father, and of the mercies of God, though they do not see they be interested in them. By the very contemplation of the mercies of God in Christ, and his inviting them to receive them, the Spirit of God will be wrought in the soul, whereby they may have confidence to come to God as a Father.

I desire you therefore to remember this. It is the first sermon of our Saviour Christ after his resurrection, and therefore forget not to think of God as a Father and Christ as a Brother. Indeed, whatsoever comfort is in any relation, God and Christ have taken it on them. A father is more comprehensive than any other title: Christ is Father, and Husband, and Spouse. And God is our Rock and Shield; and whatsoever is comfortable he hath taken on him, and in Christ we may command him to be so. And if we had ten thousand worlds, they could not be compared to the comforts that arise from hence, that we can call God, Father. It is more to us, if we could improve it in our spiritual trade for heaven, than if we had a thousand worlds, especially in days of affliction and in the hour of death. For it improveth whatsoever is in the bowels of God for poor distressed souls. When nothing else will comfort, this will comfort, if we can say to God, 'Father.' Though we cannot make a distinct prayer, yet if we can say 'Father,' God can pick matter out of our broken language. Now Christ is ascended up to heaven, he doth us more good than he did when he was upon the earth. The sun in the firmament yieldeth us heat and comfort; but if it were nearer it would do us hurt, or if further off it would not do us so much good. God hath placed it, being a common light of the world, high, to enlighten inferior bodies, and to convey influence by means into them. And so Christ, the Sun of righteousness, being ascended and advanced to heaven, doth more good

than on earth. And therefore saith he, 'It is for your good that I ascend.' It is for our good that we have Christ in heaven, to appear there for us.

'I ascend to my Father, and to your Father.' 'Father' is here taken personally, not essentially; though it be true in that sense, 'to my Father,' as the first person of the Trinity especially. Christ may well say, 'I ascend to my Father' now; for he was risen again, and was mightily declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. 'Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee;' that is, this day have I declared thee, Rom. i. 4, and Heb. i. 5. It is said of things, *fiunt, cum patefiunt*, they are done when they be open, and declared to be done. Christ was the Son of God when he rose again, because he was discovered by his glorious resurrection to be so indeed. And therefore Christ may well say after his resurrection, 'I go to my Father, and your Father.' Observe from hence, that God in Christ is our Father. We say, relations are *minima*, *entitatis* they are little entities founded upon others, but they are *maxima consequential*, of great concernment.

I beseech you, before I leave the point, give me leave to go on a little further in this, to show that wonderful mercy, that admirable goodness which the tongues and hearts of all the men in the world, and angels in heaven, are not able to express; that love of God which is contained in the relation he hath taken on him in Christ to be our Father.

(1.) Consider who, and whom. Who, the great God, that hath the Son to solace himself in. He did not adopt us because he wanted sons. He had sons of his own, and sons of his love to solace himself in. What need he have took traitors, rebels, enemies, to make them his sons? Oh it is a marvellous advancement of our nature, that God should in Christ become our 'Father.' It is said, Ps. cxiii. 6, 'God abaseth himself to behold things below;' and indeed so he doth, with reverence be it spoken to his great majesty: he abaseth himself in regard of things below, in regard of us worms of the earth, that be enemies, yea, devils by nature. For many, ye shall see the devil in them, in their lying and opposing of goodness. And God will always have some amongst men, to show others what they would be, if God left them to themselves. God abaseth himself to behold things below. Not that it is a diminution of majesty to do it, but God in Christ hath stooped so low, that he could go no lower, and he is advanced as high in our nature as can be. How could God become a man, a curse, God in the second person with us, God in the first person to be so near to us as a Father, and God in the

second person to make him a Father, to be so low as Christ was, which is to be as low as hell itself.

(2.) Consider to whom this message is sent. He is your Father, even a Father to you the disciples, now you are disconsolate. God owneth us for his children at the worst. He took our condition notwithstanding all our infirmities. When we be pronest by a work of the Spirit to condemn ourselves, then God is nearest to justify us. When the poor prodigal said, 'I am unworthy to be a son, make me an household servant,' you see how' the father entertaineth him, Luke xv. 19. So the poor publican dareth not lift up his eyes, and yet went away justified, Luke xviii. 13. David, when he could not pray, but murmur and rebel, and said in his heart all men are liars, 'yet thou heardest the voice of my prayer,' Ps. cxvi. 11; even then, when he could not pray, but groan and sigh to God: 'I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet thou regardest the voice of my prayers when he said, out of a murmuring spirit and rebelliousness of nature, I am cast out of thy sight—a speech that tended to desperation,—yet God heard the voice of his prayer. When Job said, 'I clothed myself in dust and ashes,' God said to him, 'I have accepted thee,' Job xlii. 6, 8. When we by the Spirit think ourselves unworthy to be accepted, or to look to heaven, or to tread upon the earth, then God looketh on us worthy in his Son; and never more worthy than when we acknowledge our own unworthiness. 'Go tell my disciples,' at this time when they had dealt so unworthily, 'I go to their Father.'

It is from his own bowels, and not any goodness in us, that he loveth us. He loveth the work of his own Spirit, his own nature, that that is of his own. Though the child hath many infirmities, yet the Father seeth the nature of the child, and therefore loveth it. God seeth his image of holiness in us in some poor measure, and he loveth his own in us. And he loveth our love to him, which is in some measure. Though the disciples had got into corners, after their unkind dealing with Christ, yet he knew they loved him. As where there is love, there will be a reflection of his love back again.

And then God knoweth if he should not show mercy to sinners, he should have none to serve him on earth. And therefore saith the psalmist, Ps. cxxx. ver. 4, 'There is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared;' that is, worshipped. If God were not merciful to sinners, where should he have any to worship him? And therefore God showeth himself to be a Father, even to sinful creatures; even in their wickedness, he seeth his own nature in them.

He seeth some love, some work of respect in them, and if he should not love them, he would have none to fear him.

Beloved, live upon this. I spake before of the love of Christ. Here is the love of God the Father, who is content to be a Father even in our sinful condition. If God be a Father to us, as to Christ, then let not our hearts be discouraged in afflictions, persecutions, temptations. God was a Father to Christ in his desertion. God leaveth us to ourselves sometimes, and we fear his love. Did not he leave his own Son upon the cross—‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Mat. xxvii. 46—and yet he ceased not to be a Father.

For persecution of enemies: was not Christ’s whole life filled up with persecution, and yet a Son? For temptations: thou art tempted, and thinkest thou art none of God’s children. Satan did tempt our blessed Saviour, that he might be a merciful Saviour, and know how to succour thee in times of temptation. Therefore, be not discouraged. Say not, when thou art deserted, persecuted, afflicted, tempted, God is not thy Father; for by that reason thou mayest argue, God was none of Christ’s Father. God was Christ’s Father, notwithstanding his desertion for a time; and notwithstanding his afflictions in the world, his persecutions of all sorts of men, and notwithstanding his temptations, God was his Father still. This we must observe, ‘father’ is not a relation to-day, none to-morrow. It is an eternal relation. ‘Dum percutis, pater es; dum castigas, pater es,’ saith Austin: ‘While thou strikest us, thou art our Father; whilst thou correctest us, thou art our Father.’ Parents are tender to their weakest and sick children; and God is most tender of all to them that be weak. ‘Go, tell Peter.’ And therefore, never be out of conceit of God or Christ. We cannot be in a condition wherein, on any sound grounds, we may run from God.

But if this be so, let us learn of God to be indulgent. If I were to speak to ministers, I should be large to advise them to preach the law and the gospel. The very law is preached in mercy. The Lord taketh a severe course, but it is to order us. All God’s severity is reducible to mercy and Christ; all his afflictions, humiliations, and abasements, do they come from unfatherly affection? No; but to draw us home to him. And therefore, never be terrible to any, but with a bowel of compassion, but with a mind that they may see themselves, and see the comforts they have in Christ. We ought to be of his affection, the great Pastor and Bishop of the church. And so for ordinary Christians; they should be indulgent one to another. Some are always cutting

in ulcers; always wounding and tearing themselves with ill usage and misconstruction; keeping themselves from growing up in a better life, by observing the infirmities of them that be better than themselves. Oh, but 'go, tell my brethren' that my Father owneth them for his children, which may be a use of marvellous comfort to us.

Shall a child be always prowling for itself? We think there is neither father nor mother to take care for it: your heavenly Father knoweth what you need. We ought to labour for contentment in all conditions; for God is our Father. And for others, if God be our Father, let us look to others that be our brethren; own them, and carry ourselves to them as brethren. Let the strong carry themselves lowly to the weak. It is a sign of greatest strength to be most indulgent. Many account it great commendations on their part to be censorious and to be severe. Ay, but that is the greatest part of their weakness, if they have any goodness in them. For who was more indulgent to the disciples than Christ, who saw their weakness? He bore with all their infirmities. Where we see any goodness, let us bear with many weaknesses. We ought to be peaceable men: *Bead sunt pacifici*. They that be appeased in their consciences, in sense of their own pardon, are ready to show mercy to others. Busy, contentious, quarrelsome dispositions argue they never found comfort from God himself.

If God be a Father, and we are brethren, it is a levelling word; it bringeth mountains down and filleth up valleys. All are brethren, take them in what condition you will. If they be great in the world, brethren of high degree; yet 'brother' levelleth them. If they be of low degree, yet it filleth them up, and raiseth them to the height in this brotherhood. And therefore, 'Go, tell my brethren;' tell them all, for they be all equally brethren.

If I were to speak to persons of quality and great parts, as I am to speak to mean, let them be put in mind of their condition. Nothing should raise us up so high, as to forget the everlasting relation of brother. Infirmity should not so far prevail with us, as to forget that which the children of God have to eternity. And for other persons more eminent, if he be a king, let him not so mind that, as to forget all other. For all relations determine in death, and must be laid in the dust; all must stand on equal ground before God's bar, and they that have most to answer for, have the highest account of all, and therefore it is ground of humility to all. Let them that are in greatest eminency consider this. Paul, after conversion, could say, 'Henceforth, I know no man after the flesh,' 2 Cor. v. 16. There is a great deal of humanity

in the world: compliment is very ordinary, which is the picture and outside of humanity; but Christian love, which is a degree above humanity, the apostle calleth it *φιλαδελφία*, 'brotherly love,' that is the scorn of the world. They will own a brother in office; but owning them in the sweet bonds of brotherhood, as they are the sons of God, here is heaven; make much of them in that kind, that is a strange thing in the world. But we must know what it meaneth, before we come to heaven. We must respect a Christian, be he what he will be, under all his infirmities, if he hath a good spirit in him, which God the Father seeth and Christ seeth. We must bear love to all saints. Some will make much of an eminent man, that hath excellent parts, because there may be some countenance from such persons; but here is sincerity that beareth love to all saints. He wraps them up all in the general term, 'Go, tell Peter,' among the rest, that hath offended more than the rest.

If you will know whether you be true brethren or no, or sons of God or no, make a use of trial, by what is formerly delivered. I shall enlarge myself in that point, because all dependeth upon it. God is the Father of all by creation; he is the Father in a general covenant, of all that receive the sacrament and are baptized. But if they have no other relation to God but so, they may go to hell, as Judas and others did: therefore we must know whether we may claim this relation of Father on good grounds or no, else it is an usurpation.

1. Those that belong to God, the Spirit of God witnesseth to them that they are sons. They that are adopted have the Spirit of adoption in some degree. God sendeth his Spirit into their hearts, that assures them that they be God's children. And howsoever this is the first, yet God giveth some intimation by his Spirit, that they look to God in another familiar manner than before; and he looks on them in a fatherly manner. So there be some intimations, and insinuations, and hints, though the Spirit of adoption witnesseth not fully and gloriously to the soul always, because we are not fitted for it; but sometimes in great afflictions and desertions. Where the Spirit of God is, there is communion with God in the Spirit of adoption. And when the voice of the Spirit of adoption speaks not loudly, yet there is a work of the Spirit. There is something to us renewed by the Spirit; there is something of the new creature. When a Christian cannot hear God say to his soul, 'I am thy salvation,' yet a man may see a work of grace. There is a love to God, to the ordinances, to the people of God; a mourning, because he cannot mourn; a sighing, because he hath not an heart pliable. He is

discordant with his condition when he is disconsolate. So that there is a work of the Spirit helpeth him in his worst condition.

Besides, there is a spirit of supplication in some measure. Though he cannot make sot discourses to God, yet he can in a sweet manner lay open his sorrow and grief to God, and leave them in his bosom. They be broken words, perhaps, but God can pluck sense out of them. God knoweth the meaning of the sighing of his own Spirit, though broken speeches. So that where there is any tongue for God in a man, there is a spirit of prayer; there is not a strangeness of God to go altogether by, but the spirit hath a kind of acquaintance with God; and it goeth to God in a familiarity, and layeth forth grief, and putteth forth petitions, in another manner than the world doth.

Again, A Christian in the worst condition, God not only shineth on him through the cloud, but there is a spirit in him that sigheth to go through all thick clouds to God. There is a spirit of supplication and of love in some degree, for that is promised. 'The Spirit shall help our infirmities, when we know not how to pray,' Rom. viii. 20. The intercourse and communion with God is never broken off where there is any Spirit of adoption. Therefore Jonas and David, and the rest, though they could not pray, yet they sighed to God, and would not leave him. If they could embrace Christ, they would not leave him. If they could not embrace Christ, they would touch the hem of his garment. They will not yield to the stream altogether, but strive against it. And though they be carried away with the strength of the stream, and see no goodness in themselves, yet they that be with them shall see a spirit striving to another condition than they are in. Something of Christ's, something of God's Spirit there will be in them. And take them at the worst, they will appear better than the civil man, that thinks himself a glorious man, though he hath nothing but for show and fashion. Who would be in such a man's condition without some brokenness of heart, some sighs?

2. Likewise we may know it by our sympathy and antipathy — our sympathy with them that be good, and antipathy to that which is naught. There is a love of that which is good. So things, good things, are connatural to a good man. There is a relish in good company and good things. As there is sweetness in the best things, so there is something in the children of God that is answerable to the God whom they servo. He is never so out of taste but he findeth his chief comfort in this thing, and he is never himself so much as when he is conversant in these things, though in different measure: sometimes more, and sometimes less. There is an inward antipathy to God in

a proud carnal man that hath not his heart subdued by grace; there is a contrariety to the power of that grace which outwardly he professeth, and a sympathy with the world and the spirit of the world. Take a good Christian at the worst, he is better than another at the best. I beseech you, therefore, examine our dispositions; how we stand affected to things of an higher nature than the things of the world; to spiritual things, how we can relish spiritual things, God's ordinances, and anything that is holy. Surely if there be the life of God and Christ in us, there will be a kind of connaturalness and suitableness of taste to the sweetness that is in holy things.

To come to the next, mark the order here, 'Go to my Father, and your Father.' We are the sons of God at the second hand. God is the Father of Christ first, and then ours. He is his God first, then our God.

This is a weighty point for directing of our devotions, that we may know in what order to look on God. See God in Christ; see all things in Christ first, and then in us. Look upon him as Father to Christ, and then to us. Look on him as a God to Christ first, and in Christ a God to us. Look on him as having elected us, but elect in Christ first. See ourselves justified, but see Christ justified first from our sins, and his justification declared by his resurrection. See our resurrection and ascension, and glorification in heaven, not directly, but in Christ our head, who is in heaven, and taketh up place for us. See God loving us, but look on it in Christ, who is sedes amoris. The next thing to God is his Son, and he loveth none but in him. When we consider of any spiritual blessing, say with the apostle, 'Blessed be God, that hath filled us with all spiritual blessings in Christ,' Eph. i. 3. Otherwise we do not know ourselves nor God. Whatsoever is derived from God to us is through Christ. All promises are his first. They are made to him, and to our nature in him, and they are performed for his sake. He taketh them from God the Father, and they be performed for his sake. He is the true Aaron. We are but the skirts. The oil that is poured upon his head runneth down to his skirts. It runneth to the meanest Christian; but the ointment of grace is first poured on his head. 'Of his grace we receive grace for grace, and of his fulness,' John i. 10. The first fulness is God himself; the second receptacle of all is Christ, God-man; the third are we; we have it at the third hand. God emptieth himself into Christ, as mediator. In him are the fulness of all riches, the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge. We are completed in him, and in him we are full. His is not only a fulness of the vessel, as ours is, but a fulness of the fountain.

And it is for our comfort that it is so, that God's love is to Christ first. There is a firm foundation when God loveth us in his Son, and we are children in his natural Son, in whom we are adopted. Then our state is firm. Our first state in the first Adam was not firm, but now our nature is taken into the unity of the second person, it is firm. So that the love and care and fatherly disposition of God towards us, it is sweet to us, because it is tender to his Son. It is eternal to us, because it is eternal to him. He can as soon cease to love his Son, as cease to love us. For with the same love he loveth all Christ mystical, head and members. There is not the least finger of Christ, the least despised member of Christ, but God looketh on him with that sweet eternal tenderness with which he looketh upon his Son, preserving the prerogative of the head. Oh, this is a sweet comfort, that now all the excellent privileges of a Christian are set on Christ and then on us; and therefore we should not lose them, for Christ will lose nothing. When the favour of a prince is founded on his son whom he always loveth, the affection is unalterable on the son, and therefore the case is good. So God's favour to us is founded on his love to his Son, and therefore unalterable and eternal. We should therefore look up to God in his Son; put up all our petitions to him in his Son; expect all from him in his Son. He is in heaven for us, to do that that belongeth to us. Expect all from God through Christ, and do all to God through Christ; love God in Christ, and Christ in God; ourselves in Christ, and ourselves in the love of God. Christ is in God, and God is in Christ. God and Christ are in us. There is a marvellous sweet relation and communion between God and us, and Christ and us. It is a sweet communion, and mysterious to us. How sweet is the communion between the soul and the body, the soul being so spiritual, and the body a piece of earth! But what is this to the mystery of mysteries, when God takes clay and dust into unity of his person; and all this is for this union. The great and glorious union of Christ to our natures is that he may take us into his mystical body, and so make us one with himself, and one with the Father. He took our natures that he might convey his fatherly goodness and love and Spirit to us. The sweet union of the two natures of Christ is to confirm union between the Father and us, and Christ and us. And we are never happy till we be assured that we are one with Christ, which is the issue of his excellent prayer, John xvii.

Our blessed Saviour fetcheth the comfort of our Father from this, that God is his Father first, and so to join both together; that God is our God, because he is his God first. It is a point very considerable, that whatsoever comfort we look for from God, and in God, we must see it in Christ first

before we see it in ourselves, because we be but sons by adoption, and we have all we have from God through Christ. Whatsoever we see in Christ, think this will belong to us. And whatsoever we look should belong to us, see it first in him. As verily as he ascended, we shall ascend; as verily as he rose, we shall arise; as verily as he is at God's right hand, we shall be there too; for by faith we sit now in heavenly places with Christ; and 'we shall judge the world, and be for ever with the Lord,' 1 Cor. vi. 3. Whatsoever we see in Christ, interest ourselves in it. And therefore we must not conceive of Christ as a severe person, but conceive of ourselves in union and communion with Christ our head; and to conceive of Christ as our head and surety, and 'second Adam,' and as a quickening spirit, that communicateth all to us. And therefore when we are to deal with God, be sure to go through Christ; as we expect all from God through Christ, so give all to God through Christ again. Be sure to take Benjamin with us when we go; and come clothed with the garments of our elder brother, and do not doubt when we come with Christ, for else we dishonour Christ. Shall I come in the sweet name and mediation of my Saviour, that hath perfected salvation, and not be accepted of God, when God hath ordained him for that purpose? If we stagger, and doubt to receive anything at God's hand, we wrong not only God's bounty, but Christ the mediator. Carry this therefore all along with us.

Do all in him, and desire God to pardon all for his sake, and God will regard us.

Use. Let us therefore make use of it, and add this further, that if so he God is first the Father of Christ before he is our Father, and first the God of Christ before he is our God, and that all our good is dependent upon what God is to Christ first, then doth not this follow from hence, that we should not only thank God for ourselves, but thank God for whatsoever he hath done to Christ; not only comfort ourselves in it, but let God have the glory of it? And this the Spirit of God in the holy apostles Peter and Paul led them to. Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' What, and nothing but so? Nay, with a reduplication, 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' even because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; because out of his infinite depth of wisdom and goodness he hath found out a way to save us in Christ, to be a Father to him, and in him a Father to us. It is said of the Virgin Mary, 'All generations shall call her blessed,' Luke i. 48. Why? Because she was the mother of the person that was God; she was the mother of Christ in human nature, and of God, because we may not sever the persons. And shall we bless the Virgin Mary, as

mother of God, and not God as Father of Christ? If she be the mother of Christ-man, then God is the Father of whole Christ; and therefore blessed be God, not only that he is our Father and our God, but that he might be thus with satisfaction to divine justice, he hath found out such a way to be the Father of Christ; and Christ, as man, is an object of God's love and predestination as well as we. We deserved nothing at' God's hands, but he found out such a way by taking the nature of man into unity of his second person, and so became a Father of Christ and of us. And therefore bless God, who hath predestinated Christ to be the Lamb of God, that hath freed him from sin, and set him at his right hand, raised him from the dead; that hath carried him into heaven, and ordained him to be Judge of quick and dead. Are these things severed from us? No. They be favours that be ours in Christ; his first, then ours. And therefore whensoever we think of anything Christ hath of his glory in heaven, as he is king of heaven and earth, and hath all power committed to him, glorify God for it, and think of it, This is mine; he is mine husband, my head; he hath taken up that glory, and whatsoever is in heaven, and enjoyeth them, he hath taken it up for me, and therefore we should bless God for it. So the apostle Peter: 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that hath begot us again to an inheritance immortal, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens,' 1 Peter i. 3. He hath begot us to a lively hope, 'through the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' So it is from the resurrection of Christ from the dead that Christ saith, 'God is my Father and your Father.' Since God's justice is satisfied by my resurrection; that is, declared to be satisfied; 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.' I beseech you, let us not lose the comfort of these things, since our Saviour Christ intended them for comfort.

To come to the words. First, Christ saith, God was his God, and our God, because his God. In what sense is God Christ's God? As mediator, as man, both in regard of his person and in regard of his office, God is Christ's God every way. See Ps. xxii. 9, which is a psalm of Christ, David being but a type of him in it: 'Thou art my God from my mother's womb;' and so God is Christ's God in his particular person, from his mother's womb.

(1.) For, first, God was Christ's God when by his Holy Spirit he sanctified him in his mother's womb, and brought him out into the world. Let the foolish disputes of friars, and dreams, and dotages of dunsical times go. 'But thou art my God from my mother's womb.'

And (2.) He is Christ's God, because he saved him from the massacre of the infants. Our Saviour Christ makes that prayer in Psalm xxii., Mark xv. 34, on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

(3.) God was Christ's God in protecting of him in his young time, and afterward in going along with him still to his death; and in death, 'My God, my God' still. He would own God to be his God still; when God had deserted him to his sense and feeling, yet 'My God' still. So God was Christ's God, as Christ was man. Take Christ as mediator, God is the God of Christ; for God the Father hath by his authority put on Christ whatsoever he hath. The Father hath sent him into the world; the Father 'sealed' him; the Father sent him out as a propitiation for our sins; the Father hath declared him and 'anointed' him; and all these terms of authority, whereby the Father hath showed himself to be Christ's God, even in his office of mediatorship. So in regard of the care of his person from his mother's womb, and for ever; and in regard of his office as mediator he might well say, 'I go to my God.' In regard of the intimate familiarity and acquaintance maintained even on the cross, he might say, 'My God.'

But the comfort of it lieth in the second clause, that as God is the God of Christ, so he is our God, because he is the God of Christ.

What is it to be a God to any? In a word, to be a God is to be all-sufficient to any; to be sole sufficient, and to be self-sufficient.

To be a God is to be all-sufficient for every creature; to be all-sufficient when nothing else can be sufficient. And to be self-sufficient, to be sufficient of himself, and therefore to reduce all back again to himself. Now, God is a God of himself, for himself, and by himself. God is all-sufficient, self-sufficient, sole-sufficient; and whatsoever the creature hath, it hath it from him. There is, in a word, in God a sufficiency for all good and happiness, and an efficiency to apply that sufficiency for the good of the creature. And in particular to be a God to any, is to do for a creature that no creature in the world can do but God. To make it of nothing, to free it from misery that it is beset withal, when no other can free it, to recover it again. God is Jehovah, that hath a being of himself, giveth being to the creatures, that can make the creature of nothing, and being something, can make it nothing.

Now, if God be a God to any, he is not only to give being to us, in a certain rank of creatures, as we are advanced above other creatures, as to have a being, or a life of growing, or a life of sense, or to advance us to a life

of creatures endowed with reason, whereby we are common in that fashion with angels, and understand God himself. Alas! this were a poor privilege if it went no further than to set us in that rank of creatures, though a great favour. But considering us in a lapsed estate, it is a poor favour to leave us here. And therefore God is said to be our God now in a state of grace, when he advanceth us to an higher being and life than all this, a life of grace here and of glory hereafter; when out of his sovereignty and power he reduceth all to help forward his main end, the salvation of his in particular. So God is a God in peculiar of some that he taketh out of base mankind. There is a world taken out of the world, as Austin useth to speak. And thus he is a God not to bestow a life of grace and supernatural being here, but a glorious condition hereafter in heaven; and to make all things serviceable to that, that we may say, 'All is ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. So that whatsoever befalleth a Christian, is serviceable and conducive to the main and last end. And that is for God to be God indeed, to make us his in Christ Jesus, to give us a new creation and a new state, better than the first.

Now, what is the foundation of this, that God is our God in the covenant of grace? We say it is founded on Christ. God is Christ's God, and then our God; and that is the reason why Christ is called 'Immanuel,' which is as much as to say, as it is expounded, 'God with us.' Not only because when he took our nature on him, there was God and man in one person; but the meaning of the word is, Christ is Immanuel, 'God with us;' by being God in our nature, and satisfying divine justice in our nature, hath brought God the Father and us into a sweet covenant. So that God may be our God and our Father, notwithstanding his justice; because all is satisfied by Christ, who took our nature to die for us. Christ is Immanuel, because he hath made God and us one. So that God is our God, and not only so, but our Father in him. Thus you see how it cometh to pass that God is our Father by Christ, who came to bring us again to God, as his whole office was to bring a few that had been singled out of mankind to God again, from whom they fell; for we all had communion with God in Adam, but we lost it; and now must be brought again to God, which must be done by Christ, God and man.

Thus much for the foundation of the point, that God is Christ's God, and God in Christ is our God, to do all things for us, to bring us to an happy condition here and an everlasting happy condition in heaven.

We see here it is brought as a ground of comfort, and so indeed it is. And we may observe from hence, that now by the resurrection of Jesus

Christ, God is not only become a Father to us, but a God. This is a ground of many comforts. 'Go, tell my disciples,' now I am risen again; and therefore justice is satisfied; and now they may have lively hope of a better condition hereafter. For God is my God, that hath raised me up, and who will raise up mine too. So that now we are copartners with Christ, sharers with him in the fatherhood of God, and God is God in common with Christ and us.

This may well be brought as a ground of comfort. If there were any comfort in the world of sweeter efficacy than this, our Saviour would have sent it to his disciples. Comfort being his main office and his main end, he would have the best comfort after his best resurrection. And he picks this from amongst them all, 'Go, tell them, I go to my Father, and their Father; to my God, and their God.' And therefore it is a pregnant comfort; and indeed no heart can conceive the comfort of it, that we have interest together with Christ in God, and with the Fatherhood of God. And both these the Scripture joineth together: 2 Cor. ii. 6, 'I will be your Father, and your God.'

To unfold the comforts more, God is said to be our God in covenant in Christ. He is the God of Christ, and therefore of us, because he hath made himself over to us. A thing is said to be another man's when the title is passed to another man. Now, God hath as it were passed over himself to his believing children and members of Christ. He hath made over himself to them to be their God; as he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, so he is of every good, believing Christian to the end of the world. God maketh himself over to be theirs; and, as the Scriptures' style is, he is their portion and their inheritance; a blessed portion, a blessed inheritance, more to us than if all the world were ours, than if heaven were ours, than if ten thousand worlds were ours, for he is our God that can create millions of worlds more than this if it were needful. *Habet omnia, qui habet habentem omnia*: he hath all things that hath him in covenant that hath all things. And therefore when the Scripture saith, 'I go to their God,' it implieth, I go to him that is all in all to them, that is larger than their hearts can be; for what heart can conceive the fulness of the comforts arising from hence, 'that God is our God'? Many know they need comfort of such a transcendent nature. The heart of man is so distrustful, so faithless, and the conscience is such a clamorous thing, and therefore he cannot think this is too much. I beseech you, therefore, do not lose the comfort of it, that in Christ God is our God; though we can say of nothing else, it is ours. Perhaps we cannot say, great houses are ours, or friends are ours, or inheritances ours. That is no matter. We can say, that is ours which is

infinitely more than that. We can say, God is ours in Christ. Nay, being exhorted to say by the Spirit of faith, that God is ours in Christ, all things in the world are ours. As you have it in that place of Scripture, 'All things are yours.' Why? 'Because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' 'Whether things present, or things to come, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, life, death, all is yours; you are Christ's, and Christ is God's;' that is. all things must by a command from God conspire to make us happy: affliction, or Satan, or death, or trouble of conscience, or desertion, or everything to help us to heaven. The curse is taken away, and there is a blessing hid in everything that befalleth a Christian, to bring him to heaven. Therefore it is a comfort of infinite extent. All is yours, because God is yours.

You shall see the extent of the comforts further by retail, as it were. If God be ours, then all is ours too. What he they? The Scripture telleth you, and I should spend too much time in unfolding of them.

1. If God be ours, his wisdom must needs be ours, to find out ways to do us good; for his infinite wisdom hath found out a way in Christ, by satisfaction of his justice, to bring us to heaven. He can make us go beyond all the policy of our neighbours, for his wisdom is ours.

2. If we [are] in danger, his power is ours, to bring us out.

3. If we have sinned, his mercy is ours, to forgive us. He himself being ours, his mercy must needs be ours. The whole being ours, it followeth out of the strength of reason that the parts also must be ours.

4. In any want, his all-sufficiency is ours, to supply it or to turn it to good, and make it up in a better kind.

5. In a word, God being ours, whatsoever is in God, whatsoever God can do, whatsoever he hath, is ours, because himself is ours. And therefore, I beseech you, make this use of it, to get into Christ by faith; to be one with Christ, that so God may be our God. Get faith above all graces, the grace of union and the grace of communion; that being one with Christ, we are one with him. God being ours, all is ours; yea, the worst thing in the world is ours.

If God be not ours, it is no matter what else is ours. Alas! all things must be taken from us, we know not how soon, and we taken from all things else. What if we had a kingdom, as Saul had, if we be forsaken of God as he was?

What if we had paradise? If we offend God, we shall be cast out. What if we had the dignity to be apostles? If with Judas we have not God, what will all come to? What if a man enjoy all the world? If out of Christ, it would yield him no comfort! As the emperor said, I have gone through all varieties of condition, et nihil mild profuit, but it hath done me no good. If we had all, what is it but 'vanity of vanities'? and not only so, but 'vexation'? Eccles. i. 2, ii. 17. Now, when we have God to be our God, he is able to fill the soul. He is larger than the soul, and he is able to quiet the soul; he is the rest of the soul, the soul is quiet; in him is the centre, as the place of quiet. If God be ours, then the soul resteth in it; for God filleth the soul, and quiets the soul, and hath always fresh comforts for the soul, infinite still to all eternity. There is nothing in the world but we do as it were cleflorare, take away the flower of it by use, and it becometh stale. Though a man continue many thousand years in the world, yet he will be weary of all things in the world, because there is no freshness in them. It is finite, and the soul is larger than the comforts of the world. But in God is a spring of fresh comforts to everlasting. Consider the things that enable him to be our God, to fill the soul, and to be larger than the soul; to quiet and calm the soul in all the troubles of it; and then to have fresh springs of comforts. What a comfort is this, to have God for their God!

Let it therefore raise up our souls to labour after God, and never rest till we have some interest in this great portion, of God to be our God. When we can by faith go out of ourselves to Christ, and lay a right and just claim to God to be our God, this is a comfort which reacheth from everlasting to everlasting. It giveth us forgiveness of sins when we had lost ourselves; because we are in Christ, he hath forgiven us. In all extremities and troubles, when no creature can comfort us, it is his glory to show himself a God. It reacheth to the resurrection of the body. God is Abraham's, and Isaac's, and Jacob's God when dead, because he was the God of whole Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore of soul and body. And it reacheth from all favours of this world, so far as is for our good, to all eternity. Being our God, he will protect us from all extremities in this world; he will speak comfort to our souls, which nothing can do but God. When we be dead he will raise up our dust, because he is our whole God, the God of our souls and bodies, and we shall be for ever with the Lord. It is a comfort of wonderful extent.

Use. 1. Let us therefore make this use of it. Labour to make him so to us; for as he is to us, so God by his Spirit is our comforter, who being satisfied, giveth us his Spirit. We must make God our God, and then he will

be a God to us. These be mutual wheresoever they be; wheresoever God is God to any, they by the Spirit obtained by Christ have grace to make him so to themselves. What is it for us to make God a God to us? It is this: to set up God a throne in our hearts; to give him a sovereignty over all things in the world, that we may say in truth of heart, God is our joy, God is our comfort, God is our rock, God is all in all to us. When we give him supremacy of affection above all the world, we esteem nothing above him; we value him above all esteem; his loving-kindness is better than life itself; for else we do not make him a God to us, and then it is no comfort to hear all the comforts spoken of before. For all to whom he is a God in the covenant of grace, and have hearts to make him so, the Spirit raiseth up their affections to make him a God to themselves. *Amor tuus, deus tuus*, as it is said of old, what we love most is our god. What we joy most in is our god, what we rely and trust in most is our god, as it was said of the 'wedge of gold,' Job xxxi. 24. And therefore if anything hath our affections more than God, or equal with God, that we make our god. It is a query of the greatest concernment in the world to put to our hearts. What do I make my god? as David putteth the query to himself: 'Now, Lord, what is my hope? is it not in thee?' And so put this query to ourselves: Lord, what is my joy, what is my hope, what is my trust, what is my comfort? is it not in thee? If our hearts cannot make an answer to this in some sincerity, surely as yet we have not made God our God. Time may be that he may be so; but till by the Spirit of God we be brought to see an emptiness and vanity in the creature, and nothingness in all in comparison of God, that we can say, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' we have not comfort, because we do not make him ours by a spirit of mutuality. Where there is a covenant of grace there must be a mutual making of God our God, as he maketh himself to us.

Alas! we may be ashamed of it; the best do often forget themselves. Oh how do men value the favours of a man, and the promises of a man; the seal of a man for such and such a benefice; and how doth it grieve them to have the frowns of flesh and blood, the frowns of greatness! But when their consciences tell them they are under guilt of many sins, and God is not in good terms with them, how doth this affect them? And when their consciences cannot say they have promises sealed in Christ of the favours and mercies of God here and hereafter, alas! it is dead comfort: Ἐμοὶ τὸ παγὸν, Give me that which is present, and take you that which is to come, is the language of both. How few can say from sincerity of heart that they make good to be their God? And therefore it is of greater concernment than we take it.

Use 2. As it is a ground and foundation of comfort, so of all obedience to God, as it is prefixed before the commandments, 'I am the Lord your God,' Exod. xx. 2, 'you shall have no other gods but me,' and do all in obedience to me from this ground. But much more now. Then he was the Lord God that brought them out of Egypt; but now God may prefix, 'I am your Lord God in Christ,' that have brought you from hell and damnation, that intend you heaven and happiness, and therefore do so and so. Since this is the spring of all obedience, we ought to labour to make it good, and often to examine ourselves, as before, what we make our god, and what we pitch our affections on. Alas! is our soul for anything but God? Hath not God made us for himself? and will our hearts rest in anything but God? Why then should we love vanity, and besot ourselves? When death comes, they may say, as Saul said, 'The Philistines are upon me, and God hath forsaken me,' 1 Sam. xiii. 12. Death is on me, trouble, sickness, vexation of conscience is on me, and God hath forsaken me; I have no God to go to. What a miserable estate is this! And therefore, I beseech you, let us labour to have interest in the covenant of grace, to make it good that God is our God in Jesus Christ.

Who giveth us a being to be Christians, to have a new nature, to have a good being, but God? Who maintaineth and preserveth that being but God? And who keepeth and preserveth us till we get into a glorious being in heaven but God, who is all-sufficient, self-sufficient, sole-sufficient, only sufficient? This God is our God now in Christ.

God is to us in a more special singular manner than to other creatures, because he hath raised us to be a more excellent being, not only as men, we being in the highest rank of creatures next the angels; and so he is a God to us more than to inferior creatures that have a more circumscribed and narrow being. Man hath a large being, a reasonable soul, and is fitted by nature to have communion with God, who is wisdom itself, and with angels; but all this were little comfort unless we had higher degrees of being than this. If God be our God in Christ, we have a spiritual being, which is as much above the dignity and prerogative of our ordinary being as our being by nature is above the basest creature in the world. And so God setteth a style upon us suitable to the excellency of our spiritual being. There is nothing excellent in the world but we are termed by it now, to set out the advancement and excellency of the dignity we have from God in a special manner; to be 'sons,' 'jewels,' his 'portion,' his 'diadem,' to be whatsoever you can imagine that is glorious and excellent: an excellent condition, though spiritual and concealed from the world. God's children are concealed men, as

you shall see afterward. They be hidden men. The world taketh no notice of them, because their excellency is seen with another eye than the world hath. 'The God of the world blindeth the eyes of worldlings,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. They cannot see into the excellency of God's children, no more than they know God himself and Christ himself. So you see what it is to be a God in nature and in grace; to be all in all unto us; to have our whole substance and dependence in him. 'In him we live, move, and have our being,' and well-being.

In this our excellency consisteth, that God is our God in Christ, who was God; and that he might bring God and us to good terms together; that he might make God our God. He was Immanuel, God with us, to make God with us in favour and love. The Godhead is nearest the human nature of Christ of any creature. It is nearer to Christ than to the angels; for God hath not taken the angels into hypostatical union, to be in the same person; but God in Christ is so near our nature, that there is an hypostatical union. They make one person, our nature being taken into the second person. By reason of this near union of the Godhead to our nature cometh that comfort and near union between God and our nature, whereby God hath sweet communion with us in Christ. God by his Spirit, though not hypostatically, yet graciously, is one with us, and hath communion with us now as his children. So that sweet intercourse between God and us now, is founded upon the nearness of the Godhead to our nature in Christ, in whom it is nearest of all, in whom it is advanced above the angelical nature. And therefore our blessed Saviour might well say, 'I go to my God, and your God;' to his God first, and then to our God.

Now we may say, God is our God; and upon good grounds, because God is Christ's God, and in him our God, which is a point of singular comfort; and therefore I will enlarge myself further in it.

Doct. For God to be our God, especially in having that in our hearts unfolded, in regard of our spirits and best being, is the most fundamental comfort that we have. For from this, that God is our God, cometh all that we have that is good in nature and grace. Whatsoever is comfortable cometh from this spring, that God in Christ is our God, our reconciled God; that God's nature and ours now are in good terms.

Beloved, what cannot we expect from God, that is now become our God! What he is, what he is able to do, what he hath, all is ours, considering himself is ours. If we have the field, we have the pearl in the field. And

therefore the wise merchant in the gospel sold all for the field wherein the treasure was, Mat. xiii. 44. We have the field itself in having God, and we have all that God is or can do for us for our good, even as we have Christ, and all that Christ is, or hath done, and suffered, and enjoyeth; 'all is ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' as the apostle saith. So that having God we have all, because we have him that possesseth all, the creator of all, and preserver of all, and disposer of all.

But to clear the objection a little: if God be ours, and all things else, how comes it that we want so many things?

Ans. I answer, It is our own fault for the most part. We want faith to make use of and improve this comfort. And then again, we want nothing that is for our good; want itself is for our good. And observe this, our God is so powerful a God, that he maketh the worst things we suffer a means to convey the greatest good oftentimes to us. If God be our God and Father in Christ, why have we sins? Why vexed with the devil? Why persecuted with men? Why frightened thus, and thus, and thus? All this is for our good. God is our God by these, and in the midst of these; and is never more our God than in the greatest extremity of all, for then we come nearest the fountain. There is a near and sweet communion between this God and us, when we take of the fountain. When the means are drawn away, the conduits of conveyance, and we have nothing to go to but God immediately, there is sweet communion and sweetest comfort in heaven; we shall have God in Christ, who will be all in all unto us. We shall need no magistracy, ministry, food, raiment, or defence against cold or injury; 'we shall be out of the reach of Satan and all enemies; God will be all in all immediately. The same God is all in all to us, either by means or immediately. When means foil, he conveyeth his sweetness and his power immediately, but ordinarily by means. And what sight doth in heaven, faith doth now in some proportion; for as sight in heaven seeth God in Christ all in all, and enjoyeth that happy vision, so faith seeth God to be all in all, and Christ to be all in all. Though in an inferior degree to sight and clearness of vision, yet for the capacity of this life we enjoy God now as they do in heaven. We have inward comforts when most deserted. God was never more near our blessed Saviour than on the cross, when he cried, 'My God, my God,' &c., for then he found invincible strength supporting him in the great undertaking under the wrath of his Father. And so God is never nearer than in extremity; in strength, though not in sense and feeling; and oftentimes in feeling itself. We never have sweeter comforts than in the want of all outward comforts whatsoever, when nothing

else can comfort us but the presence of God. And we must know besides, that the state of a Christian in this world is an hidden condition; for it is to the eye of faith, not of sense; and therefore God is a God to his, though the world see it not. There is a secret, hidden influence, a secret passage between heaven and earth, that none seeth. Who observeth the influence of the sun, or the sweet influence of the stars upon the earth? Light we see, but there is a secret influence pierceth deeper than the light, to the very bowels of the earth, whence metals come. Where no light comes, there is an influence, though not discerned; and much more can there be influence of strength and power and hidden comfort, though there be no sight. Cannot God be our God in regard of strength, supporting and supplying, though there be no visible and sensible comfort, though we see it not ourselves? Certainly the soul is upheld by an invincible strength in the worst condition that can be. Therefore this is true, that God is our God in all conditions.

Use. Let us make use of this. To what use is riches and friends, if we do not use them? To what use is God and Christ, if we use them not? *Nostrorum est, utamur nostro bono.* He is ours, let us use him for our special good on all occasions. Oh that we had faith answerable to our prerogative. It is a prerogative more than heaven and earth, that God is ours; and had we faith suitable, what kind of persons should we be in grace and comfort, and whatsoever is good? Therefore labour to make use of it. But more of this after we have spoken of some rules of trial, because whatsoever I may say this way may be misapplied. They be excellent comforts. But perhaps, saith the distressed soul, they belong not to me, to whom it doth belong. Perhaps it belongeth to me, saith another that is a stranger and a carnal man, to whom it doth not belong. Therefore our Saviour giveth some notes of distinctions, to know whether God be our God or no. Not to be much in the argument, yet to be plain in it.

(1.) God is their God in this peculiar manner I speak; that is, in the covenant of grace, not otherwise; and I speak not what God is by creation of man, for so the devil is God's, and every creature. But the question is, Whom God is a God to in the nearest bond of the covenant of grace? That is the only comfortable relation that can be; for if God be not our God in that, all other comforts will be nothing. It is better we be no creatures at all, than not creatures in the covenant of grace. It is therefore worthy the commending to you, especially considering our naughty hearts are prone to deceive us. Satan, and melancholy, and temptations do make some refuse the comfort, and some presumptuous persons to snatch at it when it doth not belong to them.

Those to whom God is a God indeed, in a sweet relation of the covenant of grace to be their God, as to the patriarchs, prophets, and Christ and the apostles, he giveth his Holy Spirit to witness so much to them. Though the voice of the Spirit is not always heard in the best children of God, yet he giveth them the Holy Spirit, that though it doth not always witness, yet it always works something in them which may be an evidence that they are God's.

(2.) Now the spirit of adoption and sonship is known by a spirit of supplication especially. Whom God is a God to, he vouchsafeth a spirit of prayer, to go to him in all their necessities, which is an issue or branch of their faith. He giveth them faith to believe it, and prayer to make use of it; for God will not give this great privilege without hearts to make use of it, which is done by faith and prayer; and prayer is nothing but the frame of faith, Acts ix. 11. As soon as Paul was a good man, presently after his conversion, 'behold he prayeth.' The child crieth as soon as born, and the child of God is known by his praying; as soon as he is converted, an intercourse is opened between God and the soul, which a Christian soul will never neglect. If they are placed in the worst condition, they will pray to God, or at least sigh and groan, which is a prayer that God can make sense of.

Those that have any strong places of defence, in trouble they will be sure to fly to that; in times of war they will betake them to their castle and place of munition. And so they that be God's, in time of danger run presently to God; he is their rock, their refuge, and place of defence. [They] repair to him by faith and prayer. 'The name of the Lord is a tower of defence: the righteous in trouble fly thither, and they are safe,' Prov. xviii. 10. A man may know what his god is by his retiring in times of extremity. Your carnal man, if he hath any place to retire to, it is to his friends, to his purse, to bring him out. He will go to that which his instinct will specially lead him to in times of trouble. As every creature, together with the nature of it, hath received an instinct from God to go to the place of refuge wherein it is safe—as the weakest creature hath strongest refuge — the conies, a poor weak creature, hide themselves most strongly, out of instinct they have of their own weakness—so God's child, being privy of his weakness, and need of support and strength, hath the strongest support that may be, and runneth to his God. Worldly men have many shifts, as the wily fox hath; but a Christian hath but one, but that is a great one: he goeth to his God in time of need. And therefore you may know who is in covenant with God in times of extremity, especially by a spirit of faith, a spirit of prayer.

In times of extremity, no man but a Christian can pray with any comfort, with any sweet familiarity, ‘Abba, Father;’ but they be like Pharaoh, ‘Go, Moses, pray to your God,’ Exod. ix. 28. He hath no such familiarity with God as to pray for himself. And so carnal men will say, ‘Pray to your God.’ And many, like devils, will have no communion with God in their prosperity, but their whole life is a provoking of God to enmity, by swearing, loose, debauched, irregular carriage, hateful even to moral men. Their hearts tell them they be even like Satan, ‘What! dost thou come to torment us before our time?’ Mat. viii. 29. What hast thou to do with me? What have they to do with God? They have scarce a Bible in their chambers; if one, it is for fashion’s sake. And that they may not appear to be naught, they will hold conformity in public assemblies; but for private familiarity, they have nothing to do with it. The show of religion goeth under an opprobrious name, but if they would put off the show it wore nothing, and not make ostentation of what they are not; but they have no communion with God in prayer. They will go for God’s people, and own him for their God, when they have no trading with him so much as by prayer. Take heed we deceive not ourselves, I beseech you; salvation dependeth upon it.

(3.) We may further try whether our claim of God to be our God be a good, claim, on good grounds, by our siding, by our part-taking; for those whom God is a God to in a peculiar manner will be sure to side with God. God hath two things in the world he prizes more than all the world; that is, his children and church, his cause and religion. They that be God’s will be sure to side with the church, they will stand and fall with the church; and the cause of religion, they will live and die with it. But a carnal politician, that hath perhaps great parts of nature, he is Ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἄλλοῦς, as the Grecian calleth him; they be for all turns; they can bring themselves to any figure, like water that will receive any figure. Take it, put it into a vessel that is square, it will be square; put it into a round vessel, it will be round. How can they own God for their God when they will not seek him, and they are yet to choose their God and religion? And because they will be sure to be safe in all times, they will own no religion in any time. And, beloved, is it possible any such should say with confidence, God is their God? Will he own them that will not own him, nor his church, nor his cause? You know Jehu crieth out, ‘Who is on my side, who?’ Cast her out. And so God, in doubtful times of danger, crieth out, ‘Who is on my side, who?’ Stand out; appear, if you be on my side; if you be on my side, own my cause; if you be not on my side, if you have no degree of goodness, it will appear. Christian wisdom is one thing, carnal policy is another thing. ‘The wisdom of the flesh is enmity with God,’ Rom.

vii. 8. Many applaud, and think themselves for somebody in this kind; but this wisdom is enmity itself against God. When a man will be wise in a distinct kind of wisdom from God, when he will have a cause severed from God, and will not side with God, he must look that God will account him his enemy, and make him his; but especially in the hour of death and deep extremity, he shall not be able to look God in the face, to whom he hath been a traitor in the church and in the cause of religion. And therefore, as we will be able to own God for our God, especially in doubtful and dangerous times, side with the church, and side with religion. It was objected to that good Jehonadab, a good man, 'Have we anything to do with God's enemies?' Jer. xxxv. 6, seq. Now there be two sorts of enemies that we are especially to have nothing to do withal if we side with God: enemies within us, and enemies without us. Sin within us. We must take part against our sins; take God's part and the Spirit's part against corrupt motions and affections. Divinity must begin from within, else it is faction without. It is not religion, but faction, if the religion begin not in our hearts, and if we hate not sin in ourselves. Where there is true antipathy, the nearer anything is that is opposite to our nature, the more hateful it is. He that hateth a toad, hateth it in his bosom most of all. And he that hates sin as sin, hates it in his own heart most of all. And therefore they that will pretend religion, and be naught in their own particular, it cometh not from a true principle; for they that will side with God, side with God in their own hearts, and be good men in their own particulars. Therefore, I beseech you, try yourselves by this. Likewise, when men esteem God's enemy wheresoever they see it, and so far as their authority and power reacheth, they will take God's part in themselves against themselves, and in the world too. I will not enlarge the point, because it cometh in by way of trial, and I cannot but touch it as a trial. Thus you see how we may know whether we be God's or no, by owning his cause and siding with him. You have some expressions in Scripture to this purpose: Micah iv. 5, 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.' Every man will walk and converse in the name of his god; they will own their god and take part with him; and we will walk in the name of our God for ever and ever, and own his cause at all times, and constantly, for ever and ever.

And likewise in Isa. xlv. 5, speaking of gracious times there, when men shall be bold for the Lord, as in all times some men will. 'One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and term himself Israel.' God shall

have his tongue, his hand, and all. He shall say, 'I am the Lord's,' he shall call himself 'by the name of God,' he shall subscribe to it, and own the cause.

(4.) Again, If we would know whether God be our God, we must know whether we may lay just claim to our God as a peculiar God to us, or no, and that way in which God showeth himself to be a God in peculiar respects to us.

Quest. Now how doth God show himself a God in a peculiar respect to his children?

Ans. He showeth himself to have a peculiar respect to them,—

[1.] By peculiar gifts, when he gives to them that which he giveth to none else. Shall we imagine God to be our God by common gifts and common graces? No. For thou comest to hear the word; so Herod did. Thou receivest the sacrament; so did Judas, so did Simon Magus. Thou hearest the truth with some joy; so did the 'third ground,' Mat. xiii. 20. Thou hast excellent parts; so hath the devil himself.

But thou art in such a place of the church, teachest others; so did Judas. Are these evidences to try whether we be God's or no? "What then is the peculiar gift and love-token that God bestows upon his favourites? They be the graces of his Spirit, especially in regard of God: an humble broken heart, and a believing heart, and a lowly heart, that goeth out of itself, that goeth unto God by faith, and towards man full of love, which argueth a great deal of self-denial, when a man can love others with denial of his own profit and ease. He that hath a humble, believing, lowly heart, hath more than all the world besides, for he hath God's peculiar gift. Many poor souls complain as if God had no regard to them, and yet in the mean time they have humble, broken hearts, which is more than if they had all the wealth and worth that the world hath, which have proud hearts, never broken. The return of these favours will be comfort in death and glory in heaven. What will the fruit of a believing heart be? He hath God and Christ. If he hath a lowly large heart to do good, he doth that which in the issue shall further his account at the day of judgment; and there is the love of God showed in his special favour.

[2.] So the love of God especially shall be a peculiar comfort that the world is ignorant of, especially in times of extremity. Inward peace of conscience, inward joy, and inward comforts, these are signs of love that God bestoweth upon a man, when he will own him in the worst times, and

Speak peace to his soul when nothing in the world will speak peace. When the lions roar, [when] the great lions of the world roar in extremity, he hath inward peace and joy, and comforts of the Holy Ghost. That inward intercourse of God with the soul is a sign of God's peculiar love. When God speaketh peace to the soul, when he showeth the light of his countenance, which David in Ps. iv. 7 prefers before all outward comforts whatsoever—God's revealing of himself, as the Scripture calleth it—when God revealeth himself to his to be theirs, with peace, and joy, and comfort accompanying it, this is peculiar.

[3.] Again, A peculiar favour and love-token of God is to have seasonable and sanctifying correction. To have corrections when they be seasonable; when we be in a way of straying, and God will bring us home by correction; and when we have sanctified correction, we find by experience that all is turned to our good. If I find am-thing turn me to my God, I know I am his; if my cross be seasonable and sanctified, he is my God, for he takes that course with me which he takes with his own people. These be singular signs of God's love, when he bestoweth the graces of his Spirit, his comforts, peace, and joy, though not largely, yet so much as shall sustain the soul. And then, when he seasonably meeteth us, and will not suffer us to thrive in an evil course. Oh it is a judgment of judgments to be hardened in sinful courses of life; how can it but end in desperation at length? And therefore it is a great favour to be chastised; it showeth 'we are sons, and not bastards.' Thus we see how we may lay just claim to this, that God is our God in a peculiar manner.

(5.) To name but one more, to distinguish a spirit of presumption from a spirit of faith and truth, that God is our God, is this,

[1.] If we have grace to answer his dealings towards us, when we can echo to God's dealings. God hath chosen us, if we have grace to choose him for our God. We may know he hath called us effectually, when we answer God's call. When he biddeth us believe, he giveth an influence of power to be able to say, 'I believe; Lord, help my unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. We may know he loveth us, when we reflect love again, and love him. We may know he compasseth us, when we embrace him. We may know he delighteth in us, when we delight in him and his servants. Whence is the strength of this argument? From hence. All good things, whatsoever we do from God, is by reflection. God shineth on us first; God owneth us for his first, and God must do so in order of causes. God being the spring of all goodness, he must

begin. 'We love him because he loved us first,' 1 John iv. 19, else we could never love him. 'Therefore if we love him and truth, he loveth us. That is sure. 'What have I in heaven but thee, and in earth of comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. Surely he owneth us, because in order of causes we can have nothing but from him first.

[2.] And then again, out of the nature of conscience; if we can go boldly to him as a reconciled God, notwithstanding guilt of conscience, it is a sign he hath obtained peace of conscience, because it is the nature of conscience, if it hath not peace from God, not to dare to appear in God's presence. So then, when there is inward peace and love answering to God's love, choice answerable to God's choice, apprehending of him answerable to his apprehension, this reflection, and return, and rebounding back to God, is an invincible argument that God hath first shined upon that soul. God sometimes will let us see things in the effect, and hide them in the cause. Perhaps he will not persuade by his Spirit that he loveth us, hath chosen us, and that we are his; but he will work something in our hearts, because he will have us search our spirits, what good thing he hath wrought, what love, what choice of the best side are in any of these. Surely then God is theirs. Though there be not an open voice, yet they may know God hath loved this soul and spoken peace to that soul, because we can return nothing to God, but he must shine on us first.

Therefore, beloved, let us make use of this, and let us take heed of sacrilegious usurpations, that we do not usurp upon God's house or God in a peculiar respect. Indeed, we may come to God as his creatures—We are the workmanship of thy hands—and say the truth, though we be in a wicked course of life. But to say, 'Thou art my God in Christ,' 'I am thine, thou hast chosen me for thine,' when we have not chosen him for our God, nor loved him nor his cause, nor sided with him, nor have any stamp of him on the soul, have nothing but common favour, that castaways have as well as we, and the devils as well as we—for the devils go beyond all men in parts—and yet to usurp the prerogative of being God's in a peculiar manner, and to be bold with the holy things of God, as if we were of his family, this is a dangerous usurpation; take heed of it. And therefore they that live in courses of rebellion, and resolve not to mend, they take the holy things of God, as the psalmist speaks, Ps. 1. 16, 17, in an holy indignation, 'What art thou, that takest my word in thy mouth, since thou hatest to be reformed?' Thou art an enemy to God and goodness, and wilt be so; thou art in a course of rebellion, and wilt be so. The devil's works you do and will do. Can we not take the

word of the covenant into our mouths, and shall we take the seal of the covenant? Therefore resolve to amend, else have nothing to do with God; do not add one sin to another. 'It is the children's food, and not for dogs,' Mat. xv. 27; it belongeth to them of the family. If thou be none of the family, what hast thou to do with them? If thou be of the family, whatsoever thy infirmities are, thou mayest come boldly, for the seals are to strengthen our weak faith. When the father is father of a child, the father will not cast away the child for breaking out with deformity or lameness. When God hath taken us into his family, infirmities cannot discard us. But I speak of them that in a wilful opposite course of sin show they never had to do with God in familiar intercourse. God never gave them a spirit to alter their natures. Propriety, and proportion, and suitableness of disposition go together: propriety joineth with suitableness; where God owneth any man, he makes them like himself by his word and Spirit, that their natures shall be even and agreeable to holy things, shall have a taste of holy things. And where there is not suitableness of holy things, there is no propriety. Will God own a man, and not make him suitable? Will God take his friend, and not give him a friendly nature? He will not, for he first fitteth our natures for communion with himself, else there can be no propriety. Let us not deceive ourselves, but if we find some beginnings of grace, and can say without arrogancy or usurpation, 'Doubtless thou art our Father, our God,' Isa. lxiii. 10; we be not worthy to be thine, but we be thine; if we find something that castaways cannot have, some grief of heart for sin, some faith, some little measure of love, some love of truth and inclination to the best things, then we may come boldly to increase our familiarity and communion with God. But otherwise it is dangerous to come to God. We approach 'a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. 'Who shall dwell in everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Say they in Isaiah, And if God be not in covenant with us, Oh, he will be 'a consuming fire,' everlasting burnings, and we but stubble; and it will increase spiritual judgment in us, hardness of heart, and going on from sin to sin, till we be accursed for sin. Therefore it is a fearful thing to be given up to hardness of heart. They that do continue in sin, God giveth them up to hardness of heart, to be insensible of his dealings with him.

Use 3. If we can in any degree make it good that God is our God and we his people, then let us make use of it for our comfort in all times, that we have a God to go to. Though we have no friend in the world, yet we have him in whom all friends meet. If we have no comfort here, yet we have him in whom all comforts meet, for all centre in him. He hath father and friends, and worth and grace, and peace and comfort in him; and all is in him.

If we go to him, we shall find a confluence of everything that is good, suitable to any necessity of ours.

And therefore let us learn to single out of God whatsoever may help us to be in covenant with him. He having made himself over to be ours, let us learn this wisdom, to single out of God whatsoever is peculiar to our present condition; for considering he hath made himself a God to us, he is all-sufficient to every turn. Therefore out of his all-sufficiency, take out whatsoever is fit for any particular exigency. 'Lord, I am in a strait, and want wisdom.' Thou in Christ hast abundance of wisdom. Christ hath in him all treasures. I now want friends, I want counsel, I want help, I want strength. God hath a fulness of all this for his children. He hath it not only to content himself, and look on his own happiness, but for his friends that be in covenant with him, that be so near him that he will own him to be their God. If you ask, What is religion? it is to know God, to have all-sufficiency in him for any good, and then to make use of him by dependence on him for that good, and by advancing of him in giving him the due honour and thanks of it. And therefore we deserve not the names of religious persons, if we do not study what he is to his creatures in the covenant of grace. Then make use of it by a spirit of dependency, and always giving praise and thanks. This is our whole man, and what is all else? Nothing but trouble and vanity. Got our bonds sealed that he is our God, and then break with all the world beside. Come what can come, or what will come, we are sure to be safe. It is a comfort of wonderful large extent. The use of the sacrament is to seal that God is our God in particular, and that Christ is ours as verily as the bread and wine are ours. And let us desire the Lord to seal to every one of our souls, that are to have communion with him in particular, that he in Christ is ours: Christ with all his merits and fruits of them, forgiveness of sin and life everlasting, as verily as the outward man partakes of the outward seals; and then we shall come and go away with comfort, and be made partakers of that end and use of the sacrament for which our blessed Saviour instituted it.

Having spoken before of common favours, which devils and castaways may have as well as we, I shall enlarge myself a little in this, because it is a point of concernment. As in other sins we be like the devil, so in this sin a man is worse than the devil himself, if a man will be a common swearer, and opposer, and malicious against goodness, being only in love with some idle conceit of his own, which he will have God himself stoop to else he will not to heaven; he will not be saved but by his own foolery. A man that hath a bitter spirit against the power of grace, that is a common blasphemer, that

carrieth a spite against religion, for him to say, 'God is his God,' the devil will as well say so. He will say of Paul and Silas, These are the people of God; but he will not say himself is, Acts xix. 15. For a man to live in sins against conscience, defend them, oppose all that opposeth his sins, and yet claim an interest while that disposition standeth in him, it is more than Satanical impudency, and it is extreme hardening of the heart against all goodness; for how many thousands in the church perish and sink to hell under this presumptuous conceit, 'I am God's, and God is mine,' when the title is false, and the evidence false. And therefore it is a point deserving thoroughly to be examined continually, what those evidences of graces be that we venture our souls and salvation upon.

I will not stand much to press the point. But you see the necessity of it. Consider therefore, I beseech you, what I have said. If God be ours, there will be a separation. Where there is an owning of God for their God, there will be a separation from all that is not his, as well as a gathering to them that be his. The work of God's Spirit in his children is like lire, which hath two properties: to sever all heterogeneal and strange stuff, and dross, and the like, and gather all the homogeneal stuff of one nature. And so the works of the Spirit gathereth to the soul so much as is good, and refines that, and severeth that which is contrary. The Spirit of God, that telleth them that they be God's, it is a severing Spirit and a uniting Spirit. It severs contraries, and it uniteth things of the same nature. There is a joining to what is good, and a separating of what is evil.

I will add this farther, that wheresoever on good title we can say, 'I am God's,' there is a reflect act of the soul to say, 'God is mine.' God hath put a light of reason and friendship into man. Now friendship standeth in mutual office of duty and gift. Where this is not, there is no friendship, no reconciliation, no owning on good terms. The end why God saveth a company of men, and bringeth them to heaven; the body of Christ, which we call the church; it is, that he may have eternal communion with them in the heavens, as he hath with the blessed angels; and in Christ a nearer communion than he hath with them. Now how can this communion be, unless we turn to God, unless we have something to answer God's love?

Again, Note, God is ours, because Christ is ours. The covenant is made first with Christ, and then with us. Whence we see a ground of particular application of that which we call particular faith; a ground of particular

application by a Spirit of faith of God to us, and Christ to us; that God in Christ is my God and your God.

The ground of this is, as God offereth himself, we must apprehend him; but Christ offers God, and he knoweth how to offer him. He teacheth us how God is to be presented, and he presenteth him as our God and our Father; and therefore let us entertain him as ours. Thus you see a good ground of particular application of God the Father, and Christ to us in particular, in two respects; not only that every one in particular ought to have a particular faith, and not to think a general faith is enough, to believe as the church believeth, but to have a particular faith of the object; not only of the subject, but of the object; that that is his in particular, 'I go to my Father and your Father.'

God is the Father and the God of all the elect, and only the elect, and of every one of the elect, as we say, in solidum. That is said to be in solidum, when every one applieth the whole to himself, without diminution of any part. The sum is in solidum to every one that will make use of it, to enlighten every creature that shutteth not his eyes. As a common fountain is no man's in particular; for no man can say, This is my fountain, and yet every man can say, This is mine; so every saint can say of God, He is mine in solidum. Though he were alone, he may say, God is mine. If ten thousand have him, yet God is his God. God careth for all, as if there were but one, and for one, as if none but he. God offers himself, not only to his whole church, but to every one in particular, and therefore of every one he ought to be apprehended.

This is founded in all the great points and mysteries of religion. As for instance, what is the ground of all the petitions in the Lord's Prayer? 'Our Father.' What interest have we to all the petitions, and to every article of the creed? If there be not a particular application,—'I believe God the Father to be my God, Jesus Christ my Saviour, the Holy Ghost my sanctifier; remission of sins and life everlasting is mine,'—we do no more than the devils. Now every truth in Scripture is written for our comfort, and shall it be no more comfort to us than to the devils? Doth the Scripture intend us no more comfort than the devils? Yes. But the devil may say, for the church there is remission of sins, and a God and Saviour, but not for me; and that is his torment; he cannot come to particulars. So the sacraments are to seal a particular faith. As every one in particular taketh the bread and wane, so by a particular faith every one may say, Christ is mine; his death is mine;

bloodshed mine; remission of sins and interest of Christ is mine. It doth not seal a general faith in the clouds, but a particular assurance, that it belongeth to every one. And so in the words of the catechise, the ministerial questioning of sinners is intended, that every one that believeth should apply it, If thou believest, and if thou believest, thou shalt be saved; and thy sins shall be forgiven thee. So that if we regard prayer and faith, if we regard the sacraments, or the use of the catechise, all enforce a particular faith. If we have not particular faith, we lose the virtue of all. So it is for the commandments. Put case, no man in particular, yet every one ought to ply in particular, that they ought to abstain from such a sin, and perform such a duty. If they do so, they shall be glorified; if not, they shall be punished. And there is the same reason in faith as in obedience. A man is condemned in law, though not named in law; because the general is set down here, and every man ought particularly to apply it; I ought not to have done so and so. So that it overturneth the end of all, if a man labour not for a particular faith. To go farther. Now if I disable this interest of particular faith of God's love, and Christ's love, I lose the comfort of weak faith where it is true. What condition were they in now, when Christ biddeth Mary go? Had not some of them denied Christ, and had they not all forsaken him? And yet notwithstanding, 'Go tell Peter,' and tell them all, 'I go to their Father and their God.' So that the interest that a soul hath in Christ, who hath true faith, though a weak faith joined with many infirmities, the interest he hath in Christ is not broke off, as you see by the example of the apostles. And therefore I beseech you, let us comfort ourselves in this, labouring for a particular faith, and then labour to maintain our interest, notwithstanding our infirmities and faults, notwithstanding our sins past. Let not Satan rob us of our claim, that God is our God and Father in Christ. Let us learn of Christ; we cannot have a better pattern. What doth Christ on the cross, when he had the sins of all the believing world upon him, and had there been ten thousand times more, it had been all one to so infinite a person, God-man; he had made full satisfaction to God's justice. But having so much upon him, did it take away his claim of God, as his God? It did not, but still he said, 'My God, my God.' Was it a claim that did him any good? Was it a useful claim? Yes. For it was made good by his resurrection and ascension; and therefore he might well say, 'I go to my God and your God.' I have overcome the wrath of God due for sin; and therefore when I, that had all the sins of the world upon me, acknowledged God to be my God, and underwent the burden of God's wrath, and satisfied for all sin, you may well say, 'My God;' not only from the pattern of Christ, because he did so, but as a cause. I may say so now, because Christ said so then. For he hath fully satisfied his Father,

who had laid that burden on him. You, therefore, that have particular burdens of your sins, and have not that other, but have a conscience troubling you, it is for good; because if you believe, that is taken away. But put case you had the guilt of your own sins, and many sins beside, what is that to this of Christ, who had the guilt of all sin? And therefore let no guile hinder you from a spirit of faith, to say, 'My Father, and my God.' Is Christ ascended to heaven, to be a mediator of intercession to appear before God? For whom? Is it not for sinners? What work is there in heaven for a mediator, if we were not daily sinners? Christ that hath satisfied for sin, biddeth us, after satisfaction, to think of God as a Father, and think of his ascension; even for this end to appear before God for us as our high priest, to make daily peace for us. His blood is of everlasting efficacy. And if Abel's blood cried for vengeance, the blood of Christ crieth for mercy, Hob. xii. 24. As the appearing of the blood of Abel spake for vengeance, so the very appearing of Christ speaks enough for mercy to the sinner.

It is a comfortable clause that in Hosea ii. 19, where God saith, 'He will marry them in everlasting mercy.' So that mercy is a part of the jointure of the church. God will marry them in mercy; in what mercy? In pardoning mercy; as the husband is to bear with the wife, the weaker vessel, not to put her away for infirmities. Shall we attribute mercy to men, and not to God? Can a friend bear the infirmities of a friend, and a husband of a wife? And cannot Christ bear the infirmities of his spouse? And therefore never think that our infirmities may hinder our claim. You see it did not here. But 'go to my Father, and your Father.' This comfort we shall be driven to make use of some time or other, and therefore make use of it now.

But you will say, This is not comfort for common sort of Christians. It is not, and I intend it not for them. It is children's bread, and it must not be cast to dogs. Therefore they that have not God for their God, and live in any sin, they can lay no claim to him, for they serve another god in their hearts. Their vile courses are instead of their god, and in their affections above their God, and therefore let them not think any promise belongeth to them in that course. Let them think of God as 'a consuming fire,' as 'everlasting burnings,' while they be such, and that their peace is as the peace that the soul hath when the strong man holdeth all in possession; when the conscience is speechless, and God hath given them up to hardness of heart, which is a desperate peace. This belongeth to them that are resolved not to live in any sin, that have given themselves up to God; and yet by reason of

the remainder of corruption are driven to make use of that petition which Christ bids them to pray, 'Forgive us our daily sins.'

Use. Hence issueth this truth, that a Christian may be assured of his salvation in this world. For, first of all, grant that we ought particularly to apply, as God offers himself to us, and that no infirmities nor sins hinders this claim, then what followeth but a Christian, believing and repenting of his sins daily, may be assured that he is in a state of grace, because there be grounds of particular application. That, therefore, which seems to disable that interest, hinders not at all. And therefore labour to maintain that comfortable state of assurance by all means. The grounds of it is, particular application, notwithstanding of all sins and infirmities whatsoever, because Satan envieth it most, because it is a state wherein we honour God most.

I will not enter largely into the point, because I have spoken of it in other texts; but, forasmuch as concerneth this time, we must labour for that, without the which we cannot go through that which God calleth us to.

(1.) There be many duties and dispositions that God requires which we cannot be in without assurance of salvation on good grounds. What is that? God bids us be thankful in all things. How can I know that, unless I know God is mine and Christ is mine? Can I be thankful for that which I doubt of and think I ought to doubt of? Therefore it is such a state, without which I cannot perform other duty; and particularly the grand duty of thankfulness. And what a pitiful state is this, that a man should not be thankful for Christ, nor heaven, nor for the state of another world, that there should be such great matters, and yet they cannot thank God for them.

(2.) Again, God enjoineth us to rejoice. 'Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice,' Philip, iv. 4. Can a man rejoice that his name is written in heaven, and not know his name is written there? The disciples were very weak now; and yet, notwithstanding all their infirmities, they loved Christ; they cast themselves upon him, and had not chosen another Saviour. Therefore 'rejoice that your names are written in heaven,' Luke x. 20, and how can a man rejoice that knoweth it not to be so? By God's writing of the law in a man's heart, he may know his name is written in heaven. Can a man always rejoice if he hath not grounds why?

(3.) Again, God requires cheerfulness. 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. ix. 7, and a cheerful doer. It is the disposition that is required in everything. 'Give me thy heart' in everything thou dost, Prov. xxiii. 26. Alas!

how Can I perform cheerful service to God, when I doubt whether he be my God and Father or no? Shall not I labour for a heart to yield cheerful obedience? Doth it not come deadly off? Surely it doth. We ought to comfort ourselves; and how can a man comfort himself in a condition full of uncertainties? No comforts are comfortable without this, that God is our God and our Father. Unless we know this, comforts themselves are not comfortable unto us. None of the comforts we have, the comforts of this life, are not comforts to us when the soul saith, Perhaps God feeds me to slaughter; and, perhaps, I have these mercies as my portion in this world; and how can he be comfortable when he apprehendeth not, that they issue from a spring of love? Alas! comforts themselves are uncomfortable. And therefore shall not I labour for that without which I cannot be comforted? especially it being a disposition for our good to be thankful, and cheerful, and joyful, and large-hearted.

(4.) God requires a disposition in us that we should be full of encouragements, and strong in the Lord: and that we should be courageous for his cause in withstanding his enemies and our enemies. How can there be courage in resisting our corruptions, Satan's temptations? How can there be courage in suffering persecution and crosses in the world, if there be not some particular interest we have in Christ and in God? It cannot be so. Unless we will deny obedience to all duty enjoyed, we must have this assurance which enters into all, which is the spirit that quickeneth and enliveneth all. Therefore labour for it.

Use 2. Else we shall take away the grounds that God. enforceth good duties from in Scripture, as he doth enforce duty from this ground, 'As elect, see ye put on bowels of compassion,' Col. iii. 12. I beseech you, 'by the mercies of God, offer yourselves a sacrifice to God,' Rom. xii. 1. Alas! I know not whether I shall have mercy or no. Why take away your ground and overthrow your principles? And therefore shall not we labour for that state of soul wherein we are fitted to be in that disposition, and to perform duty as God would have us? I therefore beseech you, labour for assurance of salvation.

That we may maintain it the better, see the grounds of it. It is not in our perfection, for then the poor disciples, where had they been? Alas! they had dealt unfaithfully with Christ. But the ground of firmness is on God's side, the certainty is on God's part, not ours. Tell them, 'I go to my Father, and my God; and their Father and their God.' Though we make breaches every

day, yet God breaketh not, as Mal. iii. 6, 'Verily, I the Lord am not changeable; and therefore you are not consumed.' We change, ebb and flow, are to and fro, up and down every day, varying in our dispositions. Though there be some root and seed of grace in us always, yet there is a change in our dispositions every day; but it holdeth on God's part. And therefore Christ nameth not any qualification in them to build comfort on, but 'my God and your God' will yet maintain the relation of a Father to you, that have not dealt as you should do; and maintaineth the relation of a God, notwithstanding your fall. So that we maintain not our assurance on any part in us, but on God's love. 'Whom he loveth, he loveth to the end,' John xiii. 1. Our God unchangeably loveth us, in whom there is not so much as a shadow of change. And therefore in the last of the Hebrews, it is called an 'everlasting covenant.'

'The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,' Heb. xiii. 20. By the blood of Christ there is an everlasting covenant. God will be our God to death, and in death, and for ever. For this relation being on God's part, extendeth itself from forgiveness of sins to life everlasting. It is always. The blood of Christ is the blood of an everlasting covenant. 'I will marry thee to me for ever,' Hosea ii. 19. It holdeth sure on God's part.

Let us labour to maintain this assurance of salvation from God's love.

Use 2. But for our comfort, we must do our parts too, though it begin with God. It beginneth on God's part. He loveth us first, and embraceth us first; and we must love again, and embrace again. We must desire of God grace to answer relation. Therefore I will prescribe some rules, how we may say, God is our God, with comfort. That we may have the comfort of it, by making good our interest in him, to make it good that we are sons, as well as to call him Father; that we are his people, as well as to call him our God; his spouse, as well as call him our husband. And because this cometh from God, join this "with all our endeavours: Lord, thou must begin; I desire to show myself as a spouse to thee; but thou must discover thyself to me. I desire to love thee, but discover thy love first; all I can do is but reflection. Thou must shine on me first. So desire God to reveal himself more and more in Christ Jesus; and then we cannot but carry ourselves to him as we should do in our relation.

This day we must perform the relation on our sides. There be two words that go to this heavenly bargain. The covenant consisteth of two parts. Now,

desire God, by his grace, to enable us to do our part, for he doth both. And desire him, according to his promise, to teach us to love him, and ‘to write his law in our hearts,’ Jer. xxxi. 33, to do what is good; and circumcise our hearts, and give his Holy Spirit. We ask no more than he hath promised, and so go boldly to him. Lord, thou hast made a covenant with us; we cannot keep it without thee. Thou hast not only promised grace and gifts, but the grace to perform the covenant on our parts must come from thee. And this God will do. Therefore in the use of means, attend upon him; and looking to him, we shall have grace to do our parts, and then maintain this assurance, without which we cannot live as Christians should live.

That we may further maintain this relation, that God is our God, let us labour to get into Christ, for it is in him that God is our Father; and to grow up in Christ, to grow more and more, to grow up in faith and in all grace.

A gracious Christian never wanteth arguments of assurance of salvation. It is the dead-hearted Christian, the careless Christian. Therefore labour, as to be in Christ, so to grow up in the knowledge of Christ.

And so to know God in Christ, labour to see the face of God in Christ; or in him are all the beams of his love. As the beams of the sun in a glass are gathered, so the beams of all God’s love meet in Christ. So lovely is God in Christ, whatsoever we have in Christ it is from God in Christ. And whatsoever we have from God, it is through Christ; therefore grow in the knowledge of Christ, in faith in Christ. To this end are the sacraments, that we might grow up in him, and be fed into Christ. And then we may make right use of it, as the ordinance that God hath sanctified for this end. And as God doth take us out and set a stamp upon us, so labour to make choice of God more and more, and choice of God in Christ; for there be the two objects of our faith and love. Choose God for our God, and esteem him above all, and renounce all other, and resign ourselves wholly to him; for all is ours when God is ours. He setteth us apart from other men—taking us out—and appropriated us to himself, chooseth us for his jewels. I beseech you, labour daily to choose God to be your God. If we say, we are God’s, let us make choice of him at the same time, and appropriate him with our choice. He is mine in particular. There is renunciation of all others. I have served other gods heretofore; the world, and the flesh, and the favour of man have been my god, but they shall be my god no more. If we choose him not, and appropriate him as ours, and renounce all other, and give ourselves to him, we cannot say he is ‘our God.’ This we should practise every day. In the

solicitation of sin, or despair for sin, make use of this choice, and appropriation, and resignation. If we be tempted to any sin, Why, I am not mine own, I am God's. I have chosen him to be my God; I have appropriated myself to him; I have renounced all other; I have offered myself to him; therefore what have I to do with sin, with this temptation? I have taken the sacrament on it, that God is mine, and Christ is mine, with all his benefits. Therefore if there be any solicitation to sin, make this use of it; and so we shall grow in assurance of our interest in God, when we can make use of it on all occasions.

If when we be moved to any sin, by Satan, or our own flesh, which is a devil within us, this is contrary to my covenant, this is contrary to the renewing of the covenant, so often renewed in the sacrament, and therefore I will not commit it. It is contrary to the state I am advanced to, and contrary to my relation. God is my Father and my God, and therefore I must be his; and what have I to do with sin? What hath pride to do with a heart bequeathed to God? What hath lust and filthiness? What hath injustice, or anything else that is sinful, to do in a heart that hath dedicated and consecrated itself to God, who hath given up himself and all he can do, and to whom we have given up all we have? and shall we give our strength to sin and Satan, his enemies?

Thus we should grow in assurance, exercising the increase and knowledge of our interest. I beseech you, therefore, let us use these and the like things to make God our God. And if any temptation to sin be joined, as Satan cannot but solicit to sin, so he laboureth when we have sinned to tempt to despair for sin; for they be the two ways by which Satan prevails. Now, fetch comfort against both from hence, 'God is my God and my Father,' and Christ teacheth them to call him so; and therefore, notwithstanding sin, I may go to God and call him Father. The disciples, though their sin was great, yet on their humility they were to acknowledge God to be their Father and their God. And therefore answer Satan: I ought not to abuse, and break off, and deny my interest in God as my Father and my God for any sin, because the disciples did not so; and Christ hath taught how to make use of God, and to acknowledge him for my comfort. We cannot have a better guide than God; and therefore never think of God but as 'our God and our Father,' and labour to answer all Satan's temptations in that kind from hence.

Use 4. Again, This assurance, that God is our God in Christ, and our Father, is wrought by the sealing of the Spirit, and sanctifying of us; therefore take heed we grieve not the Spirit of God. God's Spirit moveth our hearts oftentimes in hearing the word, or reading, or praying; when we have any good motions, or when we entertain them; and therefore do not grieve the Spirit of God, whose office is 'to seal us to the day of redemption,' to assure us God is our God and our Father in Christ. Grieve him not, lest he grieve us, by racking and tormenting our consciences. That is the way to maintain our interest. Take heed of crossing the Spirit, especially by any sin against conscience. Conscience is God's deputy. Grieve not the Spirit. Grieve not conscience, for conscience is God's deputative. It is a little god within us. And therefore, if we will not alienate God from us, to whom we have given ourselves if we be true believers, do nothing against his deputy and agent, the Spirit that sanctifieth and sealeth us to the day of redemption.

This is the way to maintain assurance, that God is our God. For men may be led with a spirit of presumption, and say, God is my God. But if conscience telleth them, they live in sin against conscience and the motions of the Spirit, and suppress them, and kill them, as births that they would not have grow in their hearts; then they cannot say God is my God, but conscience telleth them they lie. And therefore, I beseech you, labour for an holy life. That faith that maketh this claim, that God is my Father and my God, is a purifying faith, 1 John iii. 3. It is a faith quickening the soul, a faith purifying, a faith cleansing. Faith is wonderfully operative, especially having these promises. What promises? 'I will be your God and your Father.' 'Having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and grow up in all holiness in the fear of the Lord.' And therefore labour for that faith that layeth hold upon this privilege, God is our Father and our God. Make it good by this, that it be a purifying faith, an operative faith, that worketh by love, that showeth itself in our conversation. The more we labour and grow this way, the more we grow in assurance of salvation.

Beloved, favour cannot be maintained with great persons without much industry, and respect, and observance of distance. A man that will maintain the favour of great persons must be well read in their dispositions, must know how to please them, and yield them all observance and respect. And shall we think then to preserve respect with God without much industry and holiness? It cannot be. 'And therefore give all diligence,' not a little, 'to make your calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. It requireth all diligence, it is worth your pains. We live on this, that he is our God, and will be our God to

death and in death, for ever and ever. That God is our God to everlasting, that he is of an equal extent with the soul, he liveth to fill it and make it happy, our souls being of an eternal subsistence. Therefore it standeth us upon 'to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' else it will not be maintained. Why do not Christians enjoy the comforts of this, that God is their God in Christ, more than they do? The reason is, they be negligent to maintain intercourse between God and them. We must know our distances, there must be reverent carriage to God, Ps. ii. 11. A loose Christian can never enjoy the comforts of God. He is so great, and we so mean, we ought to reverence him, we ought to 'love him with fear, and rejoice with trembling.' Ps. ii. 11. Humble thyself to walk with thy God. Where there is a great deal of humility, it maintaineth friendship. We cannot walk with God as a friend, as Abraham is said to be God's friend. We must acknowledge ourselves to be 'dust and ashes,' know him in his greatness, and ourselves in our meanness, if he will maintain this to our hearts, that God is our God. If we be careful to maintain this, surely he that delighteth himself in the prosperity of his servants will delight to make himself more and more known to us, that we may be assured of our salvation.

All that hear me are such as have not yet made choice of God to be their God, or have made choice. Let me speak a word to both; for there be many that yet have their choice to make, that have other lords and other gods to rule over them. Let them consider what a fearful state it is not to be able to say, in regard of life everlasting, 'God is my God and my Father.' They can say they be God's creatures; but what a fearful condition is it not to be able to say, God is my Father. Will not these know whom he is not a God to in favour, he will be a God to in vengeance? He must be a friend or enemy. There is no third in God. God and the devil divide all mankind. They share all. If thou be not God's, and canst not say so on good titles, thou art the devil's. Yet God is daily pulling men out of the kingdom of the devil, by opening their eyes to see their miserable condition; yet all go under these two grand titles, God's and the devil's. If thou canst not say, God is thy God, then the devil is thy god; and what a fearful condition is it to be under the god of the world by a worldly, carnal disposition! And perhaps thou mayest die so, if thou be not careful to get out of it. If God be not our God, he is our enemy; and then creatures, angels, devils are against us, conscience against us, word against us. If he be for us, who is against us? If he be against us, who is for us? A terrible condition, and therefore get out of it, I beseech you.

But how shall I do? Is there mercy for such a wretch? Yea, he offereth himself to be thy God if thou wilt come in. Wherefore serveth our ministry, the word of grace, but to preach life to all repentant sinners. 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.' And therefore God hath ordained ambassadors of peace to proclaim if you will come in. And he entreateth you to come in, and he chargeth and commandeth you. You be rebels, not only against him, but enemies to your own souls if you do not. And therefore I beseech you, if you be not yet come in. Add this more, you be sacrilegious persons if you be not Christians in earnest. Have not you given yourselves to God in baptism? And have not you in your lives given yourselves to lusts which you renounced at your baptism? Now you have alienated yourselves from God, to whom you were dedicated. Did not you engage yourselves to God in your baptism? And is not he willing to receive you? He thought of you when you could not think of yourselves. And therefore, as it bindeth you over to greater punishment if you will not come in, but continue sacrilegious persons from God to whom you have dedicated yourselves, so God prevented you with mercy.

He encourageth by the seal of election in baptism to make it good by faith, without which it will do no good, being but a seal to a blank. Therefore how many encouragements have you to come in? Take God's gracious offer. He giveth you time. Make your peace. It is nothing but wilful rebellion to stand out against God.

For they that have given themselves to God, and now renewed their interest in him by the sacraments, let them conceive what a word of comfort they have in this, that Christ is theirs and God is theirs. What an ocean of comforts is it when all things leave you, as all things will; yet we have God, that will be a God for evermore. At the time of death, what comfort will it be to say, God is mine, Christ is mine. Life is mine no longer; world is mine no longer; friends forsake me, but I am interested in God, and have made covenant with God, who is a God for ever. The covenant I have made is an 'everlasting covenant.' It is of that largeness, the comfort is, that the angels themselves admire it, the devils envy it, and it is a matter of glory and praise in heaven for ever. Therefore make much of such a privilege, that is the envy of devils, the admiration of angels, that is the joy of a Christian's heart here, and matter of glorifying God for ever, world without end. That God in Christ is become his God here and for ever, it is a ravishing consideration. It is larger than our hearts. Here be comforts larger than the capacity of our hearts. *Cor vestrum soli Deo patere debet*: our hearts ought all to lie open to

divine things, for they have more in them than the heart can contain. If we will shut them, shut them to worldly things. Oh the comfort of a Christian that hath made his state sure: let him glory in the Lord.

There be three degrees of glory in all. Let him glory under hope of glory, glory in afflictions, and glory in God; that is, we glory in God to be our God. That in the sharing and dividing of all things God hath given himself to us; and what an offer is this, that when God divideth this world to the children of men, you shall have this and that, but you shall not have me. But to his children he hath given himself, and he hath nothing better to give, and indeed there is nothing else needs. For there is more in it than we can speak. But that when God divideth all things he should give such a share as himself, is not this a glory, that a poor creature should have God to be his, and all he hath to be his, to make use of it in life and in death? It is worth all the world; it is worth our endeavours 'to make our calling and election sure,' when we may have this comfort from it, 2 Peter i. 10.

King David's Epitaph

For David, after in his own generation he had served the counsel (or will) of God, he fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption.— Acts XIII. 36.

The words are part of a sermon of blessed St Paul, wherein he proves out of the Old Testament, Ps. xvi. 10, that David prophesied of Christ, and not of himself. David saw corruption, but he of whom David spake 'saw no corruption,' therefore David was not the Messias. He shows that the things there spoken do no way agree to David, but to the Messias, who saw no corruption. 'For David, after he had served in his own generation, fell asleep, and saw corruption.' In general, observe this:

One of the best ways to understand the Scriptures is to compare the Old Testament and the New together.

1. That which was spoken and foretold of Christ in the Old Testament, and fulfilled in the New, that must needs be true. Christ is the true Messias. Why? It was foretold so of him in the Old Testament, and accomplished in the New. Therefore Christ is the true Messias, comparing the prophecy and the event together. For the Old and New Testament make up but this syllogism: he that should be so and so, as was prophesied, born of a virgin, that should come at such a time, in the latter end of Daniel's weeks, &c., he is the true Messias. But Christ was such a one; he was born of a virgin, came at such a time, he saw no corruption, for he rose the third day. Therefore Christ is the true Messias.

2. Again, You see the Holy Ghost here could not mention David without terms of honour: 'David, after he had served the will of God in his generation,' &c. Precious to God is both the life and death of his saints, Ps. cxvi. 15. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, Ps. cxii. 6. The name of Josias is as an ointment poured out. So indeed the names of holy men are as ointment poured out; they sweeten men when they are gone. David's body was buried among them; but David had a better tomb. He was buried in the best monument: in the hearts and remembrance of God's people, and in the remembrance of God. God wraps him up as a valiant man in his own colours. He mentions not David barely here, but his serving the will of God.

Let wicked men cast what aspersions they will upon the names of God's people, let them eclipse them and cloud them as they please, as their malice instigates them therein, the names and reputations of God's people are not in their keeping and power. For David shall have a good name, in spite of all the Doegs and Shimeis, when they are rotten, body and name together. We see here, many hundred years after, he is mentioned with titles of honour. It should encourage us, therefore, to serve God as we regard a good name.

Mark here the language of the Holy Ghost, the language of Canaan. When he speaks of a good man, he speaks of him in favoured terms. He doth not say that David, after he had been so long, or lived so long, or reigned and flourished so long, as we see in stories, such a man lived or reigned, Ac., so long, and then died; yet this had been true; after he had. lived and reigned so long, he died. But that is not the language of the Holy Ghost; but after he had 'served God' so long. The Scripture values men by that that God values them, and not as men do, by their life, and reign, and flourishing in the world, and their esteem with men, but as his carriage hath been to God. David 'served the will of God' in his generation.

And then, when he speaks of his death, 'he fell asleep;' he sweetens the harsh name of death with a sweet term the Scripture puts upon it. It is a comfortable thing to consider the very language of the Scripture; how savoury and heavenly it is, raising us up to comfortable and heavenly thoughts, even from the very manner of the phrase. Different, as I said, is the phrase of Scripture from other histories, that say, such a man lived and reigned so long, and then he died. And indeed a man may say of a wicked man, he was so long in the world; but if he did no good, a man can scarce say that he lived; for what is life without doing good but a mere being in the world? Or if his life be ill, we may say such a man troubled the world so many years, and then went to his own place, as it is said of Judas, Acts i. 25. But this is the epitaph of a holy man. He served God so long, and then he slept and had happiness of God: another manner of epitaph than other men have when they are gone. This I observe from the very language or phrase. 'David, when he had served the will, or counsel, of God,' as the word is.

3. Again, In the third place, observe this in general, that God sets down David here only as he was a good man, and passeth by all his infirmities and breaches, whereas, alas! David's life was woven with good and ill. There were some ill spots in that excellent garment; there were some ill parentheses made in that excellent speech; there was somewhat, by the infirmity of man, that

was not so good. But doth God speak of that when he mentions David? Oh no. But David, after he had served God in his generation, &c. The Spirit of God in St Paul passeth by all that was amiss, and sets down that which is good, to show us this comfortable point, that God values those that are in Christ (and have repented of their sins), not by what they have been or have done at some time, but by what they are, and what they resolve to be.

God values them by their better part; by that that is his in them, by that that is spiritual in them. He judgeth them by the tenor of their lives, and not by a particular flaw in their lives. This is God's infinite mercy; when he pardons, he pardons absolutely: he forgets as well as forgives. Therefore the phrase of Scripture runs, 'He will cast our sins behind his back, and cast them into the bottom of the sea, that they shall never rise up in remembrance,' Micah vii. 19. When we have once repented of our sins, they are to him as if they had never been done, they are as things forgotten. Peter, after his foul fall, he was not so much as upbraided by Christ -in particular, 'Thou hast denied me,' &c.; only Christ comes sweetly over him with a question, 'Lovest thou me?' John xxi. 15. He tells him not, thou hast betrayed me thus and thus. No; he doth not so much as upbraid him with the mention of it. So curious is God for troubling the peace of his people, that when they have soundly repented of their sins, they shall never hear of it to their confusion, nor at all, except it be to better them, and to perfect the work of humiliation.

Contrary to the fashion of the corrupt poisonous nature of man: if they have but one thing in all a man's life to hit him in the teeth with, he shall be sure to hear of it oft enough, and pass by whatsoever is good in him. God doth not so with his children; but though they have some breaches in their lives, he passeth by them, and takes notice of that which is good in them, as we see here the apostle doth, being directed by the Spirit of God.

But though God so sweetly pass by David's faults when he mentions him, and calls him a 'man after his own heart,' &c., yet there is one thing that God puts in as a scar upon David. 'He was a man after God's own heart in all things but in the matter of Uriah,' 1 Kings xv. 5 Why doth that come in Scripture? Surely God mentions that, because that was done with more deliberation and advice; it was done in cold blood. It was not infirmity, but presumption in that. Now the more will there is in any action of sin, the more heinous the sin is, the more the guilt is increased. There was more will in that, for it was not done in heat of passion, but deliberately, therefore it

was a foul act. The Spirit of God takes notice both of the good and of the evil; as we see in the epistles, in Rev. ii., to the churches. He had found fault with them before, and indeed God discerns directly when we are to blame, 'yet this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans,' &c. If there be any good, God takes notice of it. David, after he had repented of that foul sin, and was sharply corrected for it, as indeed he was, David was a good man for all that, 'he served God in his generation.'

But to give you an item by the way: however God passed by the sin in David, and accounted him after his repentance a good man, yet he must be sharply corrected for it. Let no man therefore presume upon this that God will judge him by the tenor of his life, and therefore he will commit particular enormities. Oh no! It cost David dear; for besides his heart-smart in his own particular, God made his heart bleed. It cost him many a salt tear, besides that it was punished in his posterity. God raised up his own bowels to take arms against him; he made him wish a thousand times that he had not so offended God. It is ill trying conclusions with God. Though God afterwards pardon us, and turn all to good, yet it shall cost us dear first. Though God will bring us to heaven, yet if we will venture upon sins against conscience, and take liberty to offend God, he will take sharp courses with us. Yet it shall not prejudice our salvation. You see those sins of David, after he had repented and was corrected for them, they were forgotten, and David, in regard of the course of his life, 'served God.' His life was a service of God, notwithstanding some particular actions. These things may be useful to the best of us all. Therefore I observe them in general from God's manner of mentioning David here with honour, and passing by his infirmities. To come more particularly to the words.

'Then David, after he had served in his generation the will of God,' &c. The words are a short epitome of the life and death of the blessed man David. First, I will speak of his life, and then of his death. In his life there are these two parts:

First, The time in which he lived; when this service was done, 'in his generation.'

And then the manner of his carriage in that time of his generation. It was a service of God, 'he served God.'

And this service of God is set down by the object of it, 'God.' By the rule of his worship, 'the will of God.' He served God, but how? As he had

revealed his will to him, not at random. God will be served according to his own will. And then here is the act, 'he served.' So here is the proper object of worship, 'God,' in whom all our service is terminate. Whatsoever we do, it must rest in him. If we do good works to men, it must be for God's sake; we must serve God in it. Then here is the proper rule carrying us to that object, 'his will.' And then it must be a service; it must be done in obedience to God. 'David in his generation served the will, or counsel, of God,' as the word is. For his death, we shall speak of it after.

First, For the time: 'in his generation.' 'Generation,' in the Scripture, signifies a succession of men one after another, as you have it in Mat. i. 1, from such a one to such a one; so many generations, so many successions. You know in the Latin tongue, *seculum* is taken for an age or generation, the space of an hundred years, though Moses shut up the life of man in a shorter time. Succession of one man after another is a generation. Generation, sometimes in a general sense, is taken for all of one kind. The generation of Noah, and the generation of the righteous; that is, all of that kind, without restraining it to succession. But most commonly it is the consideration of men from succession of them, having the term from the way whereby we enter into the world, that is, by generation; therefore the succession of men from one to another is called generation.

Now, here generation implies both the times and the persons. The persons of men are a several generation, and the time wherein they live is a generation, and both are here included. 'David in his generation,' among the age of men, and in the time wherein he lived, 'served God.' The meaning of the place is clear. The points considerable here are,

First of all, That there is a generation, a succession of men one after another.

Secondly, That every man hath his particular generation. David had his generation, wherein he served the Lord.

Thirdly, That 'he served God in his generation;' that is, the whole time of his generation; yet with this limitation, he served God only in his generation while he was here, before he came to heaven. In heaven there is a kind of service, but it is not by way of work, but of reward. We must serve God in our generation here. If ever we look to reap hereafter, we must sow now. 'David served God in his generation.'

Obs. 1. First of all, There is a generation, a succession of men.

Particular men go off the stage, but the species, the kind, is eternal. Kinds of things continue for ever. Man dies not, but Paul, and Peter, and David die; there is a succession of particular men. It is with men as it is with the waves of the sea; one wave goes away, and another comes after. It is with men as it is with trees; for men are compared in Scripture to trees, trees of righteousness; and man, take him in his nature, is like a tree. The poet could say to that purpose. It is with men as with trees; some fall off in autumn, and others come in their place the next spring. So it is with men. They have their several generations. There is an autumn, a decay, and there is a spring of them. There is a succession of generations.

Use 1. To teach us this lesson, that our time being short here, every man hath his generation; one generation goeth away and another cometh, as the Scripture saith, Eccles. i. 4. We must be laid with our fathers, and others must stand up in our place. Rise up,' Joshua, 'for Moses my servant is dead, saith the Lord,' Josh. i. 2. One servant of God dies and another rises. There be many that must act their parts in this world. Therefore some must go off the stage, that others may come on. Therefore while we have time here, let us be sure to do good, before we be taken away, suddenly, we know not how soon, and there be no more generation. Here there will be a succession of generations, till we all meet in heaven, and then there will be no succession, there shall be no more death; but as the apostle saith, 'we shall be for ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17.

Use 2. And it should teach us likewise, considering that in regard of our being and natural condition in the world there are several successions, generation after generation, that now we are here, and presently after no more seen in the world, to make sure an eternal generation; to be born anew of the immortal seed that never dies, as St Peter saith, 1 Pet. i. 23, that tends to immortality. There is no death in that birth. A Christian, as he is a new creature, hath a generation to eternity; he never dies. In regard of our being here, there is generation after generation, successions of men; but when we are new born, though we cease to be here, we go to heaven.

'He that believes in me,' saith Christ, 'shall never die,' John xi. 20.

'Man that is born of a woman,' saith Job, 'hath but a short time to live,' and that short time 'is full of misery,' Job v. 7. But man that is born of the Spirit hath an eternal time to live, and that a happy life. All flesh is grass in

regard of this life we lead, which is supported with meat and drink, and the comforts of this life: all flesh is grass, and the beauty of it as the flower of the grass; but the word of God endureth for ever; and as St John saith, 'he that doth the will of God endureth for ever,' vi. 27. The word of God endures for ever, because it makes us, having the Spirit of God, to endure for ever. The world passeth, and the lusts of it, but he that doth the will of God, that is new born by the word of God, and transformed to the obedience of God, he abides for ever. Would you abide for ever, and not pass from alteration to alteration—as wicked men, they alter and come to nothing, and worse than nothing? Then labour for this estate. This is the way to abide for ever. This life hath no date of days, no death.

Labour to plant ourselves in Christ by faith, that so in him we may have an eternal estate. 'Thou art our habitation from generation to generation,' Ps. xc. 1. It was a psalm that was made upon occasion of their falling away in the wilderness. They dropped away as leaves, and few of them came to Canaan. 'Well,' saith he, 'we fall away here, and wither as grass,' &c.

'But thou art our God from generation to generation;' that is, we have a perpetual subsistence in thee. A Christian when he is in God by being in Christ, hath a perpetual everlasting subsistence. As we are temples of God, so he is our temple. We dwell in him, 'thou art our habitation,' &c. Who would not labour to be in such an estate? for in this world there is nothing but a succession of generations.

Obs. 2. Secondly, Every man hath a particular generation. There is some emphasis in this. 'David in his generation.' For men drop not into the world at all adventure; but every man hath his own time appointed; when to come into the world and when to go out; some in one time, and some in another. Therefore the times wherein they live are foreknown of God. He hath set down when such a man shall be born, in such an age of the world. So long he shall live; such work he shall do; and when he hath done his work, he shall be taken away hence, and another shall come and stand up in his place. So every man hath his own generation designed, and appointed, and ordained by God himself from all eternity; not only his generation, but all the circumstances of it. The very place of his abode, the time, and season, and country where he shall live, all are set down.

Use 1. It is useful for this end to observe in what times our lot is fallen, to what times God hath reserved us; what generation and age we live in: to consider of the state of the times.

(1.) Are they good? Bless God that hath reserved vs to those times. We pity some good men 'that lived in ill times; as our countrymen in Queen Mary's time, and other dark times. They were worthy men, and it was pity they lived not in better ages. Certainly they would have been excellent men then. Therefore we should bless God for reserving us to better times. What makes the times better? The discovery of salvation by Jesus Christ: the discovery of the means of happiness in another world. In what age there is a clearer discovery, where there is most Spirit working together with the outward means, that is a blessed age. The Spirit of God was not working so much in former times of darkness and popery. Then there were many that followed the beast to their eternal destruction, though God had mercy on many souls that followed him. As it is said in Scripture, 'they followed Absalom in the simplicity of their hearts, not knowing whither they went,' 2 Sam. xv. 11, so they followed popery in the simplicity of their hearts, not knowing the danger. God had mercy on them; yet certainly thousands of them were wrapped up in darkness. They were miserable times then. Those that know popery will say so. Those that read the story will say so. The world was wrapped in wars and miseries in those times.

It is true our times are not so good as they should be, and in many regards they are miserable times; and we must not murmur at this dispensation of God, if God hath so appointed that our lot shall be to live in hard and ill times. I say in some respects these are bad times; for the world, the older it grows, the worse it is. As it is in a sink, the farther it goes the more soil it gathers; so all the soil of former times are met in the sink of later times, and in that respect this generation is an ill generation.

(2.) But if we consider what makes times good; the manifestation of Christ's glorious gospel, that hath shined for a hundred years and more in our church; the discovery of the means of salvation so clearly; the abundance of the Spirit with the means, making men to apprehend the means; enlightening their understandings to make use of them, and working their hearts to obedience. Look in what age these are; they are happy times. Witness our Saviour, and he is the best judge: 'Happy are the eyes that see the things that ye see, and the ears that hear the things that you hear,' Mat. xiii. 17. Oh, in former times, if they had seen that that we see, and heard that that we hear, they would have accounted themselves happy. Oh, those that lived two hundred years ago, though they were good men, if they had lived to see that that we see, and to hear that that we hear, living in the glorious lustre and sunshine of the gospel, how would it have rejoiced them! Therefore, as

we have cause to consider of the ills of the time and generation, that we he not swayed away with them, so we have cause on the other side to bless God, that hath reserved us to these times of knowledge. In regard of the ills we may say with St Austin, 'Lord, to what times are we reserved!'. But in regard of the good things we may say, Blessed be God, that hath reserved for us these things, that he hath cast our time thus; that we should be horn in this generation; in the blessed time of the gospel; in this second spring of the gospel. We should bless God for it.

Use 2. Well, but that is not all. We are to be accountable to God for the time and means we enjoy here in our generation. If we be not the better for it, we shall be so much the worse. It had been better for us to have been born in times of popery and darkness, in places of ignorance, than living in the glorious times of the gospel, and in places where the light is discovered, and to be naught in the midst of such light. Those that are bad now are very bad. We see by experience, that of all men, the most outrageous wretched persons are those that are ill in good places; for God gives them up to more than an ordinary measure of profaneness. A man shall have better and more civil usage. He shall see better carriage in a pagan than in many Christians that are not good under the means. There be degrees of those that are naught. Some God gives up to a profane spirit in the midst of the means, a fearful brand. Those that are bad now in the glorious times of the gospel, their sins are presumptuous sins. They are not damned simply for sinning, so much as for sinning against the means, for sinning against such light, for sinning in these times. Those that lived in darkness they could do no better. What, to be swearers now! to be licentious, disordered persons now! to contemn holy things now! to be corrupt in our callings now! in this generation, when the light of the gospel hath so gloriously shined! What excuse can men have for their sins now? Certainly it shall aggravate their damnation, that they were children of darkness in the midst of light. Nothing will trouble their consciences so much as that they have offended against so many means, and so many helps as they had in the days they lived in. I beseech you, therefore, as we should bless God for reserving us for these times and places of knowledge and light, so let us take heed lest they be a means of aggravating our damnation afterward, that we shall wish that we had never been born in such times, but rather in times of darkness. It shall go better with our forefathers that lived in darker times, than with us, if we live in profane and ungodly courses.

Use 3. Now there is no generation so good, but there be gross sins in all times and generations, therefore let every man be careful (as to consider the good of the generation, to take good by it, so likewise) to consider the sins of the times wherein he lives, that he be not tainted with the sins of that generation. God's children have a counter-motion, a contrary motion to the motion of wicked persons in every generation; therefore in our generation let us do as David did in his generation, stand against the ills of the times, go against the stream in that which is ill. It is the commendation you see in the Old Testament. 'Noah was a good man in his generation,' Gen. vi. 9, and such and such were good men in their generations. 'David in his generation served God,' and yet the times were naught. 'Help, Lord,' saith he, 'for godly men perish from the earth,' Ps. xii. 1. The times were naught when he lived. There was Doeg, and Ahithophel, and Shimei, and other wicked men; yet David 'was a good man in his generation.' He was not carried with the stream of the times.

A godly man considers who are good and who are naught in his generation, and he walks to heaven with those that are good, though they be never so few. He goes in a contrary motion to others. He doth not conform to the world, Rom. xii. 2, 'he fashions not himself according to the world,' according to the wicked men in the generation he lives in; but he fashions himself to them that are of another world, that go a contrary way to the world.

Use 4. Every generation hath a genius both for manners and study; former times they were given to barbarism; now these times are more refined for outward respects. So for sins: every age hath particular sins that reign; superstition in former times, but now the clean contrary: profaneness, atheism, hardness of heart against the light, presumption, looseness, and the like. Now these being the sins of our times, we should go so much the stronger against the stream of profaneness and atheism., The devil discovers himself in divers shapes, in divers generations. Sometimes he prevails with ignorance, and then he is a spirit of darkness, sometimes he is a spirit of profaneness and looseness. Now consider by what sins the devil hath most advantage, and be sure to set ourselves against them.

Use 5. And let every one in his place labour to make the generation we live in as good as we can. Why doth God speak thus honourably of David? 'He served God in his generation.' That time was the better for him. We have all cause to bless God for such men, they are blessed men. Let every one of

us in our generation carry ourselves so, that when we are gone, it may be said, Such a man did much good in his time and place, and hindered much ill. What a blessed thing is it when in our generation we hinder all the ill and do all the good we can, that others may say to our comfort and credit, The times and place was the better for such a man. Beloved, every one of us hath his generation. Some have a longer generation, some a shorter; some have a longer glass appointed to run out, some their glass is run out in a shorter time. Well, be it longer or shorter, let us be careful that we trifle not out our generation and time wherein we live unprofitably. That little part of time that God hath given us to work in, let us be sure to bestir ourselves in our generation, we know not how long or short our generation is.

Alas! if most men ask their own consciences, wherefore they live? what is the life of many, but an annoyance? They infect the air with their oaths, they are a burthen to the earth, they mis-spend the blessings of God; but what hath the times been the better for them? Their lives have been scandalous, wicked, and vicious. It should be our glory to shine in our times, 'as lights in the midst of a sinful generation,' Philip, ii. 15. I beseech you, therefore, let us take the counsel of holy St Paul: Gal. vi. 9, 'While we have time, let us do good.' While we have a part to act here upon the stage of this world, let us act our parts, do that wherefore we came into the world. We have not assurance from God that our generation shall hold thus long or thus long. Therefore whatsoever we have to do, let us do it presently; let us reform our wicked lives presently, 'before we go hence and be no more seen,' Ps. xxxix. 13. And for the good we have to do, do it presently, put it not off. No man is assured of his continuance here.

Obs. 3. In the next place, 'David served God in his generation.' He did not do it by starts and fits. He did not do this or that good act; but he served God in his whole generation. So must every man not only be content to do now and then a good action; for the veriest wicked man in the world may do good sometimes, and the best men may do ill sometimes; but in the whole course of our life, we must do good in our generation. Our course must be holy, the whole tenor of our lives, while we are in the world. All things have their time, but there is no time for sin; there is no time for vanity; no time for swearing; no time for sensuality and looseness.

Therefore let the whole course of our lives be spent in the service of God. What do we know but that that little time wherein we yield to the service of the devil may be the time when God will fetch us hence? And what

will become of us then? Therefore resolve not a moment to serve sin. Our whole time is but short in respect of eternity. What is our generation to world without end? Therefore let us be content to serve God our whole generation.

‘He served God in his generation,’ that is, in his lifetime, while he was here. For God hath placed us in the world to do him some work. This is God’s working place; he hath houses of work for us. Now our lot here is to do work, to be in some calling and course to work for God. We are not sent here into the world to play, or to live idly. Religion is no vocal profession. Every man must have some calling or other, and in his generation he must do good. For what will our account be afterwards else, when we shall give an account to God how we have spent our time in our generation, what good we did, what ill we hindered? It will be a fearful account when we have spent our time idly, perhaps scandalously and offensively, and sent others to hell by our example. We must serve God in our generation, in our life.

Thou that livest profanely day after day, when dost thou mean to serve God? At the hour of death? Did David serve God when he was to die only? No. ‘He served God in his generation, and then fell asleep.’ Alas, why do we put off? There is no sowing after this life. Then is the time of reaping. And why wilt thou defer the time of sowing till thou come to reap? It is a time to reap the comforts of religion at the hour of death. Shall we defer to serve God’s will till we come to make our own will? And oftentimes it is forced what we do then. No. We must serve God all our time. ‘David served God all his generation.’ To do a few good works at our death only, it is a swinish doing good. The swine will do good when he is dead. Then there is profit of his flesh, though all his life he were noisome. Those men that put off thus, they are rather swine than men, beastly men. God seldom accepts the good they do then, and it is a forced good. If they were not to die then, no good at all would be done. That they do is because they can keep it no longer. It shows they have no grace nor faith at all, for if there had been faith to depend upon God they would have done good before. But they think, I may come to misery myself, and I know not what distasteful, base thoughts; therefore they will do no good in their lifetime. But we must serve God in our generation if we will be saved. These things are of some use, and we should not forget them. But I come to the service itself, which I shall a little more stand upon.

‘David served the will of God.’

Here is considerable, as I told you, these three things.

The object whom he served, 'God.'

The rule by which he served him, 'his will.' And then The service itself; for to know 'the will of God,' and not to serve him, it is to no purpose. All must go together. We must serve 'the will of God,' as we see here David did.

1. For the first, it is a known truth, that God is the main object of all our service. Indeed, we serve men; for in love, which is a very busy grace, we must serve one another in good works: but the love of God must set all on work, and all must be done in obedience to him. God is the object that must terminate all our service to men. Whatsoever duty we do, we must do it as to God. If we serve men, if we be Christians, it must be with reference to God, because he commands us, and that we may honour God. We can do no good to him, Ps. xvi. 2. What doth he care for our goods? But he hath substituted men in his place, he hath appointed such and such men in our generation to do good unto, and he accounts what we do to them for his sake, as done to him. God is the object of our service, God in Christ as our Father.

'God,' as God, without Christ a mediator, ought to be served for our very creation, if we were to go to hell when we had done, or should vanish to nothing with the beasts; for our very subordination and subjection to God as creatures implies service. He is the object of service, as being our maker, having given us a being, having given us reason to serve him. But now God considered as a Father in Christ in the covenant of grace, we ought to serve him in a higher regard; not as creatures the Creator only, and as servants their Lord, but as a gracious Father. So God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and Christ, Mediator, God-man, are the objects of our service, the whole adequate, fit object. We must not go beyond them, for whatsoever else we do, it must be in reference to them. I will not dwell upon the point. It is a foundation to that I am to speak of.

The next thing is the rule of his service: 'He served the will of God.'

'The will of God.'

The word signifieth 'counsel,' and it is better translated 'counsel' than 'will,' because it is more emphatical. God's will is his counsel, not in regard of imperfection in counsel; for counsel implies somewhat imperfect, as deliberation and consultation. God sees all at once; he doth not deliberate, but in regard of that which is eminent in counsel; what is that? Wisdom. 'By counsel thou shalt be established,' Prov. xix. 18. So whatsoever is God's will,

that is counsel. It is wise, it is weighed, it is as 'gold seven times tried,' Ps. xii. 6. Therefore we should stoop to whatsoever is God's will, either in his word or in events. His will is counsel. He is wise, he is not rash. A pattern to all those that would be like God, to do all by counsel and not by will. Those that are put to their will, if there be not answerable wisdom to guide it, to what mischief do they plunge themselves and others!

(1.) God must be served according to his counsel or will, as he hath discovered himself in his word; for service is nothing but an action done with an eye to the will of another. For if a man doth an action that one would have him do, if he do it not with respect to his command, it is no obedience nor service. He that hath not some care in the act, it is no obedience. As the civil law saith, *infringit obedientiam*, &c., it breaks from the nature of obedience that hath no cause for it. He must know his reason; at the least there is the command of the superior must be a reason and ground for what he doth in all his obedience and service. Therefore there is a like necessity of the word of God as of his service, for what master will be served according to the will of his servant? Why doth the Scripture mislike will-worship, worship that is according to our own will? Because therein we make ourselves god; we serve ourselves, and not God. We must not serve God as we would be loath to be served ourselves. We would be loath to have a servant compliment with cap and knee, and then do as he list himself; and so for us to come and compliment with God, to hear his word as if we would be directed by him, to kneel and pray to him for fashion, and then all our life after to do as we list. It is a delusion to say we serve God, unless we servo him according to his will.

2. Therefore there must be a rule of our service, and that rule is the written word of God. There was a time when the word of God was not written, Heb. i. 1; and then God discovered his will by dreams and visions, and many other ways. But when the world was enlarged, and mankind spread further, traditions from hand to hand was not a lit means and way to deliver truths, because it was subject to corruption. God therefore would deliver his will, how he would be served, in writing; and God sanctified this course, and gave credit to it, by his own example, writing his own law with his own finger. The ten commandments were written by God himself. God was the first preacher and the first writer. He was the first preacher: he preached the gospel to Adam in paradise; and the first writer: the ten commandments being written by God himself. Now, we have the written word of God to be our rule, how God must be served, an exact and perfect rule. I will not speak

by way of controversy. I hope we are grounded well enough, but by way of direction for a godly life. God's will is a sufficient rule.

What is requisite in a rule?

(1.) First, A rule must be clear and open, that it may be made use of by those that are to be regulated by it. Therefore we say, The secret will of God can be no rule, because it is secret. That which is a rule must be manifest and open. Therefore the revealed will of God, that every one may see, that is our rule. We may cross God's secret will and do well; and we may serve it and yet do ill. A father may pray for his child's life, and may cross the secret will of God, and yet doth well. God allows bowels in fathers. A wicked man may do according to God's secret will, and yet sin. Therefore that was not the rule of David's service, nor cannot be of ours.

'Secret things belong to God; but revealed things to us and our children,' saith blessed Moses, Deut. xxix. 29. The will of God, as it is discovered, must be the rule of our actions. A rule must be open, or else it is no rule.

(2.) Again, The rule by which we must lead our lives it must be infallible: not subject to error; for then it cannot be the rule of our service. The word of God is an infallible rule. It cannot deceive, because it is the word of God. Men wrote it, indeed, but it was God that dictated it. The finger writes, but the head dictates. Holy men wrote it according as they were guided by the Holy Ghost. The will of any man cannot be the rule of any man's service, further than it is agreeable to the first rule. Why? Because it is subject to error and mistake. That which must be the constant rule of a man's life, it must not be as popish traditions and the like. It must be infallible. Now, the word of God is so. It is infallible. A man may err, and be a man, and a good man too; but God cannot err, and be God. The word of God cannot be false and be the word of God. Therefore it is an infallible rule.

When this is applied to any creature, it is a grand lie, and the foundation of misery in that church. This is the first lie in the church of Rome, that the church, consisting of a company of men, cannot err. What a horrible absurdity is this, to make the will of man the rule, that the church cannot err, that popery cannot err! Though they err egregiously, they account rebellion service, and make traitors merit, &c.

But are our tenets subject to such gross things? No. We make the rule of obedience the infallible word of God, that cannot err. To attribute that of

that which cannot err to that which can err, it is a horrible absurdity. But I will not enter into controversies.

(3.) Again, That which is a rule must be perfect in commensuration, in measure. It must be of equal extent to all things that are to be ruled. Now the things that are to be ruled is our whole carriage and conversation. Therefore that that is the rule for a man, it must rule his thoughts, his speeches, and actions. So the word of God, it rules the whole carriage of a man. There is a proportion between the rule and all things that are to be ruled by it. All things fall under the word of God to be directed and ruled by it. It gives direction to our thoughts, to our speeches, to our actions, in our callings. It gives direction to magistrates, to ministers, to masters, to servants, to all estates and conditions in life, in death. It is exceeding large, as David saith: 'All things come to an end, but thy commandments are exceeding large,' Ps. cxix. 96. It is a rule that extends to all things that are to be ruled whatsoever. No other rule but God's will doth so; for men's laws they have nothing to do with thoughts. Thought is free for them.

(4.) Again, A rule must be authentical. What is that? It must be credited for itself. It must have authority of and for itself, and not depend upon another, if it be the first rule. Indeed, there be subordinate rules. There is a rule ruled, and a rule ruling men's laws. The magistrates will it is a rule ruled by a higher rule; and, as long as it is so, it is a good rule. But there must be a rule ruling above all subordinate rules whatsoever. What is that? The word of God. It hath authority from itself, not borrowed of men. It is a rule that rules all, and is ruled of none other's rule but by this rule. This is a rule ruling the very rulers of the world. No man's will is a law further than it is squared by this law of laws.

(5.) It is an inflexible rule. It cannot be bent to men's purposes. Man would bring God's will to his will; but it is the measure that measures all, and is measured by none. For we must not judge the word, the word must judge us. You have some presumptuous persons that will judge and murmur at the word, but the word will be too good for them and judge them. He that judgeth the law, and gives sentence on the law, shows himself a fool; the law must judge him, much more the law of God. Therefore it is authentical.

These are the main properties of that that must be a rule to judge our lives by. Now the word of God is both known, and is not subject to error any kind of way, and it is equal to all things that may fall under it, and it is authentical, of credit for itself, let men say what they will. It must rule, and

not be ruled. Therefore David, when he ordered his course of life by this will of God, he deserved this commendation, that 'in his generation he served the will of God.'

There be subordinate rules in their kind, as the law of nature, and the laws of men, direct in things of this life, to do them in that manner, according to the rule: a civil law for civil actions; men's laws for men's actions; but when we do anything holily, we must have direction from God's law, and that must put the respect of service to God upon our actions. For howsoever we do things civilly by the civil law, and do things comely by the law of nature, nature teacheth us to carry ourselves in a decorum, to give every man his due; but it is not a service of God, except it be directed by the rule of God. A man cannot serve God without a higher rule than man can give.

But you will say, How shall we apply and make use of this rule in particular actions? The word is but short, but actions are infinite. The word of God directs me not to this or that action, and saith, You shall do this or that in particular, but gives general rules; how shall we come to carry ourselves in particular actions? Here is the skill, for a rule is not to hang up, a measure is not to be cast aside but to be applied. A rule is a thing in relation to a thing ruled, and a measure to things measured; and if we do not apply it, we lose the use of it. How shall we know how to servo the will of God in every particular action?

1. Besides the general word of God, we have some outward helps and some inward. The outward helps are:

(1.) First, The ministry. That is one main outward help. And what is the ministry for but to dig up the treasure, the mine of God; to lay open the will of God in particular; to branch out, and lay open, and anatomise the duties of such and such callings, by their ministerial gifts, which God hath given his servants in a competent measure to give particular directions? They have their callings for this end, 'to speak a word in season.' They have 'the tongue of the learned,' Isa. 1. 4. God hath not sot up this calling for nought. Therefore, as we go to the learned in the law, in doubts in that kind, so in particular doubts why do we not make use of those that study that way, if it be in such a case as perhaps we have no light in ourselves? It is one end of their calling, because perhaps our callings are such as that we cannot study particulars ourselves; therefore God hath sanctified that calling, that we might have the use of it. That is one.

(2.) Another outward help for particulars: it is communion with good people, those that are led with the Spirit of God; for we must know that God oftentimes lays up the practice of one man in the breast of another, because he would knit man to man. We are oftentimes at a loss, the best of us all, in particular directions what to do. Sometimes a meaner man, in some things, than ourselves, can give better directions in particular than ourselves. Shall we storm and swell at this? No. It is God's wisdom that one man should carry that which is for the special use of another, that we might take counsel and ask advice one of another. 'A wise man ordereth his doings by counsel,' saith the wise man, Prov. xii. 15; and oftentimes he that takes advice of himself hath a fool to his counsellor, and he beshrews himself that he would not take the benefit of another man's advice. Therefore, besides the public ministry, this is one help, our Christian friends and acquaintance, and they are reserved for such a time. 'A friend is made for adversity,' for ill times, in perplexed and doubtful cases. This is to make use and benefit of others.

(3.) Again, The laws of men. What are the laws, if they be good, but particular determinations of the will of God. We ought to have reverent conceits of the laws, for they do but bring God's generals to particulars, if they be good laws. If they have not their derivation from God's laws, they are naught; but, if they back that in anything, they are nothing but a particular determining of the general rules in God's word, to give every man his due, etc. Therefore in many cases we may know what the will of God is, by the good laws of the kingdom which bind the conscience to obedience. There is no disobedience to men's laws, but where there is disobedience to God's laws first, which hath stablished men's laws.

(4.) And then, in some particulars, when it doth not appear what we should do, the example of good people, of the wisest and best in the rank and place where we live, till we know the contrary. The best way is to rest in their judgment, to follow the advice of others, the direction of friends, or the laws and customs, and not to be refractory and opposite, except there be reason to the contrary. For man's spirit is a divine thing. It must always be led with some reason, but with this reservation, a man may keep to others till it appear otherwise, till he see other light and direction to take this course. This is the disposition that should be in every peaceable man. These be some outward helps to know the will of God in particular actions.

2. The inward helps to know what God's will in particular is, together with the word of God unfolded.

(1.) The Spirit of God, which is as a voice behind us, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' Isa. xxx. 21. Wherefore serves the blessed Spirit but to be a counsellor? as Isa. ix. 7. Christ, he is the blessed counsellor. How comes he to be so? Not immediately by himself, but by his Spirit. All things he doth to his church is by his Spirit. He fills his church with his Spirit. Now the children of God, having this Spirit of counsel to advise them in particulars, they are 'led with the Spirit.' This is one inward help, and a main one. And surely, if we would give way to the blessed guidance of God's Spirit, and not grieve, and quench, and resist the Spirit, the Spirit of God would be ready to direct us upon all occasions. We should be guided in particular actions with a better Spirit than our own. And this Spirit we may have by prayer. God will give the Spirit to them that beg him, Luke xi. 13.

(2.) Then another inward help is particular grace, which God gives to his children. Particular prudence to speak words and to do actions in season, that everything may be beautiful in its time. There is sapience, wisdom, and prudence: 'I Wisdom dwell with prudence,' Prov. viii. 12. It is the wisdom of a man to understand his way, what to do in particular, or what not to do. It is prudence or discretion to discern of differences. Now that grace of God is in some measure given to all his children. He makes them wise to understand their own way. They are not so wise, perhaps, for other things. It is not their way. God lets some men go with a less measure of discretion to heaven than others; because he hath less work for them to do. But every man hath as much as will bring him to heaven. The less he hath himself, the more he shall have of others. Some men are excellent in gifts of wisdom. They can tell you generals out of the book of God excellent well. But come to directions in particular, and you shall have meaner men of better discretion than they. Either we have it ourselves, or else God will associate us, and by his providence cast us upon other acquaintance that have a greater measure of this grace that he will have us acquainted with. God gives every one of his a spirit to discern what to speak, how to advise, how to comfort, what to do. And the meanest Christian is more in this, for religious actions, than the greatest man in the world that hath not the Spirit of God; for he can tell in particular how to bear afflictions, and how to enjoy prosperity; because the Spirit directs him what to do.

(3.) Again, God hath put into every man a conscience. Wherefore serves conscience, but especially to direct in particulars. There is a faculty of the soul that we call a treasury, a preserving faculty, that is to lay up general rules out of the word of God, and directions out of good books, and from the

counsel of other men. It is a faculty to treasure up rules. Therefore it hath the name of preserving. But there is a conscience under this. That being sanctified by the Spirit of God, and being directed in general by the word of God, it directs in particular. Conscience tells us, 'This in particular you ought to do; this you have done; in this particular you have done well, in this you have done ill. So conscience is put in us to check or direct us in particular. It is God's vicar in every man, together with the Spirit. Conscience, together with the Spirit, is a great help to know God's will in particulars. If men would not be too bold with conscience, conscience, together with God's Spirit, would be faithful to them. Conscience may say, as Reuben said to his brethren when they were in misery, 'Bid not I tell you, do no hurt to the lad?' Gen. xlii. 21; deal not so hardly with Joseph as to cast him into the pit. So many men do many things amiss. Conscience may say, Bid not I tell you this before? it was naught, and yet you would needs do it. Yes, certainly; and when conscience is not hearkened unto as a director, it will scourge as a judge. It hath many offices, and it is good to keep this conscience in its office; to let conscience do its full duty, let conscience direct us to the full. Certainly, if we would hearken to this vicegerent in our hearts, this little god that God hath placed there in mercy to guide our lives in particular, it would be better with us than it is. We should end our days with more comfort, and give a better reckoning than we can.

(1.) Again, Experience may be added as another help. Experience is a great help in particulars, for indeed generals are raised out of experiments in particular. Therefore those that are wise politicians, statesmen, they are not so out of books altogether, but men of experience that can say, such a case hath been so at such a time. So that out of observation and particular experience they are able to say, upon the like case, it should be now at this time thus and thus. If therefore we would treasure up experience, it would be a good help to know what is to be done in particulars; to consider how it hath been in former time, and consider the experience of others. You see then what the rule of our service is, God's will; with these helps subordinate to it, how to direct ourselves in particular actions to serve the will of God. So much for that point.

'He served.'

Now I come to the act of service. God must be served according to his own will. We must search and try what is the good, and holy, and acceptable will of God, Rom. xii. 2. I have showed how we may search in particular

what the good and acceptable will of God is. Now when this is discovered, the next thing is to 'serve' God in the knowledge of his will; for all the blessings are annexed to service, and not to knowledge. 'If ye know this will.' Is there all? No. 'Happy are ye if ye do it,' John xiii. 17. If we know the rule and do it, we are happy. What if we do it not? 'He that knows his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes,' Luke xii. 47. It will but aggravate our damnation, to know the rule, to have directions what to do, and not to do them. Then the rule that we have hath another use. If we use it not for direction in what we do, it will be brought against us at the day of judgment, as a direction for God to damn us by: This you knew; this counsel you had; these motions of the Spirit you had; this, conscience told you; this, the ministry and your friends told you. Notwithstanding, you crossed and thwarted all. When it is not a direction for us to obedience, it will be a direction for God to give sentence. Therefore let us make conscience first to know the will of God, which is the rule of all our actions, by all the means we can, and then to give 'service to it.' David served the will of God. His life was not unfruitfully and wickedly spent; but 'he served' the counsel of God that had planted and placed him there in the world for that purpose. Why hath God planted us here in the paradise of the church? That we should not be barren trees, or bring forth ill fruit; but that we should 'serve' him, and be fruitful in our places.

This word 'service' is a harsh word, and such a thing as proud spirits could never digest. Why did the devils fall? They would be in a state independent, and not under others; they would have their own courses; and therefore the Scripture saith, 'They kept not their own standing,' Jude 6. God set them in one course, and they swelled and would not keep it. The particular is not set down in Scripture, but 'they kept not their own standing.' Neither the devil, who is a proud creature, nor men led with the spirit of the devil, can endure service. Every man would be a god to himself, to be guided by his own lewd will and lusts; and God knows, they are blind guides, and we shall know it to our cost if we have not a better guide. When the will of God is revealed, therefore, we must have a care to serve it.

Now, to 'serve,' implies two things especially: an action, and a reference of that action to the will of another. That is service, as I said before, to do a thing, and to do in obedience. For if a man do never so many things, if it be not in obedience to the will of another, it is no 'service.' He serves himself. So to 'serve' God is when we know the will of God, to do accordingly, and

to do it because it is the will of God. Then it is service; or else it is a work indeed done, but no service or obedience.

All obedience is with looking to the will and pleasure of another, that hath authority to direct us; and then we 'serve' the revealed will of God, when the whole inward and outward man is fashioned and framed to that; when there is a measuring of both together, as when we obey the directions; when we tremble at the threatenings; when we imitate the examples of holy writ; when we are raised up with the comforts; when answerable to every divine truth there is an answerable disposition of soul; when there is a sweet harmony between God's truth and our inward and outward man. Rom. vi. 17, 'We must be cast into the mould of the word.' As a thing when it is moulded in another frame, it carries the print of the frame or mould, so we 'serve' the will and word of God when we are moulded answerable to that will.

Now, more particularly, this 'service' of the will of God, it is either immediate, inward 'service' of the will of God, or outward service.

(1.) Inward service is the obedience of the first commandment, when upon the knowledge of God we set him up in our souls, and cleave to him in our affections of trust, and joy, and love, and delight, to give him the supremacy of all these. Then we servo him with inward worship and service. And this indeed is to set the crown upon God's head, and to make him king and God in our hearts. He must have the prime of our inward service. When we love God above all, and fear him above all, and delight in him above all, and cleave to him when all things else fail us, this is the immediate 'service' of God in our hearts, when we give God his own in our hearts. Hence comes all other 'service' whatsoever, or else it is but the eye-service, that is not enlivened with the inward worship of God.

(2.) Now, besides this inward, there is a 'service' of God that comes from this inward service, which is of the outward man; that is, when we pray to God, and that requires our words, when we praise God in thanksgiving, when we come to hear the word and to receive the sacrament. And so all outward holy actions are the 'service' of God, and are drawn from the inward immediate worship of God that I spake of before.

(3.) Besides these (which come more immediately from a sanctified spirit), there is a service of God that is the obedience of the second table, when we do good to men with an eye to serve God, as we say. There is an

elicit, proper service of God, and a commanded service of God, *cultus imperatus*. All duties to men are a 'service' of God, when we do them as commanded of God, as because I love God, therefore I honour my parents, and magistrates; and therefore I will not commit adultery: as Joseph, 'Shall I do this, and offend God?' Gen. xxxiv. 9. So the Scripture allegeth reasons out of the first table, when we are tempted to sins against the second table; and then the duties of the second table are a worship and 'service' of God, when they are commanded by the first. And this is the difference between a more formal man and a Christian in his outward performances. A civil man is altogether for the second table, but he hath not his rise from the first. He gives every man his due, &c., but it is not in obedience to God, because God hath commanded him to do it; but because he sees it is a deformed thing to be unjust. Out of the light of nature he condemns the sin, but not out of religious respects. It is not a service of God all this while. Ay, but when it is from love to God, when that great command, 'Thou shalt love God above all,' sets him upon this, then all the duties he performs to man are a service of the will of God, for God commands them. Even the basest works are a service of God when they are done in obedience to God, as Saint Paul tells them in Col. iii. 22, and Eph. vi. 5, the poor servant 'serves the Lord Christ.' When a poor servant is at his work, employed in the business of man, poor, common things, yet he serves the Lord all the while. For God hath set them that calling, and he doth the second table in obedience to the first; and he serves men, those that are his governors, with an eye to the great Governor and Master that is above all, that will reward them for their poor service, however their master reward them, Eph. vi. 8. This is to serve the will of God then; to yield to him the immediate service of the soul, and the outward expressions of it; and to go through all other duties as they spring from the first. Then we are moulded, as I said before, answerable to the word of God.

To apply this to our blessed man David, and then to make use of it to ourselves.

Thus did David serve the will of God in his time; for you may see what he was. He is anatomised and laid open to our eyes in the Psalms. You may see his care of 'serving' God in his own writings. See how he cleaved to God in his affections in Ps. xviii. 30, seq., how he loved God, and joyed in God, and in the word of God above all things in the world. He esteemed the light of 'God's countenance more than corn, or wine, or oil,' Ps. iv. 7. I give but a touch, to show how this description is true of this blessed man, 'that he served the will of God.'

And for the expression of it in praise and prayer, he was ‘a man after God’s own heart;’ especially in this, he was ready upon all occasions to bless and praise God. He kept his communion with God, as we see; though he were a king, yet his main care was to ‘serve’ God, as we see in Ps. i. 2, ‘He meditated in the word of God day and night.’ What time had he to rule his kingdom then? The moaning is, that all the spare time that he had it was to think of God; to look to the rule, the word of God, how to guide his life.

And for his outward calling. (There is a double calling wherein we ‘serve’ God as Christians, our general and our particular calling, wherein we are to deal with men.) What an excellent man was he! ‘He served the will of God,’ as a governor of a family. We see in Ps. ci. 2, how he carried himself in the midst of his house to all his servants. A liar should not abide in his house. You have a direction there how to guide your families. You see how he served the will of God as a governor. Yet there was a fault to him in that respect, he was too indulgent to Absalom and Adoniah. A man may be a good man, and yet be to blame in some particulars; but when his heart is right, God pardons the rest.

You see how he carried himself as a king. He was an excellent king, the delight of Israel. He carried himself every way as a king should do. He tempered mercy and judgment together: ‘I will sing of mercy and judgment,’ Ps. ci. 1. So he did in his whole carriage sweetly temper mercy and justice; he dispensed these two. And as a king must not only ‘serve’ God, so his care was to establish the worship of God, as you find in the story. David, when he saw all in peace and quiet, then he begins to take care for the ark, 2 Sam. vii. 2: ‘I dwell in a house of cedar; but the ark of the Lord remains under curtains.’ Therefore he took a course for that. So governors should do, when God hath settled them in their government quietly, to begin to think of God’s house; for they rule not well, they ‘serve not the will of God,’ except, besides their own service, they call others to serve him. A magistrate must be the keeper of both tables himself, and cause others to do it; he must lay down his crown at the feet of Christ, as it is in Isaiah xlix. 7. Thus David was a nursing father to the church of God; he served God in his particular calling.

Now, to make use of another division, the will of God it is either in things to be done or to be suffered; and obedience answerable to that is either active or passive; as David ‘served’ God in doing, so he yielded obedience, and ‘served the will of God’ in his passive obedience; wherein he did deny himself exceedingly, as much as ever man did, next to Christ. You

see how he denied himself in his carriage toward Saul, 1 Sam. xxlv.: in matter of revenge, how he overcame himself, because he knew that revenge was God's, and that God was his, and therefore would right him well enough. And in Shimei, 'God hath bid him rail.' He would not revenge. And other notable examples we have, how he submitted to God's will, as in 1 Sam. xxx. 6, when he was in extremity, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. There he stayed himself in extremity; and in 2 Sam. xv. 25, there is a notable place how he submitted himself to God. 'The king said, Carry back the ark of God: if I have found favour in the eyes of God, he will bring me again; but if God say thus, I have no delight in him, behold here I am, let him do as seems good to him.' Here was a resignation of himself to the will of himself in serving of him. So in Ps. xxxix. 1, 'I held my tongue, Lord, because thou didst it.' Thus you see how he 'served' the will of God, in the inward service of God, and in the outward to God and man; in both callings, as a good man, and a good governor, in his family; every way he 'served' the will of God.

Use. And wherefore is all this? Here is a pattern for us that we should serve the will of God: to serve the will of God immediately, to labour to bring our hearts to trust in him; to fear him above all; to delight in him above all; and to express it in our outward service of him, and in doing duties to men from inward respect to God; in conscience of our duty, to serve God when we serve men: to carry ourselves in our general calling, as Christians, and in our particular place, not only to be good men, but good in our callings; good students, good lawyers, &c. Let us show our religion there, as David did. This is to serve the will of God. That is not religion that is left behind in the church: as Lactantius saith, that is no religion that we leave behind when we come to the church door. But that is religion when we learn our duty here, and carry it in our breasts to practise it every day in the week; when we show it in our places. That is the service of God. Therefore let this holy man be an example to us. Wherefore are these particular things recorded of him in the Scriptures, but that we should transform ourselves to this blessed pattern.

The whole life of a Christian we see is a service of God. There is nothing that we do but it may be a 'service' of God. No. Not our particular recreations, if we use them as we should; as whettings to be fitter for our callings, and enjoy them as liberties, with thankfulness to God, that allows us these liberties to refresh ourselves. There is no passage of a man's life, but it may have the respect of a service of God. It is not the matter or stuff, but the stamp, that makes the coin; so it is not the work, but the stamp, that makes it

‘a service,’ when we do it with an eye to God. Let the king set a stamp but upon brass, upon a token, yet it will go for current if it have the king’s authority and stamp upon it. Let it be but an action of our callings, suppose to give counsel in our studies or pleading of the law-, &c., if it have God’s stamp upon it; if there be prayer upon it to bless it, and it be done in obedience to God, and with justice; not against the rules of piety and charity, and as far as it may displease God, to baulk and avoid all temptations in our callings out of religious respects, it is a ‘service’ of God. Our whole life, not only in the church, but in our particular places, may be a ‘service of God;’ as it is said here, ‘David served God.’

Oh, if we could think of this wheresoever we are, we would take no liberty to offend God in anything. We would not thrust religion into a corner, into a narrow room, and limit it to some days, and times, and actions, and places, and then take liberty to defraud and dissemble, to abuse ourselves this way and that way. Is this to serve God? To ‘serve’ God is to carry ourselves as the children of God wheresoever we are: so that our whole life is a service of God.

A Christian is no libertine, no man of freedom. He is a servant. Indeed, we have changed our master. We are set at liberty from the slavery of sin and Satan; but it is not that we should do nothing, to be Belials without yoke; but it is to serve God. We are taken from the service of Satan to be the Lord’s freemen; and indeed it is to that end. We are delivered that we might serve God, Luke i. 74. Therefore all the actions of our life should be a ‘service’ to God.

Quest. To make this a little clearer: How can this be, will some man think, that every common action should be a service of God?

Ans. I will make it clear by an instance. The beasts and other creatures and we have common actions, such as we do in common, as to eat, and to drink, and to move. The beast doth this, and man doth it. When a man doth them, they are reasonable actions, because they are guided with reason, and moderated by reason; but when the beast doth them, they are the actions of a beast, because he hath no better faculty to guide him. So common actions, they are not a service of God, as they come from common men, that have not grace and the Spirit of God in their hearts; they are mere buying and selling, and going about the actions of their callings, as the actions, of a beast are the actions of a beast. But let a Christian come to do them, he hath a higher life and a higher spirit that makes them spiritual actions that are

common in themselves. He raiseth them to a higher order and rank. Therefore a Christian 'serveth God.' In all that he doth he hath an eye to God: that which another man doth with no eye to God, but merely in civil respects. We say of policy, it is an ancient observation, which is good and very fit. The knowledge of a commonwealth, it is a building knowledge, a commanding knowledge; for though a statesman doth not build, he doth not buy and sell and commerce; but he useth all other trades for the good of the state. It is a knowledge commanding all other inferior arts and trades, in a commonwealth, to the last end. They should all be serviceable to the commonwealth, and if they be not, away with them. So religion, and the knowledge of divine things, it is a commanding knowledge; it commands all other services in our callings, &c. It doth not teach a man what he shall do in particular in his calling; but it teacheth him how to direct that calling to 'serve God,' to be advantageous and helpful to his general calling; to further him to heaven, to make everything reductive to his last end, which he sets before him; that is, to honour and serve God in all things, to whom he desires to approve himself in life and death. He hath a principle, the Holy Ghost in him, and he labours to reduce everything to the main end. Oh that we were in this temper!

And as we must labour to imitate holy David in doing, so likewise in suffering. We must be careful that nothing of God's displeas us, as we are careful, for ourselves, that nothing of ours displeas God. In doing, we ought to be careful that nothing of ours displeas God; in suffering, that nothing of God's dealing displeas us; for there is rebellion in both, in passive obedience as well as active. There is rebellion when we murmur and will not be as God will have us, as if we were wiser than he, to appoint our own condition. Whereas we should resign ourselves, as David, 'Here I am; let the Lord do as it pleaseth him;' and as they said in the Acts, xxi. 14, 'The will of the Lord be done;' and as we pray in the Lord's prayer, 'Thy will be done,' insinuating not our own. We must be content to stoop in our sufferings obediently to God, because he is 'righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 17, in all the courses he takes with us. We should be ready to justify God in all things.

Now, how did he 'servo God,' for the manner of his service? The manner of his service was as it should be, and so he was exemplary to us all in that. Amongst others, his service was,

1. First, Universal, to God and to men every way.

2. Secondly, It was uniform. He was good in all conditions, a good shepherd, a good king, he was good in his family, See. So the service of the children and servants of God, it must be uniform in all estates, 'to know how to want, and how to abound,' &c.,

3. And then his service was cheerful. We see how oft he rouseth up himself in the Psalms: 'Awake; my harp and lute,' &c.,

4. And lastly, His service tens sincere. It was to God. You may know his sincerity by this:

(1.) He cared not for scoffings; he practised duties that wore scorned at. That is an evidence of sincerity, when in ill times the children of God stand to God and religion. When Michal mocked him, saith he, 'I will be yet more vile for God,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. When God may have glory, and religion defence, for men to stand for God in ill times, it is a sign of sincerity'. An hypocrite will never do so. David did at all times, 'in his generation.'

(2.) And then it was a sign of sincerity, that he would appeal to God. 'Try me, Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me,' Ps. cxxxix. 23. When a soul can go to God, and say, Lord, if there be anyway of wickedness in me, any secret lurking corruption in me, that may endanger the state of my soul, that I know not of, discover it to me: that is a sign that a man is in league with no sin, but his service is sincere.

(3.) A man that is not sincere hath no comfort. So much sincerity, so much comfort. If a man do not things to God in sincerity, all is lost to God. A man may have commendations of the world, as the Pharisees had, which is nothing but a kind of curse: 'You have your reward,' Mat. vi. 2; that is, you have it here, and shall lose it hereafter. So much concerning the life of David, in those words, 'David in his generation served the counsel or will of God.' Now, to make a perfect discourse of it, we will speak something of his end.

'He fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption.'

'He fell asleep,' that is, he died; for sleep, in Scripture, it is a middle phrase, applicable to good and bad; for wicked men, in Scripture, are said to sleep, and good men are said to 'sleep. Only the difference is, as the persons are; for the sleep of wicked men it is like the sleep of a malefactor before his execution, that is oftentimes tripped in his sleep; or like the sleep of a man in sickness, or in a mad fit. His sleep doth but concoct the malignant humour,

and after he wakes, he rageth three times more than he did before. So the sleep, the death of a carnal, wicked man, it is but a preparation to his execution; it is but the sleep of a distempered man that wakes with more horror, and terror, and rage, than over before. Indeed, properly the death only of the godly is a sleep. But to observe something first briefly in general.

Obs. 1. We see here is a time of dying as well as a time of living.

There is a time to serve God in living, and there is a time to yield our souls to him, as well as a time to serve God in doing the actions and functions of this life.

Use 1. Which would teach us this, not to fix our thoughts too much on life. As there is a time for all things to the living, so there is a time to cease to live; and therefore to use the world with moderation, 'as though we used it not, knowing that the fashion of the world passeth away,' 1 Cor. vii. 31. It should teach us to serve God as well in living as in dying.

Use 2. And it should teach us to do all the good we can while we have time. David served God while he lived, and he served God in dying; because his death was in obedience. But, as I said before, after death properly there is no service of God, but a receiving of wages. Therefore let us serve God while we live, while we have time, because there is a time 'when night will come,' the night of sickness and of death, 'and then no man can work,' John ix. 4, if he would never so fain.

'He fell asleep.' Why did he not die before? He served God a great while; he did not die when he was first a good man.

Obs. 2. God will have his children serve out their generation.

(1.) They must serve out their time. As soon as ever we believe we have right to heaven, but God will have us bear the burden of the day awhile, to bring others to heaven with us, to go before others in the example of a godly life, to gain as many as we can.

(2.) To try the truth of our graces before we come to heaven, whether they be true or no, that they may be true, tried graces.

(3.) And he will have us perfect before we come to so holy a place. He will have us 'grow in grace,' as Ahasuerus his wives were to be perfumed and

prepared before they came to him. It is a holy place that we hope for, a holy condition; therefore he will have us by little and little be fitted by the Spirit of God. Many such reasons there be why God in heavenly wisdom will have us go on here a time before we come to heaven, though as soon as we believe we are in the state of salvation; as Christ said to Zaccheus, 'This day is salvation come to thine house,' Luke xix. 9.

Use. Therefore let us not repine that God will have us live. Indeed, as soon as a Christian hath faith, he hath life in patience and death in desire; for he is impatient to want his crown. Oh, but here is the time of service; and when he considers the eternity of the reward he shall have after, he will be glad to serve God, and he will be ashamed that he can do it no more. When he knows he shall have an 'eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. iv. 17, for a little service, then he will deny his lusts and pleasures to serve God in the place he lives in, whether he be magistrate or minister whatsoever, to undergo the burden of a little service.

Again, In that it is said here, 'then he fell asleep,' not before, till he had served the counsel of God.

Obs. 3. God hath allotted a man a time.

He hath sot him a glass that must be run, he hath given him a part to act, and he cannot be taken away till that be done. He can never fall asleep till he have served the counsel of God. As it is said in the gospel concerning our Saviour Christ, 'his hour was not yet come,' John vii. 30. They have laid wait for him, but his hour was not come. So there may be many snares laid for the children of God by Satan and his instruments, but till their hour be come, all the devils in hell, nor all the devil's instruments on earth, cannot shorten a man's life one minute of an hour; for he shall fall asleep when he hath served the counsel of God, when he hath done all that God will have him to do.

Use. Therefore it is ground of resolution, let us go on in our places and callings, undauntedly and wisely too; not to tempt God, to rush into dangers; but, I mean, without base fear and distrust; for we must serve God to-day and to-morrow, and then we shall be sanctified. We must serve God the appointed time that he will have us to live here; and then we shall 'fall asleep,' and not before. No creature hath power over the life of man to shorten his days.

Obs. 4. The next thing we will observe from the nature of sleep is, that The death of the godly is a sleep, in respect of refreshing.

Sleep doth refresh and repair, and as it were recreate and make a man anew. Sleep and rest it is the blessed ordinance of God, it is an excellent thing to repair men; so after death nature shall be repaired better, we shall rise fresher; as it is Ps. xvii. 15, 'When I arise, I shall be satisfied with thine image.' We shall rise refreshed, better than we lay down. So that as we go to bed then, to sleep, to cut off all cares, so when we rest in death, all cares, and fears, and terrors, all annoyances, are cut off.

(1.) 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: they rest from their labours,' Rev. xiv. 13; insinuating that there is no rest before. For to a man that knows that this world is a workhouse, and his life a service to God, he thinks of no rest till he be in his grave. So death it is a sleep in regard of that rest. We rest from the labour of sin, we rest from the wearisome labour of the body; from the labour of afflictions and oppressions, from the molestations of other men among whom we live. Every way this life is tedious, and death rest.

(2.) Again, It is in this respect a sleep; because a man goes to bed with assured hope of rising again, and therefore he goes quietly. Though it be a state of darkness for the time, all the senses are bound up, yet he knows that in God's ordinary providence he shall rise again. Therefore men not only quietly, but cheerfully, go to bed. So there is greater ground to know that we shall rise again out of our graves, than that we should rise out of our beds; for many men's beds have been their graves, in some sort; I mean, they have died in their beds. But for the resurrection, we have the word of Almighty God, that is a God of his word, that we shall rise again; and we have it in the pledge of our Saviour's resurrection. There is no doubt of that.

Therefore when we die, if we have faith, we should make no more of death than men do to go to bed; hoping undoubtedly of an assured and joyful resurrection. The want of faith in that kind makes us backward to this. You see in what respect death is said to be a 'sleep.' To speak only of those references and relations that are most pertinent between sleep and death.

(3.) David 'fell asleep,' and very willingly; for he had lived a painful life; he served God both as a private man, as a shepherd, and as a king; Eccles. v. 12, 'To a labouring man sleep is sweet;' so to a man that hath served God carefully in his calling, and kept a good conscience, death is very sweet. We

see children that have been playing all day, they are loath to go to bed; but to a man that hath wrought all day, 'sleep is sweet,' as wise Solomon saith, 'to a labouring man.'

Use. Would we, then, have death as a sweet rest? Let us do as David did; that is, be painful, and laborious in our particular place and in our general calling; let us be faithful in them to keep a good conscience, and set all in order as much as we can while we live; to leave no seeds of debate when we are gone. Some men die carelessly this way in disposing the good things that God hath given them. They lay a foundation of perpetual jarring afterward; and so their death is scarcely a 'sleep and rest.' They cannot but be disquieted when they think how they leave things, because they were not wise beforehand. David settled Solomon in his throne, and set all things right before he died; and that made him die, not only in rest but in honour; in 1 Chron. xxix. 28, 'David died in a good old age, full of riches and honour.'

And let us labour to get assurance of a change for the better. David his flesh rested in hope, because he believed in Christ, that Christ's body should see no corruption, Ps. xvi. 10. So if we would have death sweet as a sleep, let us labour to get assurance by faith in Christ, and so our flesh may rest in hope, that as Christ raised his own flesh, so he will raise ours. Good Simeon, when he had seen Christ once, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace,' &c., Luke ii. 29. So after we have gotten a sight of Christ to be our Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, and have interest in him, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace.' So much for the term seep.

It is added besides, that 'He was gathered to his fathers.'

'He was gathered to his fathers' both in regard of his body, and in regard of his soul; for his body went to the house of the dead, the grave, and his soul went to his fathers, to heaven. As I said before of sleep, so of this. It is a phrase of Scripture that must be understood as the persons are. When a man dies, his body goes to the place or house of all men, the house of darkness, the grave; but for his soul, that goes as the man is, to his fathers, to hell, if he be naughty; to the souls of just and perfect men, as the apostle speaks, if he have lived a gracious and a good life; and so it must be understood here, because he speaks of a blessed man.

'He was put to his fathers.' He means not to his immediate fathers, but all believing men before him that were the children of Abraham. His soul went to them; his body to the first mother, the earth, out of which it was

taken. So the general is nothing but this, that Obs. 5. When we die we are put to our fathers.

Therefore this should moderate our fear of death, and our grief for the departure of others. Why? We are not lost when we die. The soul and body is taken asunder, it is taken in pieces, but both remain still. The body goes to the earth from whence it was taken, and the soul goes to God that gave it. And for our comfort, we go to those that we knew before, many of them; to our fathers, not to strangers. Especially in respect of our souls we go to our fathers, to our next forefathers and to our old fathers: to Abraham, Isaac, to Jacob, to David, to blessed Saint Paul and Peter, and all the blessed men that died in the faith. And when we are dead, we go to those that are more perfect than those that we leave behind us. This should moderate our grief. Oh, I leave my friends behind me, my father, and mother, and children! It is to go to better, to greater, and those that love thee better. Thou goest to greater, for they are in their pitch; they have attained their end, they are in heaven; and to better, they are refined from those corruptions that men here are subject unto, and then their love is perfect likewise. Therefore going to our fathers and not to strangers, to those that are better and greater, and love us more perfectly, why should we think much to die? They will be ready to entertain us. Oh the welcome that souls find in heaven! and at the day of the resurrection the sweet embracings, when all the blessed souls that have been from Adam to the last man shall meet together! Seeing therefore we go to our fathers, it should rather make us cheerful. Here, whom do we live with? Take them at the best, our friends. Men, subject to jealousies and weaknesses. Our jealousy makes us suspect them, and their weakness makes us think the meaner of them. So our love is not perfect, nor our graces are not perfect. Therefore we cannot have perfect love and contentment while we are here. But in heaven there shall be no jealousy, nor fear, nor imperfection, which is the ground of jealousy. "We shall perfectly love them because they shall be perfectly good; and they shall perfectly love us because we shall be perfectly good; and one shall stand admiring the graces of God in another, and that will maintain a perpetuity of love. Therefore it is want of faith that makes us unwilling to yield our souls unto God at the point of death. It is a going to our fathers.

But then we must take heed what fathers we imitate here, Hob. xiii. 7. Take heed who are our patterns while we live; for if we do not imitate them here, we cannot live with them in heaven when we are dead. Therefore it is a very necessary item in Heb. xiii. 7, 'Look to them that rule over you, that

Speak the word; whose faith follow, considering the end of their labour.' Let us look before what kind of men those have been that we desire to live with in heaven, and mark the end of their conversation; for such as we delight in, and frame our carriage to here, such we shall live with hereafter. We must not think to live with Nero, and die with Paul; to live Epicures, and die Christians; to live dissembling and falsely in our places, and to die comfortably, and to go to the blessed souls at the hour of death, and at the resurrection. No. God will gather our souls with wicked men, if we fashion our carriage to wicked men. Such as we delight in, and live with, and set as patterns before us, with such we shall live for ever hereafter.

'He was gathered to his fathers.'

One sign of a man that shall be gathered to believing fathers, to his good forefathers, besides imitation, is this, to delight in the congregations of just men here. A man may know he shall go to the congregation of perfect souls in heaven, if he delight in the congregations of God's saints here; for surely he that hath a confidence to be in the proper heaven, heaven that is so blessed, he will have a care while he lives, as much as he can, to be and delight in the heaven upon earth. Now the chief heaven upon earth is the church of God. 'O how amiable is thy dwelling-place, O Lord,' Ps. lxxxiv. 1, where many souls meet together to join in speaking to God, and in hearing God speak to them. Those therefore that delight not in the congregations, that delight not in the service of God, what hope have they to be gathered to the congregation of the faithful when they are gone. So much for that, 'he was gathered to his fathers.'

'And he saw corruption.'

It is an Hebraism for 'he felt corruption,' 'he had experience of corruption.' All other senses are attributed to sight. That being the principal of all the senses, they have their term from it, because sight is the most excellent, the most capacious and quick sense. Therefore, I say, the actions of all the other senses are attributed to it, as we say, see how he speaks, and so here, 'he saw corruption,' that is, he had experience of it; because sight is a convincing sense. He could not properly see when he was dead: but the meaning is, he had experience of 'corruption.' The truth is this, in a word, that,

Obs. 6. The best and greatest men in the world, when they are gone, they are subject to corruption.

David was a king and a prophet, 'a man after God's own heart.' Yet this could not keep David's body from corruption.

Reason 1. The reason is, we are but dead men here. This is not the life that Christ hath purchased for us. We are going to death. Our natural life is but *cursus ad mortem*, a continual going to death. We are alive now, but, alas! our life is nothing but a continual dying; every day cuts off a part of our life. It is a statute that all must die.

Reason 2. And it is our perfection to die. "We cannot otherwise see God and enjoy our crown. Death indeed is nothing but misery. But when we die we go to live. The best must 'see corruption.'

Use 1. Therefore this should be an argument to support the soul; when we think of the rottenness in the grave, and of that place, and time of horror, when we shall be no more here upon earth. It is no otherwise with us than it hath been with the best in the world. They all saw 'corruption' in their time.

Use 2. Again, considering we have but corruptible bodies here, bodies that must see corruption; let us take care for the better part. He is a madman, that having two houses, one free-hold, the other a rotten tenement, ready to fall about his ears, that shall take delight in that and neglect his own inheritance, which is a goodly thing. It is for want of wit; and it is as much want of grace, when we, having a double life, the life of grace, that ends in glory, the life of the soul, the life of God, as St Paul saith; and then the life of the body, which is communicated from the soul to the body, which is corruptible;—our bodies are but 'tabernacles of clay, whose foundation is in the dust,'—for us to take care of this vile body, as the apostle calls it, Philip, iii. 21, 'Who shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body, according to his mighty power to take care of this vile body and to neglect our precious souls. It is the care of most (such is the carnal breeding of men, and they follow those that bred them in this brutishness, as if they had no souls; as if there were no life after this), their care is, 'what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and put on,' Mat. vi. 25; what to commend themselves by in the outward man to the view of others; all their care is for their outward man. Alas! what is it but a corruptible vile body? It is but the case of the soul. They forget the jewel and look all to the casket, which is a base body, take it at the best while we are here.

Use 3. And take heed we be not ensnared with the bodies of others. This is the 'corruption' of men, to gaze in this kind. You see wise Solomon

and others were much troubled with temptations in this kind. Consider that body that thou dotest on now, and which is made by the devil a snare to thee, what will it be ore long? So noisome that thou wilt not endure the presence of it. It is but a flower, and it is fading, fresh in the morning and dead at night. All flesh is but grass. It is a corruptible body. If thou wilt needs love, be acquainted with such as have excellent spirits that shall live eternally. Oh, there is an object of love indeed! That is the true love and acquaintance that is spiritual. Many things may be lovely in the outward person, but see that there be a heavenly spirit, that is mounting up, that savours of good things; a spirit that hath life begun in it, that shall be for ever happy in heaven. Unless there be this, there cannot be a fit ground for the love of any wise man.

To end all, you see here a short story of a good life and a blessed death. Let us make this blessed man of God exemplary to us in both. Let our whole life be nothing but a service of God, and let us consider the generation wherein we are to take and do all the good we can in our time. And then consider what death will be. When we come to die, it will be a sweet sleep to us, and our resurrection will be a refreshing. 'Our flesh shall rest in hope,' as David saith, 'we shall be gathered to our fathers;' we shall 'see corruption,' indeed. But mark what David saith, Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption.' Then this is the upshot of all. Though we 'see corruption' when we are dead; yet, with the eye of faith, we see a rising again from 'corruption.' We see death but as a pot to refine us in. Even as it is with silver, when there is much corruption and heterogeneal matter mingled with it, the fire refines it, but it is not lost. So the grave refines the body, and fits it for a glorious resurrection. 'The flesh rests in hope' all the while, though the body see corruption. Because our head saw no corruption. If the head be above water, what if the body be down? Our head saw no corruption; that is, Christ, for he rose out of the grave before his body was putrified; for his body had a subsistence, and was gloriously united to the second person in Trinity; and, being united to the Lord of life, it saw no corruption. For that did not lie upon Christ as our Saviour to be corrupt, but to die, 'to be made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13, and then especially, I say, by reason of the near union of it to the God of life.

Well, then, what is David's argument of comfort? In Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope; because thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption.' Because Christ rose from the grave himself, the holy one of God, our flesh may rest in hope, though we see corruption. Because the

same divine power that raised Christ our head out of the grave, that his body saw no corruption, will raise our bodies to be like his glorious body. Our blessed Saviour, that overcame death in his own person, by his power he will overcome death for all his mystical body, that is, his church. It shall be perfect in heaven, soul and body together, as he himself is glorious now in heaven. That we may say with David, notwithstanding our bodies see corruption, as his did, yet our flesh shall rest in hope, because God's holy one saw no corruption.

Lydia's Conversion

And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, that worshipped God, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul. And when, &c.—Acts XVI. 14, 15.

The holy apostle, St Paul, a vessel of mercy, having found mercy himself of God, was a fit instrument to preach mercy to others.

Hereupon he was appointed to be a preacher to the Gentiles. Among the rest of the Gentiles, he was called to preach to them of Macedonia, and it was by a vision, as we see in the former part of the chapter. Verse 9: 'A man of Macedonia,' appeared to Paul by night, and said, 'Come to Macedonia and help us.' Indeed, the state of the people of Macedonia called for help; as now the state of many people doth. Though there be not such a vision as a man of Macedonia, yet their wretched estate, being under the kingdom of Satan, cries, 'Come and help us.' Though they do not cry with their mouths, yet their estate cries. The apostle upon this vision, takes his journey to come toward Macedonia; and he stayed there a good while; 'he abode certain days.'

Though God called him to Macedonia, yet God did not give him great encouragement for the present. This is the manner of God's carriage, not to discover at the present what he will do, but leads people on by gentle encouragements; and to humble them the more with little fruit at the first. He 'abode there certain days,' without any great fruit. Afterwards he goes out to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia; and on the Sabbath day the people were gathered together, a company of women were resorted together, and there he preached to them. As indeed holy communion is never without a blessing. They met together on a good day, the Sabbath; and for a good end they were met together. Now Paul took the advantage of their meeting together on the Sabbath day. He cast his net, and he catcheth one with her family, namely, Lydia. The gospel was a sweet savour of salvation to her.

Hereupon there is a discourse of Lydia, a short story of Lydia, a story worthy to be thought of, which is in the words of my text.

'A certain woman named Lydia,' &c.

She is described, first, by her person and sex, ‘a certain woman;’ by her name, ‘Lydia;’ by her calling, ‘a seller of purple;’ by her city, ‘Thyatira by her pious disposition, ‘she worshipped God.’ And then her conversion is set down by the cause of it: ‘God opened her heart.’ And what followed upon that opening of her heart: ‘she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul;’ and likewise, ‘she was baptized with all her household. And then the sweet fruit that this conversion of her with all her household had, presently she showed the love that she felt from God in converting her, to the blessed apostle and his company, ‘She besought them, saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come to my house,’ &c., which words I shall unfold as I come to them.

‘And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple,’ &c.

First, here is a description of her person, and sex, and name, and calling, and city, and disposition.

God takes notice of all the particulars of those that are his. He delights to speak of them. Those that have their names written in the book of life, he knows their names, and callings, and persons. They are jewels in his eyes. They are ‘written on the palms of his hands,’ Isa. xlix. 10. He takes more special notice of them than of the rest of the world. Therefore the apostle is very punctual in the description of all particulars.

For her person I will be very short. I will give but a note or two, and so come to that I mainly aim at, her conversion.

‘A certain woman named Lydia.’

For her sex, she and the rest were women that were gathered together, as we see in the former verse. ‘In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female,’ Gal. iii. 28. Sin came in by a woman; and the means of salvation was by a woman too. Here were a company of women gathered together.

For the most part women have sweet affections to religion, and therein they oft go beyond men.

Reason 1. The reason is, religion is especially seated in the affections; and they have sweet and strong affections.

Reason 2. Likewise they are subject to weakness, and God delights to show his 'strength in weakness.'

Reason 3. And thirdly, Especially child-bearing women, bring others into this life with danger of their own; therefore they are forced to a nearer communion with God, because so many children as they bring forth, the) are in peril of their lives. Therefore the apostle here mentions a company of women that were gathered together, and among the rest, a 'certain woman named Lydia.'

What! a woman to be the foundation of the church of Macedonia; a poor woman! and then a jailor afterward, a rugged, rough jailor! For these to be the foundation of so famous a church as Philippi, and other churches in Macedonia! Oh yes! The kingdom of heaven is as 'a grain of mustard seed,' Mat. xiii. 81, small in the beginning. It is so in regard of the church itself; and in regard of the grace that every particular member hath. It is little and weak beginnings. Christians are not as the angels were, perfect at the first. The church grows by little and little. Therefore we should not be discouraged when the plantation of the gospel hath poor success at the beginning, We see in the church of Macedonia there was little success at the first. A woman and a rough jailor; a jailor that both by calling, and disposition, and custom, was a man hard and hardened too. Yet these two were the foundation of a great church.

Was it not so strange ourselves? The church of later times, in the time of reformation, how began it? By a child and a woman; King Edward the sixth, and Queen Elizabeth of famous memory. Therefore as the prophet saith, 'Who art thou that despisest the day of little things?' Zech. iv. 10. Despise not little things. There is nothing less than grace at the first. But as Christ the stock of Jesse, rose from the dead, and rose up to heaven, and overspreads the world now; so every Christian riseth of mean beginnings; and so doth the church itself. 'A certain woman named Lydia.' She was the foundation of a famous church.

Then she is set down by her calling.

'A seller of purple.'

God allows callings.

The calling of Christianity is showed in particular callings, which are sanctified by God to subdue the excess of corruptions. Men without callings are exceedingly vicious, as some gentlemen and beggars. In this I may rank them together. Those that have no callings, nor fit themselves for a calling, and that are out of a calling lawful.

Callings are lawful; and so this calling of commerce and trade, ‘a seller of purple.’ Though for the most part men gather a great deal of soil and corruption, by co-mixture of manners with those they deal with, yet there must be commerce, and this particular commerce of ‘selling of purple.’

The body of man needs many callings. There is not a part of man’s body, not one member, but it sets a particular calling on work. Therefore this life is a life of many necessities; and there must be callings and trading, and this particular trading, ‘selling of purple.’ It may seem superfluous, but it is not altogether; for garments are for three ends:

For necessity, ornament, distinction.

Now purple, however it be not for necessity, it is for ornament and distinction; for magistrates and the like, persons of great quality. However the pride of the times hath bred a confusion, that one will go as well as another; yet God that allows distinctions of callings and persons, allows distinction of habit and attire. Therefore selling of purple is lawful, and the wearing of rich attire. ‘Kings’ daughters’ went in such, as it is said of David’s daughters. So there be not over-much delicacy; for delicacy in this in these times is fatal, as there be many in the city and in the countries that are given to over-much nicety and sumptuousness in this kind. It is a fore-runner of ruin.

Otherwise it is lawful, for those that may, to wear purple, as it is lawful to sell purple. So that, as he said to the great emperor, they do not consider the purple, so much as that the purple covers dust and base flesh, that must turn to dust and ashes and rottenness ere long; so that people be not lift up in that that is borrowed from the poor creature, from worms. It is a strange thing that men should be so sick in their fancy, as to think themselves the better for that they beg of the poor creature. So a man take heed of fancy and pride, it is lawful to use purple. ‘She was a seller of purple.’ So much for her calling.

‘She worshipped God.’

She was perhaps a Jew, and looked for a Messiah. There were three sorts of people before Christ. The Jews, and those which we call proselytes, and religious persons fearing God. She might be one of the three; it is not certain what she was. Certainly she was one that feared God. She had some religion in her. Though yet she was not ripened in the true religion, she was a woman that 'feared God.'

From such kind of places as this, we have occasion to speak of works of preparation. St Paul was sent to her; she was a woman that feared God. To speak a little of works of preparation.

It is true God usually prepares those that he means to convert, as we plough before we sow. We do not sow among the thorns; and we dig deep to lay a foundation; we purge before cordials. It is usual in nature and in grace preparations; therefore preparations are necessary. There is such a distance between the nature and corruption of man and grace, that there must be a great deal of preparation, many degrees to rise by before a man come to that condition he should be in. Therefore preparations we allow, and the necessity of them.

But we allow this, that all preparations are from God. We cannot prepare ourselves, or deserve future things by our preparations; for the preparations themselves are of God.

And, thirdly, though we grant preparations, yet we grant no force of a meritorious cause in preparations to produce such an effect as conversion is. No. Only preparation is to remove the hindrances, and to fit the soul for conversion, that there may not be so great a distance between the soul and conversion as without preparation there would be.

Quest. But when is preparation sufficient?

Ans. When the soul is so far cast down as it sets a high price on Christ, and on grace, above all things in the world. It accounts grace the only pearl, and the gospel to be the kingdom of heaven. When a man sets a high price on grace more than all the world besides, then a man is sufficiently prepared.

Some poor souls think they are never prepared enough; but let them look to the end that God will have preparation for, that is, that a high price be set upon the best things, and value all things but grace meanly in their own rank. When a man is brought to that pitch that by the light of the Spirit

he esteems all nothing but Christ, and that he must be had, and he must have saving grace, let him never talk whether he be prepared or no. This disposition shows that he is prepared enough, at least to bring him to conversion.

Now, God in preparation for the most part civiliseth people, and then Christianiseth them, as I may say; for the Spirit of God will not be effectual in a rude, wild, and barbarous soul; in men that are not men. Therefore they must be brought to civility; and not only to civility, but there must be a work of the law, to cast them down; and then they are brought to Christianity thereupon.

Therefore they take a good course that labour to break them from their natural rudeness and fierceness; as by nature every man is like ‘a wild ass colt.’ There cannot be more significant words, ‘a colt, an ass colt, and wild,’ Job xi. 12. Now, there is no sowing in the sand or on the water. There is no forcing of grace on a soul so far indisposed, that is, not brought to civility. Rude and barbarous souls therefore, God’s manner is to bring them in the compass of civility, and then seeing what their estate is in the corruption of nature, to deject them, and then to bring them to Christianity, as we see here in Lydia.

For however there is no force of a meritorious cause in preparations to grace, to raise up the soul to grace; for, alas! that cannot be. It is not in it to produce such a blessed effect. Yet notwithstanding it brings a man to a less distance than other wild creatures that come not within the compass of the means. Therefore usually to those that use the talents of their understanding and will, that they have, well, God after discovers himself more and more.

Therefore let all be encouraged to grow more and more to courses of civility and religion, and wait the good time till God shine on them in mercy. For though those courses can never produce religion, yet it brings men to a proximity and nearness to God and Christ, more than those that stand further off. But I will not force this point further at this time.

‘She was a woman that feared and worshipped God.’ She was faithful in that light she had; ‘and to him that hath shall be given,’ Mat. xiii. 12.

‘She worshipped God.’

Not in any sight of her own. She had the grace of God from the Spirit of God. All fear comes from the Spirit of God, initial fear and ripened fear; all fear is from God, But I will not conflict with adversaries at this time. You see the person, a woman; her calling, 'a seller of purple;' and her pious disposition, she was such a one 'as worshipped God,' 'and she heard Paul.'

The sweet providence of God brings those that belong to election under the compass of the means at one time or other. Let the devil, and the instruments of the devil, rage and oppose, and do what they can, those that belong to God, God will have a time to bring them within the compass of his calling, and effectually call them by his Spirit. As here Lydia, there was a sweet preventing- providence that she never thought of. God brought an apostle for the salvation of her soul. She heard Paul, and was converted. To come to the description of her conversion in the next words.

'Whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things that were spoken of Paul.'

God opened her heart. To what purpose? 'To attend to the things spoken of Paul.'

'God, by the word preached,' opens the hearts to attend to the word. By the word we are fitted to the word. The Spirit and the word draw us to themselves; the Spirit and the word draw us to regard the word; by the word her heart was opened to attend to the word.

First, I will speak of the opening her heart. And then of her attending upon the word preached by Paul, 'God opened her heart.' She was a religious woman, yet her heart was shut before God opened it. She was religious in her kind, yet her heart must be further opened before she could be saved. There is no staying in preparations in this or that degree, as many abortives in our times that make many offers. They have the Spirit of bondage, and are cast down; but there they stick, and never come to proof. But those that will attain to salvation must not rest in religious dispositions, in good affections, and gracious offers. They must go on further and further, as we see here: 'God opened her heart.'

Observe then in the opening of the heart these things.

1. First, The heart is naturally shut and closed up, as indeed it is to spiritual things. It is open enough to the world, and to base contentments

here; but it is shut to heaven and heavenly things. Naturally it is clean locked up.

Partly in its own nature, being corrupt and earthly; partly because Satan he besiegeth all the senses, and shuts up all. There is a spirit of deafness and blindness, and a spirit of darkness and deafness in people, before God hath brought them by the powerful work of the gospel from the kingdom of Satan, that possesseth every man naturally. Naturally therefore our hearts are not open, but locked and shut up. That is supposed here. So that except God be merciful to break the prison, as it were, whereby by unbelief and the wickedness of our nature we are shut up, there is no hope of salvation at all. God opens the heart.

2. The second thing is this, that as our hearts are shut and closed up naturally, so God, and God alone, opens the heart, by his Spirit in the use of the means. God opened Lydia's heart.

God hath many keys. He hath the key of heaven to command the rain to come down. He hath the key of the womb; the key of hell and the grave; and the key of the heart especially. 'He opens, and no man shuts; and shuts and no man opens,' Rev. iii. 7. He hath the key of the heart to open the understanding, the memory, the will, and affections. God, and God only, hath the key of the heart to open that. It is his prerogative. He made the heart, and he only hath to do with the heart. He can unmake it, and make it new again, as those that make locks can do. And if the heart be in ill temper, he can take it in pieces, and bring it to nothing as it were, as it must be before conversion; and he can make it a new heart again. It is God that opens the heart, and God only. All the angels in heaven cannot give one grace, not the least grace. Grace comes merely from God. It is merely from God. All the creatures in the world cannot open the heart, but God only by his Holy Spirit. For nature cannot do above its sphere, as we say, above its own power. Natural things can do but natural things. For nature to raise itself up to believe heavenly things, it cannot be. Therefore as you see vapours go as high as the sun draws them up, and no higher, so the soul of man is lift up to heavenly things by the power of God's Spirit. God draws us and then we follow. God, I say, only openeth the heart.

(1.) Because there is not only want of strength in the soul to open itself, but likewise there is enmity and poison in the heart to shut itself, and shut out all goodness. A man hath no senses to spiritual things, no eyes, no cars, no taste, no life. Nay,

(2.) 'There is an opposition to all. 'A natural man perceiveth not the things of God, neither can he,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. He wants senses, and those senses he hath are set against goodness, as the apostle saith, 'he esteemeth them foolishness.' I need not be much in so easy an argument, that you are well enough acquainted with. Naturally the heart is shut, and God only must open it.

Use. This should teach us patience, when we can do little good with those that are under us by all our instructions and corrections, wait the due time. Grace is not of thy giving. The heart is not of thy opening, or of any man's opening. Therefore as it is 2 Tim. ii. 28, seq., wait and bear 'with patience men of contrary minds,' waiting when God in due time gives them grace to repent. Grace is God's creature. It is none of our own. Therefore take heed that we be not short and angry spirited. If we cannot have all we would have of those that are under us, children or servants, let us wait God's time. He opens the heart in his time.

And if we find not grace wrought in our own hearts at the first, or second, or third sermon, let us do as he at the Pool of Bethesda, lie there till the angel stir the water, till God be effectual by his Spirit. God doth it, and he only doth it, only we must wait. He will do it in his good time. Be not over short-spirited. This we ought to observe out of these words, 'God opened the heart of Lydia.'

The heart is put for the whole soul. He opened her understanding to conceive; for all things begin with heavenly light of the understanding. All grace comes into the soul by the understanding.

' There is no sanctifying grace in the affections but it comes by enlightening the understanding. We see the grounds of it in the understanding first. God opens the understanding, and then he opens the memory to retain. That the memory may be as the pot of manna to hold heavenly things, he opens and strengthens it with retention to keep them, and he opens the will to close with holy things, and the affections to joy and delight in them. So the heart is the whole inward man. He not only enlightens the understanding, but infuseth grace into the will and affections, into the whole inward man. We must take it in that extent, for else if God should only open the understanding, and not through the understanding flow into the will by the power of his Spirit, the will would alway rebel, as indeed it is a poisonous thing. There is nothing so malicious, next the devil, as the will of man. God will have one way, and it will have another. Therefore God

doth not only open the understanding to conceive, but he opens the will to close with and to embrace that that is good; or else it will take arms against the understanding in that that is good, and never come to the work of grace. Therefore take it so. He opened the will and affections as well as the understanding, though whatsoever is in the will and affections comes through the understanding, as well as heat comes through light. God opened her heart, to what end?

‘To attend to the things that were spoken of Paul.’

The word signifies to apply and set her mind to the things that Paul said, to join and fasten the mind to what Paul said.

First, You see then, here is the opening of the heart before there is attending. Before there can be any attending and applying of the mind, the mind must be sanctified and strengthened. The soul must be sanctified before it can attend.

The reason is, nothing can flow but from a suitable faculty, and ability to attend is a power and act of the soul. It must come from a sanctified power of the soul. The heart must first be opened, and then the heart attends. God saith, he will circumcise the heart, and then we shall love him. He sanctifies the heart, and then it loves him. God changeth and altereth the frame of the soul, and then holy actions come from it. First, grace begins with the abilities and powers of the soul. The heart is opened, and then come holy actions suitable. There is no proportion between holy actions and an unsanctified soul. The heart must first be opened, and then it attends.

‘Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended,’ &c.

You see then, in the next place, that God opening the heart of any Christian, it is to carry the attention to the word. God by grace carries the heart to the word. ‘She attended to what Paul spake.’ Where true grace is wrought, it carries not to speculation, or to practise this or that idle dream; but where the heart is open, grace carries to attend to the word, especially to the good word, the gospel of Christ. As grace is wrought by the word, so it carries the soul to the word.

Use. And therefore it may be a use of trial, to know whether we have our hearts wrought on by the grace of God or no; whether God by his Spirit have opened our hearts or no, if our hearts be carried to the blessed word of

God to relish that. If they be, God hath opened our hearts to attend to the word. And there is no better evidence of a child of God, than that that is fetched from the affection that he carries to the word and blessed truth of God. Oh, he relisheth it as his appointed food. He cannot be without it. Take away that, and you take away his life. 'My sheep hear my voice,' John x. 3. You are none of mine, because you hear not my word. A delight in the blessed truth of God is an argument that God hath first opened the heart.

Therefore poor souls, when they want good evidence, when they doubt whether their estate be good or no, let them consider what relish they have of divine truths; whether it be co-natural to the word or no; whether it be savoury or no; whether they could be without the means of salvation or no; and let them judge of themselves by their delight in God's truth. Her heart was opened 'to attend to the word.'

'She attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.'

Which were the blessed truths of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, the free mercy of God in Christ. The particulars are not set down, but it was the gospel, and she believed upon it. Therefore it must needs be the word of faith. We see here then that The seed and ground of faith is the gospel.

Her heart was opened to attend to that that Paul spake, which was the gospel. And indeed so it is. The foundation of faith, the word of faith, is the gospel. Nothing can breed faith but the word of God; for how can we hope for heaven and happiness, but by the mind of God discovered? Can we look for anything but God must discover his mind to bestow it? And where have we the mind and bosom of God opened to us? Is it not from the Scriptures, the word of God, from the good word especially? It is called the 'word of grace,' and 'the word of the kingdom,' and 'of glory,' the 'word of life;' because by it all these blessed things are conveyed to us. ' Now it is not the word simply here, but the word 'spoken by Paul;' that is, the word preached by an authorised minister is the usual means of faith. Her heart was opened to attend to what was spoken by Paul, an authorised minister. So the word preached is the ordinary, though not the sole foundation of faith. Therefore the apostle saith, that God by that converted the world, 'by the foolishness of preaching,' 'Cor. i. 21. And in the ladder of heaven, in Rom. x. 14, seq., 'How shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? . . . and how shall they preach except they be sent?' So there is no faith without teaching. The point is plain. You hear it oft. The word is the ground of faith; and the word especially as it is preached by a Paul, by a minister unfolding it.

Use. Therefore be stirred up, as ye favour the souls of God's people, to pray to God 'to send labourers into his harvest,' Mat. ix. 38; and to pray that the gospel, and the preaching of it, may have a free passage, that God would set up lights in all the dark corners of the kingdom, and everywhere to 'those that are in darkness, and in the shadow of death,' Ps. cvii. 10. And blessed are their endeavour that labour that the gospel may be preached in every part of the kingdom. For we see here it is the word unfolded, 'the unsearchable riches' of Christ spread open, the tapestry laid open, that usually beget faith. The mine must be digged; people must see it familiarly laid open.

Therefore saith he here, Lydia's heart was opened, 'and she attended to the words spoken by Paul.'

Let this teach us to set a price upon the ordinance of God. Doth God set up an ordinance, and will he not give virtue and power to it? Yes. There is a majesty and a power in the word of God to pull people out of the kingdom of Satan, to the blessed light of God's kingdom. It was the word, and the word opened by the ministry of Paul.

But it was the word, and the word opened and attended to. She mixed it with her attention, and her heart closed with it. There are these three go together; the word, and the word preached, and then attending to the word preached. That was the ground of her faith; these three meeting together.

There are these four things must always be in the senses of our body. If we will see, there must be an object to see, we must see something; and a faculty to see, our eye; and then a light whereby we see; we cannot see in the dark. And then there must be an application of the eye to see the object by that light. So in spiritual things there is the blessed truth of God, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. That we may see these things, we must have a light by which we may see them. And there must be a power to see, which is the sanctified, opened understanding. When the understanding is opened, then there is an application of the soul to attend to the word of God by the light of the word. So that there must be application and attention to the word. Before the word can do us good, it must be applied to the object, the taste to the thing tasted; and so in all the other senses.

Attention is a special thing. How many sermons are lost in this city, that are as seed drowned, that never come to fruit! I think there is no place in the world where there is so much preaching, and no place where there are so many sermons lost. Why? Because people want a retaining power and faculty

to attend, and retain and keep what we hear. She ‘attended to the word preached.’

To give a little direction in this point of attending and applying the mind. Not to speak much, I will name two or three principal things that I think fit at this time.

1. If we should come, as we should, to the word preached: Let us search our wants before we come, and all the occasions we shall have to encounter with; all temptations that we are like to encounter with, let us forecast by presenting to our souls. I am weak in knowledge, and I want such graces. I am like to encounter with such temptations, I am too weak for it; I shall meet with such adversaries, I know not how to answer them; I am plunged in such businesses, I shall be lost in them without grace. Then the soul comes with a mind to be supplied; and then it will attend, and will pray for the preacher. Oh, Lord, direct him that he may speak fitly to me; somewhat for my understanding; somewhat for my affections; somewhat to help me against such and such a temptation. This is wanting; and therefore we profit no more by the word than we do.

2. Then when we come to hear the word, let us hear it with all spiritual subjection, as that word that hath power to command the conscience. This is the word of God. The minister of God speaks in the place of God to me. I must give an account of it. I will subject my conscience to it. It is spoken with evidence, and proved; I will stoop to it. Thus we should come with subjection of soul and conscience to whatsoever is taught; and not come to judge and censure, or to delight in it as music, as if we came to a play, to hear some pretty sentences. But come to hear God, as to the ordinance of God, come as to that word that shall judge our souls at the latter day. That is the way to attend.

3. Then again, if we would attend when we have heard the word of God, let us labour by all means to bring it near to us, that it may be an ‘engrafted word,’ James i. 21; that the soul may be leavened by it, that it may be so engrafted in the understanding and affections, that we may think the better in the virtue of it, and love, and speak, and do the better, as a scion savours of the plant it is put into. Let us labour that the word of God may be written in our souls, in the tables of our hearts, that the truth of God may be near us, as any temptation shall be near us, or any corruption near us. What is the reason we yield to corruptions and temptations? They are near and the word is far off. We never attended to the word to bring it near home. If the word

were as near as corruptions and temptations, that it were engrafted and invested into the soul, we should have the word ready for every temptation. There should not be a temptation offered, nor a corruption arise, but we should subdue it and beat it down with the blessed truth of God accompanied with the Spirit. Let us labour to get it near us, that the reasons of the word and our reason, that the judgment of God and our judgment, that the will of God and our own will may be all one; and so to have it incorporated and naturalized into our hearts, that we may speak, and think, and do nothing but that which is divine; that is, to have the word written in our hearts, our attention should be to that end. Therefore, when we hear, we should do as nature doth with the meat we eat. It sucks out a strength suitable for every part. Every part hath a power to draw out nourishment, what is suitable to itself. So when we hear the word of God, we should be able to say, this is good for such and such an end; and never leave thinking of the word of God when we have heard it, till we have turned the word into our souls, till we have it fixed in our understandings, that we can say, now I know it; till we have subdued our hearts to it, and we be moulded and delivered up to it, that we can say, now I have it, now the word is mine. Let us never leave the truth we hear till we be brought to that. Alas! to what purpose is it to hear except we make it our own, as nature makes the meat our own that we eat. There is a second or third digestion that goes before digestion be perfectly made, and the meat turned into it. It is ruminating and meditating, and altering of that we hear, and working on it; that makes spiritual nourishment. Thus we should do to attend to purpose.

4. And that we may do it, let us add some meditations to these practices. Consider first of all whose word it is. It is the word of the great God, and the word of God for my good. It is the good word of God, and the word of God that brings me much good, eternal salvation, if I obey it. It is the word of God that brings eternal damnation, if I obey it not.

It is the word of the great King, a proclamation, a law whereby I shall be judged, and perhaps that word that I shall not hear another time. Perhaps the Spirit may work more now than at another time. Therefore I will be wise, and give way to the Spirit of God, and not beat it back. Perhaps I shall never have such a gale of the Spirit offered again. It may be the last sermon I shall hear while I live. We should have such meditations, we that speak, as if it were the last time we should speak; and you that hear, as if they should be the last things that ever you should hear. For how do we know but it may be so? It is another manner of matter to hear than we take it. 'Take heed how ye

hear,' saith our blessed Saviour, Luke viii. 18. We hear nothing but it sets us forward in the way of grace to heaven, or forward to hell. We are helped by it to heaven, or else hardened by it further to hell. We had need to take heed how we hear. We must be judged by that we hear; and that that we hear now negligently and carelessly, God will make good at the day of judgment. We may shake off, as profane spirits do, the minister's exhortations; but will you shake off 'Depart, ye cursed,' at the latter day? Matt. xxv. 41. Will you shake off that sentence, 'You would not hear me, and I will not hear you'? Oh no. Therefore shake not that off now that will be made good then. If thou entertain the gospel now, God will make it good then; if thou receive mercy now, he will show that thou art acquitted then before devils, and angels, and men. Let us regard this, and let it make us hear the word with attention, as this good woman here. God opened her heart, 'and she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul.'

Quest. But you will ask, How shall I know a man whose heart is opened, and attends better than another man doth?

Ans. 1. I will give two or three brief rules of discerning. He that by the Spirit of God attends to the good word of God to purpose with an opened understanding, he not only knows the words, and the shell in preaching the word of God, but the things. He knows not only what faith and repentance is in the words, but he hath a spiritual light to know what the things are, what repentance is, and faith, and love, and hope, and patience; he knows the things. And likewise he that hath attended to purpose, he can do the things. He not only knows what he should do, but by the grace of the Spirit, and attending upon the word of God, he knows how to do them. Grace teacheth him not only that he should deny himself and 'live soberly, and righteously, and godly,' Titus ii. 12, but it teacheth him how to live soberly, and righteously, and godly. Grace, when we attend upon the word as we should, teacheth us to do the things, not only that we should repent and pray, &c., but to do them. It opens the things, and gives ability to do them.

And in the next place, those that attend as they should do, there is a spiritual echo in their souls to everything that is taught; that is, when they are exhorted to believe, they answer, Lord, I will believe; Lord, I will hear, I will repent, and I will take heed of such sins by thy grace. 'When God saith, 'Seek my face,' 'Lord, thy face will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. This is the answer of a good conscience, this echo. Where there is attention to the word of God by the Spirit, there is an echo to that the Spirit speaks. Lord, it is good, and it is

good for me if I yield to this; if I do not, it is naught for me to put off repentance till another day; I desire to yield now, and Oh that my heart were directed! If it be rebellious, and not yielding, there is a desire that the heart may be brought into subjection to every truth revealed, there is a gracious echo in them that attend to purpose.

3. Then again, those that do attend from a sanctifying grace, they see things by another light, by a spirit of their own, by a heavenly light, by a species in their own kind, spiritual things with a spiritual light. Many come and hear sermons, and can discourse, and wrangle, and maintain janglings of their own, and all this out of natural parts, and out of pride of heart; hat a gracious holy man sees spiritual things by a spiritual light in their own hind.

A man that is born in a dungeon, and never saw the light, when he hears discourse of the sun and stars, and earth, and flowers, and plants, he hath imaginations what they should be, but he fancies other things. So a man that never had spiritual eye-sight to see spiritual things in their kind, he fancies them to be this and that, but he sees them not by their own light. Many speak and talk of good things, but it is by the spirit of other men, out of books and hearing, and not by a spirit of their own. He that attends by grace, speaks out of a spirit of his own, and not out of other men's spirits. He sees spiritual things in their own colours. Thus we see how to discern spiritual attention.

4. And he that knows what this means, what it is to have his heart opened to attend, when he goes from hearing the word, he judgeth of his profiting by it, not by what he can say by heart, but by how much the meeker he is, how much more patient, how much more able to bear the cross, to resist temptations, and to have communion with God. So he values his attending upon the means and hearing the word by the growth of his grace, and the decay of his corruptions: 'she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul.'

'She was baptized, and her household.'

She had the means of salvation, and she had the seal likewise, which is baptism. We have all need of seals. We have need to have our faith strengthened. God knows it better than we ourselves. We think baptism and the communion small matters, but God knows how prone we are to stagger. He knows that all seals are little enough. Therefore it is said here, 'she was baptized, and all her household.' Baptism is a solemn thing; it is the seal of the covenant of grace. You are well enough acquainted, I imagine, with the

thing; therefore I will not enter into the commonplace. It is needless. As the whole Trinity was at the baptism of Christ, so every infant that is baptized is the child of Christ. And it is a special thing that we should meditate of.

We slight our baptism, and think it needless. You see the holy woman here would be baptized presently; she would have the seal of the covenant. There are many that are not book-learned, that cannot read, at least they have no leisure to read. I would they would read their book in their baptism; and if they would consider what it ministers to them upon all occasions, they would be far better Christians than they are.

Think of thy baptism when thou goest to God, especially when he seems angry. It is the seal of the covenant. Bring the promise: Lord, it is the seal of thy covenant; thou hast prevented me by thy grace; thou broughtest me into the covenant before I knew my right hand from my left. So when we go to church to offer our service to God, think, by baptism we were consecrated and dedicated to God. We not only receive grace from God, but we give ourselves to God. Therefore it is sacrilege for persons baptized to yield to temptations to sin. We are dedicated to God in baptism. When we are tempted to despair, let us think of our baptism. We are in the covenant of grace, and have received the seal of the covenant, baptism. The devil is an uncircumcised, damned, cursed spirit. He is out of the covenant. But I am in the covenant. Christ is mine; the Holy Ghost is mine; and God is mine. Therefore let us stand against all the temptations of that uncircumcised, unbaptized, damned spirit. The thinking of our baptism thus will help us 'to resist the devil,' James iv. 7. He is a coward; if he be resisted, he will flee; and what will better resist him than the covenant of grace and the seal of it? When we are tempted to sin, let us think, What have I to do with sin? By baptism I have union with the death of Christ; he died to take away sin, and my end must be his. I must abolish sin in my nature. Shall I yield to that that in baptism I have sworn against? And then if we be tempted to despair for sin, let us call to mind the promises of grace and forgiveness of sins, and the seal of forgiveness of sins, which is baptism. For as water in baptism washeth the body, so the blood of Christ washeth the soul. Let us make that use of our baptism, in temptations, not to despair for sin. And in conversing among men, let us labour to maintain the unity of the Spirit 'in the bond of peace,' Eph. iv. 3, to live peaceably. Christians must not fall to jar. Why? 'There is one faith, and one baptism;' have we 'not all one Father,' ver. 5, one inheritance, one baptism, one religion? and shall we break one with another

for trifles? They forget their baptism that are so in quarrels. Thus if we would think of it, it is such a book as would be ready at hand for all services.

And then for our children, those that God hath committed to us, let us make use of baptism. Do they die in their infancy? Make this use of it: I have assured hope that my child is gone to God. He was born in the covenant, and had the seal of the covenant, baptism; why should I doubt of the salvation of my child? If they live to years of discretion, then be of good comfort, he is God's child more than mine; I have dedicate him to God and to Christ, he was baptized in the name of Christ, Christ will care for him as well as for me. If I leave my children behind me, they are God's and Christ's children. They have received the seal of the covenant, baptism. Christ will provide for them. And he that provides heaven for them will provide all things in the way to heaven necessary. God hath said, 'I will be the God of thee and of thy children,' Ps. cxxxii. 12. They are in covenant. Thine they were, Lord. A man may commit his children to God on his deathbed: 'Thou gavest them me, and I commit them to thee again, as before I did by baptism. All this we have by thinking of our baptism. If we look no further, as profane spirits do not, than the water and the elements, we can have no comfort by these things; but we should consider God's blessed institution and ordinance to strengthen our faith. And to our children when they come to years, baptism is an obligation to believe; because they have received the seal beforehand, and it is a means to believe. 'She was baptized.'

'And her household.'

So good is God, where the governor of the family is good, he gives all the family good, because he makes conscience in governing and instructing them. God crowns their endeavours with success, that they shall be all good. As we see Abraham and his household, the jailor and his household, Zaccheus and his household. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be a good governor in a family. He brings a blessing upon his house, the church of God is in his house. There cannot be a more honourable title to any house than to say it is the church of God; that the governor of the family brings all in subjection to God; that as he will have all serve him, so he will have all serve God; that he will not have a servant but he shall be the servant of God, nor a child but he shall be the child of God; and he labours to make his wife the spouse of Christ. Thus it should be said of every Christian family, and then they are churches.

Alas! in many places now they are hells, because there is little regard had of instructing of them. Beloved, many poor souls have had occasion to bless God for ever that they have been grafted into such good families. And put case sometimes thou hast instructed them and taken pains, and there is no good done. When thou art dead, and twenty years after, it may come to their minds all those instructions when they are in worse families. Oh! in such a place, with such a master, I had such instructions, but I had no grace to take good by them, but now I call them to mind. So the seed that was sown long before may take effect then. This should encourage those that are governors of families to be good. 'Lydia was baptized, and her household.'

'And she besought them, saying, If you have judged me faithful to the Lord, come to my house, and abide there.'

Here is the fruit of Lydia's conversion. When she was converted and baptized, she entreated the apostles to come to her house and abide there; and she prevailed. She constrained them by a moral kind of violence; they suffered themselves to be overcome.

'If you have judged me faithful, &c., come to my house, and abide there.' Here is her invitation, and the argument that she forceth it by. 'If you have judged me faithful to Christ, then come to my house.'

To speak a little of her argument, whereby she forced the blessed apostle and the rest to her house.

'If ye have judged me faithful.'

It is a most binding argument. If you judge me faithful, you must judge me a child of God, an heir of heaven, the spouse of Christ; you must judge me all these and the like. 'If you have judged me faithful, come to my house.' And if you judge me so, can you deny me this courtesy? It is a conjuring, wondrous forcible argument. 'If you have judged me faithful.'

It implies that St Paul and holy men would be more strange else; and so them should not be intimate familiarity—converse there may be, but not familiarity—with those that are not faithful. Indifferent carriage to all alike shows a rotten heart: those that make no difference between good Christians and formal hypocrites. No. But 'if you have judged me faithful, come to my house.' As if she had said, I know your spirits are such, that except you judge me faithful, you will not take this courtesy at my hands.

Again, she supposed, if Paul judged her faithful, he would not deny her that courtesy. Those that upon good grounds we judge faithful, we should be gentle to them and easy to be entreated. 'The wisdom that is from above is so,' James iii. 17. Grace sweetens the carriage and alters a man's disposition. Those that have felt pity from God are merciful to others. 'Therefore, if you have judged me faithful,' &c.

It was an argument of a great deal of sincerity to appeal to their knowledge and judgment. 'If you have judged me faithful.'

If she had not been sincere she would not have done so. But sincerity makes a man bold to appeal to God himself. 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' saith St Peter, John xxi. 15; and 'If there be any iniquity in my heart,' saith David, Ps. lxvi. 18. They dare appeal to God and to God's people: 'If ye have judged me faithful.'

In this speech, likewise, she desires to have confirmation of her estate from the apostles. And indeed it is a great confirmation of weak Christians to have the judgment of strong Christians that they are good, 'If you have judged me faithful,' do me this courtesy. And would it not comfort her soul to have the judgment of so strong a man as Paul?

It is a great strengthening, not only to have the Spirit of God witness for us, but the Spirit of God in others. And sometimes in temptations, the judgment of others will do us more good than our own in a dark state. Therefore we should appeal to those that fear God to judge us faithful, though we be in a mist and in darkness sometimes, that we are not able to judge of our own condition.

And indeed, when we judge the people to be truly good and true-hearted to God, we owe them this duty: to think them good people, and to show it, it is a debt. "We wrong good persons when we take wrong conceits of them. Shall we not affect and love them that God loves? It is as if she had said, God hath taken me into his family, and will admit me to heaven, and will not you come to my house? When Christ shall take men to be members of his body, shall not we take them into our company. It is a wrong to good people to be strange to them. Sometimes there may, by way of censure in some sin, be a little strangeness, but ordinary strangeness becomes not Christians. It becomes not that sweet bond, 'the communion of saints.' 'If you have judged me faithful.' That is the bond. Her invitation is, 'Come to my house, and abide there.'

You see many sweet graces presently after she believed. Here is a loving heart. Why did she desire them to come to her house? To express the love she did bear to them for their work's sake. She felt the love of Christ by their ministry; and now she desired to express the fruit of her love in maintaining them.

And not only so, but she desired to be edified by them. She was youngly planted, and she desired to be watered from them. She knew Paul would drop heavenly things, and give her that that might stablish her; therefore she desired that they would stay at her house, that she might have benefit by their heavenly discourse, and be built up and edified further and further.

So you see these two graces especially upon believing, a bountiful, loving heart. She entreated them not only to come to her house, but to abide there a good while, as they did. And here was her desire to be edified, and a boldness to appear to own Christ and his ministers in dangerous times. For in those times it was a dangerous thing to appear to be a Christian. They were worse hated than the Jews were. Though both were hated, yet Christians were above all. Therefore false Christians would be 'circumcised,' they would be Jews to avoid the cross, that they might not be accounted Christians.

You see in general true faith, that works love, and works by love. It works love in the heart, and by love it works all duties of hospitality and bounty by love. When it hath wrought that holy affection, it works by that holy affection. You see here it is never without fruit; presently faith brings forth fruit. As soon as she was baptised, she shows her love to the apostles, and their company, and her bounty and her boldness in the cause of Christ.

We say of a graft, it is grafted to purpose if it take and bring forth fruit; so she being a new scion graft into Christ, she took presently. As soon as she was baptised into Christ, here is the fruit of love, and bounty, and boldness in the cause of Christ. Zaccheus, as soon as ever he believed, 'Half my goods I give to the poor,' Luke xix. 8. So we see the jailor afterwards, presently upon believing he entertained the apostles with a feast, and washed their wounds.

Take heed of a barren, dead faith. It is a false faith. If thou believe indeed, faith will work love, and work by love, as it did in this blessed woman. Her faith knit her to Christ in heaven. Her love was as the branches of the tree. Her faith knit her to the root; but love as the branches reached to others; her branches reached fruit to the apostle and his company. So it is the

nature of faith that knits us to Christ. The same spirit of love knits us to others, and reacheth forth fruit to all we converse with.

As we desire to have evidence of the soundness of our faith, let us see what spirit of love we have, especially love to these three things:

1. Love to Christ, to whom we are engrafted, and,

2. Love to the ministers of Christ. We cannot show kindness to Christ. He is in heaven. But his ministers and his poor are upon the earth; when we can, buy ointment to pour on Christ's feet, his poor members, and his ministers.

3. And love to the word of God. They are the three issues of a gracious, believing heart, and where they are not there is no faith at all.

I beseech you, let us imitate this blessed woman. You see here the name of Lydia is precious in the church. The name of Lydia, as it is said of Josiah, it is a box of ointment poured out. The name of Lydia cannot be named in the church, but there is a sweet savour with it. As soon as she believed, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God blowing upon the garden of her heart, where the spice of grace was sowed, stirred up a sweet scent of faith, and of bounty, and liberality in the cause of Christ.

Let not this be in vain to us, but every one of us labour to be like Lydia. You see what loadstone drew Paul here to go unto her house; she had faith, and she expressed it in love.

Let us labour to have faith, and to express it in love to God, unto Christ, to his people, and word, and ordinances, that have his stamp on them; and let us boldly own the cause of Christ; let us not regard the censures of vain men that say thus and thus. Faith and love forget danger; it is bold. She forgot all the danger that she was in by countenancing Paul and such men.

Let us labour for faith and love, and we shall not say this and that. 'There is a lion in the way,' Prov. xxii. 13; but we shall go on boldly until we do receive the end of our faith and love, 'the salvation of our souls.'

The Bridegroom's Promises, and the Bride's Prayer

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.—Rev. XXII. 20.

As the church of God, being the weakest and the most shiftless part of mankind, is never without trouble in this world, so God would never have it to be without comfort. And therefore God reveals unto Christ in this book, and Christ unto the angel, and the angel unto John, 'things to come,' from the ascension of Christ unto his 'second coming' that so, in all conditions of the church, the church might have recourse unto this book, to see what the issue of all would be. This is their comfort, that howsoever things maybe carried in this world in a seeming confusion, in a cloud, and in a mystery, yet in conclusion all shall end "well on the church's side. Their trouble shall end in peace, their abasement in glory, and their conflict in a crown. This we may see here verified. This revelation doth end in the description of the glorious condition of the church. In the two last chapters, as I take it, the evangelist Saint John sets down the glorious estate of the church of God, even in this world, yet so as it shall end and be consummate in perfect glory in the world to come. For the soul of a Christian, like Noah's dove, cannot rest in any glory here, till it return to the ark, till it come to the enjoyment of perfect glory, and have blissful communion with Christ for ever and ever in heaven. And therefore Christ doth terminate and end the sweetness of his promises in heaven, and at his last coming; and the church likewise stretcheth and raiseth up her desires to that. Howsoever, there shall be glorious times and things here, yet these are but as the first fruits to the whole harvest, and as a drop unto the ocean. Therefore, when you read of a glorious estate of the church to be here upon earth, your minds must have recourse to the upshot and consummation of all in heaven. Jerusalem which is from above must lead us to Jerusalem which is above.

Now, because that man's unbelieving heart is too prone to think that these things are too good to be true, and too great to be performed, seeing such an immeasurable disproportion between his own unworthiness and the excellency of the things promised, hereupon the mercy of our blessed Saviour is such, that he confirms this his second glorious coming by all kind of witnesses that may be. Here is the angel, verse 6; Christ himself, verse 7;

the spouse, and the Spirit in the spouse, verse 17; and Christ himself again in the words before the text, 'Behold, I come quickly.' Then you have the spouse's answer, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Beloved, faith is a supernatural thing. It hath no friend within us. It hath no help, no cause in the world, except God himself. Therefore, it hath need of all confirmation. God knows us and our needs better than we do ourselves, and you see he useth confirmation to help our unbelief. And besides the witnesses, the thing itself is repeated again and again, three or four times in this chapter: verses 7, 12, 20, 'Behold, I come quickly,' and 'Behold, I come quickly,' and, 'Surely I come quickly.' By every repetition, Christ seeks to gain upon our misgiving souls. 'Behold, I come.' Now because our spirit is exceeding short, and we are ready to cry out, as it is in the sixth of this book, 'How long, Lord, holy and true?' Rev. vi. 10. How long? Why, he answers, 'Behold, I come quickly.' You shall also find in the prophecies of the Old Testament, the same promises delivered and repeated again and again, because of our unbelief; which ariseth from an inward guilt, that cleaves to our consciences, because we are subject to failings, and are not so strict as we should be. But such are the yearning bowels of our blessed Saviour, that it grieves him to see his tender church afflicted and troubled in mind. Therefore he helps all that he can.

Note. Observe then, I beseech you, in the words, the sweet intercourse that is between Christ and his spouse. Christ promiseth again and again, 'Behold I come quickly;' and the church saith, 'Come;' 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' There is no intercourse in the world so sweet as is that between Christ and his church. But we will come unto the words themselves: 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

In these words you have, first, the assent of the church; secondly, the consent—her assent to the truth; her consent to the goodness of the truth. 'Amen:' it is so. Nay, 'Amen:' it shall be so. Nay, 'Amen:' be it so; or, let it be so. There is a wishing included in it. All these are wrought by the Spirit. The Spirit convinceth us both of the truth and of the goodness of the truth. And besides that, in the next words, the same Spirit stirs up a [desire and prayer: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Holy desires are turned into fervent prayers.

Note. 'Amen' is a short word, but marvellously pregnant, full of sense, full of spirit. It is a word that seals all the truths of God, that seals every particular promise of God. And it is never likely to arise in the soul, unless there be first an almighty power from heaven, to seize on the powers of the

soul, to subdue them, and make it say, 'Amen.' There is such an inward rising of the heart, and an innate rebellion against the blessed truth of God, that unless God, by his strong arm, bring the heart down, it never will nor can say, 'Amen.'

Note. But now the heart will not be pent in or restrained. The Spirit is an enlarging thing; and therefore, besides 'Amen' (though 'Amen' includes that which follows), the spirit breaks forth and saith, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

A little of 'Amen.'

Christ is said, in the beginning of this book, to be 'Amen, the true and faithful witness,' Rev. iii. 14. And all the promises are said, in Christ Jesus, 'to be yea and amen,' 2 Cor. i. 20; that is, they are made for his sake, and performed for his sake; they are made in him, and for him; and they are performed in him, and for him. And when 'Amen'—that is, Christ himself—shall say his 'Amen' to any thing, is it so much for us to give our 'Amen'?

The point I mean to raise out of this word 'Amen' is this:

Doct. 1. That the hearts of the children of God are pliable to divine truths, to yield to the whole word of God, especially to the good word of God, viz., the promises; and of all promises, to the promise of promises, the second coming of Christ.

They say 'Amen' to that, and that for these reasons:

Reason 1. Because there is a suitableness of disposition, and a kind of con-naturalness, between a sanctified heart and sanctified truths, between an holy heart and holy things; insomuch, that if an holy truth, never heard of before, be heard by an holy heart, it will yield present assent; for his heart is subdued so, that he hath an 'Amen' for it presently.

Reason 2. There is a sweet relish in all divine truths, and suitable to the sweetness in them, there is a spiritual taste, which the Spirit of God puts into the soul of his children. Though there be never so much sweetness in things, if there be not a suitable taste, there is no relish in them. Therefore, the Spirit of God, in his children, works a taste of the sweetness that is in the word of God. And that is a main ground why they say 'Amen,' especially to comfortable truths.

Reason 3. Again, when the soul is once contracted unto God, it hath no will of its own, but it yields up his will to God's will. The spouse hath no will of her own, but her husband's will is her will. So if Christ say 'Amen, I come quickly,' the spouse of Christ saith 'Amen' too.

Reason 4. God deals with his children, likewise, by way of a covenant and a contract. And above all other covenants, the covenant of a contract is the sweetest covenant. Now, in it there must be a consent on our part; and therefore it is, that the Spirit always stirs up an 'Amen' on our parts too. When he saith 'Amen,' it shall be so, then the soul saith, 'Amen, Lord; let it be so.' As in civil marriage there is a contract, so here, in the spiritual; and seeing there is a contract, there is also an assent to the 'second coming' of Christ. The contracted spouse must needs say 'Amen' to the marriage day.

Reason 5. Lastly, the Spirit of God, in the hearts of his children, stirs up in them this 'Amen,' as a seal of their effectual calling. If you should ask me what effectual calling is, I answer, it is nothing else but the heart's echo and answer to God's speech. God calls, and we answer. This is by St Peter called, 'the answer of a good conscience,' 1 Pet. iii. 21. There must be in the soul the answer of a good conscience to all divine truths. Doest thou believe? I do believe. Doest thou repent? I do repent. 'Seek ye my face. Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God,' Jer. iii. 22. Unless there be thus the answer of a good conscience, there is no effectual calling. Our calling is then effectual, when the Spirit stirs up in the heart an answer unto it. Therefore, you see there must needs be an 'Amen' wrought in the hearts of the children of God.

Use. Beloved, if this be so, I beseech you let us beg of God, if we find any stubbornness or renitency in our souls to divine truths, the performance of the covenant of grace, Lord, thou hast promised fleshy and sensible hearts, tender and yielding affections. Oh now grant them, and work them.

Note. For, beloved, this you must know, howsoever God deals with us by way of covenant, yet when he comes to perform the covenant, he works, in a manner, our part and his own too. In effect, he makes a testament, and not a covenant. In a testament we bequeath; we do not covenant and condition. So that, though God deals with his people by way of covenant, as if you repent, if you believe, if you obey,- yet he gives, by way of testament, the grace that he bestows. Therefore, beg of God that, as he requires this condition, that we should assent and be pliable unto his word, so that he

would make his covenant a testament and a will—I mean, that he would effectually work it, and make us to do it—this should be our desire of God. And so much the rather—

Motive 1. First, Because God honours us by it, in having our consent. Is not this a great honour to us, that he will not perform things without our consent? For indeed he will not accomplish the work of our everlasting salvation without it. But then, if we set our seals to God's seal, and we consent once, we even bind God himself. When he seals to us, and we to him, we bind God almighty, and by that power of faith, subdue hell and all our opposite enemies. When we seal to the truth of God, and cry 'Amen,' it is a word that fills heaven and earth. There is not a joyfuller word in the world, than when whole congregations can say and shout 'Amen.' When God says 'Amen' in heaven, if we presently can say 'Amen' to his truth upon earth, he will say 'Amen' to our salvation. Thus God honours us by it, when he comes for our consent.

Motive 2. We honour God again, by our sealing to his truth. Faith is that which seals to God's truth, and 'Amen' is the very voice of faith.

Use 2. It is a pitiful thing, but common in the world, that God should have no more credit with us. Poor distressed souls will say 'Amen' to the lies of their own hearts, and presumptuous persons will say 'Amen' to a liar, to a murderer, to an enemy, to Satan. But God hath so little credit with us, that if he command, we will not say 'Amen;' if he promise, we have no 'Amen' for him; if he threaten, we bless ourselves, saying, We shall do well enough: 'We shall have peace, though we walk after the imagination of our own hearts, adding drunkenness unto thirst,' Deut. xxix. 19. When the Spirit of God saith, 'He will stir up a fire in his anger, and his wrath shall burn unto the lowest hell,' Bent, xxxii. 22, against all such as go on in their sinful courses, yet they will flatter themselves. Well, beloved, we may shake off God's word in the ministry, as profane persons do; but when God comes in the execution of his threatenings, then his wrath shall burn to hell, and not be quenched. Who can avoid or abide that dreadful sentence, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,' Mat. xxv. 41. God's words are not as wind. Indeed, they are such a wind as will blow down all impenitent sinners to hell. We must have a legal 'Amen' to the threatenings of God, as well as an evangelical 'Amen' to the sweet promises. St John here, by the Spirit of God, saith 'Amen' to the promises of the time to come; to wit, for the confusion of antichrist, for the conversion of the Jews, and for

the glorious times to come, though he sees no evidence thereof for the present; and so must we to all divine truths.

But we have another kind and company of men that must be taxed, that have indeed an 'amen' and a seal, but it is to a blank. They are presumptuous persons, and such, which is worse, as will have God to say 'Amen' to their courses. They will be naught and sinful, and then study and strive to bring God's word to stand bent to their bow; and so in their lying conceit make God say 'Amen' to their lusts. They account it not sufficient to have their will, but they will have God to be of their mind too, and they will always get some daubers that shall say, 'Go on and prosper.'

An Ahab will always have his false prophets. What a wicked thing is this, that we should make an idol of God, and transform him into the likeness of Satan, his enemies, to make him like that which he hates most. We will continue in our sinful courses, and make as though we had the word of God for us; and, Oh we have the judgment of such and such, and thus bolster up ourselves by building upon such sandy foundations. When we should bring up our souls and resign them to God and his Spirit, we will bring God down to our bent, and make him to say this and that, agreeable to our carnal reason and corrupt affections.

But I must not enlarge myself in this. In a word, therefore, to conclude this point: As there is a sweet harmony in God's truth, so let there be a harmony in our hearts thereunto. God's truth always agrees with itself. Oh let our hearts agree with it. When we hear a threatening, a precept, or a promise, Oh let us say, 'Amen.' It is the sweetest harmony in the world when we can bring our hearts to close with God and his word, with his Spirit and truth, when we can be delivered 'into that form of doctrine which is delivered unto us,' Rom. vi. 17.

But now I go on. 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' We come from the assent unto the consent, yielding unto that which Christ said as true and good. We come unto the desire and prayer of the church: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

Note. 'Amen' is an Hebrew word, and it is still retained, to show the consent of the Christian church with the Jewish, both with that which was before, and with that which shall be afterward. And it is expressed and opened here, by a word following, 'yea,' or 'even so,' come, Lord Jesus. You see the church desires, and out of her desire prays, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Now, this desire of the church shows the gracious disposition of the church. These desires are the breathings and motions of the Spirit in the soul, tending to further union. Even as motion tends to rest, so desires tend to the uniting unto the thing desired. The church's desires here are the immediate issue of the soul, and therefore undissembled, and they show the true character of a Christian soul. We may dissemble words and actions, but we cannot dissemble our desires and affections; we may paint fire, but we cannot paint heat. Therefore God judgeth us more by our desires and affections than by our words and actions.

Now you may know that our desires are holy and good, if so be that they be heavenly; for then it is a sign that they come down from heaven, even as a spring will arise and ascend as high as the spring-head whence it comes. If our desires rise to heaven, as the church's here do, then it is a sign they come down from heaven.

Our desires are as a stream, which I will show you, by prosecuting that metaphor and allusion in sundry particulars.

1. A good stream hath a good spring; so must our desires. The spring of the church's desires here is love: she loves Christ, and therefore desires him to 'come quickly.'

2. A stream, you know, carries all before it; so our desires are an holy stream issuing from a good spring and carrying all before them. They are efficacious, not a mere velleity, as they say, a bare wishing and woulding.

3. A stream, if it be stopped, will swell till it break down all opposition and carry all before it; so let a good desire be stopped, and it will swell more and more, and grow bigger and bigger, till it makes way for itself.

4. A stream is restless and incessant till it meet with the ocean and empty itself into the sea; so, true and holy desires be restless and always in motion. They are not like a standing pool that rests, but they are in motion still, till they have emptied themselves into the boundless and bottomless ocean of endless pleasure.

5. As true streams that arise from a fountain do wax bigger and bigger the nearer they come to the ocean, because other rivers join with them, and so they take advantage and augmentation by other streams that run into

them, so, if our desires be true, they are growing desires; they increase bigger and bigger still till they come to heaven.

6. At length, we see the streams empty themselves into the sea. They are swallowed up there, where they have a more constant being than in themselves, namely, of the ocean, the true element and proper place of all waters; and so our desires, if they be holy, as they are restless and growing, so at last they empty themselves into Christ, and join with God and happiness for the time to come; for there is greater happiness for the souls of men, in God, in Christ, and in heaven, than there is in themselves, and there they are swallowed up.

7. Lastly, We may try our desires by this. Vapours in a low place do show that there is a spring there. You know that the springs are there where there are most vapours constantly. So where there be breathings of the soul upward, as there is here of the church, surely there is a spring of love that yields these vapours, and whence these desires flow.

But I come more particularly unto this particular desire of the church, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' I shall make way by some propositions which I shall premise, before I come to the main thing which I shall stand upon at this time.

First, "We must take it for granted;

Obs. 1. That there will be a second glorious coming of Christ, that will be far more glorious than the former.

The best times and things are to come for Christians every way. Every day they rise they are nearer to their happiness.

Again, We must know this;

Obs. 2. That a Christian, if he hath true faith in the times to come, he will have answerable desires, and correspondent prayers.

For, beloved, there is always an harmony between the heart and the brain, between the understanding and the will and affections. What we assent to as true, and consent to as good, that we shall both desire and pray for. Therefore, if you know there will be a glorious coming of Christ, and if you assent to it, that the best times are yet to come, surely there will be this prayer

too. There is alway a sweet agreement and harmony between a sound convinced knowledge and gracious affections. Hence it is, that in Scripture what we do not wish and affect, we are said not to know. We see not things in their proper light, when we know and affect them not; but we have received them only by tradition and from others. But when we see proper things with a proper light, spiritual things with a spiritual light, then there will be always prayers and desires accordingly.

As the church here, after ‘Amen, even so,’ there is the desire. ‘Come, Lord Jesus,’ there is her prayer.

And therefore, we may know whether our knowledge be spiritual or not, by this, if the heart be subdued to yield unto it. Otherwise the heart will swell when it comes to petition, and to particular truths. What! Shall I yield to this? No. I have heard of this by the hearing of the ear, but I know not whether it be true or not; I have heard much talk of the Scriptures. But when the Scripture comes to cross a man in this or that particular lust, then if his knowledge be not spiritual, his heart will rise and swell against it, and begin to call into question and doubt; yea, and to think it folly and a base thing for a man to yield to it. I am sure of my pleasures, I am sure of my profits, but I am not sure whether this be true or no. And thus the heart of an atheist comes to stand out, because his knowledge is not spiritual. But if it be, then it carries an assent to it with it, and a desire drawn into a prayer.

Again, You must know this before we come unto the main point,

Obs. 3. That a orations heat I turneth promises into desires and prayers.

The promise was, ‘I come quickly.’ Here faith clasps about the promise, as a vine about the elm, and saith, ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’ Faith puts the promise into suit presently. Christ had no sooner said, ‘I come quickly,’ but the spirit of faith saith, ‘Nay, come, Lord Jesus.’ But then we must be sure that we have a promise out of the word of God. Faith hath no ‘amen’ for the word of a man, or for anything else but the word of God; and when it fastens upon that, as it doth here, you see it turns it into a holy desire and prayer, ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’ Beloved, we believe not the promise as we should do, else we would do so. We have rich, ‘exceeding great and precious promises,’ 2 Peter i. 4, but where is our rich, exceeding great and precious faith, to lay hold upon them, and to turn them presently into suits, desires, and prayers? Thus if we would do, we should bind God with his own word; he cannot deny himself, or falsify his truth.

Obs. 4. You see again, that the more assured one is of anything, the more effectually it will make him to pray.

An atheistical heart would say thus: Such a thing will be; Christ will come whether I pray or no; what need I pray then? Nay, therefore pray, because he will come. 'I come quickly;' therefore, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus.' Christ himself was fully assured that his Father would grant him all that he prayed for: 'I know that thou hearest me always,' saith he, John xi. 42; yet you see what an heavenly prayer he makes, John xvii. Nay, God bids him do it: 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,' Ps. ii. 8, &c. Christ himself must ask before God will give him 'the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.' So Ezek. xxxvi., where you have the covenant of grace itself, with many promises attending it; to all which it is added, ver. 37, 'Yet for all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, saith the Lord.' Though he had made great promises to his church, yet he must be prayed to for the performance of them. He will have things received as fruits of our prayer, as well as of his promise and providence. We cannot be so thankful for things that come only as fruits of his providence, as when we look upon them as fruits of our prayers. David was a king of prayers; but Saul came by providence only, and by the people's importunity. Whether was the more blessed?

Oh then, my brethren, though we be never so much assured of things to come, yet let us join prayer thereto; for the assurance of the end will stir us up to the careful use of the means. None are so careful of the latter as they who are most assured of the former. Witness the church here.

The next thing I shall premise, as making way for that, that I moan more fully to speak of, is this:

Obs. 5. That God's promises have gradual performances.

They are made good by degrees. God goes by many steps to the performance of his great promises; as here, the promise of Christ's 'second glorious coming' hath many degrees to the accomplishment thereof. So God promises 'a new heaven and a new earth,' Isa. lxvi. 22. That was one degree of the performance hereof, when the Jews came out of captivity. It had a second degree of performance when Christ came in the flesh. Then all things wore new. There was a new priest, a new Sabbath, a new nation. So when the Gentiles were called, and came in, it had a third gradual performance. When the Jews shall be called, when there shall be 'a resurrection from the dead,' as

it were, Rom. xi. 15, then all things shall be new. That was a fourth. And the last and full performance shall be, when all things shall be new indeed; that is, when there shall be 'a new heaven and a new earth.' So this promise here, 'Come, Lord Jesus,' it hath a latitude and a breadth of performance; 'Come, Lord,' into our hearts first, and set up thy kingdom and sceptre there; subdue all therein unto thyself, throw down all lusts, thrust out Satan, take thine own interest in us.

And then 'come' into thy church, as you have it, Mark ix. 1. There is a powerful coming of Christ in the gospel; therein 'the kingdom of God comes with power.' Come thus in the ministry of thy word. When Christ was bodily ascending up into heaven, he came spiritually in his ordinances. And thus 'come' thou by thy Spirit.

And then 'come' to blast antichrist, and to consume 'that man of sin,' 2 Thes. ii. 8, and so make way for the other degree of thy coming. 'Come' in the fulness of the Gentiles, 'come' in the conversion of thy people of the Jews, that their riches may be an increase of our riches, that there may be golden times indeed, as surely then they will be.

And then, because there is a certain number of the elect of God, which must be accomplished and fulfilled; and Christ will delay his last coming till that be done; therefore, 'come' and accomplish the number of thine elect, as you have it Rev. vi. 11, 'And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' They must stay till the rest come in. As they that have invited a company of strangers to a feast, do stay till the last be come, so there will not be a glorious coming of Christ until all the elect be gathered into one body. And then shall be the coming of all comings, which is the glorious coming of Christ, to take us to himself, and to make us sit with him, 'to judge the world,' 1 Cor. vi. 2, as so many kings and judges of the world, and to be with him for ever. As the apostle saith, 'Then shall we be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17, 18. And that is a comfort indeed. As he adds there, 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.' And so you see the gradual performance thereof.

Now I come unto the last, and that which I mean most to stand upon, being a blessed truth, most suitable to this occasion.

Obs. 6. That as it is the duty, so it is the disposition of a gracious heart, to desire the glorious coming of Christ Jesus; and to desire all his other comings in way and order to this, as they make way for his last coming In the unfolding of this I shall show you the grounds and reasons why the church doth so, and then make some trials whether we do so or no, and then give some few directions to help us therein.

Why doth the church desire so much this second and glorious coming of Christ?

Reason 1. Because the church is in want till that time, and the ground of all desire is want. We want our bodies, we want many of our friends, &c. But then there shall be a supply of all.

Reason 2. Because 'our life is hid with Christ in God,' and 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 3, 4. Our glorious head is there already. When he shall be revealed, then our glory shall be revealed, for 'he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those that do believe.'

Reason 3. In regard of Christ himself: Christ is in some sort imperfect till the latter day, till his 'second coming.' For the mystical body of Christ is his fulness. Christ is our fulness, and we are his fulness. Now Christ's fulness is made up, when all the members of his mystical body are gathered and united together; the head and the members make but one natural body. So Christ and the church are but one mystical: 1 Cor. xii. 12, 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ.' Hence it is that the saints are called 'the glory of Christ,' 2 Cor. viii. 23. Christ, in this sense is not fully glorious therefore till that time. The church desires therefore that Christ may be glorious in himself, and glorious in them, that he may come to be 'glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. i. 10.

Reason 4. Because, where the treasure is, there will the heart be also, Mat: vi. 21. Now where is the church's treasure but in Christ? Our spirits, are supernatural, and carried to the best of spirits; and who is the best of spirits but Christ himself?

Reason 5. Because the members are carried to union with the head. The happiness of the soul is in union with the fountain of happiness, and the nearer the fountain of happiness the more happy. What is it that makes the

blessed body of Christ more happy than all the angels and men, but because it is hypostatically united to the second person of the Trinity, and so to the fountain of the Godhead? The nearer to God the happier, the fuller of grace and glory, because he is the God of all grace and glory. Therefore the nearer to Christ the more happy. Now after the resurrection we shall be nearer both in soul and body. We may see this by the contrary. What is it that makes hell so horrible? Because there is an utter and eternal separation from the chiefest and choicest good, God himself. Here the wicked men of the world have the presence of God in the creatures. They taste the sweetness of God's goodness in them. But in hell they shall have none to all eternity. There shall be an utter separation between Christ and them. But now the joining to God, the fountain of all good in heaven, makes heaven to be heaven indeed. If Christ was not there, heaven would be no heaven. Therefore Paul saith, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' Philip, i. 23; and so the church here, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Then we shall be near, not in soul only, but also in body and soul; and in both we shall be for ever joined to the fountain of all good. It is that which the church desires here; and in the Canticles, what is it that the church prays for in the beginning? 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips,' &c., Cant. i. 2. There she desires the first coming of Christ. But you have it afterwards in the conclusion of the book: 'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to the young hart or roe upon the mountain of spices,' Cant. viii. 14. Such is the disposition of the church, that before Christ was come, good people were known by the desire of his coming. And therefore it was the description of holy men, that 'they waited for the consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25. O Lord, come quickly, come in the flesh! But now the first coming is past, they desire as much his 'second coming,' and therefore they are described in the epistle of St Paul to be such as 'love and long for the appearing of Christ; a crown of righteousness is laid up for all those that love his appearance,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. Therefore if we had the spirit of the church, we would echo to Christ when he saith, 'I come quickly,' and say, 'Make haste, my beloved,' &c., as the church saith in the latter end of the Canticles.

Reason 6. Beloved, do but compare the glory of that time with the glory which we have here, and that will show another reason. I will show it by way of comparison a little, why the church should be desirous of the 'second coming' of Christ.

If the good things that we have by grace here are such 'as eye hath not seen, or ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to consider of,'

1 Cor. ii. 9 (for the place is meant of grace especially, that is the natural and immediate meaning), how transcendently then unutterable and inconceivable are those things that are reserved against that time! If the 'first fruits' are so sweet, what is the full harvest! Rom. viii. 23. If the 'earnest' be so comfortable, what is the whole bargain! 2 Cor. v. 5; Eph. i. 14. If this 'joy be unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter i. 8, and this 'peace pass all understanding,' Philip, iv. 7, what will the fulness of joy, peace, and pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11, and which shall be then, do!

If the angels wonder at the wisdom of God, in the government of his church here, in the midst of confusion, how shall they be put into a new and greater wonderment, when they shall see Christ glorious in his saints!' 2 Thes. i. 10.

If when Christ was born in his abasement, they sang 'Glory to God on high, peace on earth, good will towards men,' Luke ii. 14, how joyful will those blessed spirits be, when Christ and all his members shall be joined in one body in heaven!

If Abraham rejoiced to foresee by the eye of faith the first coming of Christ in the flesh, how should we joy by faith to see the second coming of Christ! If John Baptist leaped in the womb for joy at the presence of Mary the mother of our Lord, how will our hearts dance when we shall see the Lord himself in the great glory and majesty of heaven! Luke i. 44.

If Peter was so ravished with a little drop and glimpse of heaven, when he saw the transfiguration of Christ in the mount, so that he even lost and forgot himself, and 'wist not what he said,' Mat. xvii. 4, how shall we be affected, think you, when we shall see Christ, not in his transfiguration, but in his glorification, for ever!

If old Simeon, when he saw Christ in his infancy, embraced him in his arms and said, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke ii. 29, how shall we be transported with joy and admiration to see Christ, not in his swaddling clothes, nor in his infancy, but in heaven all glorious!

If the sight of Christ in his ordinances, in his word and sacraments, doth so affect a Christian's heart, as to transform him into the image of them, 2

Cor. iii. 18, what will it do to see Christ ‘face to face,’ without these glasses! 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

If the promises do so quicken us, as you have it in the Psalms, ‘Thy word hath quickened me,’ Ps. cxix. 25, et alibi, what will the full performance of them, do!

If the communion of saints here be so sweet, even an heaven upon earth, ‘John i. 3, what will it be when all the blessed souls that have been from the beginning of the world unto the end shall be all together, and they altogether freed from all corruptions and infirmities! What a blessed sight will that be!

If so be that things prepared by men be so glorious as the temple of Solomon was, what is that glory which was prepared before the world was, and is in preparing still for the church!

If rest from labour be so sweet, what is ‘the glorious liberty of the sons of God!’ Rom. viii. 21. A little liberty from corruption, a little freedom and enlargement of spirit here, how sweet is that! When we are set at liberty to serve God, when we have the liberty of the spirit to go boldly to God and to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16, how pleasant is that! But oh the liberty of glory! that is true liberty indeed. Beloved, these things deserve and desire admiration, rather than expression. Therefore I leave them to your wondering and admiring, rather than I will study long to express them. O ye blessed souls, stand still a little, and consider by the eye of faith these glorious things and times to come. You see then by this, the church hath great reason to say, ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’

Reason 7. Besides, do but consider the estate of the church here in this world; even at the best, ‘while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord,’ 2 Cor. v. 6. But for the most part, the church is in this world as Daniel in the lions’ den, as sheep in the midst of ravening wolves, as a ship in the midst of the waves, and as a lily among thorns. All the birds of prey do seize on the poor turtle dove of Christ, and they bear a special and implacable malice against God’s church and children. Yea, oftentimes, those that profess religion in the form of it do let out the heart-blood of it indeed, and deny the power thereof. We see it hath been so ever since Christ’s coming, and it will be so to the end of the world. Satan abuseth the great ordinances of God, and makes them serviceable to his own ends; so that there is nothing free from Satan’s defilement, no, not the best ordinances of

God. We see how boisterously and roughly the poor church of God is handled. Are there not oftentimes in the church within itself prejudices, surmises, jealousies one against another, that the company of one another is not so sweet and delightful? And 'woe to the world because of offences,' Mat. xviii. 7. Are there not scandals and offences in the church, that hinders the comfort of it, and many times do cause the falling out of those that are otherwise truly good? So that in regard of Christians themselves, there is not such a sweet complacency and delight one in another as there should be, and as there shall be then. Where there is a different sight and a different light, there will be different judgments and affections. Now all Christians in this life have both a different light and sight, one sees things clearer than another, and so their judgments differ a little, and therefore their affections too: those promises of the lion and the lamb dwelling together, Isa. xi. 6, shall not exactly be performed until this his second coming but there shall be something of the lion and of the wolf in the best Christians. But then it shall be fully satisfied. Then all wolfish and lionish dispositions shall be subdued; then there shall be no infirmity in others to displease us, nor any in us to give distaste to them; but then we shall have an eternal communion together. Therefore is there not, in regard of ourselves, good reasons for Christians to say, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus?' Then, in regard of every one in his own particular, doth not every one find that true in himself that Paul saith of himself, that we carry about with us 'a body of sin and a body of death'? Our corruptions, that we carry about with us, are like a dead body tied unto a living body. Now, what an odious and loathsome thing is it for a man to carry about with him a dead body! Thus we do, and the more we grow' in grace, the more noisome it will be to us; for the more we grow in grace, tire more life we have, and therefore the more antipathy against sin. The more we grow in grace, the more light we have to discern the bad, and the more will our love to grace increase. Now the more light, and life, and love, the more shall we be annoyed carrying about with us this body of sin, and 'the thorn in the flesh,' 2 Cor. xii. 7. Some corruptions are as grievous to us as a thorn that rends the flesh. And this is the disposition of the best in this life. Therefore, in regard of the church and the enemies of it, in regard of ourselves and every particular Christian, in regard of their conflicting and afflicted condition, have we not cause to say, 'Amen; come, Lord Jesus?' Thus we see the grounds which the church hath to say so.

Let us now come to the second point, to try whether we can indeed express this desire that the Spirit of God makes. For it is only the Spirit in

the spouse that saith, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Let us see whether the Spirit says so in us.

We shall not say much. It may be known by that which hath been said in the beginning, and it is evident also besides. Therefore, in a word or two.

Trial 1. Let us try ourselves by this. What benefit have we by the first coming of Christ, by his death, and the shedding of his blood? Doth that pardon our sins? Are our consciences 'besprinkled by that from dead works to serve the ever-living God?' Heb. ix. 14. Are our hearts set at liberty to go to the throne of grace? Have we thus any benefit by his first coming? Then we cannot but with a long and longing expectation look for his second.

But, on the contrary, he that hath no good by the first, cannot truly desire nor comfortably expect the second coming of Christ: for why? The second coming is but to make good what is begun here. The first is to redeem our souls, the second is to glorify our bodies. If our souls be not redeemed, never look for the 'redemption of our bodies,' Rom. viii. 23. The first and second coming of Christ are of so near connection, that oftentimes they are comprised together, as the regeneration of our souls and the regeneration of our bodies, the adoption of our souls and the adoption of our bodies, the redemption of our souls and the redemption of our bodies; to show that wheresoever there is the true redemption and adoption of the soul, there the redemption and adoption of the body will follow, and an expectation thereof also. Christ will be redemption to us when he hath been redemption to our souls first, in the assurance of the pardon of our sins. Look then to that first.

Trial 2. If we desire the second coming of Christ, we will prepare for it. If a man says, he desires to go to some great person, and yet never thinks of any preparation for it, it is but a pretended desire if he doth not put on his best clothes, and fit himself for it, as Joseph did for Pharaoh, Gen. xli. 14. So if a man hope for this coming of Christ, he will 'purify himself for it, even as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 3. He will not appear in his foul clothes, but will 'put off the old man, and put on the new,' Eph. iv. 22. He will fit himself as the bride for the coming of the bridegroom. Beloved, if the thoughts of Christ's second coming be not efficacious to work in the soul a great care to fit and prepare for it, it is but a false conceit and lying fancy, it is no holy desire.

Trial 3. Examine it by this, whether your hearts be the kingdom of Christ, whether he rule in your hearts here? Do we think to rule with him in

heaven, in his kingdom, if we will not yield up our hearts to be his kingdom upon earth? No; he will come into our hearts before we shall come to him; he will come to rule in us here, before we shall ever think to come to rule with him in heaven. Therefore all they that stand out against the ordinances of God, and will live in sin against their knowledge and conscience, do they spend any thoughts or wishes on Christ's second coming? He will come indeed, but it will be a 'day of darkness and gloominess' unto them, Joel ii. 2. Such persons cannot say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' but 'Mountains come, and rocks come, come quickly: fall upon us, and hide us from the presence of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,' Rev. vi. 16. Nothing will be more terrible to such than that day. Fire is the most comfortable thing, and the most terrible; and so God is most comfortable to his, and yet most terrible to such that do not prepare for his coming. 'Who amongst us,' saith the prophet, 'shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Who shall appear before Christ? To them, then, that live in their sins, in this glorious light of the gospel, there is a most terrible threatening, even from the coming of Christ. 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus,' when he is discovered clearly in the gospel, 'let him be Anathema, Maran-atha,' 1 Cor. xvi. 22, which is a more terrible curse than any is in the law. As the greatest blessings are from the coming of Christ, so from the same is the more terrible threatening. There is not a more terrible curse in all the Scriptures again, as that is in the Corinthians. So that 'the Lord shall come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to all them that know him not, and that obey not the gospel,' 2 Thes. i. 8. Therefore take heed of this.

Trial 4. Try it again by holy exercises. They that desire indeed the coming of Christ, they exercise themselves much in holiness: they exercise themselves in the beginning of heaven here upon earth, in reading and hearing the word, in the communion of saints, in praying and acquainting themselves with God, &c. In what else shall we be employed when we come to heaven? There shall be the perfection of these graces and exercises begun here upon earth. Many a profane wretch's heart swells when he comes to prayer or any divine exercise. He is proudly brought up, and his heart is not subdued to holy exercises here. Heaven will not brook such, and such will not brook heaven. There is nothing but praising God continually. Now if you will not endure these holy exercises here, what should you do in heaven? Therefore let us not deceive our own souls, I beseech you. If we say this truly, 'Come, Lord Jesus,' undoubtedly it will have an influence into our lives, it will stir up all graces in the soul: as faith, to lay hold upon it; hope, to

expect it; love, to embrace it; patience, to endure anything for it; heavenly-mindedness, to fit and prepare for it; faithfulness in our callings, that we may make up our accounts before that time, &c. There is not a grace of the Spirit, but it is stirred up and quickened thereby. Therefore he not deceived. It is impossible that we should have dead, and dull, and cold hearts, and yet believe this, that there is such a glorious time to come. Undoubtedly it will inspire and cause strength and comfort in all our sufferings, and in all our doings, if our hearts do think with the spirit and thought of faith of this glorious appearing of Christ. Therefore we should shame ourselves. What! Can I hear of these things, and be no more affected with them than I am? Thus we should complain of the deadness and dulness of our hearts, and labour to work our hearts to an admiration of the excellencies that shall be revealed then.

But I go on, and come, in the last place, to some few directions how we should come to frame ourselves to this, to be able to utter this desire and prayer.

Direct. 1. Labour to be reconciled to God. Maintain and preserve thy peace and reconciliation with God, and then all things will be reconciled unto us, that are between us and the second coming of Christ. Nay, all shall be ours: death ours, devil ours, to help us to heaven. When we are at peace with God, all shall be at peace with us, John v. 23; Hos. ii. 18. And then we may have comfortable thoughts of that day; then we can think of death, and not be troubled; of hell and God's wrath, and not be disquieted. Therefore, above all, let us get the assurance of the grand point of justification, of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Let us be sure to be found in that, and appear in it, to understand that point well. St Paul was wonderful careful hereof. He desires to have it as a seal of the righteousness of faith, and 'to be found in him, not having his own righteousness,' &c., Phil. iii. 9, as if he were tender, to touch upon Christ's glory. If we be clothed with the garments of Christ's righteousness, we may go through the wrath of God; for that alone is wrath-proof. That will pacify God, and pacify the conscience too. It is a righteousness of God's own providing and accepting. Be sure that you understand it well; that you appear not in your own, but in his, and then may you think of that day with comfort.

Direct. 2. If we would think of the blessed times that are to come with comfort, then let us labour to grow in the now creature, to be more and more filled with the fulness of God, to strive to have more of Christ in us

still. The more we have of Christ in us, the more shall we desire his coming to us. Let us desire and labour to have all the corners of the heart filled up with the Spirit of Christ, our understandings with knowledge, our affections with love and delight, and our wills with obedience. The Scripture calls it, 'being filled with all the fulness of God,' Eph. iii. 19. Now the more we enter into the kingdom of heaven, by growth in grace here, the fitter shall we be for it, and the more shall we desire it. The more suitableness there is between us and heaven, and the glorious condition to come, the more shall we long after it, and rejoice in the thoughts of it.

Direct. 3. Be sure to do "hat you do quickly and thoroughly. Satan is so wise that he knows his time is but short, and therefore lays about him with great wrath and fury, Rev. xii. 12. Oh let us be so wise as to know that our time is but short. God himself tells us that it is so. Our time is a little spot of time cut out between two eternities, before and after, 1 Cor. vii. 29. Then let us do our work quickly. We may be suddenly surprised before we be aware; and as the tree falleth, so it lies; as a man lives, so he dies; as death leaves us, so judgment, and the second coming of Christ, shall find us. "We should therefore, as the apostle saith, 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12. Many men when they come to die are troubled about this; Oh, I have not done so; I should have done this and that, and have not; but I have done amiss, I have not] thoroughly repented; something is not done that should have been; I have not made mine evidences sound, I have not 'made my calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. Oh my conscience is troubled, and my soul cannot find that peace in God, &c. Oh do you take warning by them, and now work out your salvation with fear and trembling; and that upon this ground, because the time is short and uncertain. Beloved, it is a great error in us. We think of reaping as soon as we begin to sow, nay, we begin to sow then when we should reap. Then we begin to think of God and goodness when we lie a-dying. That should be a time of reaping the comfort of all our former life, and to think of the time to come with joy. Oh what a comfortable thing would it be if we can with St Paul look backward and say, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,' &c., 2 Tim. iv. 7. He looks back with comfort, and therefore he looks forward with comfort too; 'From henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day,' &c., verse 8. When a Christian man hath done the will of God, and looks backward and saith, I had a race to run, and I have run it; I had a faith to keep, and I have kept it; I had a fight to fight, and I have fought it; and then looks forward, and sees a crown of eternal glory before his eyes: what a

comfort and ravishing joy will this afford! Whether he looks backward or forward, all is glorious. But if we be careless and negligent, and will not work out our salvation, then we cannot with Hezekiah look back with comfort, and say to God, 'Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth and uprightness of heart, and have done that which was right in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. Neither can we with St Paul look forward with any comfort. Beloved, heaven is a pure place, and requires a great deal of purity in those that come thither; and Christ is holy and glorious. Therefore we must set no measure and pitch to any holiness in this life, but grow still more and more heavenly till we come to heaven. Therefore the apostle sets it down by way of wonderment in the last of St Peter: 'Seeing all these things shall be dissolved,' saith he, 2 Peter iii. 11. What saith he to that? He cannot tell what to say. Therefore he says nothing in particular, but in general: 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Some men will set a measure and stint to themselves, and if any go beyond their measure, then they are such and such, curious, nice, and precise, &c. Why! What measure of holiness should be set to them that look for the second coming of Christ? 'What manner of persons ought we to be?' He cannot tell what to say in particular, and therefore leaveth it to admiration. We must not then set up our staff, and put any measure to any perfection here in this world; but still grow in grace and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord.

Direct. 4. Let vs take all advantages to help vs in this desire and prayer for the second coming of Christ, from all the crosses of this life, and from all the businesses of Satan. Satan was shut out of paradise, but he is still creeping into the paradise of the church. But in heaven he shall never come. He was once there, and was cast down from thence, never to come there again. But in the church he is always stirring. He is never so bound up but he hath some mischief to do. Now let the consideration of Satan and his instruments, that are always some way or other molesting of the church, and are as thorns in their sides, stir us up to desire the second coming of Christ. So from all particular losses and crosses let us help ourselves. If we have lost a friend, let us fill our hearts with comfort from the 'second coming' of Christ, and from the consideration of that, that then the time will come when all friends shall meet together. Do we leave anything in this world behind us? "We shall meet with better there, better friends, a better place, better employment; all better. Therefore let us take advantage from everything to help forward that desire. In a word, I beseech you, because there he many things that might be spoken to this purpose, let it be your main care to fit

yourselves for that time. It is a time of longing here, while we live. It is the time between the contract and the marriage. Let us labour to be fitted and prepared for that time.

Obj. But you shall have many a good soul cry out, Oh, I am not so desirous of the coming of Christ as I ought.

Ans. True. It may be so because of thy wants, because thou hast not prepared thyself, because thou art not spiritual, because thou art not mortified. This ariseth further, as from other causes, so from this. Thou art ignorant of the covenant of grace, that God is thy Father, and that he hath bound himself as a father to pardon the sins of his children. Therefore, if thy sins be but infirmities, that thou strivest against, thou mayest be comforted. Mark what the apostle saith, 'We ourselves, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our bodies,' Rom. viii. 23. If we labour against our corruptions, it should be so far from hindering our desire of Christ's coming, that we should desire it the rather, because we labour under them; for then we shall be fully rid of them. Labour to understand the covenant of grace more fully. Christ is a mediator and intercessor. For whom? For perfect men? No. But for them that unwillingly run into debt with God every day. Therefore we say in the Lord's prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,' &c., Mat. vi. 11, 12. The ignorance of evangelical points makes us so cold, so dead and dull, as we are oftentimes.

Obj. But you will say, I desire to live still. Those that desire the 'second coming' of Christ, desire that he would come and fetch them out of the world when they have done their work. May not I do so?

Ans. Yes you may, but it must be with a reservation that you may bring to heaven as many as you can, that you may get further evidence of your salvation; and so in other respects you may desire to live, so it may be that God may honour himself by our lives. But simply, and as the thing is in itself, we ought to be of St Paul's mind, 'to desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' which is far better, Philip, i. 23.

Therefore when the time of our dissolution comes, we are to be willing to resign up our souls unto God, not only patiently, but cheerfully. For why? The day of death is a day of jubilee, a day of coronation, a day of marriage, a day of harvest, a day of triumph. We are to be ashamed of the disproportion of our desires to earthly things and to heavenly. Is the labourer loath to think

of a sabbath or a day of rest? Is a soldier loath to think of a day of victory and triumph? Is a contracted person loath to think of the day of marriage? or a king of the day of his coronation? They are all desirous of these things, and why should not we be of that time, when all these things shall indeed and really be performed? All those things are but shadows, and scarce that, of things to come, and yet how earnestly desirous are men of them? Have not we then just cause to take occasion to shame and blame ourselves, for the disproportion of our desires to earthly and heavenly things?

But now, when we have finished our work, when God hath been served by us in our generations—as it was said of David, ‘that he served God in his own generation, by the will of God, and after that fell on sleep,’ Acts xiii. 36—then God will take off our desire of living any longer, then he will make us even willing to die. As St Paul, in the last epistle that over he made, when he had run his race and fought his fight, and finished his course, then nothing but a crown. ‘Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,’ &c., 2 Tim. iv. 8. And in the same chapter afterward: ‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom,’ ver. 18. So saith Christ, ‘I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self,’ John xvii. 4, 5. So when the children of God have an item from the Spirit of God, that they have done all that God would have them for to do, then they will be most willing to go hence. In the mean time, they ‘must run with patience the race that is set before them,’ Heb. xii. 1; they must fight the fight that God hath pitched for them, and keep the faith; they must be willing to do all that God would have them, in an humble submission to his will. But when they have done all, then their hearts will be enlarged to desire the coming of Christ, that he would come and call them home.

So, then, this doubt is sufficiently answered. In a word, I will end with this.

When you find your hearts dull and cold, and inactive to good, then fetch fire from hence to inflame them: from the ‘second coming’ of Christ, from the love of God in Christ, from the love of his appearance. Oh, rouse up and quicken your hearts with such considerations. Do you conflict with any enemies, either without or within? Remember what the apostle saith: ‘Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life,’ 1 Tim. vi. 12. What is

the way to fight the good fight of faith? Why, lay hold on eternal life, and that will make a man fight indeed.

Are you in any disconsolate condition? If you be, see what the apostle Paul saith to the Thessalonians: 'Wherefore, comfort yo one another with these words,' 1 Thess. iv. 18. With what words? Why, 'We shall be ever with the Lord.' Oh these words will comfort indeed. Consider, when you have lost your friends, your estate, or anything, it shall be all fully made up there? Do you, as it were, make it up beforehand, with comforts of a higher nature? They be things that will comfort indeed.

And so, when you find yourselves dull in doing the work of the Lord, think upon the 'second coming' of Christ, and that he will not then come empty-handed, but 'he will bring his reward with him,' Rev. xxii. 12. Consider what St Paul said to Timothy: 'I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his kingdom,' &c., 2 Tim. iv. 1. The holy apostle had no greater a conjuration to move Timothy to be diligent, and to quicken him in his ministry, than by the coming of our Lord Jesus. So let us stir up ourselves, and comfort ourselves hereby.

Beloved, the soul is never in such a tune, as when the thoughts of these glorious times have raised the affections to the highest pitch and peg. Then the soul is never uncomfortable; and so long as it is so affected, it cannot sin, for we lose our frame, we let down the soul in base desires, we let loose our thoughts from closing with Christ, and with the time to come, when we sin. When we let them loose, then they sink down to earthly things; and that is the cause of all sin and of all discomfort.

So long, then, as we keep our hearts in a blessed frame of faith, and in a love of the appearing of Christ, they are impregnable. Satan cannot come between us and our faith, but he labours to loosen our faith and love, and to distract us with the businesses of the world, that we shall have very seldom thoughts of these things. Alas, that we 'who are born again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us,' 1 Pet. i. 4, should have so little and so light thoughts of our inheritance!

If a man were to go a journey by sea a year hence, he would be thinking every day upon his journey, what he should have to carry with him, and what will do him good when he comes there. We have all of us a long journey to

go, from earth to heaven; and we should be thinking of it every day in the year.

But we have a company of men in the world, all whose happiness is in putting off all thoughts in that kind; in deferring the day of their death, and putting the evil day far away from them; not thinking upon them; that so they may drown themselves in pleasure and voluptuousness. Ah, what a pitiful case hath Satan and our own sinful dispositions brought us unto, that we should place our happiness, safety, and comfort in putting off the thoughts of death, in going on presumptuously in sin, and never thinking upon that great day! Alas, they cannot think of it but as Felix did, who, when he heard Paul dispute and reason of 'righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, trembled,' Acts xxiv. 25.

Why, let Felix tremble, and let the world tremble, but let every Christian that hath made his peace with God, rejoice. Even as poor birds do sing when the spring time is returned again—for it warms them, and puts life and spirit into them, and they entertain the light and heat of the sun with singing and melody—so let us, in our thoughts, entertain Christ's coming with joy and comfort, having made our peace, substantially and solidly, with God. Let us look up, and lift up our heads with joy, for our redemption draweth nigh, Luke xxi. 28.

Now I come to the particular occasion.

It is well known that the particular occasion of this meeting is, to celebrate and solemnise the funeral of that worthy man Sir Thomas Crew, one of the king's Serjeants, in regard of whom I made choice of this text. If I wanted matter to speak of him, he had many natural excellent parts, which did commend him. I might speak of the quickness of his wit, of the firmness of his memory, of the readiness of his expressions, of the clearness and solidity of his judgment, able to penetrate into the depth of things, &c. And for his ability in his particular calling, I might say many things. He was a man very eminent in his calling; he was one of the oracles of the law in his time; one that had gathered very long and large experience, and wonderful great dexterity in that profession. And surely, beloved, these things are not to be neglected by us, though to God-ward they are not much regarded. For natural parts, the devil excels, and hath more than any man; but yet to men-ward, they are to be esteemed, for they vindicate men from the reproach and obloquy of the world. They will say, Such a man was a religious man, but he had no skill in his calling; a good man, but unlearned. Now then it takes away

reproach and disgrace from religion, when it can be said, This was an excellent man in his profession, and withal, a very excellent good Christian. It is the guise and fashion of proud profaneness, to lay religion as low as they can. They will take away or diminish all parts from religious persons as near as they can, that religion itself may seem vile and contemptible. For if religion once should win credit, then their baseness would appear the more; and that their pride will not endure. Wherefore, if these things be to be regarded, in regard of men, we ought to thank God for it, when grace is graced with excellent parts. Therefore, God sometimes vouchsafeth to men that are truly religious, excellency of parts. Otherwise, grace is lovely in itself; but as a precious stone and pearl set in gold is more precious and glorious, so religion, set in the stem of nature and excellent parts, hath more lustre and beauty, and the larger improvement.

You have a company of profane wretches in the world, even in those glorious times of the gospel, that do glory only in their excellent parts, that will seek even to the devil himself, so they may out-brag others, and gain to themselves a reputation of wit; and some will vilely adventure upon sin against their conscience, thinking that they should lose all reputation of wit and parts, if they should become religious once. But you see that God oftentimes adorns religious men with excellent parts of nature. Religion indeed cuts off the froth, the exuberance and redundancy of parts; but it increaseth the solidity of parts, and spiritualiseth them, and directs them to their right end, to the glory of God and good of mankind. Therefore, they may stand well enough together.

Now, in this worthy man there was a concentrating and joining together of the parts of nature and the parts of industry, and likewise of the parts of grace. And that which did steer his conversation, and rule all aright, was indeed the true fear of God, which caused him to set the stamp of religion on all his courses in his whole conversation.

For the Lord's day, it may a little be discerned by that. He had a wonderful care to keep it holy. He was as eminent as any in his profession for that. He would not intermeddle with the businesses of his calling on that day. He did not think it enough to hear the sermon and divine service, and then to go to the works of his calling. And in this he is to be commended. For whose good hath God appointed the Lord's day? Is it not for our own? Should not we grow base and earthly-minded, if one day in seven we should

not be heavenly-minded, and think upon our everlasting condition in another world? Shall we think much then of that which God appoints for us?

But to return. Besides his care of the Lord's day, for he did not limit his religion to a day, he was careful in his family of having morning and evening prayers; yea, and private also, twice in a day at the least. And this, as it did bring strength to his soul, and put a beauty upon it, so it did also sanctify his labours and prosper his businesses, and bring them to a good issue. He lost nothing by it. And seeing it is almost impossible in these profane times but that such courses as these are should meet with envy and scorn from some, therefore he had learned with Moses 'to bear the reproach of Christ,' Heb. xi. 26. He did account nothing more glorious than the profession of religion. And truly religion is a glorious thing: it puts a glory and beauty upon the soul.

But there are many men in these days that will not own Christ in his cause. How will such look him in the face another day, when he hath said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels,' Mark viii. 88.

But this worthy man, I say, what he judiciously undertook he constantly went through withal. He would not be scorned or turned out of his course by any man. He was a child of wisdom, able to justify what he did against the spirit of gross and proud profaneness, and against an empty, formal, dead, cold profession. He had not only the word of God to back him, but his own excellencies, and the sweetness that he felt and found in his Christian course, to defend him. And this should all we labour for.

He was, moreover, a man exceedingly conscionable. He had a very tender conscience, being willing in all doubtful things to be directed and resolved, which was an excellent thing. He knew, and so should all you, that the time would come ere long that a man would give a great deal to have a good conscience, and this was in him.

For his conversation in his family, he was very mild and gentle at all times; not as some, who being sweetened with a fee, are wonderful mild and calm to their clients, but are lions in their own houses. His carriage was not such.

For his conversation with other kind of men, it was sweet and loving, and very useful. He was full of goodness, and offices of love. He did not bear

himself big upon his offices or place; but was, as David saith of himself, ‘as a weaned child,’ Ps. cxxxi. 2. Though his parts did raise him up, and advance him above the ordinary sort of men, yet his grace levelled him, that he made himself equal to the lower sort, and yet in such sort that he had wisdom to understand and know himself in his place, and so grace will teach a man to do.

He was a marvellous great encourager of honest, laborious, religious ministers, for their Master’s sake, and for their work’s sake, and he lost nothing by it. He had a prophet’s reward, the prayers of all good men that were acquainted with him. And I hope that that commendation will not die with him, but that it will live in those that he lives in.

For his disposition toward the poor, he was very merciful and compassionate. He was the poor man’s lawyer; insomuch that the last cause that ever he pleaded was *sub forma pauperis*, for a poor man, and a minister; as it was publicly shown to the greatest and most judicious magistrates in the kingdom. ‘He was a foot to the lame, and eyes to the blind,’ as Job saith he was, Job xxix. 15, and ‘he made the widows to rejoice.’ He was a helpful and fruitful man, ‘a tree of righteousness,’ full of good fruit. He made the times and places better where he lived. He was a great lover of his country, even in some degree to the prejudice of himself.

It pleased King James, of famous memory, to choose him with some other commissioners, to go into Ireland about public employment, which he performed with such care and conscience, that when he returned home again he was made the king’s serjeant, and after that speaker in parliament, and the mouth of the Commons.

He was forty years a practitioner in his calling; in which time God blessed him with a great increase of his estate. God sometimes doth delight to make good his temporal promises to a religious, industrious, and faithful man, and that in the eyes of the world. Sometimes God carries things in a cloud and in a mystery. We cannot see how such and such men should go back in the world. This will appear to us another day, in the day of revelation. But because God would encourage religion, faithfulness, and industry, he makes good his temporal promises to such faithful men as he was. Such was his faithfulness, such was his dexterity and quickness in dispatching men’s causes and business, that men were willing to put their causes and estates into his hands. Therefore it is no wonder, if in so long a time as forty years’ practice, God blessed him with so great an estate.

Obj. But some may object his going to London of late times, when his infirmities grew upon him.

Ans. But this much I know, that the exigency and urgency of other men's occasions did importune, and in part draw him to it. And then again his staying at home was very tedious to him. It is death to an industrious man, that hath been in employment, to be idle, as it is death to an idle man to be employed. He was a man of an active spirit, and one that was not hindered by his journeys. Neither would it have holpen or eased him to have stayed at home. Therefore you must judge charitably of that.

But I come in a word to the time of his sickness, and so to the hour of his death.

For these later years he had two several severe churlish monitors that did put him in mind of his end, namely, the stone and the strangury. In these sore diseases he carried himself with wonderful great patience. None did ever hear any words fall from him that witnessed any impatience.

Toward his end, he considered that he was now for another and a better place. Therefore, when he was invited to dinner in the house of which he was, in Gray's Inn, saith he, 'I must dine in another place.'

When his sickness did seize upon him more sharply, though the pain thereof took away a great part of the powers of his soul, yet he did manifest a great deal of strength of faith by divers words that fell from him: 'As the hart brays after the rivers of water, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' Ps. xlii. 1. And as the church doth here, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;' and, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.' He was displeased with them about him, that out of their love to him did recall him by cordials out of a swoon, and so protracted his life longer than he would have had it: 'You keep me too long from Christ,' saith he, 'God is merciful to me, and you are not,' with many the like. And when they heaved up his body, his spirit was so strong in him as if he desired to meet Christ before his time.

And thus, at length, this blessed man meekly yielded up his blessed soul into the hands of his blessed Saviour, that had so dearly bought it, sanctified it, and sealed it by his holy and blessed Spirit.

Beloved, I think there were but few men of later times, of whom we had more, and a more general loss, than of this worthy man. His servants lost a kind and loving master; his children lost a most tender and careful father; his friends, a true, cordial, and hearty friend; the professors of the law, a special ornament of it; the ministers especially, a sweet encourager; the poor clients, a loving patron; the richer sort, a grave, wise, and judicious counsellor; religion and justice, a great supporter; the country where he lived, a faithful magistrate. So that here is the loss of many.

But what hath he lost? He hath attained to that which he desired so earnestly, he hath joined himself to Christ and left behind him a monument of mortality, the sad remembrance and remainder of him, his dead body. He hath made an happy change, of earth for heaven; of the company of men for the company of perfect souls and angels in heaven; of troublesome employments here for glorious employments for ever. So that he is no loser.

He hath left behind him likewise another sweet memorial and remembrance of him, as sweet as the ointment of the apothecary, unto the church and people of God.

He lived, to end all, in the best times that have been in the church since the apostles' times all his days. He was born under the gospel and lived under the gospel. He began to favour the best things, even from his youth. And God lengthened his days very long for the good of us. Therefore God miraculously, almost, preserved his weak worn body. It was much that such a spirit should endure in such a body so long under such diseases. But, at length, being full of days, and full of honour with all good people, God having blessed him in his children (for his children's children inherit his blessing), in the comfort and assurance of an happy change, he yielded up his blessed soul, and triumphant spirit, into the hands of God, whom he had loved; whose cause he had owned here in the world, in the midst of this sinful generation, and whom he professed, even unto death; whose coming he desired so earnestly; where, and with whom, we now leave him.

And for you, beloved, that fully know, as the apostle Paul saith, 'his purpose, his manner of life, his faith, his long-suffering, his charity, patience,' &c., 2 Tim. iii. 10, I beseech you, let not his memory die with him; but let those virtues that were in him live in you, so long as you live. 'If there be anything praiseworthy, or of good report' (as indeed there was much in him), 'think on these things,' Phil. iv. 8. If there were any infirmities in him (as, I think, there were as few in him as in any man), love hath a mantle to cover

them. He was a gracious man every way; one that adorned the doctrine and gospel of Christ in everything. Therefore, I beseech you, as the apostle saith, 'be followers of him, as he was of Christ.' We must one day give an account to God, not only for what sermons we have heard, but for the examples of those amongst whom we have lived; how we have profited by the lights that God hath set before us in the world, whether we have imitated their examples or no. We must give an account for all the good we might have received, not only by the means of salvation, but also by the precedents of worthy persons set before us.

I beseech you, in the bowels of the Lord Jesus, 'think on these things,' and 'the peace of God be with you!