



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### **Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### **About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

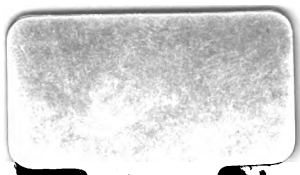


vols. 1st. from J. Thornton, Priar's Entry, May 1917, for 3/-

31570

5/6

994 f 33











352

---

THE  
POSTHUMOUS WORKS  
OF  
THE LATE REVEREND AND LEARNED  
THOMAS BOSTON.

---





THE  
**POSTHUMOUS WORKS**

OF

THE LATE REVEREND AND LEARNED  
**THOMAS BOSTON,**

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ETRICK;—AUTHOR OF THE  
FOURFOLD STATE, AND OTHER VALUABLE WORKS;

---

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM HIS MANUSCRIPTS, IN  
POSSESSION OF HIS FAMILY,

CONSISTING OF SIXTY-SIX SERMONS ON IMPORTANT  
AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

---

With a RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE by the Clergyman who  
prepared the WORK for the Press.

---

*By it, he being dead, yet speaketh.*      **HEB. xi. 4.**

---

IN THREE VOLUMES.

---

**VOL. I.**

---

**Edinburgh :**

PRINTED FOR W. CREECH, J. FAIRBAIRN, OGLE & AIKMAN,  
MUNDELL & SONS, AND C. DICKSON,

*By J. Pillans & Sons.*

---

1802.

BODL LIBR.  
MAY 197  
OXFORD

## ADVERTISEMENT.

---

**T**HE Publishers having now completed this undertaking in which they had engaged, beg leave to return their cordial thanks to their friends and the public for the flattering reception it has met with. They are highly gratified in having had repeated solicitations to add a fourth volume, if the whole of the subjects suited to meet the public eye could not be contained in the third volume. With these solicitations, however, they did not judge it proper, from various considerations, at present to comply; at the same time, they think it their duty to intimate, that, if these solicitations are continued, and other favourable circumstances encourage them, a fourth volume may in a short time be published. For, though on the outset of this undertaking, it was computed that the whole could have been comprised in three volumes, they now find that with ease they could have made a fourth. This the public may in so far be sensible of, as they will perceive several of the subjects mentioned in the proposals originally issued, not contained in these volumes; and they have since discovered others equally if not more important and interesting.

Faint, illegible text covering the upper and middle portions of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.

1946

...the ...  
...the ...  
...the ...  
...the ...



## ATTESTATION

IN

*FAVOUR OF THIS WORK.*

---

---

**W**E, whose names are subjoined, having had opportunity of looking over several of these Sermons in Manuscript, now proposed for publication, have sufficient reason to be satisfied, that they are the genuine remains of the worthy Author whose name they bear. They have been transmitted through the hands of his lineal descendants. From the handwriting, which is such as was common towards the beginning of this century, though now rather antiquated, as well as from the information of those who had access to  
know,

know, it appears that these Sermons were the original *autograph*, written at the time mentioned in the dates affixed to them. But to those acquainted with the spirit and manner of Mr Boston's other writings, the perusal of the Discourses themselves will convince them that they are genuine. They discover the same serious and spiritual strain,—the same perspicuity and simplicity of language,—the same happy fertility and copiousness of scriptural proof and illustration,—the same pertinent application of his subjects to persons and times—the same deep concern about the public interests of religion, and the dangers to which these kingdoms have been exposed through heinous sins and backslidings,—as are conspicuous in his other Works. Few have ever attained to his manner and style of writing, so much adapted to popular and general edification. Such of these Discourses as we have perused, seem to have been as carefully and fully written as those formerly published, and on subjects no less interesting. The Sermons in this collection which were composed at the time of the Rebellion that arose  
upon

upon the accession of the present family to the throne, will be found deserving particular attention in such a period as the present. It must be a public benefit to have such a favourable entertainment made accessible, through the Press, to all who regard the means of their own spiritual improvement, or that of others; and we hope, that, through the divine blessing, the long-prevailing rage for frivolous or dangerous reading, may, in some measure, be counteracted, by such solid and useful publications as the present.

THUS far we have taken the liberty to express ourselves, in compliance with the request of those concerned in the present Publication.

(Signed)

ARCH. BRUCE, *Minister of the Gospel at Whitburn.*

JOHN BROWN, *Minister of the Gospel at Longridge.*

ROB. PATERSON, *Minister of the Gospel at Biggar.*





---

## ADVERTISEMENT.

---

**T**HE Author of the Discourses now offered to the Public, is so universally known, and his character as a practical and evangelical writer is so fully established with religious persons of all denominations, that, in regard to the present Publication, it may suffice to state, that the Discourses in this and the succeeding Volumes, are all of them upon important Subjects; some of them uncommon and striking. They were composed by the Author in the early part of his ministry, and in the most vigorous period of his life, as will appear by the dates prefixed to them; on which account, as well as to distinguish them from preceding Publications by the same Author, though they are the last offered to the Public, they appear under the title **PRIMITIÆ**; and as the whole of the remaining Manuscripts of the hand-writing of the worthy Author, as far as is known, are in the possession of the present

sent Publishers, for the purpose of accomplishing the present publication, the title *ULTIMA* is added ; intimating, that it is almost certain, that they are the Last Remains that will meet the public eye, as a genuine production from the pen of this able Divine.

After the ample recommendation by the Author's near relation, and two other respectable clergymen, contained in the preceding pages, it will be necessary only farther to add, that these Discourses have been faithfully transcribed from the originals in the Author's hand-writing, and correctly printed from them. It is not doubted but that these volumes will be highly acceptable to the religious of all denominations, who, we trust, will unite with the Editor and Publishers, in sincere and fervent prayers, that, through the divine blessing, they may be extensively useful.

EDINBURGH,  
*January* 13. 1800. }

---

# C O N T E N T S

OF

*THE SUBJECTS DISCOURSED UPON*

IN

VOLUME FIRST.

---

	<i>Page.</i>
<b>SERMON I.</b> Infallible antidotes against unbelieving fears, - - -	13
Rev. i. 17. 18.—“ Fear not : I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen : and have the keys of hell and death.”	
<b>II.</b> Sin that which separates God and men, 36	36
Isa. lix. 2.—“ But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”	
<b>III.</b> The folly of resisting, the wisdom of complying with the gospel-call, -	51
Matth. xxi. 29.—“ He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went.”	
<b>IV.</b>	

	<i>Pag.</i>
IV. The nature and effects of a weaned disposition of soul, - - -	65
Pfal. cxxxii. 1.—“ My soul is even as a weaned child.”	
V. The danger of not waiting on God after the due order, - - - -	78
1 Chron. xv. 13.—“ For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.”	
VI. The perfection of providential dispensations, - - - -	91
Pfal. xviii. 30.—“ As for God, his way is perfect.”	
VII. Fear and hope, objects of the divine complacency, - - -	99
Pfal. cxviii. 11.—“ <del>There is</del> <del>pleasure</del> <del>in</del> <del>them</del> <del>that</del> <del>fear</del> <del>him,</del> <del>in</del> <del>those</del> <del>that</del> <del>hope</del> <del>in</del> <del>his</del> <del>mercy.</del> ”	
VIII. The same subject continued, -	114
IX. Jesus victorious over death, -	146
Isa. xxv. 8.—“ He will swallow up death in victory.”	
X. The same subject continued, -	156
IX. The suitable improvement of faints former experiences, - - -	168
2 Kings, ii. 14.—“ And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?”	
XII. The same subject continued, -	186
XIII. Christ, the Father’s gift to his chosen people, - - - -	200
	<i>Isa.</i>

Isa. lv. 4.—“ Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.”

XIV. The Christian weak, yet strong, 216

2 Cor. xii. 10.—“ For when I am weak, then am I strong.”

XV. The same subject continued, - 229

XVI. The interesting inquiry, - 240

Matth. xx. 6.—“ Why stand ye here all the day idle ?”

XVII. Christ's presence with gospel-ministers, 252

Matth. xxviii. 20.—“ And lo, I am with you always.”

XVIII. Christ's invitation to the labouring and heavy-laden, - - 268

Matth. xi. 28.—“ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

XIX. The same subject continued, - 294

XX. The same subject continued, - 317

XXI. The same subject continued, - 327

XXII. Christ, a refreshful shadow in a weary land, - - - - 349

Isa. xxxii. 2.—“ And a man shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

XXIII. The same subject continued, - 366

XXIV. The evil and danger of halting betwixt two opinions, - - 389

1 Kings, xvi. 21.—“ And Elijah said, How long halt ye betwixt two opinions ?”







discloses the state of his church till his second coming. Both of them were dignified with a vision of Christ, the Son of God; and on each of them it had almost the same effect. In Daniel there remained no strength, Dan. x. Here we see the vision had a similar effect on John. He is represented, ver. 17. as a dead man. He was confounded with the glory of the person whom he saw. His eyes were dazzled with the brightness, his strength failed, he could act no more than if he had been dead. But our Lord revives him. He lays his right hand on him, and strengthens him, that he might be able to stand, hear, and receive his orders. Jesus comforts him. He rebukes his fears: *Fear not.* There is a fear with which God is well pleased, and a fear of which he does not approve. This last is excessive fear, which greatly mars us in our duty, makes our hearts faint, and our hands hang down, so as that we have neither heart nor hand for our work. This is incident to the people of God; but Christ does not allow them in it, though he is tender of them under it.

We have next, the grounds of consolation, to dispel this fear, viz. (1.) The Godhead of Christ. He is the first and the last. The first principle of all things, from whom they had their beginning, and the last end of all things: an irrefragable testimony this of the divinity of Christ. And it shews us that the comfort of believers depends upon this article. (2.) The union of the Godhead and manhood in one person:—where Christ is held forth as God, the living God; who had *life* from eternity of himself, and gave life to all the creatures:—As man; in that it is said he died. It is spoken of the same person. It was the living God that died, though not the divine nature. Here

we

we see proposed, for John's comfort, the death of Christ, God-man. He was made man, and died. (3.) His resurrection: *I am alive*. He overcame death, and arose the third day. (4.) The eternity of that life to which he was raised up: he lives *for evermore*. To all this is prefixed a *behold!* to stir up believers to notice it as the grand fountain of their comfort; and it is followed with an asseveration, *Amen*, or verily, to put them out of doubt of it.

Next, we have his Mediatorial sovereignty: He hath *the keys of hell and death*. The keys are an ensign of government. The key of the house of David is laid upon his shoulder. He opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open, Isa. xxii. 22. None go to death or hell but when he sends them; and none are kept out of hell, and taken to glory, but by him.

From this subject we may observe the following

**DOCTRINE.** That the death and resurrection of Christ, that eternal life to which he was raised, and his Mediatorial sovereignty, are the great grounds of the saints consolation, and sufficient to dispel all their unbelieving fears.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall, by divine aid,

I. Speak a little, and but a little, to each of these things, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

II. Point out the consolation of the saint to be found in these.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. To speak a little to each of the things in the

B 2

text,

text, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

1. As to his death. On this I offer these few remarks; (1.) His death supposeth—his incarnation, and living as a man in the world, John i. 14. “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” This has a respect to the Shechinah, or the divine presence; that was a fire, encompassed with a cloud, which was above the ark in the first temple. Christ’s divinity was clouded with his humanity; the form of God, with the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6.—8. “He took upon him our nature.” He was a partaker of flesh and blood, Heb. ii. 14. Thus he became a substantial Mediator between God and man, that so he might be a Mediator of reconciliation; how he was conceived, born, and lived in the world, the Evangelists fully relate. (2.) His death was vicarious: He died in the room and stead of sinners, not indeed of all, but of his own sheep. The Socinians allow that he died for our good, though not in our room; but this places the death of the martyrs and of Christ on the same footing. But the scripture is plain, Matth. xx. 28. “He came to give his life a ransom for many.” Gal. iii. 13. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was made sin for us, and died, the just for the unjust.” There was a real imputation of the sins of the elect unto Christ, and a real translation of the punishment due to us upon him, Isa. liii. 4.—6. “Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to

to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—This was typified by the sacrifices under the law, on the head of which the offerer laid his hand, typically transferring the sin upon the beast; which was really accomplished in that true sacrifice of Christ, who gave himself for us, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling favour," Eph. v. 2. (3.) His sufferings and death were most exquisite: "God spared not his own Son." In the death of Christ there was a complication of deaths; they murdered his reputation, execrating him as a blasphemer against God, and a traitor against the government; placing him between two malefactors, as if he had been the greatest of the three. They murdered his body, and that in a most cruel manner: The wrath of God fell upon his soul, the first drops of which made him cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." His enemies shewed no pity, but gave him vinegar to drink: He got judgement without mercy from God: Even the sun was darkened, that he might not have the light of it, because it is pleasant to the eyes. (4.) His sufferings and death were satisfactory, and that fully. By his one sacrifice, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. He was Lord of his own life: He voluntarily laid it down, and that upon a compact betwixt the Father and him. Being God, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, the fulness of merit cannot be doubted; for so his sufferings were of infinite value, to which nothing can be added. He was God, and purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28: There was a proportion between the sins of the elect and the sufferings of Christ: Sin is an infinite evil, his sufferings were of infinite value. His deity stamped an infinite value on his sufferings; and in this respect they

do more than equal all the possible sufferings of ALL CREATURES together; for what would they all be to GOD DYING?

2. As to his resurrection, and the life to which he was restored. The text says, *Behold, I am alive.* Had he lain still in the grave as dead, all the hopes of believers had died with him; but behold, we have David's comfort: his soul was not left in hell, neither did he see corruption, Psal. xvi. 10. Here consider, (1.) That God raised up Christ, Acts ii. 24. "Him God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." There was the weight of all the elect's sins lying on him as a grave-stone. This was rolled away, and he was raised up by the exceeding greatness of God's power, Eph. i. 19. By this power, also, the Father declared him to be his Son indeed, Rom. i. 4.; and that he was fully satisfied for the debt Christ undertook to pay. Therefore, though Christ himself could have rolled away the stone, yet an angel, God's officer, is sent to do it, to open the prison-door; thereby declaring, that the Judge had no more to exact of him, that the debt was completely paid. (2.) Where he now lives. It is in heaven, the better country, which we had forfeited by sin, but where we still would fain be. Forty days after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven. As a public person he died, and as such he ascended. There the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. He is set down on the Father's throne, and is at his right hand. Having offered his bloody sacrifice, he is now gone into the holiest of all, and there will continue till the restitution of all things. (3.) For what he lives. The apostle tells us, that it is to make intercession for us; and he himself says, it is to prepare

prepare a place for us in his Father's house, where there are many mansions. He went there to take possession of heaven for us, and he lives to keep possession. He lives there as the Advocate of the saints, who have continual business at the court of Heaven, yet have no skill to manage it; "but," says Paul, "Christ is entered there to appear in the presence of God for us." This is said in allusion to a custom among confederated states and princes, who have their agents, who, upon all occasions, appear in the presence of the prince in behalf of those they represent, and for whom they negotiate, to take up any emergent differences, or manage whatever business may be put into their hands.—We now go on,

3. To the eternity of this life: The man Christ lives *for evermore*. Amen. Says Paul, "He ever liveth," and that as God-man. The saints cannot outlive their Advocate; nay, through eternity they shall behold his glorious face. He will never lay aside our nature. He is now for ever out of the reach of death. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. Joseph's brethren, when they saw their father was dead, were in a great fear, lest Joseph should avenge the wrong they had done him. No such fear needs the believer have. Jesus lives for ever, to be the eternal bond of the saints eternal communion with God. For, seeing we can neither come to God by ourselves, nor by ourselves abide in communion with him, it is necessary, that as we come to God by Christ, so by him also must we abide with God for ever. The members must receive influences and glory from their Head, to whom they shall remain for ever united. He lives for ever, to be their prophet, for the Lamb is the light of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 23.; and he will be their Priest for ever; he continueth

neth for ever, having an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 24. He will eternally represent his own sacrifice as the foundation of our eternal glory; and as for his kingdom, it is an everlasting kingdom, that shall not be destroyed, Dan. vii. 14.

—Let us,

4. Attend to his Mediatorial sovereignty. He hath the keys of hell and death. He hath all power over the present and future worlds. Hell and death are terrible to the believer; but Christ holds the keys of both. He went down to the grave, opened the door, and brought the keys away with him. None go to hell but whom he sends there, and consequently the keys of heaven are in his hand; which is here also understood. He has "all power in heaven and earth," Matth. xxviii. 18. Of this, Joseph's exaltation in Egypt was a type, Gen. xli. 40. And these keys are the purchase of his blood, Phil. ii. 8. 9. "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name," &c.

Now, these things, the death, resurrection, life, and power of Jesus, may be considered three ways, in order to improve them for consolation to the faints. (1.) As patterns and examples. It is the ordinary way of distressed persons, to conclude there is no sorrow like their sorrow; and if ye can satisfiably answer that ordinary question of theirs, Was there ever any in my case that got safely out of it? you will do much to allay their grief, and raise their hopes. Thus we find the apostle improving the sufferings and glory of Christ, Heb. xii. 3. "For consider him," says he, "that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds." **Yea, Jesus**

Jesus himself says, Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (2.) As pledges, assuring the faints of what they wish for. Thus the apostle improves the resurrection of Christ, to assure believers they shall not lie ever consuming in a grave, but shall be raised up to glory. Christ says he is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that slept, 1 Cor. xv. 20. ; and Jesus tells us, that his life is a pledge of ours : "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. (3.) As containing in them sufficient salves for all their sores. Thus are these the magazine of the faint's consolation, his wounds are the clefts of the rock, wherein the poor creature may safely hide itself. Only bruise the spices, pour out the ointment, consider them in their nature and effects, and assuredly they will send forth a pleasant smell, sufficient to revive and comfort a fainting soul.—We are now,

II. To point out the nature of that consolation which faints may derive from these. For this purpose, let us take a view of the fountains of their fears and distrust.

1. There is the supereminent glory and infinite majesty of the great God. This, when seen and considered by poor worm man, whose habitation is in the dust, is a great source of fear. This made John fall down at his feet as dead. Who can behold the glorious majesty upon this earth, and not be ready to dwindle into nothing? How do some tremble at the view of their fellow-creatures exalted above them in power and dignity! But O what a vast disproportion betwixt God and the greatest monarch! This challenges our fear indeed, but the faints ought not to let it degenerate into slavish fear.



fear. God has veiled his throne in the heavens, he spreads his cloud upon it, Job xxvi. 9. This is the common benefit of mankind upon this earth. But the saints have another ground of consolation in the text; and that is the death of Christ, wherein we behold God incarnate, God made flesh, God in our nature. Can ye not look straight forward to divine majesty, then fetch a compass, and look through the veil of the flesh of Christ, and so ye may see God, and not die. "Often and willingly," said Luther, "would I thus look at God."

2. Sin is another fountain of fear; sinfulness considered with the nature of God. Here the sinner first sees guilt in himself, and justice in God, which two together make a very frightful spectacle. It is the nature of guilt to bind over to punishment, and of justice to inflict it; so that guilt is a great source of fears. But fear not, O Christian; Christ was dead, and is alive for evermore; therefore the guilt that exposes to hell-fire is done away. Thou mayest indeed be guilty, so as to bring upon thee fatherly chastisements for your amendment, but thou art not liable to eternal plagues. You may plead not guilty to the charges of the law as a covenant of works: "For if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Upon the cross there were two crucified, the Son of God, and the law of God. But the Son of God, by his becoming dead, bruised to death the law as a covenant of works, in respect of believers. He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, Coloss. ii. 14. Therefore the law, our first husband, being dead, our relation to it is dissolved, and we are legally married to Christ, who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Justice is satisfied. No flaming sword stands any more to guard the tree of life,  
The

The storm hath exhausted itself upon Christ ; fear not, but come forward. He died in our room. Justice exacted, and he answered. Fear not old accounts, for God spared not his own Son. A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right-hand, by the stroke of justice, but it shall not come nigh thee. Do ye doubt the completeness of the satisfaction ? Behold Christ in heaven, with the complete discharge in his hand. He is out of prison. He brought the keys with him, and is now on the throne. Everlasting righteousness is brought in, and it is put on thee by him. He is made of God unto you righteousness. Your own is only filthy rags ; but that which is imputed unto you will abide the judgement of God, and endure for ever.—But

3. The sinner sees pollution in himself, and holiness in God. When they behold the spotless purity of God, and themselves as an unclean thing, they are ready to say, O will God look on vile me ? will these pure eyes cast a favourable glance on such a dunghill-worm ? Fear not, Christ was dead, and is alive. He is made of God unto you sanctification. Thou hast some grace amidst a heap of corruptions. Though thou seeest not what a lustre this casts within thee, yet God sees it : “ The king’s daughter is all glorious within,” Psal. xlv. 13. But look to your outer garments, which are of wrought gold, they will hide all your deformities. Though you are, in respect of inherent grace, but fair as the moon, yet your imputed righteousness is clear as the sun.—To this some may object, “ I am guilty of gross sins, and that even since the Lord began to deal with me.” *Fear not*, Christ died ; and if so, God died for your sins, If he was God who died, when he was pouring out his blood, he knew all the sins you would be guilty

guilty of, even after your conversion. He did not shed his blood in vain, and therefore in his death he had even these in his view; and will not the blood of God be able to expiate the grossest sins? It cleanseth from all sin. Remember also, he is alive evermore to intercede for you: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," John ii. 1. If his blood was sufficient for expiation, his intercession cannot but be prevalent.—"But I may say, I sin evermore, and that breaks my soul." *Fear not*, Christ lives evermore; and, if ye believe the apostle, it is to make intercession for you. If Christ lives evermore, ye shall not sin evermore: For he will not thus live alone without you; where he is, there you shall be also, John xvii. 24.—"But the sin of my nature lies nearest my heart: I am just a lump of hell, and a mass of sin. Acts of sin are transient, but this is permanent, and I cannot be freed of it." *Fear not*: Christ died, and therefore, though it may make your way to heaven difficult, yet ye shall never be condemned for it. Nay, good news, O believer! with the death of Christ sin got a fatal wound: Your old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, Rom. vi. 6. You wonder it is so troublesome; but why do ye do so? The old man is mortally wounded; and can you think he will groan out his life in silence, and not move a tongue against Christ? But as surely as Christ came not down from the cross till he breathed out his last, so surely shall the body of death in you be destroyed.

3. Desertions are a cause of fears. The deserted soul is an affrighted soul.—Say some, "Christ is withdrawn from me: My sun has gone down: Nothing now but darkness and confusion: I can see no evidences of the Lord's love to me: I may say as Job, ch. xxiii. 8. 9. "I go forward and backward,

ward, but I cannot perceive him." But fear not, Christian; it has been, and it will be, better with you: Good news to you in your low state, Christ died, and in his death he was forsaken of God; and yet he now enjoys the bosom of the Father, and the light of his countenance. Who would not be content to follow Christ, even through the valley of the shadow of death? Ye pray, and it seems ye are not heard; so it was with Christ: "O my God," said he, "thou hearest not," Psal. xxii. 2. But though your Husband be far off, though you cannot see him, yet he is not dead, he is alive; and if alive, he will come again, for he hateth putting away. Though ye seem to be out of sight, yet ye are not out of mind; he liveth evermore. Zion's account of Christ under a fit of desertion, is not canonical, it is not orthodox, Isa. xlix. 14.—16. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me."

To this the objection may be proposed, "But how can I endure to want the joys I have sometimes had, and these blessed consolations?" Answer, Trust in God, and have respect to the recompence of the reward of grace. Will you disquiet yourselves because there is not a second summer in one year? Bless God that helps you to the fight in any measure; wait patiently for his comforts, and be constantly at your work.—Again, say others, "Were there no more in my case, I might keep heart; but I am under dreadful apprehensions of wrath, and there are positive outgoings of God's anger against my soul, as Job vi. 4. "The

arrows of the Almighty are within me." Here, I confess, it is hard to stand, and not to fall down at his feet as dead. Yet we must say, *Fear not*; for Christ was dead, and the wrath of God was poured out into his soul, which melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels: Yet he swam through this ocean. Now, that he is alive, is a pledge that ye shall not drown: For, says he, "because I live, ye shall live also."

It was one of the ends of Christ's death, to deliver you and the like of you, Heb. ii. 15. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. You are mistaken, if you think the arrows are dipped in deadly poison; for Christ was dead, and is alive, and the poison of these arrows entered into his soul in full measure, and he drank it up, Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." They will wound very sore, though there be no poison, no curse in them. Your cloud has a white side, if ye could discern it; only believe, and ye shall be established. This is the heat of the battle with you. Keep hold of the death of Christ as your shield that will defend you. Look not on God, but through the veil of the flesh of Jesus. Dry stubble may be safe, if there be a strong crystal-wall between it and the fire. Does God appear as a consuming fire? Christ is the crystal-wall: set him betwixt you and an angry God. The light of that fire will shine through him to refresh you, but it will not burn through him. It has been often tried; he is still alive, and ye shall live also.

4. Temptations are a source of fears. Sometimes Satan gets leave to dog fawns at their heels. With what horrid temptations poor souls may be harassed,

harassed, some know by sad experience: Fiery darts that they tremble to think of, and that they dare not name! This fills them with fear: But to such I say, *Fear not*. Christ died, and is alive evermore. He that thus lives evermore gave a deadly wound to the tempter. When Jesus was in the world, Satan set on him with the most severe temptations; but Jesus overcame him, and at his death triumphed over him. He spoiled principalities and powers, Col. ii. 15. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." You see, then, that the enemy with whom you fight is already vanquished, and the victory of Jesus over him is a sure pledge of yours. Yea, as in the first Adam we were all tempted and fell, so in the second Adam we were tempted and stood; and so have overcome already in our Head. We have no more to do but cry to our Lord, who, from his own temptations, well knows how to succour his tempted people. We must give the alarm, and handle our weapons. Though the fight may last a while, yet it will come to an end, and we shall be more than conquerors. Jesus is in heaven, waiting till his enemies be made his footstool; and he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

5. Death is the cause of much fear. O how hard is it to look on it with a stayed countenance! Death is terrible, in that it is a dissolution of nature, parts soul and body; and therefore we are so apt to shudder at the thoughts of it. But *fear not*; for Christ died. His precious soul and body were parted: So he orders us to travel no path but such as he hath trode before us. By his death he has destroyed death; he has unstinged it to the believer. Then, fear it not, it can do you no harm. "But death is terrible, in that it takes us

out of this world from all our enjoyments, from our dearest relations and friends, and sends us into another world, where we know not a foot of ground, where we never saw a face. Were a child born with that judgement that men have, the first sight of this world might be terrible to them; so must the unseen world be to us." But *fear not*: He that was dead is alive; and when ye are carried off, you shall be with him who is infinitely better than all earthly relations. Here is your comfort. Jesus hath the keys of hell and death. He is Lord supreme of that other world to which you are travelling. He sends you such word as Joseph sent his father, Gen. xlv. 9. saying, "God hath made me Lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not." O to believe it firmly!

6. And *lastly*, Hell is a fountain of fears. Sometimes the godly are above, sometimes under the fears of hell. It is terrible, the thought of being excluded for ever the presence of God! "Who can abide with everlasting burnings?" When we look down to the pit, it seems hard to escape it; when we look up to heaven, our souls faint lest we never get there. But *fear not*: For Christ died; and if so, he suffered the torments thou shouldst have suffered in hell, as to the essentials of them. He was under the punishment of loss; God forsook him, Psa. xxii. 1. He endured the punishment of sense, even to drops of blood, and the wrath of God poured into his soul: Then God will not require two payments for one debt. Christ lives, he rose, and entered heaven as a public person; and therefore, believer, thou shalt as surely go to heaven as if thou wert there already. Yea, the apostle says we are there already, Eph. ii. 6. "We are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as our Head. Je-  
sus

fus lives for evermore ; and therefore, thou shalt be for ever with the Lord. He has the keys of hell and death. Suppose your father or best friend on earth had these keys, would you be afraid ? But we may have more confidence in Jesus than in ten thousand fathers, or even the mothers that bare us. They may forsake us, and a mother may be found that will not have compassion on the son of her womb ; but, O believer, Jesus hath said, " I will not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15. 16. " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." Though Satan be the jailor of hell, yet he keeps not the keys ; they hang, believer, at the girdle of your best friend.

III. WE shall conclude with some improvement.

1. From this subject, we may infer the comfortless state of them that are out of Christ. Are the truths in the text grounds of consolation to the saints ? How, then, can they bear up who have no interest in Christ ? Nay, we might turn the black side of this white cloud upon unbelievers, and tell them, that if Jesus died, how can they escape ? If he be alive, he will avenge their contempt of him, and their neglect of his salvation. If he lives for evermore, then they will have an eternal enemy. If he has the keys of hell, then they cannot escape that prison ; or be rescued out of it.

2. That it is the duty of Christians to improve these things for their actual comfort. Christian, sit down at his table, and suck the breasts of consolation. Build your comforts on these truths. Alas ! our comforts are often short lived, because we do not found them sure enough. I will give you but a few notes concerning this. (1.) The grie-



ving of the Spirit cuts the throats of our comforts: (2.) Good men sometimes build their comforts on cutward blessings; hence, when these are gone, their comfort is gone. (3.) On grace within them, not on grace without them; the comfort of some streams from their obedience principally, therefore it is soon dried up; whereas the death and life of Christ are liable to no change, as is our obedience. (4.) Upon the coming in of words to their minds. Hence, when a promise comes in, they are comforted; when a threatening, all is gone. I do believe, that the Spirit comforts his people by the word, and that he makes words come in with an impression on the soul, John xiv. 26. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said." But then these words lead the soul direct to Christ, and to build our comfort on him; but it is not of God to build it on the bare impression of a comfortable word. The coming in of a word should guide us to Christ; and though the impression, the guide go, yet we may keep our hold of him.—Here we are presented with an objection, "But I fear I have nothing to do with these consolations." *Ans.* Are you this day willing to take Christ? Then give your consent, and he is yours, and all is yours: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. *Obj.* "But I fear I am not sincere, in that I am actuated from fear of hell, and hope of reward." *Ans.* If ye fear not God's wrath, so as to endeavour to escape it, ye are despisers of God; if ye desire not salvation, so as to labour for it, ye are monstrous murderers of your own souls. Let your self-love only be regular, and it is commendable; and then it is regular, when your desires of happiness are carried towards it through Christ and the way of holiness; so that  
your

your soul longs for Christ as well as salvation, and ye desire to be holy as well as happy. It is regular, when it is subordinate to the will of God; and that is, when the man justifies God, though he should cast him off, and yet, come what will, is resolved to cleave to the Lord and his way.

A word to other two sources of the saint's fears.

1. Weakness and spiritual inability for the duties of religion. The soul taking a view of the great work it has to do, what strong lusts are to be mortified, temptations resisted, duties performed; and then, considering how weak and unable it is for any of these things, it is even ready to sink. But *fear not*: Christ died, &c. Heb. xii. 12. "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees:" Christ died, and therefore strength for duty is purchased. In the first Adam, the influences of the Spirit were forfeited; in the second Adam, they are bought back again. The well-ordered covenant is sealed and confirmed. There is a fulness in the covenant for all your wants. There are promises in it that will answer all your needs. Now, the covenant is confirmed, for the testator is dead. Christ liveth: He arose from death, and lives evermore; therefore, he that has the believer's stock of strength is alive. Adam got our first stock, but he became insolvent; Christ got the next, he liveth in the court of heaven as a public person, and treasury of strength, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

The believer's Surety to the Father stands good; and what need they fear as long as their cautioner holds foot? Christ is the believer's cautioner for sanctification and perseverance, John x. 28. and chap. xvii. 12. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but

but the son of perdition ; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Therefore he is called " the surety of a better testament," Heb. vii. 22. Now, he will not see his people in want of what is necessary for their through-bearing. He lives for that end, to dispense the benefits of the covenant. He holds the keys, therefore they shall not want. The Spirit is given by virtue of his ascension, John xvi. 7. " Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you : but if I depart, I will send him unto you." For what purpose was Joseph sent to Egypt, and exalted there, but to provide for his father's family, being therein a notable type of Christ ? Well, then, fear not ; wiles help weak folk. Though ye want strength, yet you have wisdom afforded you, even in betaking yourselves to Christ. I may allude to that, Prov. xxx. 24.—29. " There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer ; the conies are but a feeble flock, yet make they their houses in the rocks ; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands ; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings palaces." Ye have the wisdom of the ants, to provide your meat in summer ; of the conies, to build in the Rock Christ ; of the locusts, not to set out alone ; and of the spiders, to be in the palace of the great King, holding by the promises. 2 Cor. xiii. 9. " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

2. The danger of an evil time is another source of fear. Psal. xlix. 5. " Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about ? Two things there look ghastly

ghastly upon them. (1.) The hazard of sinning. An evil time is a time of many snares. The soul is afraid that he will never stand out, but one day will fall. *Fear not* :—Christ died, and it was an evil time, a time of many snares, yet he came safe off. This he did as a public person, and so it is a pledge that ye shall also be carried through; see Heb. iv. 14.—16. Christ lives evermore, therefore ye may say, as David, Psa. xviii. 46. 48. “The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. He delivereth me from mine enemies;” &c. He lives to intercede, which was Peter’s security: “I have,” says he, “prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” He is busy for his people, when they have most need. (2.) There is hazard of suffering, and that is frightful to flesh and blood. *Fear not* :—Christ died, and therefore the bitter dregs of the cup are drunken off. He was forsaken in his sufferings, that you might be supported in your sufferings.—Your sufferings will but conform you to Christ your head. Christ liveth, and therefore ye shall be supported in suffering, that the world may know that he who was dead is alive. Remarkable is that word, 2 Cor. iv. 10. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body.” A suffering time is a special season in which Christ uses to appear. We read thrice of Christ’s hour, John, xiii. 1. “Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Ch. xvii. 1. “These words spake Jesus,—Father, the hour is come,” &c. That was an hour of darkness. John ii. 4. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee ?

thee? mine hour is not yet come." That was an hour wherein the wine was done, and the pots were filled with water; you know what followed.

Here it may be objected, "But what if ordinances be taken away?" *Ans.* If they be, the God of ordinances endures for ever. Christ liveth, "and he shall be for a sanctuary," Isa. viii. 14. And says God by Ezekiel, concerning his scattered people, "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come," chap. xi. 16. When there was no ordinary food to be got in the wilderness, it was sent down from heaven. Though our kirk-doors should be shut, heaven's door shall be open as long as Christ liveth.—*Obj.* "But I think I am very unfruitful under ordinances." *Ans.* It is the greater shame! But if this be thy trouble, know that Christ liveth; and therefore, if there be sap in the root, there is always hope of the branches. There is enough there, draw it out. But as Christ first died, then arose, so the believer grows downward as well as upward. If ye have a heart-memory, though ye want a head-memory, it is well.—*Obj.* "But what shall those do, when they are seized with fear and discouragement, and cannot tell wherefor?" *Ans.* The Lord may sometimes exercise his people so, to shew them their own weakness and nothingness. But possibly it may be the majesty of God that so affects thee, and the reason why it is not discerned to be so, may be an intimation of the Lord's love just going before it. See Dan. x. 10.—12. "And behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent: and when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling."

trembling." But however it be, the only cure is believing, P<sup>sa</sup>l. xxvii. 13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The sooner you believe, the better; for in this case a man is like one that is going to ride a great water that is increasing; the longer he delays, the water grows still the greater.

Now, the way to make use of these things, so as to draw comfort from them, is to believe. There is, in the first place, a firm assent to the truths revealed, 1 John, v. 5. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" then, an act of faith, realising these things, Heb. xi. 1. "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." To which may be added, an act of assurance, Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." If ye cannot reach to all this extent, yet you may reach an act of adherence. A trembling hand may draw the water of consolation out of the wells of salvation. Amen.

SIN

---

SIN THAT WHICH SEPARATES GOD  
AND MEN. \*

---

S E R M O N II.

ISA. lix. 2.—*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

**W**HEN we look abroad through the world, many sad sights may be seen; but amongst the most lamentable is man, who was by the Lord planted a noble vine, wholly a right feed, but now turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. Some are lying mouldering in the grave of a graceless state, noisome to God and to good men; some are in a withered state, their former beauty gone, and death has settled down on their faces, because God, the life and soul of their souls, is gone. If they inquire, with Rebekah, Why am I thus? the answer is in the text: *Your iniquities, &c.*

In these words, we have, 1<sup>st</sup>, a dreadful evil that

\* Delivered Nov. 3. 1706.

that this people was under, *separation from God.* 2dly, The party at whose door the blame lies, they who have *made the breach.* 3dly, The procuring cause of this evil, *your iniquities.*

As to the 1st, Separation is either good or bad, according to the quality of the term from which men are separated. But the separation here is held forth as an evil, and that the greatest evil; for it is a separation from God, an evil which is so heavy, that, when felt, it is enough to make a Cain groan, and say, "It is greater than I can bear," Gen. iv. 13. Sin makes many separations. It separates the nearest relations; it separates the soul from the body. But all these are inconsiderable in respect of this, the separation of the soul from God.—It is, an evil still greater, for it is a separation from a covenanted God, YOUR GOD. Free love had separated Israel from all other people on the earth, and made them the Lord's by a peculiar relation; but sin separates betwixt them and that God to whom they were thus joined. That there should be a separation betwixt God and the Gentile world, who had professedly joined themselves to other gods, is not to be wondered at; but how dreadful is this, to be separated from our God! No fall is like a fall to hell from off heaven's threshold. The higher persons are raised up, the lower do they sink when they fall.

2. Who are to blame? Why, men are ready to say, God is an austere master, and forgetful of the children of men; and from our first father we have it as hereditary; rather to lay the blame on God, than to take it to ourselves. Therefore, he clears himself of it, ver. 1. shewing he wants neither power nor will to help them, on due application; and accordingly, he lays the blame where it should be, even on themselves. They made the breach;

VOL. I.

D

they



they may thank themselves for what they lie under, for they have drawn it on with their own hands.

3. How have they done it? Has God, who is exalted above the heavens, withdrawn from them, because they are on the earth as nothing before him? Cannot Infinite Majesty lodge with the soul in a cottage of clay? Has he separated from them, because they are mean, hated and despised by their neighbours round about them? No, no; none of these are the causes. Their *iniquities* are the only cause of all. Nothing but sin could part them. Sin is the only make-bate betwixt God and you. This subject affords us this

DOCTRINE, viz. However light people think of sin, yet it is that which is of so dreadful efficacy, as to make a separation betwixt God and the sinner. Sin separates between God and a soul.

In discoursing which, I shall shew,

I. What is that separation which sin makes betwixt God and souls.

II. I shall evince the greatness of the evil of separation from God, which many go so lightly under.

III. Inquire how sin makes this separation betwixt God and the soul.

IV. Make some practical improvement.—I am to shew,

I. WHAT is that separation which sin makes betwixt God and a soul. It is not a local separation; for “he is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, move, and have our being.” ACTS xvii. 27. 28. The wicked would fain be at a local separation, and therefore, in their vain imaginations, they shut up God in heaven, that he may

may not see what is done on earth. But the immensity and omnipresence of God make this simply impossible; for as he is God, he is intimately present with us, even in the very centre of our souls; so that, unless our sins could undeify him, (if the expression may be used), they can make no local separation betwixt him and us. Hence it is remarkable, that even in hell the wicked shall be punished from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thess. i. 9. He will not send his strokes upon them from heaven, or from afar, though he could preserve the force of them by the way, but he will erect his throne of justice among them: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me," Psal. cxxxix. 7.—10. But it is a relative separation, inferring a distance of opposition betwixt God and the soul, and affecting the man's state, or case, or both. It makes such a separation as is made by whisperers betwixt friends: "A whisperer," saith Solomon, "separateth chief friends." This being the case, the Lord's countenance is not towards the sinner as it was before the breach was made. And as by sin there is an alienating of the sinner's affection from God, so in God there is something equivalent to the alienation of affections from the sinner, for affections are not properly ascribed to God. Thus, concerning every one that separateth himself from the Lord, and setteth up his idols in his heart, God saith, Ezek. xiv. 8. "I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the

midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

As to this separation, we observe,

1. That in it there is something negative; and that is, the Lord denies them the influences of his grace, countenance, and fellowship; they are deprived of benefits, their sins withhold good things from them. The scripture expresseth it by the Lord's hiding his face from sinners, as it is said in the text, by shewing them the back, and not the face, Jerem. xviii. 17.; by forgetting them, Hos. iv. 6. Thus the sun of many is gone down, they "stumble at noon, as in the night, and are in desolate places as dead men," Isa. lix. 10. They go up and down in the world, as walking statues, carrying dead souls in their bodies as living coffins; for God is gone, and his glory is departed from them.

2. There is something positive in it, sin kindles a fire against the soul. (1.) There is a standing controversy God has against sinners, Amos iii. 3. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" God is displeased with the creature, his Spirit is grieved at him. Anger rests in the bosom of God against the sinner, as long as he keeps the sinful morsel under his tongue, which, though pleasant to the poor fool in the mean time, is most displeasing to a holy God. (2.) There is a pursuing of this controversy against the sinner; some positive outgoings of God's anger against the soul, in angry looks, which, if perceived, are enough to put the stoutest sinner out of countenance. In this way did the Lord look unto the host of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled them, Exod. xiv. 24. Angry words, even sad threats, ministered by the word and the man's conscience; also sad strokes upon the soul, sometimes

sometimes upon the body, sometimes on both at once, are measured out.

But to this it may be objected, says one, "Happy am I then, for I see no such thing." *Ans.* Were there no more upon most of us than we feel, we would have a very light burden either of sin or wrath upon us. But take heed ye be not like Ephraim, Hosea, vii. 9. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Or like the Ephesians, chap. iv. 19. "Who being past feeling, gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Are you going on in your sins? then be sure God is going on against you, pursuing his quarrel; and even in small things, if it were but the miscarrying of a basket of bread, the curse of God is in it to a wicked man, which makes it in itself very heavy. There are two kinds of strokes upon the soul: (1.) Deadening strokes; these are secret strokes which God gives, and they are not easily perceived. By them the conscience is deadened, the soul stupified, and thus the man is fattened for the day of slaughter. People think never to get their fill of ease, and sometimes the Lord gives them enough of it: Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," (*Heb. give him rest*). (2.) Quickening strokes: Hos. v. 14. "For I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear and go away, and no one shall rescue him." By such strokes the conscience is made like mount Sinai, when there was nothing but thunder and lightning, and the sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder. Many men's consciences are like iron taken out of the fire, and having lain a  
D 3 little,

little, no fire appears there ; but when some drops of water fall on it, it makes a hissing noise.

But the objector still says, " On the contrary, I find Providence very favourable to me." *Ans.* Is it in spiritual good things ? findest thou that because he lives, thou livest also ? Is Providence kind to thee in influences of grace, communion with God ? surely, then, Christ has taken away the separation-wall. But is it in external things ? then know that these are no discriminating marks of nearness to God ; see Job xxi. 7. God is kind to you as ye are to him, Levit. xxvi. 27. " And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury." He tells them they walked with him by accident, by the by, when they chanced to light on him ; and he says he will walk with them so too. What good the wicked does, is for another end than the glory of God ; and what good he does to them, is oftentimes in wrath.

Now this separation is twofold: 1. Total, agreeing to the wicked only, to whom, in respect of their state, God is an enemy. This is that state of separation from God in which we are born, produced by Adam's sin, Rom. v. 12. " Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This, to some, even to the elect, is only temporary, the separation-wall being pulled down, and they brought near by the blood of Christ applied by faith at their conversion, Ephes. ii. 13. To others it is eternal, who living and dying in a state of distance from God, are separated from God, soul and body in hell for evermore ; according to that, " *Depart* from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This eternal separation is not meant in the text, but it is a certain consequent of the other, if it is

continued

continued in, for none are brought near to God in glory, who are not, by grace, first brought near to him here.

2. There is a partial separation, which agrees to the godly, who have the root of the matter in them. Sometimes the Lord is provoked to withdraw from his own people: "I opened," says the spouse, Song v. 6. "to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself; my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Sometimes Christ's garden is left, so that there is no blowing of the Spirit there, Song, iv. 16. Hence the faints are so often praying to God to return to them. Often may we see the King's children, having their white robes sullied with tears, and rolled in the dust, because of a departed God. What a mournful voice has the sweet singer of Israel often, under desertions and hidings of God's face! Heman looks upon himself as a burgees of the land of darkness, not only *forsaken*, but *forgotten*, Psal. viii. 8. This makes them, with Job, cry out, "O! that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone on my head!"

II. I SHALL evince the greatness of the evil of separation from God, which many go so light under. Alas! many reign like kings with God; they be like king Saul, when God departed from him; but how sad a thing this is, will appear, if we consider,

1. What God is. Every thing in God speaks terror to those that are separated from him. I shall only take notice of these following: (1.) God is the chief good; and therefore, to be separated from God is the chief evil. Our native country we look on as good; and therefore, to be banished from it is a heavy trial. Relations are good, life and liberty are good; and therefore, to be deprived

ved of them is very afflicting. But God is the chief good; all these petty good things disappear, and dwindle into nothing, when compared with God. How dreadful, then, must it be to be separated from him! If the enjoyment of him is the highest pinnacle of happiness, separation from him is the lowest step of misery. It is often observed as an aggravation of the sufferings of the primitive Christians, that they suffered not only from the Emperors who were accounted monsters of men, but also from those who were admired by the people for their virtues. Surely, then, to be cast off by Goodness itself in infinite perfection, must be very distressing. (2.) God is all-sufficient in himself, and to the creatures. The enjoyment of him makes truly happy; and therefore, to be separated from him is a dreadful evil. While David thinks on God as his portion, his heart leaps for joy: "The lines," says he, "are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," Psa. xvi. 6.—9. While Cain sees himself driven from his presence, his punishment appears intolerable. The frowns of those we depend upon, and cannot live without, are very grievous. To forsake the "fountain of living waters," Jer. ii. 13. is held forth as a great evil of sin; and to be partially separated from it, must also be a great punishment. (3.) The omnipotence of God. Job takes notice, that "the arrows shot against him were arrows of the Almighty," Job, vi. 4. Let all the men on earth, and devils in hell, let the angels come down and help to draw the bow, still it is but finite power against the man; but how terrible would it be, to be a mark to these arrows! how much more, when the Omnipotent God pursues the quarrel! (4.) The absoluteness of God. Let men and devils work against the sinner, let them do their utmost, there

is one that can stay their hands, and say to each of them, "What dost thou?" but God is a King against whom there is no rising up. There is none who can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What dost thou?" Dan. iv. 35. Can the pots hinder the potter to dash them all in pieces? Or can worm man shake off the yoke of God's absolute dominion, and live in a separate state from him? (5.) God is eternal. If a great man be our enemy, we know always death will end the quarrel; if we have such an one to be our friend, yet death will tie up his hands, that he can give us no more favours: but God endures for ever. Had a man not only the earth, but the heavens for his portion, yet "the earth shall be burnt up, and the heavens wax old as a garment;" thieves may steal away the covetous man's treasures out of his barns and coffers; moths may consume what remains, the devil in wicked men may take away all he has in the world; only God is an everlasting friend and portion. It must, then, be very sad to be separated from such an one.

2. All created things are empty and unsatisfactory. They are a lie, alluring afar off; but when men come near, they answer not their expectations. The world, that bulky vanity, that great round nothing, can no more fill the heart, than a triangle a circle. All created things stand as two lame legs under vanity and insufficiency. He was a fool, indeed, that laid up for his soul in his barns, as if his swine and his soul could have fed at one trough. Cain had the broad world to find himself support, but all was sapless: His punishment from God's face was greater than he could bear. Where God is wanting, there is a void which a thousand worlds cannot fill up; and therefore, if you know the truth, ye would say to your sins, to your lusts, "Ye have



have taken away my God, and what have I more?"

3. To be separated from God is the saddest plague out of hell. When God departs, he leaves a burden on the soul behind him, which, when felt, will make the soul to roar: "Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them," Hof. ix. 12. Who can tell the ills the sinner is exposed unto, when once sin separates between God and him. Saul felt a total separation; and what a desperate project did it set him upon! Job felt a partial separation, which was so heavy, that his soul choosed "strangling and death, rather than life," Job, vii. 15.

4. Nay, it is a very hell to be separated from God. Therefore David complains, "that the sorrows of death compassed him, and that the pains of hell got hold upon him," Psal. cxvi. 3. Even coals of hell are cast upon the godly in this world, when their sins have made this separation; only they are softened with love, whereas those cast upon the wicked are dipped in the poison of the curse. Men by their sins now greedily sue out a separation from God. What will hell be, but a giving them their will? For the torments of hell are summed up in that, "*Depart from me, I know you not.*"

5. I shall only add, that those that continue in a state of separation from God, have no quarter to which they can turn for comfort in an evil day. We know not what sad trials we may live to see. When men that are seeking great things for themselves now, may think they are come well to, if they get Baruch's part, their life for a prey; but for a man to be in Sampson's case, the Philistines upon him, and God departed from him, must be heavy indeed. We must all die: this we know. Let a man squeeze his cisterns, then, with which he

he now solaces himself in his separation from God, what will they do for him? they will not be able to stay his fleeting and fainting soul. We must rise again. Will the gods ye now serve help you then? Will the sea, the rocks, or mountains, fall on him, will the earth cover him, who to enjoy it incurred a separation from God? No, no! O ungrateful earth, that the man consumed time, heart, and strength upon, while his days lasted, that will not take part with him, now when he is not able to do for himself. We must stand before his tribunal, and come near before his throne for judgement, whose presence we now forfeit for the satisfying of our lusts. What will comfort us then, when we see we have passed this partial state of separation from God, as a short preface to an eternal separation from him.

III. I AM now to inquire, How sin makes this separation betwixt God and a soul?

1. There is the guilt of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to misery for his sin. God, from vindicative justice, acts against the wicked; and this justice of his naturally requires punishment to be inflicted on the sinner, according to the law. Hence, when Adam sinned, a flaming sword was set to keep him off from the tree of life. The enjoyment of God is the greatest good; now, justice will not permit this, while guilt remains untaken away; and therefore, separation from God necessarily follows. As to the godly, by their guilt they are bound over to fatherly anger and chastisements, whereof that partial separation from God is the chief part.

2. There is the stain and defilement of sin. Now, God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. An unholy sinner cannot have communion with a holy God; and in regard that some are altogether polluted, they are therefore altogether separated from God.

God. Others are only in part polluted, by reason of some one or more sins regarded in their hearts; therefore are under that partial separation, Pfal. lxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The leper, for his uncleanness, was put without the camp; so is the sinner. They only are admitted to stand in the holy place, who have clean hands and a pure heart, Pfal. xxiv. 4. Hence says James, chap. iv. 8. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."—It remains,

IV. THAT I make some practical improvement from this subject. We have,

1. An use of information. We may hence see, (1.) That it is sin which makes a land weak, mean, and contemptible, and is the cause of all national calamity; for sin separates between them and their God. Then their strength is departed from them; and therefore, though the people should unite with one another, there is little good to be expected so long as such abominations abound in the land, setting God against us. O that we might see the day, when, uniting with Heaven, we might be zealously affected in reformation, and the heaven-daring abominations that abound, in principle and practice, be zealously suppressed. But every one minds their own things, few the things that are Christ's. (2.) Why so few have communion with God in ordinances, public, private, and secret. Are there not many at public ordinances dead and lifeless, sitting like idols that have eyes and see not, hands but handle not? Why, sin has separated between God and them. Hence they go as they came; no intercourse with God. The Lord goes by them, and comes by them, speaks to the hearts of others, but not to them. They cannot walk together; for they

they are not agreed. (3.) Why so many slight religious duties? Some will not bow a knee to God; they will not commune with their hearts, nor converse with God. Sin hath separated them; and what pleasure can they take to converse with an enemy, or one that has turned his back to them? Hence some are not afraid of any company so much as themselves; and therefore, if their consciences begin to speak, they labour some way or other to divert it. (4.) Whence is the root or cause of all the misery professors are lying under at this day? Security, barrenness, withering, desertion, and the like. What wonder that it be so? They may thank themselves for the whole. It is their dallying with some bosom-idol, their grieving the Spirit, and slighting his motions and convictions, their worldliness and unwatchfulness: these are the root, the cause of all their misery.

2. An use of exhortation. (1.) To those who enjoy nearness to God. O beware of sin! If ye give way to it, it will soon turn your wine into water, and overcloud your enjoyments. Live at a distance from it; for it is the very thing from which you are in such great hazard. (2.) To those who are by their sins separated from God. Break off your course of sin, continue not in it. Is not the separation-wall high enough, and thick enough already? what needs more be added? What shall you do to get the separation taken away?—Lay hold on the Lord Jesus by faith, Isa. xxvii. 5. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Jesus is the ladder that knits heaven and earth together. It is by him that God reconciles the world to himself. His blood takes away both guilt and pollution. It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Though God

hears not sinners, yet in Christ he is well pleased; and through him they may find access to, and acceptance with him. He is our peace: He is the Mediator between God and man.—Repent, and turn from your sins. There is no concord between Christ and belial. To enjoy both God and your lusts is impossible; ye shall as soon bring together the two poles. However some make a mock of sin now, yet it has separated, and will separate them from God eternally, if they separate not from it.

THE

---

---

THE FOLLY OF RESISTING, THE WISDOM  
OF COMPLYING WITH THE  
GOSPEL-CALL.\*

---

S E R M O N III.

Matth. xxi. 29.—*He answered and said, I will not;  
but afterwards he repented, and went.*

**T**HE scope of this parable is to shew, that many who have been the vilest of sinners repent, and go to heaven, when others, who, though they have a profession of religion, never go farther than a mere profession, and so fall short; partly, also, to shew that many who had been publicans and harlots are now in a better case than the Chief Priests and Scribes. To convince of this, Christ spoke the parable before us.—For understanding of which, I would notice, that the man in the parable represents God; the two sons, two different sorts of people among the Jews. Both had the gospel-call by John the baptist. The first of the sons points out the publicans and harlots, who,

E 2

though

\* Delivered on Saturday, 31st July 1714.

though they were formerly most vile and hopeless creatures, yet, on their hearing of John, repented, and became disciples indeed. The second represents the Priests and Pharisees, who, notwithstanding of their high pretences to religion, yet were indeed strangers to it, their practices did not correspond with their profession.

In the text, which concerns the first son, pointing out the penitent publicans and harlots, we have two things.

1. The sinner's first answer to the gospel-call; and it is a short one: *I will not*. Like Israel, Psa. lxxxii. 11. "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." The sinner so loves his sinful ease, that he cannot think of the work in God's vineyard. Observe in this answer, (1.) The rudeness of it. The son remembered not that he was speaking to a father, so has not so much as a fair word to bestow on him. O the rude treatment Christ meets with at sinners hands! They remember not his authority over them, nor do they regard it; but they will be their own; who is Lord over them? (2.) The plainness of it. He tells the matter plainly; says not, he cannot, but he *will not*. It is want of will to the work of religion that is the great stop. Sinners hearts cannot relish the work of religion: The bent of their hearts lies another way. (3.) The peremptoriness of it. He is at a point. The hearing of the word raises his heart against it. Let sinners hear of the work of religion, and that is enough, they desire no more of it. It is a plain case to them, they must not, they will not, engage in such a task.

2. The second answer, in which the former bad answer is happily retracted: *But afterwards he repented, and went*. He complies with the call he had

had before refused. The spring of this was, his heart was touched; he took second thoughts of the business, and changed his mind. He fell under after grief, anxiety, and solicitude, as the word signifies. Conscience, that was silent before, now begins to speak, and his blood begins to cool; he calmly considers what he had answered, and he calls himself beast and fool, that should have adventured so to treat his Father; and hence he takes up the work of religion, which he had before rejected. From this subject there arises this

**DOCTRINE,** That refusing the work of religion is not to be stood to, but retracted, and the sinner will see cause for it, if ever he comes to himself. They who have refused to comply with the gospel-call, to engage in the work of the Lord, should take their word again, and heartily comply with it; and if ever they be wise, they will do it.

In illustrating this point; I propose to shew,

I. What is that work to which the gospel calls, and with which sinners will not comply?

II. Why is it that sinners will not comply with this work?

III. Why this refusal should be retracted.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

**I. I AM** to shew, What is that work to which the gospel calls, and with which sinners will not comply? It is the work of practical godliness, to which most men are strangers. It is a large work, as extensive as the commandment, which is exceeding broad. I shall take it up in these two.

I. The gospel calls you to fall to your salvation-work, Phil. ii. 12. "Work out your own salvation



with fear and trembling." Sinners, you are in a ruined condition; your souls are pining away in your iniquities; there is a burden of guilt on you that will sink you; there is a swarm of living lusts preying on you, that will devour you. O guilty creature! knowest thou not, that thou art God's enemy, justice's debtor, the law's criminal, and that the avenger of blood is at your heels? The gospel is calling you to consider your ways, and fall to the work of your salvation, before it be too late. This work has two parts: (1.) The work of faith, John vi. 29. "Jesus answered, and said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Acts xvi. 31. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." It is not that faith wherewith ye have lived in a good belief all your bypast days, so that you had never power to believe an ill tale of your own state; that is a faith of the devil's planting, and the gospel will have it rooted up. It is not that faith which consists in your going on in sin without fear. The devil's faith goes beyond this, for they believe and tremble, Jam. ii. 19. But the work of faith to which the gospel calls you, is that whereby a sinner, sensible of his undone state, flees out of himself to the Lord Jesus, to unite with him for righteousness and sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is that faith, which, when the house, in which the presumptuous hoped, wherein the secure sinner rested in his sins, is overturned as by an earthquake, makes the sinner, naked and destitute, to flee to Jesus Christ, as the only rock and shelter. It is that whereby the sinner, sensible that he has lost his two eyes, and therefore cannot guide himself through the wilderness to Canaan, gives up himself wholly to Christ as his leader, prophet, and healer; and, seeing the

the flaming sword of justice pursuing him for sin, runs in under the covert of Jesus' blood, saying, This is my rest; and being willing to part with sin, but unable to master his lusts, puts himself under the protection of Christ as his King, that he may make havock of his enemies. This, sinner, is your work, your foundation-work. Haste, then, out of your natural state, and escape for your life to Jesus Christ.

2. The work of sanctification. Ezek. xviii. 31. "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—Heb. xii. 14. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Sin is the great devourer and destroyer, and therefore the great salvation is from sin. Jesus saves his people from their sins. To think of being saved in sin, is a contradiction, for to be left in it is ruining. The sick man does not desire the physician to remove death, but yet spare his disease; yea, but the foolish sinner is thus unreasonable in the case of his soul; he has no will that his cloaths be burnt, yet he will needs carry fire in his bosom; he wishes not his feet to be burned, yet he will walk on coals of fire. Living lusts will devour the soul; therefore to work, sinners, for you must either kill, or be killed. Let not the vineyard of your souls be any more like that of the sluggard. The sinner's soul is overgrown with hurtful lusts, there is no fence about it. O! then, work; seek holiness.

3. The gospel calls you to your generation-work. Acts xiii. 36. "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep." Wherefore were you sent into the world, and made members of society? Was it not to honour

honour God, and to be useful to your fellow-servants? Surely God sent none of us into the world to play ourselves, like the leviathan in the sea; nor to be like mice and rats, good for nothing but to eat that for which others have laboured. Far less did he send you to be agents for the devil, to advance his kingdom, and to oppose the work of the Lord in the places where you live; nor yet like the beasts, only to eat, drink, work, and sleep. To your work, then, your proper work, the service of God. Perhaps ye will say, ye have not been idle; but what have ye done for God in your day? What have ye done for the good of any soul? What have ye done to pluck any brand out of the burning? I fear, if we reckon our days according to what we have done for God in them, most of us may reckon our days lost days. Look up to God, who placed you in the world, and say for what good purpose you have taken up room in his earth. For what use are you in the world? God has given you a talent, what have you gained? He has placed you in such and such situations and relations, have you done the duties of each? — I am to shew,

II. WHY is it that sinners will not comply with this work?

1. Because it is the work to which, of all works, their hearts are most averse. Rom. viii. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They would rather do any thing than go and work in God's vineyard. It is against the grain with unrenewed minds. The prodigal would rather feed swine than go back to his father, till he came to himself. Judas would rather go to a halter, than go to Christ for pardon. It is like cutting

cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. The sinner's neck is flexible enough to the devil's yoke; but it is an iron finew to Christ's yoke. He that has a will to any thing, he has no will to this, till a day of power make him willing, P<sup>s</sup>al. cx. 3.

2. Because of prevailing love to carnal ease. Prov. xxvi. 15. "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." The man loves to sleep in a sound skin, and therefore will die in his nest, if God do not in mercy set a fire to it. Sloth is so sweet a sin, that the carnal heart can never get a fill of it, Prov. vi. 10. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The man lies in the bed of sloth, and would not miss heaven if it would fall down into his mouth, or if *wisbing* and *woulding* would do it. But if these will not do, he must even want it, for he cannot leave the embrace of his dear ease. Fighting, running, praying, striving, wrestling, taking heavenly violence, and the like, he cannot away with.

3. Because Satan furnishes them with work more agreeable, and it they will do; therefore God's work they will not meddle with: John, viii. 44. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When the call of the gospel comes to sinners, Satan does with them as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, holds them more to their tasks; so they have always busy hands, and hearts full of their work, insomuch that they cannot get the work of religion minded to purpose. And what are they doing? They are busy weaving the spider's web; very busy doing nothing, or hatching the cockatrice egg, doing worse than nothing. They have much to do, having the desires of the flesh and mind to fulfil. They have more  
to

24. " Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirl-wind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did choose the fear of the Lord." Salvation-work will not work, unless men bestir themselves; but damnation-work will go on when men sit at ease, and are carried down the stream into the ocean of the wrath of God.

IV. IN the last place, I am to make some practical improvement; in doing which, I shall confine myself, for the present, to an use of exhortation. I would exhort refusers of Christ and of religion to take their word again, and to comply with the gospel-call. Ye have had many calls to engage in the work of religion with earnestness, but the answer of the most part is, *I will not*; and thus one refusal comes on the back of another.

You have had many calls from the word' of God to fall to your work, and what has been your answer to these messages of God by his servants, but that *I will not*? Have you not heard many exhortations which have never affected you? Have you not gone back to those very sins for which reproofs have met you in public ordinances, and yet you have held them fast? Has not duty been laid plainly before you, and you have found means to put it by? and still the answer is, *I will not*.

2. Has not God pursued some of you by afflictions

tions to drive you to your work, and yet no awakening to repentance and reformation, but still the language of your practice has been, *I will not*. The Lord, in his holy providence, has sent you losses, crosses, and distresses of divers sorts, to bring you to your duty; but, O! may it not be written on rod after rod, You have not yet returned to the Lord?

3. Nay, has not the Lord sometimes so met you in a sinful course, that you could not but say, This is the finger of God? and yet ye would be froward, ye would go back to the sin again. What is the language of that, but *I will not*? Have ye not fallen under Jotham's curse again and again? Judges, ix. 15. whereby fire has flashed out of some one or other bramble, under which you have rested, on your faces to burn you, instead of that shade ye thought to find under it to refresh you. Has not your conscience awakened on you sometimes, and the arrows of conviction fastened on you, and yet you have refused? Ye have murdered convictions, and never been at ease till conscience has been silenced. You have run away from God, even with his arrows sticking in you, saying in opposition, *I will not*.

*Lastly*, Have you not often delayed complying with the call of God, and set the time for your going to work? Yet for all that is come and gone, your eyes have never seen that time yet. What is delaying but plainly a refusal? *I will not*. For there is no word of God that says, Go work to-morrow, or the next day; it is to-day, if ye will hear his voice; son, go work to-day. So that he that will not work to-day, but pretends he will do it afterwards, plainly refuses the call, and will not.

To promote your compliance with the call, I would offer a few weighty motives; as,

1. Repent now, and fall to that work ye have

VOL. I.

F

formerly

formerly refused ; for it is a work preferable to all other works. The work of religion is your main, your chief work. (1.) It is the most pleasant work. Many are disgusted at the work of religion, because they think it unpleasant. But they have not yet tried it, and therefore are not fit judges. You have a more favourable account of it from Prov. iii. 17. " Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." See also Psa. iv. 7. 8. " Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." There is work indeed in the vineyard that is very unpleasant to corrupt nature ; but even out of this arises the most refined satisfaction to the new nature. And what are all the pleasures of the world, to reconciliation with God, and that peace of conscience and joy that there is in believing ? (2.) It is the most profitable work. The profit thereof is both for time and for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. " For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The profits of it are durable profits ; they last, and will be profitable, when all others will be of no avail. Hereby you will gain the life of your souls, and, as the loss is incomparably great, so also is the gain of it. (3.) It is the most necessary work. It is the one thing needful, absolutely needful, Luke, x. 42. We cannot be happy here or hereafter without it ; without it, we are undone for ever.

2. Ye are always working something. The greatest idler on earth is in some sort always busy. God does not require of you more work, but other work. The soul of man is like a watch, that goes as fast in going wrong as in going right. How  
 sad

sad is it, that seeing men are always doing something, they should refuse only that work which would honour God, and save their own souls! Will you not, then, for God's sake, and your own sake, change your work?

3. It is sad work you are working while you refuse this. If you be not working out your own salvation, you are working out your own damnation. We are always going forward; if not pressing a step nearer heaven, you are a step nearer hell. Every refusal, yea, every sin, is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new call to Heaven for vengeance on the sinner, builds the separation-wall the higher, and lays on the greater weight to sink you for ever under the wrath of God.

4. Consider, if ye be not in some sort at as much pains to ruin your souls, as otherwise might save them. There are difficulties in the ways of sin, as well as in the ways of God. Is the work of religion a toilsome work? but do not ye many times weary yourselves to commit iniquity? Is there not as much pain when a sinner deprives himself of his night's rest, racking himself about the world, as when a saint communes with his heart on his bed about eternal things? The sinner travels to bring forth sin, Psa. vii. 14. What more than this at the hard duties of religion! Since he that engages not in the work of religion is cumbered about many things, had he not better take up with the one thing needful? The saint has but one master to serve; sinners have many, not only at war with God, but at war among themselves, one lust dragging them one way, and another another way.

5. The time is coming, when working in the vineyard will be over; and if ye continue to refuse,



fulse, ye know not if ever you will get another offer; "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This day's delay may be an eternal loss, for you may be in eternity before another day. A new refusal is dangerous; God may take you at your word.

6. Our Lord is content yet to invite you to his work, notwithstanding your former refusals; you will still be accepted: "Him that cometh unto me," says Jesus, "I will in nowise cast out."

7. Whatever hardships may be in the work of religion, it is not long ere you shall be freed from them all; you shall be made more than conquerors: "You shall rest from your labours, and your works shall follow you."

*Lastly,* If you will not, then remember death will make you change your mind, and you will get a long eternity to repent that ye did not repent in time. But such a change can then be of no avail, but to increase your misery. Infinitely better, then, will it be for you if this change take place at present; "for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

THE

---

---

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF A WEANED  
DISPOSITION OF SOUL. \*

---

---

S E R M O N . I V .

Pfal. cxxxi. 2. *My soul is even as a weaned child.*

**T**HIS Psalm is David's profession of piety, wherein he discovers what was the habitual bent of his heart, and course of his life. The occasion of it seems to have been the injury done him by Saul and his courtiers, who reproached him as a proud, ambitious, and turbulent man. His comfort is the testimony of his own conscience, which witnessed, 1. The humility of his heart. This kept him from an aspiring temper, and within the bounds of his station. 2. His easiness in any condition with which the Lord was pleased to trye him. God had promised him the kingdom, yet kept him from it long, and that in very hard circumstances; but yet he was easy under it; he was far from that restless itching after a crown, of which his enemies accused him.

In the text, he points out the spring of this easi-

F 3

ness:.

\* Delivered Sabbath afternoon, August 1. 1714.

ness: *My soul is even as a weaned child*: That is, his heart was loosed from those things to which the hearts of men naturally are glewed. There is here, 1. Something supposed, namely, that the day was, when he was sucking the breasts which fallen Adam led all his children to, as well as others; that he was even as fond of them, and could as ill want them, as a child the breast. 2. Something expressed; that now there was a change, the child was weaned, set to another way of living, and could want the breasts. God had taken off his heart from those things on which naturally it was set, and now he fed at God's hand, instead of creatures. He does not speak of willingly forsaking these breasts of his own accord, but he was weaned by the power of grace. Now, this is his comfort against the aspersions of his enemies.—  
From this subject I take this

**DOCTRINE,** That grace makes a weaned soul.

IN discoursing which, I shall inquire,

- I. From what does grace wean the soul?
- II. How is the soul weaned from these things?
- III. What are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?
- IV. Make some practical improvement.

I AM to inquire,

I. From what does grace wean the soul? Grace weans the soul, 1. From the dry breasts of the world. One part of pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James, i. 27. For says John, 1st Ep. ii. 16. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

The

The soul of man is not self-sufficient, and must fetch in its satisfaction from something without itself, seeing it is capable to desire what it hath not to furnish itself with. Our first father Adam did us two ill turns; he led us out of the path of life, not knowing how to get into it again, and so left us with a conscience full of guilt; he led us away from the living God, not knowing how to return to him again, and so left us with a heart full of unsatisfied desires. Hence the poor soul is like the horse-leech, having two daughters crying, Give, give; a restless conscience, and a restless heart, to each of which it must say, as Naomi to Ruth, ch. iii. 1. "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" But, alas! the first way it goes for that, is through dry places, as the devil, when he goes out of a man. For the restless conscience seeks rest in the dry and barren region of the law, Rom. x. 3. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness;" for the restless heart goes to the creatures, saying, Who will shew us any good? The poor soul, like a hungry infant, weeps and cries, shifts about as it can, gaping for something to fill the mouth. The world is nearest, and there it fastens and sucks. The soul has fallen off the breasts of divine consolations, and cannot set itself on again, and therefore takes up with the breasts of the world; but grace takes off the soul again. And,

1. Grace weans the soul from the profits of the world: Heb. xi. 26. "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt." The natural man fixes on them, drinks greedily at the broken cisterns. His hungry heart flies out after them, as a ravenous bird after its prey; he is restless till he get them, as the child  
is

is for the breasts; he is fond of them, when he has them, as the infant plays with the breasts. They say they are become rich, they have found out substance, Hof. xii. 8. But when grace comes, it stops the chace. It makes the bulky vanity, that can only satisfy the fancy of children, and not souls of men, dwindle into nothing.

2. Grace weans the soul from the pleasures of the world. Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and men cannot but seek it; hence God proposes it to the soul in the enjoyment of himself, P<sup>s</sup>al. xvi. 11. "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand are pleasures for evermore." But the soul, instead of going to God for it, to drink at the pure fountain, naturally goes to the muddy streams of it in the world, and there sucks,—is as fond of the lusts of Egypt, flesh, &c. as the Israelites; yea, can as little live without them, as the sucking child without the breast: 2 Tim. iii. 4. "They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." But when grace comes, it makes the soul fall off, and looses the heart from these things.

3. In a word, grace weans the soul from all worldly comforts whatsoever, making it take up its rest in God: Luke, xiv. 6. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The heart of man takes a greedy grip naturally of relations, liberty, life, and such things. These are their good things, which they can no more part with than the child with the breasts. Take these away, what has the man more? He has not a God. He will rather part with God and Christ than these things. But grace puts matters right; it regulates the affection to these things,  
and

and makes the soul ready to give up with them at God's call.

2. Grace weans the soul from the foulsome breasts of sin, so that it loaths that which it loved before. The soul in its natural state is like Israel, Ezek. xvi. 4. "Not cut, neither washed in water to supple them; not salted at all, nor swaddled at all." They had lain long in the foul womb of Egypt, and after they came out, they were still sucking in the Egyptian manners, customs, and abominable courtes. Thus men suck the breasts of sin; they seek satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as desire; they greedily drink of what God forbids them to taste; they are as fond of their sins as a child is of the breast, their hearts are averse to part with their sinful courtes. There is a sweetness in these to their corrupt hearts, which they cannot want. For, let a man go the round of all created lawful gratifications in the world, and squeeze the sap out of them all to satisfy his heart, they are so empty, that he will break over the hedge, to try if forbidden fruits will make up the want which allowed fruits cannot do. But grace weans the heart from these breasts. It makes the person say, "That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more," Job, xxxiv. 32.

## II. How is the soul weaned from these things?

1. Grace lays gall and wormwood upon these breasts, and so embitters them to the soul that it is made willing to give over sucking them. The heart is made loth to part with them; and though it is often about to give up with them, yet it still goes back again, hoping to suck sweeter than before; but still the gall and wormwood lies there, and more and more is laid on till the heart be actually

tually weaned. The way is hedged up with thorns. Hence, "she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now," Hof. ii. 6. 7. Now, there are two things that serve to embitter these breasts. (1.) Continual disappointments from them. Though the man is always seeking satisfaction from them, he can never get it. Like the prodigal, Luke, xv. 16. "He would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." The man is like one in a mist: He sees something, and it appears a house; he comes to it, and it is but a stone. His hope rises again on another view, comes forward to it, and it is but a bush. They fall always short of expectation; and his most blooming hopes are blasted. When he is going to take in the most pleasant fruit, Providence makes it even fall between the hand and the mouth, Hof. ix. 2. "The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Let him make his bed where he will, there is always a *thorn* in it. (2.) Severe wounds arise from them. The man leans with great delight on the broken reed; and ere he is aware, it pierceth through his hand. He sucks eagerly at the breast, and, instead of milk, wrings out blood. When striking the rock for water, instead of it, fire flashes out in his face. Perhaps from the very thing from which he expected his greatest comfort, arises his greatest cross. Rachel must have children, else she dies: She gets them, and dies bringing them forth. But all this will not wean the soul; therefore,

2. The Lord fills the soul with better things: "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it,"

it," Pſal. lxxxix. 10. If the nurſe take away the breaſt, ſhe will not put an empty ſpoon into the child's mouth. The ſoul of man is an empty wavering thing, muſt always have ſomething to feed on; and will hold what it has as good for it, till it get what it counts better. The man will not quit hold of the world and his luſts, till he open his hand to take hold of Chriſt and all the benefits of the everlaſting covenant in their ſtead. Therefore, the great tranſaction of the ſoul with Chriſt is called buying of him, in which if a man gives away his money, he gives it not but for as good, or better. Thus grace weans the ſoul: For, ſaith Jeſus, John, iv. 14. "Whoſoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the water I ſhall give him, ſhall be in him a well of water, ſpringing up into everlaſting life." Hence, two things are evident. (1.) That only the enjoyment of God can wean the ſoul, and the ſoul will never be at reſt till it reſt in God. The heart of man muſt have a match, and will be ranging through' the world for a match, till it meet with Chriſt, who is the pearl of great price; and to gain this, quits with all. The ſoul of man will be a reſtleſs night-walker till the day of grace dawn, and diſcover Jeſus the Plant of Renown. If they cannot work themſelves happy, they will try to dream themſelves happy, and prepare themſelves a feaſt of a thouſand airy nothings; poſſeſſions of the heart, though not of the hand. (2.) That the ſoul will never be looſed away from theſe breaſts. The very dung, and aſſes heads, will be precious in Samaria when there is no bread. Who is there that has not a rational conviction of the world's vanity? yet men throng into the houſe craving a fill. Why is it that men ſo often ſeem to give up with it, and in very deed have ſatisfaction in nothing,



thing, and yet go just back to the same door, where they have got a thousand nay-says, and seemed to have got their last answer? Why, truly the devil is gone out of the house, but it is empty, it is not filled from heaven, and it must not stand empty; therefore, he returns with seven spirits worse than himself.—I shall now inquire,

III. WHAT are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?

The soul is weaned at its first conversion to God. Then it is taken off the breasts; but it is hard work, and tedious. The soul is never perfectly weaned till death. As there is an uneasiness and fretfulness in new weaned children, till thoroughly weaned, so is there in the case of the children of God while here. Hence it is said to them, Psa. xlv. 10. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." So the effects of this disposition are more or less strong, as souls are more or less thoroughly weaned.—I shall notice some of these effects.

1. The weaned soul is a resigned soul: "If any man," said Jesus, Matth. xvi. 24. "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." When the soul is weaned, the long war betwixt our own will and the will of God is at an end, and our will runs captive after the wheels of the Lord's triumphant chariot. The will of the weaned soul is moulded, (1.) To the will of God's commandments. The stony heart is broken, yea, melted down, to receive the impression of whatever is God's will for our duty. Its language is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No right hand, or right eye, more to be spared. They esteem all God's precepts concern-  
ing

ing all things to be right, and they hate every false way, Pſal. cxix. 128. All carnal reasonings, in favour of luſts, muſt yield to the great authority of the Lawgiver. (2.) To the will of his providence. It will no more rally its forces, to decide the queſtion, whether God's will or their will ſhall carry it as to their lot; but as the weaned child is at the nurſe's diſpoſal, ſo will they be at God's. If that which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, they will comply with it as it is. If their lot cannot be brought up to their mind, their mind ſhall be brought down to their lot. Like Paul, "they learn in whatſoever ſtate they are, therewith to be content," Phil. iv. 11.

2. The weaned ſoul is chearful, and not fretful, in its reſignation. He ſays, not only juſt, but "Good is the will of the Lord," Iſa. xxxix. 8. It makes a man carry Chriſt's yoke evenly; for, to go drooping under it, is a ſign of a heart not right weaned. What God does is not only well done, but beſt done; ſo ſays the weaned ſoul.

3. The weaned ſoul ſtands on other grounds, when created comforts are with him, and even when created ſtreams are running full: He draws his ſupport in both caſes from God as the fountain. Such ſay, like Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1. "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord;" and with David, Pſal. xviii. 46. "The Lord liveth, and bleſſed be my rock: and let the God of my ſalvation be exalted." The world's good things ſhall not be their good things. They will love them as a friend, but not be wedded to them as a huſband. They will uſe them as a ſtaff, but not build upon them as a pillar.

4. The weaned ſoul will ſtand without them when theſe are gone, for they were not the props on which his houſe reſted. Such a ſoul can adopt

the prayer of Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17. 18. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be found in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Ah! that soul is in a sad case, whose comfort waxeth and weaneth, just according to the waxing and weaning of created comforts; is satisfied or starved, just according as these breasts are full or empty. Thus many lose all spirit and life in religion, when God takes away their worldly comforts.

5. The weaned soul uses ~~created~~ comforts passingly. They follow the directions of Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. 31. "That both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." The greedy grip the heart takes of these things, in the use of them, is a sad sign of an unweaned soul. It was the sin of the old world, they were eating and drinking like beasts. The weaned soul will do in these like the dogs of Egypt, who run when they lap the water of the Nile, for fear of the crocodiles.

6. The weaned soul casts itself upon the Lord, without carnal anxiety, as the weaned child depends on the mother's care. This seems partly aimed at in the text. The soul is easy, not on a sensible prospect, but on the faith of the promise. They are "careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their  
their

their requests be made known to God," Phil. iv. 6.

*Lastly*, The weaned soul strives to starve, but never to provide for their lusts. These are the suckers, which, the more they are satisfied, just the more they crave. They have much to do who have these to feed.

IV. It remains to make some practical improvement. And,

1. In an use of information. This shews us, (1.) Who they are that have met with Christ, and been feasted at this communion: Even those whose souls are now like a weaned child. Are your hearts turned to loath your lusts, weaned from sucking the dry breasts of the world, and ye must have your food from heaven? then the Lord is not sending you away empty. (2.) Your hearts are not right with God, while they are not weaned. If no weaning influences have reached your hearts, no gracious influences have. You will be nothing the better of this communion; nay, it is like you will be the worse of it; if you get not your hearts weaned on this occasion, your lusts will be more rampant after this; like the child that is most fond of the breast after it has been long away from it.

2. Use of exhortation. I exhort you to labour to get a weaned soul. To urge you to this, I would propose the following motives. (1.) How sad is it that a heaven-born soul should be held at such fulsome breasts as those fleshly lusts are, at such empty breasts as those of the world are! Is there not better food, and more plentiful, set before you, even Christ himself, and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant? Leave those to the swine, and let your precious souls eat that which is good.

(2.) Your souls will never get satisfaction there. You shall as soon fill your hands with the wind, or grasp your arms full of dreams and shadows, as fill your souls at the dry breasts of the world. It is spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. (3.) They are altogether unsuitable to your souls. The soul is spiritual, they are earthly things; your souls are immortal, they are perishing; and ye can no more feed on them to thrive, than fishes on meadows; nor on the breasts of your lusts, no more than salt water will quench thirst. (4.) A weaned soul would make you very easy. The man that has it, can never be miserable, meet with what he will. The heaviest cross would be very light, if eased of the overweight an unweaned soul lays upon it. What is the rise of so much uneasiness, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing, and being exceeding glad to have it, are exceeding sorry to part with it. It would make you easy to others also. (5.) An unweaned soul is the root of apostacy: It will expose you to many temptations, and may carry you off from the way of the Lord altogether. It will make you a reproach to religion; and it had been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you, 2 Pet. ii. 21. If ye go back, ye shall not feed on <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>leaf</sup> so cheap a rate as before. (6.) A weaned soul will fit you for suffering; and you have need of it, when the work of God is in such danger. It will keep you safe in times of trial, when others, glued to the world and lusts, will turn their backs. (7.) It will fit you for communion with God, and you shall have it. The manna fell when the provision brought from  
Egypt

Egypt was done. *Lastly*, It will fit you for heaven ; and there you shall be filled.

In conclusion, Study the mortification of your lusts. What need for these things, if you had not living lusts to feed on them ? Feed on Christ and spiritual things. Take him instead of that which the world and lusts offer. Amen.

---

---

THE DANGER OF NOT WAITING ON GOD  
AFTER THE DUE ORDER. \*

---

---

S E R M O N V.

1 CHRON. xv. 13.—*For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.*

**T**HE ark of God having been brought from Kirjathjearim, and left at the house of Obededom, upon the account of the death of Uzza, whom God smote, God blessed that man and his house, where the ark was. The news of this coming to David's ears, he resolves again to attempt the bringing of the ark into his own city, 2 Sam. vi. 12. In this transaction, observe, 1. That the fear of mis-managing a duty may sometimes prevail so far with the people of God, as to make them lay by the duty for a time. David had seen how dear a rash touch of the ark had cost Uzzah; so, says he, 2 Sam. vi. 9. "How shall the ark of the Lord come  
come

• Delivered 2d August 1707.

come unto me?" The fear of God, by reason of corruption, easily degenerates into a slavish fear, which cuts the sinews of holy endeavours, and leaves people neither heart nor hand for the work.

2. Lay by duty who will, God will always have some that will take it up. If David have no will for the ark to be with him, Obed-edom will entertain it. Many, in our day, turn their backs on Christ and his service; shut their hearts against himself, and their houses against his worship; but God will always have some that will put their shoulders to his work. 3. They are great fools that lay aside duty. They stand in the way of their own mercy, and deprive themselves of that blessing that attends the service of the Lord. 4. The people of God, when they take up duty again, will see themselves the greater fools that ever they laid it by. Well, David being resolved on the work, proceeds with great caution and circumspection, as we see in the verses preceding that of our reading: The reason of all which we have in the text.

In which words there is, 1. An old story brought fresh to mind: *The Lord our God made a breach upon us.* The stroke reached Uzzah, and cut him off, while all the rest were safe; yet the holy man looks on that as a stroke to the whole congregation. 2. There is the cause of the stroke: The stroke was dreadful and astonishing, but the holy man lays not the blame on God, but on themselves, and so justifies God. The sin of the Levites was the cause of the stroke: *For because ye did not at the first,* namely, sanctify yourselves when ye first began to remove the ark from Kirjathjearim. They did not sanctify and prepare themselves, by solemn prayer and services, in consideration of God's will, as to the way of carrying



rying the ark: As if he had said, We have smarted already by your carelessness, beware of it therefore at this time. The sin of all the congregation, wherein he takes in himself among the rest, also produced the stroke; and that because it was his and the people's duty to have been acquainted with the word of the Lord; and the oversight of the Levites did not excuse them.— We sought him, indeed, bringing the ark, the symbol of God's presence, from the place where it was, to be in the midst of us; but our way of doing marred all. It was God's ordinance that the ark should be carried on the Levites shoulders, Numb. iv. 15. and vii. 9.; but the Philistines had put it on a cart. God did not punish them for this transgression, and this emboldened Israel to follow their example: But they learned by sad experience, that God would not bear that in the one, which he did in the other.—From this subject, I take this

**DOCTRINE,** God is highly displeas'd with persons who perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

IN discoursing which, I shall shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons.

III. Why is the Lord so highly displeas'd?

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I AM to shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties,

ties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

1. Because to perform duty is the easiest part of religion, but to do it in a right manner is very difficult; and few people have a heart to manage the difficulties of religion. Ease is sweet; and in other things we see it very ordinary for men to take what is most easy, instead of what is most profitable. It is an easy thing to think, to hear, to eat bread, and drink wine; but to plough up our corruptions, to engage in good earnest in the service of God, and to get the heart in a case for fellowship with Christ, is not easy, and sloth prevails.

2. Because the bare performance of duties is within the reach of all, the performing of them in a right manner is beyond the reach of the most part. Natural abilities will serve for the one, gracious abilities are necessary for the other. John xv. 5. "I (said Jesus) am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; *for without me ye can do nothing.*" "By faith (says Paul, Heb. xi. 4.) Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." Grace, you see, is necessary, and grace is very rare. A natural man is conjured within the circle of self, beyond it he cannot move; this is his principle, and this is his end. Nature cannot carry a man above itself, more than the mouth of a river can be higher than the spring-head. This, then, mars all, so that the service can no more be acceptable to God, than a man sowing his master's ground with his own seed, to reap it for himself.

3. By the bare performance of duties, men attain

tain the base and low ends which they propose to themselves in the service of God; namely, (1.) Peace of mind, such as it is. The consciences of some are but half awakened; thus a little thing quiets them, even the external performance of duties; but should these neglect duties altogether, they could have no peace. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw men to the outside of duties, namely, to be seen of men, and to have glory of men, as our Saviour expresses it, Matth. vi. 1. 2. It is to them no small matter to have a name to live; to be called good is affected by such as are at no pains to be good.

What shall we say of those that will set about duties, and attend sacraments, even while they are sure that they will be mocked and reproached for it by the wicked? *Ans.* It is good, in so far as they are carried over these things: For, alas! there are some so pitifully weak, that they will be blown over with the wind of the mouth of the wicked. A broad laugh, or silly taunt, out of the mouth of the profane, is an unanswerable argument against religion and seriousness, to some who are in the cause of Christ like silly doves without heart. Such as are thus chargeable are very inconsiderate; Christ gives a solemn warning to them, Mark, viii. 38. "Whosoever, therefore, 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 the holy angels." We doubt not but a hypocrite may come this length. We do not wonder if even a miser, a covetous wretch, part with his money to buy land; neither need we wonder if a hypocrite should sacrifice credit among the profane, to gain credit among the

the godly. He does but as a man on a ladder's tread on the lower step to win to the higher.

4. Because men may get duties done, and keep their lusts too. For instance, they may go to a communion-table one day, and the next to the table of devils. But to perform duties in a right manner, is inconsistent with peace with our lusts : Pfal. lxi. 18. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Hence, over the belly of an express commandment, people will venture to the Lord's table without self-examination, or at least without searching to the quick. They cannot, however, communicate aright without a due attention to it. No, indeed. Says the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 28. " But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Many, notwithstanding, can communicate without it, and keep their lusts too; here is the hellish advantage. There are secret lusts, which the man is unwilling to disturb, therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

5. Because most men have low and mean thoughts of God, Mal. i. 6.—8. " A son honour-eth his father, and a servant his master : If, then, I be a father, where is mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name : and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name ? Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar ; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee ? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil ? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ? saith the Lord of hosts." It is not every one that knows the Lord.

**Lord.** Many men worship they know not what, and therefore they offer him for worship they care not what. . If men had awful apprehensions of that God whom they worship, as a God greatly to be "feared in the assembly of the faints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him," Pſal. lxxxix. 7. doubtless they would see, that there is none in heaven or earth like him, and they would worship him in another manner.—Therefore the apostle, to engage men to take care how they perform duties, says, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28. 29.

I AM now to shew,

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons.—He does so,

1. By withdrawing from them in religious services: "Son of man," says God by Ezekiel, chap. xi. 3. "these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them?" And by Hosea he says, ch. v. 4. "The spirit of whoredom is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." It is granted, ordinances are the galleries wherein the King is held, they are the trysting-places where Christ meets with his people; but if they be not gone about in a right manner, they will be but an empty sepulchre: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The living God is not to be found in a dead worship; when men withdraw their hearts from the service of God, then he withdraws himself from them; and it is but sorry entertainment a man can have at this feast, when the Master goes away.

2. By

2. By rejecting their services, Mal. i. 13. "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord." God will not accept of such duties, whatever pains men may take about them, Isa. i. 11. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord." It is better to go halting on in the right way, than to be going straight in the way of error: "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city," Eccles. x. 15. It may well be applied to the duties of some, what is said, Hab. ii. 13. "The people shall labour in the fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." To labour in the fire signifies great pains, and great disappointments; they work in the midst of scorching flames, and what they do produce consumes between their fingers, they get no good of it.

3. By spiritual strokes upon their souls. There is a curse denounced against them, Jer. xlviii. 10. "Curfed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully;" and Mal. i. 14. "But curfed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." This will pierce the soul; and they are of two sorts: (1.) They are deadening strokes; these are silent blows, arrows that fly without noise from the hand of an angry God into the soul: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed," Isa. vi. 10. Sometimes men are like Saul among

VGL. I.

H

the

the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked on the head, it may be on a communion-Sabbath, and from that time God answers them not. Many are sprightly professors for a while, but at length God is so provoked, that their hearts are deadened, their affections withered, their consciences stupified, their souls blasted, and they are then prepared to be pruned off, and cast over the hedge. (2.) Quickening strokes, whereby the man's name is changed; he is Mager-Missabib. The conscience is made like mount Sinai, where nothing but thunder, lightening, and the sound of the trumpet, are to be heard. God takes the filthy rags of their lifeless duties, wraps them in brimstone, and then sets them on fire about the sinner's ears; so that, like the house built upon the sand, to which the man betook himself for shelter, the whole falls into ruins. As to this, you will observe what the prophet declares, Hof. v. 11.—14. "Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgement; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear, and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him."

4. By strokes upon their bodies. Sometimes the Lord has mingled his people's blood with their sacrifices. Thus he did with Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1. 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear: "The Lord smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men," 1 Sam. vi. 19. Uzzah, taking hold of  
the

the ark, was struck dead, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells, 1 Cor. xi. 30. that for profaning the Lord's supper, "many (among the Corinthians) were weak and sickly, and many sleep," that is, were dead. One dies before his time, even in his strength; another falls sick, it may be after a communion. At communions there is a great throng; perhaps one has got a thrust, another has caught cold, but unworthy communicating has more often done the deed.—I shall inquire,

### III. WHY is the Lord so highly displeas'd?

1. Because God commands his service to be done in a right manner. The matter and right manner of performing duties are, in the command of God, linked together. He will have his service well done, as well as really done. We must serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if we seek him, he will be found of us; but if we forsake him, he will cast us off for ever, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to oblige their servants, not only to do their work, but to do it so and so; and though they do the thing itself, yet if not in the manner required, it cannot be accepted. So they brought the ark, but they brought it on a cart, which was opposite to the command, for it should have been on the shoulders of the Levites; and therefore their service was rejected with vengeance.

2. Because the doing of a duty in a wrong manner alters the nature of it, and makes it sin. Hence the plowing of the wicked is sin. Hence prayer is accounted a howling on their bed, Hof. vii. 14. And unworthy communicating is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. If a house be built of never



so strong timber and good stones, yet if it be not well-founded and right built, the inhabitant may curse the day he came under the roof of it.

3. Because duties not performed according to the right order, are but the half of the service we owe to God, and the worst half too. The Jews had it written about the doors of their synagogues, "Prayer without intention is as a body without a soul." A skeleton of bones without the flesh would have been a very abominable sacrifice to have laid upon God's altar; no less abominable are our services, when the heart is not engaged, and when the soul is not lifted up to God: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John, iv. 24.

*Lastly*, Because duties thus performed are very dishonourable to God. See again, Mal. i. 6.—8. Now, God is a holy God, and will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified, Lev. x. 3. He is a jealous God in the matter of his worship, Josh. xxiv. 18.

IV. I AM now to make a practical improvement. And this,

1. In an use of information. We may hence see what a mercy it is that we have a pure worship amongst us at this day; a worship, neither defiled by idolatry, nor corrupted by superstition, but after the divine order, according to the pattern shewn on the mount. It is dangerous to join in a way of worship not warranted by the word of God.

2. Let this fill us with a holy reverence of God when we approach his presence in this venerable ordinance, Psal. lxxxix. 7. Let us know and remember, that the God with whom we have to do is a heart-searching, holy, and jealous God, who will

will not hold them guiltless that profane his ordinances. Was he so displeas'd with Belshazzar, for abusing the vessels of the temple? how much more with us, if we profane the symbols of the body and blood of his Son! The danger is great, both for soul and body. But there are two sorts that are ready to abuse this. (1.) The stiff-necked careless sinner will cloak his contempt of communicating, and his sloth, with this: 'If it be so, then we will do best not to meddle with it.' But, O Sirs! is there not an odds between rushing on the sacrament, and forsaking it? Assure yourselves this contempt of the sacrament is damning. God can reach a blow to you, though ye stand far off from his table; and so much the more, that you slight this love-token of a dying Lord. (2.) The poor broken-hearted sinner will be ready to drink up discouragement from this, fearing that he may be the person on whom the Lord will make the breach. But, poor soul! I would say to thee, Where wilt thou be safe, if thou keepest thyself without the ranges? the sword of the Lord may overtake thee there, for the neglect of your duty. Therefore come, though trembling, venture thyself at his feet; acknowledge, that if he should make thee a monument of his justice, he is most just, thou deservest it. A trembling hand may receive a pardon. Be diligent to prepare thyself; and when thou hast done all, lay no stress on any thing, but flee to Christ, and get him between an offended God and thy soul. Dry stubble may be safe before a consuming fire, if there be a crystal wall between it and the fire.

I conclude with exhorting all that intend to sit down at the Lord's table to-morrow, to take heed how ye communicate. I would urge you to do it in the right order. Ye have heard the danger of

an opposite conduct ; this may be sufficient under this. Another motive is, that duty done in a right manner, and that only, has the blessing connected with it ; mark Matth. xxiv. 26. " Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." A man may pray a thousand times, and never be heard ; go from one communion to another, and never be sealed ; one sincere groan from the heart will do more than all these. If ye mismanage this sacrament, your souls may get such a stain that they will never cast again ; and if ye manage it rightly, ye may get such a taste of the goodness of the Lord as ye never got before. With this view, see that you be right as to your state ; that you be the friends of the Bridegroom, or you have no right to sit down at the marriage-feast. It is not the due order, for persons dead in sin to sit down at the table of our Lord ; it is an ordinance only for those who are quickened, and made spiritually alive ; it is the children's bread, and therefore they only, who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, have a right to it. Endeavour to be in a right frame ; to have grace in exercise ; a holy hunger, faith, repentance, and love. It is not enough that you have oil in your lamps, you must also have your lamps trimmed, and the oil burning. Your graces must be in exercise. If this be your state, and this be your frame, then surely it will be good for you to draw near to God at his own table : " They that thus wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, run, and not be weary, walk and not faint."

THE

---

---

THE PERFECTION OF PROVIDENTIAL DIS-  
PENSATIONS. \*



---

S E R M O N VI.

PSAL. xviii. 30.—*As for God, his <sup>way</sup> work is perfect.*

**T**HE Psalmist by this time had followed the Lord through many a deep step, and he had endured various troubles. Here, in the text, he looks back on these ways in which the Lord had led him, and gives his verdict as to them: *As for God, &c.* In the words there is,

1. A magnificent preface: *As for God.* He stands up here in his defence against an ungodly world, to justify his proceedings: *As for God, I that have tried his way can speak to his commendation.*

2. What of God he commends: *His way.* There is a twofold way. (1.) That wherein men walk to and with God.—Personal; Christ, who is the way to the Father:—Real; holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. None of these are here meant. (2.) The way wherein God walks with

\* Delivered July 16. 1709.

with men, the way of his providences, his dispensations, the way he takes with men in disposing of them.

3. The commendation is *perfect*; there is no flaw in that way. Be his dispensation never so hard, there can be no fault really observed in them by the most discerning eye; they are faultless. These words afford us this

**DOCTRINE,** That the dispensations of providence are altogether perfect and faultless, however they appear to our carnal hearts.

In illustration I shall,

I. Take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

II. Inquire in what respects the way of God is perfect.

III. Confirm the point.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM to take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

1. The reason of dispensations not seen. The design of Providence lies oftentimes hid, and it is no easy matter to discover it: "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known," Psa. lxxvii. 19. The Lord leads the man, and he knows not where; therefore corruption is ready to storm at this, and disdains to follow the Lord, unless he will tell him what way he is going; but the fault is in the eye, not in the way. Time is big with the discovery, but must go a while before it is brought forth: Acts, x. 17. "Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean,

mean, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." John, 13. 6. 7. "Then cometh Jesus to Simon Peter; and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." When the spectacles of faith are on, no fault appears.

2. Providence seeming to forget the promises, and the word seeming to miscarry. Then we are ready to say, as in Jer. xv. 18. "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Abraham thought he saw this fault, and he would take a way of his own to rectify it. But though the promise tarried, yet it was accomplished, for Isaac, and not Ishmael, was to be his heir. Fools haste is no speed.

3. Providence going cross to the promises, his works to his word, pulling down with the one hand what he seemed to be building up with the other. Thus it appeared, when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, Gen. xxii. So also it was when God threatened to cut short the days of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 1. But there is no fault here yet; wait the end, as in these instances; they are but raw travellers, who think that the way lies always even forward; the way in the wilderness is often crooked.

4. Providence running, as it seems, quite contrary to the design of it. Many times the Lord has a design on foot for the good of his church and people; but a continued tract of disappointments cross it more and more, till the very grave-stone seems to be laid upon it. Thus it was with Joseph, when

when he was put into the dungeon. But what fault is there here, more than when the sun sets to make it darker and darker, till day-break. Stay till the dawning of the design. Oftentimes providence reads best backwards: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36.

5. Providence laying aside the most likely means. But where is the fault here? for if he lay aside these means; he will accomplish his designs by other means, and what though they be unlikely? 'This stumbled the world,' 1 Cor. i. 23. 24. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Naaman in distress stumbled at the unlikeliness of the means prescribed by the prophet for the cure of his leprosy, 2 Kings, v. 11. The disciples of Jesus also stumbled, and judged the death of Christ a very unlikely mean of leading him and them to glory; and they had the same opinion of his ascension, John, xvi. 6. 7. Men have their own ways; they will needs think that they know best what is good for them. But God knows that his people are not good chusers of their own lot, and Sovereignty will have a latitude.

6. Providence falling on means quite contrary to the design of it. But what the worse was the blind man that he was cured with clay put upon his eyes? The Lord works healing by wounding, and comfort by tears. The earthquake, the troubling of the waters, the dungeon of Joseph, the den of Daniel, the whale of Jonah, yea, we know, that "all things work together for good to them  
that

that love God, and are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

7. Wicked godless men getting the sunny-side of the brae, walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiles, that never an ill turn almost misgives in their hand. This made Asaph stammer, Psal. lxxiif. 12.—14. "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." It shook Jeremiah, chap. xii. 1. 2. But there is no fault in this, that the sun of prosperity rises on the wicked: "For when the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they may be destroyed for ever," Psal. xcii. 7. The sun rose fair on Sodom that very day on which it was destroyed; all Israel followed Absalom; Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord; Haman finds all things going to his wish. But see the end of all these things!

8. Astonishing strokes lighting on those that are most dear to God. Ecclef. viii. 14. "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked." Eli's sons are slain, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. The two sons of Aaron die at the altar. How numerous were the afflictions that came upon Job! But where is the fault here? Christ's cross to a child of God is better than the world's crown, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10.

9. Great afflictions meeting the Lord's people in the way of duty. This was Jacob's case in many instances. He was in the way God bade him go, yet he met with many trials and afflictions. It



It hath been so also with many of the Lord's people in all ages. But the Lord has his holy ends in these things; he shews them that they are sinful creatures; though they are in his way, tries their faith and patience, and makes way for higher experiences. — I am,

II. To shew in what respects the way of God is perfect.

1. All the dispensations of providence are exactly according to the pattern shewn in the word. If you would know wherein a man has exactly built a house, look to the draught given him. Meet with what we will, all may be reduced to, and explained by, scripture-doctrines, prophecies, promises, threatenings, or examples.

2. They are exactly suited to the necessities of his people, and to the designs of them. God weighs every grain of sand which he puts in our glasses; he will never put in too little, nor too much; nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. Deut. xxxii. 4. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgement; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

3. In respect of the times of them. Nothing too soon done, nor too late; all fall out in their proper season, determined in the unchangeable council of God.

4. In respect of its stability. Our ways are unstable, and that is a great fault; but God's ways are not so. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. There will always be a crook in our lot. That is sure, and we could not walk even without it. — I shall,

III. CONFIRM the point. Consider,

1. That the saints in their experience see this.  
They

They readily and fully acknowledge it: **Hosea, xiv. 9.** "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." This is their unanimous vote when in a right mood, and will be so in heaven, when the web is out. Then will they say, "He hath done all things well."

2. That they are all the product of infinite holiness, which can do nothing wrong.

3. That they are all directed, as well as contrived, by infinite wisdom, which knows best how to frame matters.—It remains that,

#### IV. I MAKE some practical improvement, in

1. An use of information. Are the dispensations of providence all right? Then, (1.) If any thing be wrong with us, we may see where the fault lies, not in God, but in ourselves, **Job, x.** The oar he rolls his vessel with is in the waters of affliction, and therefore we think the oar is crooked; but that is our misjudging of God. (2.) That we should justify God in the harshest dispensations, give him the glory, even when we walk on the mountains of darkness. Providence will abide a look of the most piercing impartial eye. But when the eye is infected, it will take up things in their wrong colours.

2. Of comfort to the people of God, whatever providences they meet. Be they never so dark, be they never so little understood by them, yet they are all right and faultless. God does not distribute favours to them by guess, but by measure and weight.

3. Of reproof to those who censure, murmur, and quarrel, with the dispensations of providence.

This is, (1.) To accuse God of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world that he has made. O how often fall we into this, as if we could have ordered better than Providence has done. Murmuring will step up, and correct the escapes of infinite wisdom. (2.) Of injustice, as if he were too hard upon his creatures, that deserve better at his hand. For why would people murmur at their right and due? (3.) Of impotency, as if he could not take away our crosses as easily as he brings them on, or could not make them work for our good.

*Lastly,* Of exhortation. Let all of us, especially the Lord's people, be exhorted to submit and stoop to sovereignty, be our lot in the world what it will. There is none want their own crosses. Every one has some burden or another to bear; and if we would in truth come after Christ, we are enjoined "to take up our cross, and follow him."

FEAR

---

---

FEAR AND HOPE, OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE  
COMPLACENCY.\*

---

S E R M O N VII.

PSAL. cxlvii. 11.—*The Lord taketh pleasure in them  
that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*

**T**H**ERE** are times of danger in which the event is very doubtful, but even then the safety and success will always be on the side the Lord casts them. In consequence, it is an important question, How may we engage him on our side? Certain it is, his pleasure lies not in created strength. Horse and foot, courage and strength, may be on the side which God will disown, and which shall be worsted: "By strength," says he, "shall no man prevail," 1 Sam. ii. 9. His pleasure is in the strength of grace: "He will keep the feet of his faints;" or, as it is expressed in the text, *The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.*—In which words we have,

I 2

1. The

\* Delivered July 27. 1718.

1. The character of those whose part the Lord will take in all their trials and troubles, and in all their encounters with their enemies. The first part of their character is, they are *fearers of God*. They have the awe of his majesty upon their spirits.—The second is, that they hope *in*, or rather *for* his mercy. They, in a becoming manner, wait and patiently seek for relief from God, and that in the way of mercy through Christ, not for any thing in themselves.—Observe next the the mixture of these parts of their character: They do not only fear God, but hope in him; for fear without hope will sink into raging despair. They not only hope, but fear, for hope without fear will turn into presumption. These two God hath joined together, let not us put them asunder.

2. The privileges of these persons, whoever may be displeased with them, and however much they may be displeased with themselves, God takes pleasure in them. He accepts their persons, and their services, and he will shew himself to be on their side. They shall not hope in vain; however ~~hope-~~less their case be in itself, they shall get a merciful relief in due time.

From these words, observe this

**DOCTRINE,** The Lord takes pleasure in those, who, whatever case they be in, entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy.

IN discoursing which, it is intended,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy.

II. To describe that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases, along with this holy fear.

III.

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope in all cases together in the soul.

IV. To shew what is that pleasure the Lord takes in such.

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text.

VI. To make a practical improvement of the different parts of the subject.

I AM, then,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy. This fear of God is,

1. An awe and dread of his majesty and transcendent greatness: Psa. lxxxix. 6. 7. "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence of all them that are about him." With this the lightness and vanity of the heart is to be repressed. The soul must entertain high and honourable thoughts of God, as a sovereign of independent being, in whom all perfections do concenter, must look up to the clouds and behold him on his throne in heaven, and so bring itself thereby to a profound reverence of his greatness.

2. A reverence of his absolute, his unlimited authority and power: "Fear *him*," said Jesus, "who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him," Luke xii. 5.; he can command us whatsoever he will, and dispose of us as he pleaseth. Let us have a reverential regard to the uncontrollable sceptre he sways over all creatures. Since he doth in heaven and in earth what seemeth good unto him, and none can stay

his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? we should silently submit to his disposals.

3. A fear of offending him in any thing : Psa. iv. 4. "Stand in awe, and sin not." This is a fear, and caution, and circumspection, which we should always carry about and never lay aside. We walk amidst many snares ; Satan and a corrupt heart are ready to entangle us ; but God cannot away with sin ; it is the only offence we can give him. He is well pleased to see us afraid of offending him, to see the poor sinner affrighted at every thing that is provoking to him, and keeping up a holy tenderness this way.

4. A fear of imputing iniquity to him, or harbouring hard and unbecoming thoughts of his majesty, Job, i. 22. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." The proud heart casting off the fear of God, arraigns and condemns the conduct of holy Providence as rigorous and unrighteous ; and so murmurs against the Lord. But holy fear silenceth the mutiny of these unruly passions, and says, "He does all things well, is holy and righteous in all his ways and works."

5. A dread of going out of his way for help, however hard the case be : Isa. viii. 13. 14. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread ; and he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel ; for a gin and for a snare, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be taken." Holy fear takes off the wheels of the chariot of impatience and un sanctified haste, which drives furiously to get out of that case in which infinite wisdom has placed us. The soul dare not  
adventure

adventure to shake off the yoke, till the Lord p  
to his own hand and take it off.

*Lastly*, A dread of his holy hand in his judgements: Amos, iii. 8. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" - This fear keeps the heart from flight thoughts of them, and furnishes awful thoughts of a finiting God, the weight of whose hand no man is able to bear. And there is here a dread of the hand of the Lord lying on their person for the past: Heb. xii. 5. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." The man noticeth the stroke, and what impressions of anger are engraven on it, and so he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope, Lam. iii. 29. Whatever he meets with, he takes it as from the Lord, and reverenceth the hand that smiteth.— There is, (2.) A dread of what the Lord may inflict upon him: Psal. cxix. 120. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements." The fearer of the Lord sees, that whatever be his stroke, it is less than his deserving. They say as Ezra, chap. ix. 13. "Thou, our God, has punished less than our iniquities deserve;" and therefore submit themselves, lest the Lord make the stroke greater, and punish us seven times more.  
—Let us now,

II. DESCRIBE that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases along with this holy fear. It is,

I. A firm persuasion of the good, gracious, and bountiful nature of God, who delights not in the misery of his creatures: Psal. xxv. 8 "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Ezek. xviii. 23. "Have I any pleasure  
2 at



at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" God is the fountain of all goodness to be found in man or angel, and so is himself a boundless ocean of goodness. He loves to have poor sinners entertaining these kindly thoughts of him. And well may they do so, even under hard pressures, for God lays not on man more than is meet or right, Job. xxiv. 23.; and even this he does with a kind of holy reluctance, for "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," Lam. iii. 33.

2. A hope of mercy to all their unrighteousness, through Christ. This is the great hope, called the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. For it is the main hope purchased by Christ to lost sons of Adam, and held forth to them in the gospel, Heb. viii. 12. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." To cast away this hope, is at once to throw dishonour on the mercy of the Father, and the blood of the Son, and the efficacy of his Spirit; to cast it away, is to please Satan, and to ruin our own souls.

3. A hope of good by their afflictions, trials, and troubles: Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It is the Lord's ordinary way to bring his people nearer him by afflictions: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word," Psal cxix. 67.; yea, by this way, also, does he bring in those that are strangers to him, Hosea, v. 15. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their afflictions they will seek me early." When the Lord will not use a rod upon a person, that

that is a terrible sign; but there is always hope when the Lord is at pains with a rod; and to hope for this good, is the way to advance it.

4. A hope of support and protection under their afflictions: Heb. xiii. 5, 6. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The Lord can carry persons through deep waters, and yet keep them from sinking, for he is the lifter up of the head. However high the waters swell, they are still under the check of him whom the winds and the seas obey. The everlasting arms underneath, though not seen in the time, secure the sinner from sinking to the ground, and bring him safe ashore. Now, faith and hope is the way to bring in that support.

5. A hope of seasonable relief, or having such deliverance in due time, as shall be best for God's honour and their good: Psal. xlii. 5. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." The Lord has many ways of giving relief from trouble. Sometimes he makes the storm blow off, and restores a calm; sometimes he hides them in the grave, and gives them a blessed exchange, for an afflicted life in this world, a joyful happy life in another world. It becomes us to hope for his mercy, in whatever way he may send it: Heb. x. 35. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."

6. A hope of eternal life in a better world: 1 Pet. i. 13. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, (for what?), for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Those hopes will never

ver please God that are confined to the things of this world. He has provided and offers better things to poor sinners; there is a hope laid up for us in heaven, Col. i. 5. While that hope remains firm and well grounded, happy is the soul, whatever be its case; and since he offers it, and makes it over to whosoever will embrace Christ, that hope should never be cast away while we are here.

7. A waiting for the mercy needed and desired: Psal. xxvii. 14. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." The hoping soul will wait for God, and bear till his time come, however long it may seem to be. He hath the times and seasons in his own hand. He knows what is the fittest time for giving a mercy, and we must leave it in his own hand, and wait on him: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience, till he receive the former and the latter rain; be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

*Lastly*, All this hope is to be grounded only on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, and the precious promises of the word, held forth to us in him, 1 Pet. i. 13. quoted already. Therefore it is called hope for his mercy: "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psal. cxix. 49. If hope be founded on any work or merit in ourselves, or be not bounded by the promise, that is to say, if we hope for what God has not promised, then it cannot be pleasing to him; so that this hope follows faith's embracing Christ in the gospel, and resigning the soul to the Lord; which being done, hope goes and stands upon the watch-tower, to behold and wait for

for all promised good things coming with Christ from God in due time to the soul.—We now proceed,

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope together in all cases.—They are necessary to keep an even balance in the soul at all times, ready to fall either to the one hand or the other. God's voice to us is, Isa. xxx. 21. "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." But, O! how apt are we to go off the road, especially if we are obliged to traverse the mountains of darkness and affliction, of desertion and temptation. But this fear and hope will hedge us on every hand, that we turn not to the right hand or to the left; whereas, if either be wanting, there is a wide gape, at which we will readily fall into the mire.—But more particularly,

1. They keep the soul from splitting on rocks on both hands. We are in this world as on a sea, therefore had need to take care. The way we pass is beset with two dangerous rocks; one on the left, *despair*, where thousands split; another on the right, *presumption*, where ten thousands have been shipwrecked; some fall on them in a dead calm, they are fearless and careless, and ere they are aware they dash on the rock of presumption, and go to the bottom: Job, xxi. 13. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." To others a storm arises, they are tossed, grow hopeless, and then split on the rock of despair. Whereas holy fear would carry us safe by the one, and kindly hope by the other, whatever storms blow: "Which hope," says Paul, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast,

stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil," Heb. vi. 19.

2. They keep the heart in a due mean between carnal security and torturing anxiety. Holy fear keeps men awake, while fearless souls are sleeping within the sea-mark of wrath, not knowing when a wave may come and sweep them away. They may be saying, like the rich man, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine rest; eat, drink, and be merry. But God may then say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke, xii. 19. 20. Kindly hope composes the heart, and calms the disturbed spirit, while others destitute of it are tormenting themselves. Fear keeps from soaring too high, hope from sinking too low.

3. They keep notably to the duty of praying, which is necessary in all cases, and is a messenger often to be sent to heaven, especially in times of trouble: Psa. l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Fear stirs up to the duty, hope draws to it. Fear fills the soul with reverence for God, and makes it to be in deep earnest in its addresses; hope guards it against terror and confusion in its applications to the throne. Fear carries off presumptuous confidence; but hope makes it hang upon mercy and grace.

4. They help on patience and resignation to the will of God, without which no man is master of himself: Luke, xxi. 19. "In your patience possess your souls." Hope looks for better things, a calm after a storm; fear tells us, such a stroke, ill carried, may bring on a worse. Thus the soul is in a holy manner both flattered and frightened into contentment with its lot. Thus it is kept from despising the chastening of the Lord, which many do, with  
their

their natural courage, and from fainting under his rebukes, as weak-hearted ones are liable to.

*Lastly*, They arm us on every hand against our adversary the devil: James, iv. 7. "Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There are two things, one of which the devil drives at continually: Either, (1.) To go forward with all ease in the way of sin; for, says the liar, there is no hazard; and thus whole shoals of sinners go on to the pit. But the fear of God will repel this temptation. Or, (2.) Not to offer to return to God, or go to Christ; for, says the murderer, there is no hope. But the kindly hope repels this. By this last he attacks the awakened sinner, and by the former the secure one. Whatever be your case, then, get your souls possessed of this kindly hope and holy fear. Beware of quitting either hope or fear. Are you at ease, and your hope great? O balance it with fear, lest, having too much sail without ballast, ye suddenly be overcast and overwhelmed. Are you in trouble, and your fears great? O buoy up your souls with hope, lest ye sink altogether. For motives, consider,

1. The want of any of them makes you a prey to your grand enemy, 1 Peter, v. 8. "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith." Which ever of the avenues of the soul stand open, the enemy will enter by it; and once he get in, you know not what havock he may make there. Are you fearless? he will have his snares fitted for that case. Are you hopeless? be sure he will take his advantage of it.

2. The safety of the soul in this sinful and ensnaring world depends on your entertaining both. The mariner may easier sail the ocean without

his compass, the blind man go over his heights and depths without his guide, than you go through this world without these; for the worst that can befall them is the death of the body, but your souls will be ruined.

*Lastly,* The want of either is highly dishonourable to God. Is there a God in heaven, and will you not fear him? Has his Son died to purchase hope to sinners? and has he declared in his word, that he would have you hope in and for his mercy, and will ye not do it? Mal. i. 6. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." By the want of fear, you declare you <sup>do not</sup> value greatness; and by the want of hope, that ye can put no trust in his word.—I come now,

IV. To shew what is that pleasure which the Lord takes in such.

1. He approves them in so doing. The Lord says, Thou didest well that it was in thine heart, though Satan may suggest it to be presumption, Psal. cxv. 11. "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield." What God requires to be done, he will surely approve of when it is done; this he requires, and therefore will approve of it.

2. He accepts of them; he is well pleased with the persons that do so. The exercise of these graces is a piece of very acceptable service to God, which he takes off sinners hands for Christ's sake, though it be attended with many imperfections. That unbelief which remains in the hearts of them that fear God, makes them suspect they will be very unwelcome to hope for good at the Lord's hand;

hand ; but it is a mistake, for such exercise is very pleasing to the Lord.

3. The Lord delights in them that do so. Their name may be Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in them, as a father does in his child, who both fears him, and hopes for good at his hand.

(1.) The Lord delights in their persons. Jer. xxxi. 20. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." They are accepted in the beloved; their fear carrying them to Christ, and their hope fixing them upon him as the storehouse of all blessings. Being covered with imputed righteousness, they are all fair and lovely in the eyes of the Lord, there is no spot in them, Song, iv. 7.

(2.) He delights in their graces. Song, iv. 16. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Holy fear and hope are the fruits of his own Spirit in the souls of his people, that grow up there as in a garden, being watered with the dew of heaven. They are leading graces, which bring along with them a train of others, all tending to promote holiness in heart and life.

(3.) In their duties. Prov: xv. 8. "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Where the fear of the Lord has place, the duties of religion will get room; the soul will be afraid of neglecting to pay its due homage unto the Lord; and hope being joined thereto, will bring them to the Lord with expectation of good at his hand; and this is the Lord's delight.

(4.) In their company. Song, v. 1. "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." He



loves to have them near him, hanging about his hand, conversing with him, receiving his word from his mouth, and making their requests known to him : Song ii. 14. " Let me see (says he) thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." The mighty God, who has his higher house in heaven, has the contrite spirit for his lower house.—I shall now proceed,

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that *the Lord taketh pleasure in those, whatever case they be in, who entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy.*—For this purpose, consider,

1. This is answerable and agreeable to the revelation of God's mind in his word, what he has made known of himself both in the law and in the gospel. The fear of God is the great purpose of the law, hope for his mercy through Christ is the great purpose of the gospel. The law was given in such an awful manner, as might fill sinners with the dread of the great Lawgiver; the gospel brings in the blessed hope to lost sinners, so that this fear and hope, answering the design of both, cannot miss of being very pleasing to God.

2. It glorifies God in his glorious perfections, discovered to us in the face of Jesus Christ. The great end of the gospel-contrivance is, to shew the glory of God in Christ as in a glass : 2 Cor. iv. 6. " For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now, the entertaining of these two, *fear* and *hope*, doth at once give him the glory of all these. *Holy fear* gives him the glory of his awful majesty, inflexible justice, infinite power and holiness ; *kindly hope* gives him the  
glory

glory of his free grace, mercy, love, and goodness: and the joining of these two together gives him the glory of his infinite wisdom, that hath found out the way to give vent to both in the sinner's case.

3. It is agreeable to the Spirit's work of grace on the soul, whereby the sinner is first cast down, and then lifted up. The Spirit of God coming to the elect soul, finds it secure, careless, and presumptuous, thinking itself "rich and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. The spirit then discovers what a God, and what a law, the sinner has to do with, and so works this holy fear in the heart. When the soul is awakened, it is ready to despond; and the Spirit, by the doctrines of the gospel, works this hope. Thus the sinner comes and cleaves to Christ.

*Lastly*, The Lord is very gracious unto such. They are entertained with some off-fallings while they hang about his hand in the ordinances and duties of religion: Psal. lxxv. 4. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Yea, they are filled as with marrow and fatness; God makes known his secrets to them, even the secrets of his covenant: Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." He shews them also the secrets of his word: Luke, xxiv. 32. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Also the secrets of his works, and the dispensations of his providence. And at length they shall be admitted to the full fruition of him in a better world; they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and be for ever with him.

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

S E R M O N VIII.

PSAL. cxlvii. 11. *The Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*

**H**AVING, in the preceding discourse, briefly gone through the doctrinal part, it only remains, that, in the

VI. AND last place, I make a practical improvement of the whole ; in doing which, I propose to enlarge at considerable length, by adverting to the different parts of this subject.—I begin,

I. WITH an use of information. It informs us,

1. That God in Christ is full of good-will to poor sinners. Since he will have them thus to depend upon him as children on a father, fearing and hoping in him ; he it is who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. Is not this a plain proof that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ? Eccl. xviii. 13. and that their ruin is of themselves, if they should perish ; that he does not cast them off that hang by him, nor cast them out that come unto him, John, vi. 37.

2. That however prosperous and favourable our case be, we have ground to keep up a holy  
fear

fear upon our spirits : " Happy is the man that feareth alway," Prov. xxviii. 14. Whether it be that our outward state in the world, or our spiritual state, be peaceful, easy, and prosperous, still there is ground to fear, for we are in hazard of offending God in it. There is no way so plain and even, but we may stumble in it. Outward prosperity ruins many : " The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," Prov. i. 31. And even in a prosperous state of the soul, there is no safety in being secure and careless, for in the managing of that we are apt to offend : 2 Cor. xii. 7. " Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." No paradise on earth but the serpent may be found there ; and if one were rapt up to the third heavens, like Paul, they will bring back with them a corrupt heart, ready to give them a slip, or lead them astray. We are in danger of a heavy turn and sad change in our condition, we are " to serve God with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Psal. ii. 11. See how quickly David's prosperity was changed : Psal. xxx. 7. " Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Job's condition, both temporal and spiritual, how suddenly was it changed ? Sovereignty lifts up and casts down, and the anger of a jealous God may soon be stirred, so as to make a mighty overturn in one's condition ; therefore we should not be " high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20.

3. It informs us, that however low one's case be, there is still room for hope while here ; therefore we should always entertain a kindly hope : Psal. xliii. 5. " Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? why art thou disquieted in me ? Hope in God,

God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." One may be at his wits end with his difficulties, knowing of no outgate, but yet he may have ground of faith and hope, because—so great things have been done by our merciful God, as to raise us up. He made a world out of nothing, he has raised the dead, and particularly Christ, while the whole elect's sins lay as a grave-stone on him. What, then, hinders him to do a great work for us, when he has done a greater? In him we may trust that he will yet deliver us, 2 Cor. i. 10.—Whatever our case be, we are not the first that have been in it, and delivered too in God's own way. Psal. xxii. 4. "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them." People are apt to say, Never one was in such case as theirs. But, "is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before us," Eccl. i. 10.; and suppose it were new, yet faith and hope in God are not in vain; for he has a new cure for a new case, Isa. xliii. 18. 19. Whatever our case be, can it be worse than a lost case? Luke xix. 10. "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost." Can it be worse than a self-destroying case? Hof. xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." Can it be worse than a case in itself quite hopeless, even as dry bones? Ezek. xxxvii. 11. 12. but even by the Spirit of the Lord these bones can be made alive.—It is not beyond the reach of the power of God. Gen. xviii. 14. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" who can be so low, as that the everlasting arms cannot raise up? with God nothing is impossible. A word from heaven can make all things take a happy turn, for saying and doing are but one thing

thing with God. God says to the sinner, Believest thou that I can do these things? If thou dost, there is a ground of kindly hope.—In a word, the covenant of promise reaches to, and includes mercy of all kinds, necessary to make us happy; so that we have not only God's power, but his will, to give us mercy in all cases held out to us in the word, if so be we will take his way of faith and hope.—From this subject there is,

## II. AN use of exhortation, in several branches.

1. Fear the Lord; get and entertain a holy fear of God in your spirits. The profane and licentious lives of some, the carnal and loose hearts of others, proclaim a general want of this, P<sup>sal.</sup> xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked faith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But all fear of God is not a holy fear pleasing to God. There is a servile fear, and a filial fear. Not to the former, but to the latter, I exhort you.

Herewith some various difficulties and inquiries may arise, which we shall endeavour to answer, such as,

1. When is the fear of God only slavish? In answer to this, take the following Observations: The fear of God is only slavish,

(1.) When it ariseth only from the consideration of God's wrath as a just Judge. This fear of God is to be found in the unconverted; they have the spirit of bondage again to fear, Rom. viii. 15.; yea, in the devils, they believe and tremble, Jam. ii. 19.; and if the conscience once be awakened, though the heart be not sanctified, this fear cannot miss to take place. It is a natural passion flowing from self-love and a sight of danger, which is so much the more vehement, in proportion

tion as the danger apprehended is greater or smaller, nearer or more distant. One under this fear, fears God as the slave fears his master, because of the whip, <sup>with</sup> which he is afraid of being lashed; he abstains from sin, not out of hatred of it, but because of the wrath of God annexed to it. An apprehension of God's heavy hand on him here, or of hell and damnation hereafter, is the predominant motive of his fear of God, whom he fears only as an incensed Judge, and his powerful enemy.

(2.) When it checks or kills the love of God. There is a fear opposite to the love of God, which by this very character is discovered to be base and servile: 1 John, iv. 18. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." There is a necessary connection betwixt true fear and love, the one cannot be without the other; they are both links of the same chain of grace, which the Holy Spirit gives those whom he sanctifies; but slavish fear fills the heart with hard thoughts of God, and the more it prevails, the farther is the soul from the love of God.

(3.) When it drives the sinner away from God. Under its influence, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, and Cain went out from his presence. All the graces of the Spirit, as they come from the Lord, so they carry the sinner back to him; so no doubt it is an ungracious fear of God that frights the sinner away from him; for they that seek and return to him, will fear him and his righteousness. This fear hath this effect in different degrees, and the higher the worse:—It takes heart and hand from persons in their approaches to God, 1 John iv. 18. quoted already; it kills them before the Lord, knocks all confidence and hope in God on the head, so that their hearts at duty are like Nabal's, dying

dying within them, and become as a stone; so when they should run for their life, it cuts the sinews of their endeavours; when they would wrestle for the blessing, it makes their knees feeble, and their hands hang down.—It makes them first averse to duty, and then give up with it; they deal with God as one with his avowed enemy, into whose presence he will not come, Gen. iii. 8. The people of God have sometimes had a touch of this, 2 Sam. vi. 9. “And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?” Though it never prevails with them to extinguish love, yet sometimes a believer is like a faulty child, who, instead of humbling himself before his parents, hides himself in some corner, and is so frightened, that he dare not come in, and look the parent in the face; but this is a most dangerous case, especially if it lasts long.—In a word, it makes them run to physicians of no value. For what is more natural than men that are frightened from God under apprehended danger, to run to some other quarter, and that to their own ruin, Rev. vi. 16. “And said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

2. What is to be thought of this slavish fear of God? To this I answer, There is something good in it, and something evil.

(1.) There is something good in it, namely, the fear of God's wrath for sin, which lies unpardoned on the guilty sinner, or which the sinner may be inclined to commit: James, ii. 19. “Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well.” To cast off fear of the wrath of God, and the terrible punishments which he has annexed to sin, is a  
pitch



pitch of wickedness which but the very worst of men arrive at. The fear of God's wrath against sin, and that duly influential too, is recommended to us by Christ himself, Luke xii. 5. "Fear him," says he, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him." It is also recommended by the example of the very best of saints, Job, xxxi. 23. "For destruction from God was a terror unto me;" and says David, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements," Psal. cxix. 120. And the law of God is not fenced with terrors to be disregarded, but to awe men's spirits. But,

(2.) There is something evil in it, yea, much evil in it, if we consider,—The scantiness and narrowness of its spring. Why should the fear of God be confined to spring up from his wrath against sin only or chiefly, since there are so many other perfections of God, which may give rise to the fear of him, which are disregarded by this means? It casts a veil of disrespect on his holiness, goodness, and hatred of sin, on his relations of Creator, Preserver, Father, Supreme Lord, and Governor of the world.—The horrible effects and tendency thereof, as it rises only from this spring, and overflows all the banks of godly fear. Fear of God, even of his wrath, is good, but the excess of it is very bad. Fire and water are both good and necessary, but very bad when the one burns man, and the other drowns him. Hence, since what is acceptable in the sight of God is perfect in parts, though not in degrees, is good in the manner as well as matter, this fear is not what he takes pleasure in, nay, it is displeasing to him, and is the sin of those who hear the gospel, whose fear ought to be extended according to the revelation made to them. And thus

thus one may be displeasing to himself, to those about him, and to God also; and if they attain to no other fear of God, what they fear will probably come upon them. Nevertheless, this fear, kept within bounds, may, by the Spirit, be made the means to bring the sinner to the Lord in his covenant. For the fear of God's wrath is a good thing in itself, Rom. viii. 15.; it serves to rouse the sinner out of his security, to make him sensible of his danger, and to seek for relief: Psal. ix. 20. "Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." And therefore the law, and its threatening, as a red flag, are displayed in the sight of secure sinners, that they may be roused to flee from the wrath to come.

To this there may be offered this objection, The fear of the Lord's wrath can make but an unsound closing with the Lord in his covenant. *Ans.* That is very true, if there be nothing more. But fear of God's wrath not only may, but ordinarily, if not always does, begin the work which love crowns. Fear brings men to the gates of the city of refuge, and when they are there, love is kindled, and makes them press forward. Fear brings the poor captive woman to confer with the conqueror about the match; but thereby love is kindled, and faith makes the match. It works, however, very differently at other times; for Satan and our corrupt hearts are ready to drive forward this fear of God's wrath to exceed all bounds; and no wonder, for when it has got over the boundaries, it makes fearful havock in the soul's case, like a consuming fire, deadening all good motions towards God, and quickening evil ones, to the dishonour of God, and one's own torment; and no case out of hell is liker hell than this, both in respect of sin and misery. But when the Spirit of

God has a saving work in view, he can easily make the spirit of bondage subservient to the spirit of adoption.

3. How should one manage in the case of a slavish fear of God's wrath? Here I answer, We had need to be well guided, for the losing or winning of the soul depend upon it. For your assistance I offer the following DIRECTIONS.

(1.) Labour to clear the grounds of your fear of God's wrath, by a rational inquiry and discovery. There are, even of these fears, some that do really proceed from a bodily distemper vitiating the imagination, namely, from melancholy, and the like; and in this case, your trouble rises and falls according to the disposition of your bodies, but not according to the comfort or terror you receive from God's word, as it is in truly spiritual troubles. Thus it often comes on, and goes off, they know not how; shewing the first wound to be in their head, not in their conscience. Of this sort was the evil spirit Saul was troubled with, under which he got ease by music, not by his Bible. In this case, as well as others, it would be of use to consider the real grounds of fear from the Lord's word, and the consideration of one's own state or case, and so to turn it as much as may be into solid fears upon plain and evident reasons for it. This would be a step to the salvation of the soul. But, alas! it is sad to think of tormenting fear kept up on we know not what grounds, and which can produce no good; while in the mean time people will not be at pains to inquire into the real evidences of their soul's hazard, the sinfulness of their state, heart, and life. Ask, then, yourselves, what real ground there is from the Lord's word for this fear of yours.

(2.) Beware of casting off the fear, dread, and awe

awe of the wrath of God against sin : Job, xv. 4. " Yea, thou callest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." This is the issue of some people's fears, who, one way or other, get their necks from under the yoke, and grow more stupid, fearless, and profane, than even by the just judgement of God. It is true, that fear is not enough ; but there is something to be added, and yet not this fear cast away. If thou be brought into a state of sonship to God, the dread of God's wrath against sin will come along with you, though it will be no more slavish ; as if a slave were made his master's son by adoption, he would still fear his anger, though not slavishly as before. But be one's state what it will, better be God's slave, fearing him for his wrath only, than the devil's free-man, casting off the fear of God altogether. There is less ill in the former than in the latter. Yea,

(3.) Cast not off the fear of that wrath, even its overtaking you, till such time as thy soul be brought away freely to Jesus Christ : Hof. v. 8. " I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence ; in their affliction they will seek me early." Thou hast no warrant to cast it off sooner, for certainly wrath is pursuing thee, till thou be within the gates of the city of refuge ; and to be without fear of that wrath that is still advancing on a person, is ruining. Indeed, as soon as thou hast sincerely come to Christ in his covenant, though the fear of wrath against sin is never to be laid by, yet then thou mayest and oughtest to cast off the fear of vindictive wrath overtaking thee : " There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1.

(4.) Look not always on an absolute God, for surely that can produce no fear of God but a slavish

wish one ; but look on God in Christ as the tryſt-  
ing-place himſelf has ſet, for receiving the ad-  
dreffes of the guilty on a throne of grace : 2 Cor.  
v. 19. " God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world  
unto himſelf, not imputing their trefpaſſes unto  
them." This is the way to repreſs and curb the  
horrible effects of ſlavish fear, to make love to  
God, faith, and hope, ſpring up in the ſoul, and  
ſo mould that fear of thine into filial fear and re-  
verence. In a God out of Chriſt thou canſt diſ-  
cern nothing but inflexible juſtice, and the utmoſt  
terror ; and from his throne of unveiled majeſty,  
hear nothing but terrible voices, thunders, and  
earthquakes. But in a God in Chriſt thou mayeſt  
behold bowels of mercy, and flowing compaſſions ;  
and from the throne of grace hear the ſtill ſmall  
voice of mercy and peace, Iſa. xxxv. 3. 4.

(5.) At what time ſoever you find the fear of  
God's wrath begin to choak the love of God in  
your hearts, or to drive you away from him in  
any way, check and curb that fear reſolutely, let  
it not proceed, though you were in the time  
under the moſt atrocious ſin : Pſal. lxx. 3. " Ini-  
quities prevail againſt me ; as for our tranſgreſ-  
ſions, thou wilt purge them away." For then  
you are in the march between God's ground and  
the devil's ; and there is a wind from hell, blow-  
ing up the fire of fear, that will conſume you, if  
it be not quenched ; for the ſeparation of the ſoul  
from God, and its going away from him, can in  
no caſe fail to be of a ruining nature : and the  
more that it increaſes with a perſon, his heart will  
be the more hardened, and he will be ſet the far-  
ther off from repentance.

(6.) Greedily embrace any gleam of hope from  
the Lord's own word, and hang by it. Ye ſhould  
do like Benhadad's ſervants, and ſay, We have  
heard

heard that the king of Israel is a merciful king, and we hope he will save us, 1 Kings, xx. 31. The apostle calls hope the Christian's head-piece, 1 Theff. v. 8. not to be thrown away in a time of danger.

*Lastly*, Come away resolutely to the Lord Jesus, lay hold on him in the gospel-offer, and consent to the covenant: Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Lay hold on the horns of this our altar, and you shall not die; he will swallow up death in victory, Isa. xxv. 8. Flee into this city of refuge; the avenger shall not overtake thee. Do as the lepers of Samaria did, reasoned with themselves, and went to the camp, where meat was to be found. Thou art like to sink in a sea of wrath, Jesus holds out his hand to draw thee ashore. Thou art afraid, perhaps, it is not to thee, it is vain to try; but know that it is the hand that must take thee out, or thou art a gone man; neglecting to take hold, thou art ruined; otherwise, thou canst be but ruined.

4. When is the fear of the Lord holy, filial, and reverential, such as the Lord takes pleasure in?—For your satisfaction in this inquiry, I would answer,

(1.) When the chief spring of it is not our own harm, but God's infinite excellence and perfection striking an awe upon the soul: Gen. xxviii. 17. "And Jacob was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." On this account, God was called the fear of the holy patriarchs, while in the world, Gen. xxxi. 42. Thus ingenuous children fear their parents, not because of the ill they may do them, but because of that authority and superiority they have over them.—

When the soul is awed into a profound reverence for God, by the consideration of his transcendent excellence in all things, this is a becoming or true filial fear.

(2.) When the offending of God is feared as the greatest evil. A graceless man may fear the punishment of swearing, but a righteous man feareth an oath, Eccles. ix. 2. ; the former may fear the threatening as the greatest evil, but the righteous feareth the commandment, and shall be rewarded, Prov. xiii. 13. What would the most of the world fear about sin, if they were secured against wrath? Nothing. But the fearer of God, his great fear would remain notwithstanding, viz. the displeasing of his gracious Father.

(3.) When fear of his wrath is joined with a kindly affection and love to him, Psal. xc. 11.—13. No man fears God who has not a dread of his anger, and the more grace, the more of this dread; so that a godly man will fear a frown more than another a stroke of his hand. But withal this does not straiten the heart, but enlarge it in love to him; for these perfections of God that are the most proper objects of fear, are beautiful and lovely in the eyes of a faint; and therefore under the effects of his anger, they condemn themselves and justify God.

*Lastly,* When the fear of God draws the sinner to God and makes him cling to him, Hof. iii. 5. "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." As if he had said, They shall fear away to the Lord, like a good-natured child under fear of his parent, running away to him, and catching hold of him; the language of which is, Any thing but separation from my holy Father. Holy fear also keeps the soul  
with

with the Lord, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," and that upon the same principle.

5. How doth this fear work in the gracious soul? To this question I answer, Holy fear is an influential grace, diffusing its influence through the whole man, and therefore all religion is often comprehended under the name of fear of God.

(1.) It makes God's verdict of things in his holy law the man's complete standard. In matters of faith, it causes him believe that God has said it; in matters of practice, to do or forbear, because God has bid or forbid it, though his own reason and all the world should contradict, Prov. iii. 7. "Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil." Holy fear awes the soul into implicit compliance with all that an incomprehensible God makes known in his word. So was Abraham brought to offer his son, and the fear of God carried him over all obstructions, Gen. xxii. 12.

(2.) It awes the soul into abstaining from such sins as there is no other awe-band against. There are some cases of temptation, wherein there is nothing from any creature to marr compliance with it, the way is quite clear on that part. But then the fear of God will be a sufficient restraint. Sometimes thou mayest have a fair occasion to wrong thy neighbour, and there is no fear of his knowing thou didst it; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not for thy soul do it, more than if all the world were looking on thee, Lev. xix. 14. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God, I am the Lord." Sometimes occasions for sin occur, and men will bear thee out in the sinful practice; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not



the eminence they stand in, represent God, whom we are to fear above all, and to fear in them. A reverential fear is due to our superiors, but God is the Supreme Being. We owe it to those who are superior to us in office and dignity, Rom. xiii. 7. "Render therefore unto all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." God is the supreme Governor of the world. Is the servant to reverence his master, the child his parents, the wife her husband? surely then God, who is the ancient of days, who stands to his people in such endearing relations, is to be feared by them, Psal. xlv. 11. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

3. It is our wisdom to fear God, Psal. cxi. 10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." O sinner! wouldst thou be wise indeed? then fear God; it is the beginning of wisdom. A man never begins to be wise till the fear of God enters his heart. He goes on in folly and madness till he get this ballast to his soul; he is frisking about the pit's mouth, in hazard every moment of falling down, till the awe of God strikes his soul.—It is the chief point of wisdom; all the wisdom of the world is but folly in comparison of this. Wisdom teaches men to fear dangers, losses, and the like, but what avails it all, if men fear not the offending of God, and the loss of the soul.

4. It is in some sort the whole of religion, Job, iv. 6. "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?" for it is the sum and substance of religious duties, which therefore are comprehended under that name in many parts of the Bible, and it has an universal influence over the whole of religion, drawing it all after it in the special parts thereof: for where it  
once

once gets place, it will bring in every known duty, and set the soul at a distance from all known sin.

5. It would free you of other fears that are tormenting, in whatever degree it gets place in your hearts. Fear of men and devils is so entertained by many, that it becomes a tormenting passion, frightening them out of the way of duty to God. This is the first expedient to get rid of these. Allow the great God his own room in the heart, and let him be thy fear and thy dread, and so the creature will prove contemptible in comparison of him.

6. Consider the precious promises made to, and the benefits bestowed on, those that fear the Lord. If thou be a fearer of God, go matters as they will, with thee it shall be well, Eccles. viii. 12. 13. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God." It prolongs men's days, in so far as it keeps them in the way of holiness, Prov. x. 27.; see a cluster of promises, Psal. xxv. 12.—14.; compare Prov. xix. 23. and Psal. xxxiv. 9. which you may read at your leisure.

*Lastly,* The want of the fear of God is an infallible sign of a wicked graceless heart; it looses the reins to wickedness of heart and life, and betrays men into ruin, Psal. xxxvi. 1.—4, "These that fear not God now, will be made to fear him hereafter, when there shall be no escaping out of the hand of their terrible Judge.

Some may say, O! how shall I attain to this holy fear of God? With a view to promote this attainment,

attainment, I would offer the following DIRECTIONS.

1. Labour to know God, who and what he is, 1 Kings, viii. 43. "That all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel." It is a benefit of the second covenant, to know the Lord, Hosea, ii. 20. "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." God, to the most of the world, is like a prince in disguise amongst his subjects, they treat him rudely because they do not know him; an unknown God will not be feared. While ignorance of God reigns in the heart, there is no place for holy fear; for that will make men count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear.

2. Stir up in your hearts a desire to fear him; it is a token for good, when one is willing to entertain the fear of God, Neh. i. 11. "Thy servants who desire to fear thee." This desire hath the promise, and it will be accompanied with suitable endeavours after it. Many fight against the fear of God, that they may live at ease, and may be able to give themselves loose reins to their sinful practices; no wonder their hearts be hardened from it. And hence, if at any time they be taken with the fear of God, they do what they can to be freed of it, as they would pluck out arrows out of their flesh.

3. Take God for your God in Christ, and devote yourselves to him. The God we chose for our God, we will fear; Micah, iv. 5 "For 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." And so, when men set up their idols of jealousy in the Lord's room, these get the fear that is due to God. So the worldling fears his clay god, his life is in its smiles, and its frowns  
are

are his death. But take the Lord for your God, I say, in Christ; for no otherwise he offers himself to us in the covenant, 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the way to holy fear: For, (1.) It is a promised benefit of the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear in their hearts." Whoever comes into God's covenant of grace, the fear of God is, by the holy Spirit, stamped upon their hearts, whereby it may be known that they belong to God as children; and they devote themselves, on the other hand, to his fear, Pfal. cxix. 38. They are his servants, devoted to his fear. They give themselves to it, and make it their great study. (2.) This covenant is a covenant of peace and friendship betwixt God and the guilty creature, through a Mediator, Heb. xii. 22. —24. so that thy state is changed, the moment that thou comest into the covenant, from enmity to peace with God, Eph. ii. 19 they become fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God. This happily joins love and dread of God together, producing holy fear and reverence of God; whereas, while God is apprehended certainly as an enemy to us, fear him we may with slavish fear, but not with holy fear, since we cannot love him.

4. Be much in the exercise of repentance. Sorrowing after a godly sort for sin, as it dishonours God, is offensive to his majesty, separates the sinner from God, and exposes the soul to his anger, is the ready way to produce holy fear for the time to come, 2 Cor. vii. 11. Yea, what fear, says Paul, namely, as the effect of sorrow after a godly sort; they that are burnt dread the fire; and they that feel the bitterness of sin, will fear God, and stand at a distance from it. The looking into our frightful acts of sin, will awe our hearts with a

dread of the offended Majesty, and make us fall down, saying, "Forgive us our debts."

5. Pray for it earnestly as a promised benefit of the covenant, and join thereto a faith of particular confidence: Matth. xxi. 22. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask, believing ye shall receive them." Beg of God, that he would manifest himself to you, so as ye may be filled with holy fear of him. Ye may read and hear much of God, and little impressions be made on your spirits by it at all; but when the Lord discovers himself to the sinner, his own glorious light will so represent him, as the soul cannot chuse but both love and fear him: Job, xlii. 5. 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

*Lastly*, Draw together the scattered affections, and faculties of the soul, and set them on the Lord: Psal. lxxxvi. 11. "Unite my heart to fear thy name." As the scattered rays of the sun will not burn, till they be collected by a burning-glass; so the heart, walking at random, will not be filled with holy fear. Withdraw your hearts from pursuing vanities, and gadding after idols, and labour to see the Lord in those glasses where we may perceive how he is to be feared.

I would urge you to look to him particularly, (1.) In the glass of his word. See how he is there represented as one worthy to be feared: Psal. lxxxix. 7. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." O with what awful solemnity may we hear him there speaking of himself, his saints speaking of him and to him! and the angels also, with their veiled faces, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Had we  
eyes

eyes to discern his voice in his word, every page would fill our hearts with profoundest reverence. See him, (1.) In the shining holiness of his commandments, perfectly pure from all earthly dross; and when thus seen, how can the sinful creature not fear him! Exod. xv. 11. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" He appears there to be all light, and that in him there is no darkness at all. The holy, spiritual, and extensive law, may fill our hearts with the dread of the Lawgiver, of whose nature it is a transcript. See him, (2.) In the amazing sovereignty of his threatenings. This filled good Josiah with fear, 2 Kings, xxii. 19. and Habakkuk, ch. iii. 16. Behold thence flames of wrath flashing out on the faces of impenitent sinners. All the threats of men own death to be their utmost; and, O! how will a threat of death fright mortals! But the Lord's threatenings go beyond death, and carry the matter to an endless eternity. See him, (3.) In the unspeakable riches of his gospel-promises displayed in the word. His terrors are no more severe on the one hand, than his promised encouragements are great on the other. If hell be in the one scale, heaven is in the other. Who would not therefore fear him? — Look to him,

2. In Christ, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. See God in Christ, and there see an object of fear and love in one. If ye would be stirred up to fear God, look to Mount Calvary, and there behold Christ groaning, and dying on a cross for the sins of an elect world, and you will see three awful sights. (1.) The severity of God's justice against sin, not sparing his own Son, Rom. viii. 32. Many terrible

instances have there been of this, in the deluge, and the like. But what is the tumbling down of sinful angels into the pit, the deluging of a world, the burning of Sodom,—to the Son of God dying on a cross, and bearing his Father's wrath? O! if this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (2.) The channel of mercy and grace, in which they flow to guilty sinners. It is by the Mediator's stripes we must be healed; the sinner's life comes in the way of Christ's death; no mercy, no grace, but through the wounds of a Redeemer. There was love from eternity in the breast of God towards an elect world, but Justice stood in the way of Mercy's getting through to the criminals; a way was then made by the blood of the Son of God. (3.) The price of pardon, 1 Pet. i. 19. the precious blood of Christ; no pardon, but what is the price of blood, and that blood of infinite value; that is the ransom which had to be given for the captives, or they could never have been set free. O! who can see these, and not fear this awful and tremendous majesty thus appearing!—Look at him,

3. In the glass of his adorable perfections. How small a portion do we know of him! but there is nothing which we have manifested to us concerning him, but may contribute to this holy fear. On the one hand, consider his infinite power, whereby he can do all, and his universal dominion, whereby he may do what he will: Job, xxxvii. 23, 24. and xxv. 2.; his justice, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, infinite veracity and truth, whereby all he has said shall be made good to a tittle, Who, then, can but fear him?—Consider, on the other hand, his mercy, his love, grace, and goodness, which are so unbounded and unspeakable! Who, then, can but fear him?—Look at him,

*Lastly,*

*Lastly*, In the glass of his works. Look to his works of creation, Psal. xix. 1. Does not the earth and heaven, with all their glorious furniture, cry aloud to us to fear this God. Look to his works of providence: Jer. v. 22. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass?" His managing of the world challenges our fearing of him. (1.) His mercies with which we are loaded, call us to reverence him as our great Benefactor, Jer. v. 24. (2.) His judgements; his judgements, in particular, against ourselves, Luke, xxiii. 40.; and against others, which we may every where discern: Psal. cxix. 118.—120. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements." Every stroke laid on in this world is fitted to create a fear of him in our hearts. His general judgement, that is to come, the serious view of which must needs strike sinners with fear: 1 Pet. i. 17. "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." See also Eccles. xii. 13. 14.

II. I WOULD now earnestly exhort you to *hope in the Lord for his mercy*. Entertain a holy hope in God in all cases. For clearing of this, we must know, that hope in general is an inclination to, and expectation of good possible to be had, but not without some difficulty. As hope is conversant about divine things, or the mercy of God, it is of two sorts, holy hope, and presumptuous hope; the one well-grounded, the other ill-grounded. Here, therefore, also some



inquiries may be proposed, which we shall endeavour to answer; such as,

1. What is the true hope for mercy, which the Lord takes pleasure in? *Ans.* It is a certain expectation of attaining the mercy, which faith believes, grounded on God's grace and faithfulness.

(1.) For the kind of it; it is an expectation of mercy to be attained. Hope looks always on its object as future: Rom. viii. 24. "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" This is a main difference between faith and hope, faith looking always on its object as present in the promise, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." And hope is a certain expectation of it, not so much in itself, (for true hope may be attended with much doubting, Lam. iii. 18.), as in the event, for it will never fail the party that has it, nor put him to shame by disappointment, for it hangs on faith: Rom. v. 5. "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

(2.) For the object of this hope; it is mercy which is hoped for. Now, there is a threefold mercy hope looks for. (1.) The mercy of eternal life itself: Jude, 21. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the chief thing the believer is to hope for, and he may, with the utmost certainty and confidence, expect it, 2 Tim. i. 12. This hope, even the hope of salvation, the apostle will have the Christian to put on as an helmet, 1 Theff. v. 8. and even to stretch forth his hope over death and the grave. (2.) The mercy necessary to bring us to eternal life;

life ; as perseverance therein to the end, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are in the way: Rom. viii. 38. " And we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Though the grace of God in him be like a spark of fire in an ocean, he ought firmly to hope, that the same heavenly breath that kindled it will keep it in to the end. (3.) The mercy of all other good things, so far as God shall see the bestowing them on us for his own glory, and our good. There are many particular things good in themselves, which we know not whether they will be so to us or not ; for example, deliverance from such a trouble ; therefore it is not to be absolutely hoped for, but under this qualification, that God sees it to be good for us.

(3.) For the antecedent of this hope ; that is faith, which is the evidence of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1. There can be no true hope without faith ; where faith does not open the door, hope cannot enter. Faith embraces the mercy in the promise of God, and hope waits for the accomplishment of the promise ; so that one cannot truly hope for that which God has not promised, neither can one hope for the accomplishment of that promise which faith does not believe.

*Lastly,* The ground of this hope is God's free grace in Christ and his faithfulness : 1 Pet. i. 13. " Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The mercy promised is quite above the sinner's deserving ; but he considers the fulness and freedom of God's grace, and withal how unalterably he is to his word, and therefore hopes upon having that word made good to him.

A

A *second* question is, How may the hope of mercy be known to be presumptuous? *Ans.* Presumption is the soul-ruining plague, whereby a person assumes to himself what God has, by no testimony of his word, declared to be his, and which alters the beautiful order of mercy established by God, joining together what God has separated, and separated what he has joined.—Upon this I observe,

1. That hope is presumptuous, which is not founded on the Lord's word. Such hope is brisk in the dark, but loses all its lustre by the light of God's word brought in upon it: John, iii. 20. 21. "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." God's word is a friend unto his grace, but an enemy to delusion; it is the touch-stone that discovers the true metal and also the counterfeit. You hope for salvation, in what word of God is your hope founded? Does the Lord's word, searchingly applied, strengthen or weaken your hope? Say you, The general invitations are the ground of my hope? These may be grounds of hope that ye may get eternal life, if you will take God's way: But do you not hope that you shall get it, without a due consideration of this? Now, these can never be the grounds of a solid hope, for all that hear the gospel are comprehended in these, as well as you.

(2.) That hope is presumptuous, which overlooks and neglects the means appointed by God for the attaining of his mercy unto eternal life: 1 Pet. i. 3. "We are begotten by God to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The way thou art to be happy for ever is, that thou be united to Christ by a true faith,  
that

that thou be a new creature, that thou lead a holy life. Dost thou neglect these, and yet hope all will be well? Thy hope is presumption, and will ruin thee, Deut. xxix. 19. 20.

*Lastly*, That hope is presumptuous, which is built without erasing the old foundation, Luke, xxxiv. 48. Many have hopes of heaven which grow up with themselves, they were never shaken out of themselves, nor had the naughtiness of their hopes discovered, and so never were led to Jesus Christ, to build on him by uniting with him.

A *third* enquiry may be, How may the hope of mercy be known to be true hope, which God will take pleasure in? In answer to this, it may be noticed,

1. True hope is founded on the free grace of God in Christ, 1 Pet. i. 13. quoted already. The scriptures are written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of them, might have hope, Rom. xv. 4. Hope is not built upon our good dispositions, good works, external and common benefits which we enjoy, for these are but a sandy foundation, unable to bear this weight; but the anchor of hope is cast so as to fix upon the immoveable ground aforesaid, Heb. vi. 19. It is true holiness discerned by us in ourselves, as an evidence, that doth help us to a firm hope; but the stress of hope lies not upon it as a ground-work.

2. True hope is a lively principle of sanctification, 1 John, iii. 3. "And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he (God) is pure;" and therefore it is called a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. As a spring by degrees does work out the mud that is in a well, so hope of mercy does work out corruption; as the prospect of the marriage-day makes the parties to be taken up in preparing for the marriage, so the true hope of eternal

nal life puts one to be preparing for it, Rev. xix. 7. That hope which suffers sin to lie untouched in heart and life, that does not put on a person to mortify sin, is a dead hope; and true hope carries to universal holiness, even as he is pure.

*Lastly*, It makes one diligent in the use of means appointed by God, Heb. x. 23.—25.; but without not to rest on the means, but on the Lord. To hope, without using the means appointed and required, is presumption; to rest on the means is a spice of atheism. But that is true hope, which makes the soul delight in all duties and ordinances, to leave no appointed means uneffayed, in order to attaining the blessed end; and then, when all is done, to place all confidence of success on the Lord.

With a view to press this holy lively hope, I would mention the following **MOTIVES**.

1. It is not only our comfortable attainment, but a duty required of all that believe, 1 Pet. i. 13. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." And therefore the apostle Paul presseth diligence in seeking after it in full measure, Heb. vi. 11. "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;" and he prays for it, Rom. xv. 13. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the holy Ghost." It is a duty that is in a special manner comfortable.

2. It is most necessary; hope is as necessary to a Christian, as a head-piece to a soldier in a battle, 1 Thess. v. 8.; as necessary as an anchor to a ship, Heb. vi. 19.; yea, so necessary, that we are said to be saved by it, Rom. viii. 24.

*Lastly*,

*Lastly*, It is a great friend to holiness, and perseverance in the ways of God, 1 Cor. xv. 58.—As it honours God's grace and goodness, so it strengthens the soul, and animates it to all duties, to fight against corruption and temptation, and to pursue holiness.

III. LET all be exhorted to entertain a holy fear of God, together with a holy hope for his mercy. Mix these, and balance your souls with them, whatever your case be. While you are going through the world, keep your course in the middle between the two rocks of Presumption and Despair. — For this purpose,

1. Beware of desponding or despairing of the mercy of God in Christ. There is an allowable despair, which all ought to entertain, in order to their getting their hope fixed on God, viz. a quitting of all hope in our own sufficiency, or ability to make ourselves happy by ourselves, or that ever we shall be well, while we continue in a state of black nature. But what we call despair is a giving over all hope in God, which is a horrible sin. There is a threefold despair you should beware of, as ye would not ruin your own souls.

(1.) A sensual despair, which ariseth from an excessive love of the profits and pleasures of this world, with a secure contempt of spiritual and external good in another world, 1 Cor. xv. 32. "Let us," say they, "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Alas! how many are there plagued with this? Their souls are festered with the desire of present good, which is their all, and, having no hope of better after this life, they give the swing to their lusts after these.

(2.) A sluggish despair, Prov. xxii. 13. "The slothful

ful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." Their sloth musters up difficulties to them, forming some that are groundless, imaginary ones, and aggravating real ones, so that they conclude before hand that they will not be better, their endeavours will not succeed, and therefore they lie still, and will do nothing for their own help; this ruins many.

(3.) A sorrowful despair, which ariseth from strong fears, which raise such a mist in the soul, that grounds of hope in its case, are hid out of sight, and they are in their soul's case as in Acts, xxvii. 20. neither sun nor stars for many days appear, no small tempest lies on them, and all hope that they shall be saved is then taken away. There are different degrees of this; sometimes it is silent and fullen, making little noise, but is smothered in one's breast like a burning fire. In such a case, one would do well to give it a vent before God, his servants, or godly experienced Christians, lest it ruin them. This is the way David took when in such a case, Psal. xxxix. 2.—4. "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred; my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Sometimes it is raging, as in Judas, who, under horror laid upon his sin, did miserably end his life.

Beware of all these, and resist the beginnings of despair, and if it has fastened on any soul, let them strive to quench it, as they would do a fire. The former makes way for the latter, and all together make way for remediless despair in hell. I shall only say two things of it.—(1.) It is defiling, and makes

makes the soul most loathsome before God ; for it conceives most basely and abominably of God and Christ, directly opposing itself to the grand design of the gospel ; it blasphemes the power of God, and the efficacy of his Son's blood and Spirit. (2.) It is ruining, for it makes the sinner flee from God, and cast away the means of recovery, and so ensures their destruction ; besides that it often drives the sinner to put an end to his torment here, by leaping into endless torments before the time, as in the case of Judas. And while we see how Satan is ready to take advantage, we had need to take heed.

2. Beware of presumption. Take heed that ye do not flee from the one rock to dash on the other. Indeed despair is tormenting, while presumption is easy. Nevertheless, though none of them is good, yet a person presuming is ordinarily in greater hazard than one despairing ; for the presumptuous sees not his case as the other does ; the one is well pleased with his damnable condition, the other is weary of his, and wishes to have it changed ; so that many more perish by the one than by the other.

To conclude : Remember, on the one hand, God is a holy jealous God, who cannot away with sin, or a state of sin, but the fire of his jealousy burns against it. On the other hand, remember that the blood of Christ takes away all guilt, his Spirit overcomes the most hopeless case, and his mercy reaches wide for every condition. Fear him, ye that hope in him ; hope in his mercy, ye that fear him ; for *the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* Amen.



---

---

JESUS VICTORIOUS OVER DEATH.\*

---

---

S E R M O N IX.

ISAIAH, xxv. 8.—*He will swallow up death in victory.*

**S**UCH as are desirous duly to manage this solemn communion-occasion, will have in their view the other world. We are all on a journey towards it, and, if suitably exercised, will improve this occasion to lay down our measures for eternity. Betwixt us and that other world, lies the great gulf of death; through it are two passages; one deep and devouring, where the sinner passes alone; there the waters flow with all that force and strength which they acquired by the breach of the covenant of works. By this passage, sinners are thrown out into the land of utter darkness and misery. The text shews us the other passage, which is shallow and safe, where the sinner passes on at the Mediator's back, the waters being dried up by the soles of his feet, whose passeth

\* Delivered Saturday, October 4. 1718.

passeth this way, enters into Immanuel's land, the land of life; for *he will swallow up death in victory.*

In these words, we have a prophecy of the happy success of a battle fought by the Mediator on account of elect sinners. The success is most certain; therefore it is in the Hebrew, *He hath swallowed-up, &c.*—Here consider,

1. The combatants; the two mightiest that ever encountered. Upon the one hand is Death, with his devouring mouth, a champion who never yet could find his match among the children of men, till the great HE, in the text, entered the lists against him, even Jesus Christ, who being man, was capable of feeling the force of death; but, being the Lord of hosts also, ver. 6. could not but be conqueror at length. So Death and the Mediator are the combatants.—There is,

2. The encounter of the combatants, implied in these words, *HE will swallow up death in victory.* Death attempting to prey upon that elect world which was given to Christ by the Father, HE, as Mediator, to pluck that prey out of Death's devouring mouth, encounters the terrible enemy while he is making havock of poor sinners; and, having taken upon him the guilt of his elect, which gave death a power over them, death advances against him, and attacks him, and he abides the contest. No sooner was he born, than Death mounted on his pale horse, advanced against him, and striking at him, filled Bethlehem with the blood of babes, and the shrieks of parents. Though it could not then reach him the deadly blow, it pursued him still, shot out its poisonous arrows against him all along, till they came to a close engagement on the cross, where it wrestled him down even into the grave, the proper place of its dominion. So the Mediator got the first fall.

N 2

3. But

3. But behold the issue of the battle. Death, who in all other battles wins whatever party loses, loses the day here; the victory is on the side of the slain Mediator. The slain Saviour again revives, gets up upon death, stands conqueror over it, even in its own territories, breaks the bars of the grave, takes away the sting it fought with against him, and puts it and all its forces to the rout; so that it can never shew its face against him any more, Rom. vi. 9. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him."

4. The Mediator's pursuit of the victory, till it be complete for these that are his, as well as for himself: *He will swallow up death in victory.* The vanquished enemy has yet many strong-holds in his hand, and he keeps many of the redeemed ones at under; some of them as prisoners, that they cannot stir; others of them, though they can stir, yet can go no where, but they must drag the bands of death after them. But the Mediator will pursue the victory till he swallow up death, totally abolish it out of his kingdom, that there shall no more of it be seen there for ever, as a thing that is swallowed up is seen no more at all; our Lord is cutting it down daily, and the last of it shall go over at the last day, 1-Cor. xv. 54. "So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—These words contain in them this

DOCTRINE, That our Lord Jesus, having fought death, and obtained the victory, will pursue the victory, till death be utterly abolished out of

of his kingdom.—Three things are here to be attended to.

I. The battle.

II. The victory.

III. The pursuit.—After which,

IV. I shall subjoin some practical improvement.

I. WE shall consider the battle betwixt death and the Lord of life.—And,

1. Under what character has the Lord of life fought this battle? He fought it,

(1.) As the Head and representative of the elect world, as their Mediator, who took burden on himself for all that the Father had given him; for otherwise he had nothing to do with death; nor had it any concern with him: John, v. 15. "I lay down my life for the sheep." Adam, the head of all mankind, had betrayed us all into the snare of death, we were not able to break it, or to make our escape thence; but Christ undertook it for the elect, as their Head, and so fought death in their room and stead: 1 Tim. ii. 6. "Who gave himself a ransom for all." "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. He bare what we should have borne, stood the shock which would have ruined us; he was wounded and bruised in this battle, but all for us: ver. 8. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And hence we are reckoned in law to have died in him: Rom. vi. 10. 11. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(2.) As their Redeemer and Deliverer: Hosea, xiii. 14. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plagues; O grave! I will be thy destruction." By sin we fell a prey to devouring death, the broken law concluded us under the power of it. The prey could not be taken from this mighty one, without both price and power; so Christ engaged with death, and by his death ransomed death's prisoners: Heb. ii. 15. "That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He spoiled it of its power, that they might get free. The kingdom he had received of his Father could not be recovered, nor the captives set free, without stroke of sword, his overcoming death, that held them fast; therefore he fought the battle.

(3.) As a Captain or General on the head of his people: Heb. ii. 10. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God has designed that the elect shall fight their way to heaven, and therefore has given them Christ as a Leader and Commander: Isa. lv. 4: "Behold I have given him for a Leader and Commander to the people." They must march through the Red Sea of death to the upper Canaan; but Christ goes before, drying up the waters. There are cords of death on the most lively believer, yet he must set himself to break them; but Christ has made them like a thread of flax, when it toucheth the fire. They must encounter the king of terrors; but the King of glory, marching in the  
front,

front, has received all the deadly sting.—I shall consider,

2. The attack made upon him by death. Death, finding the Mediator standing in sinners' stead, advances against him with all its forces, with which it was furnished by the breach of the first covenant; and, when managing this contest,

(1.) Death brings up its strength against him, that is, the law, 1 Cor. xv. 56. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," which, finding him a sinner by imputation, cut him down, Gal. iv. 4. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The Law cries for justice against sin, and Justice takes the Mediator by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest; then he "restored what he took not away," Psa. lxxix. 4. The law brings up against him a black band of curses, and pours into his soul: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." It soon began to shoot out its arrows against him. When he was born, he must be born in a stable, laid in a manger, for there was no room for him in the inn; persecution is raised against him in his infancy; he must be all along a man of sorrows, poor, not having where to lay his head; he is hungry, thirsty, weary, &c. At length the battle grows hotter, the heavens are black above his head; and in the garden, and on the cross, showers of arrows dip in the curse fly at him. He sweats bloody drops, falling down to the ground,—cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(2.) Meanwhile he that has the power of death (Heb. ii. 14.) advances against him, Satan sets upon him in the wilderness with most grievous temptations, Matth. iv. Being beat back, he returns, and renews the assault: Luke, iv. 13. "And when the devil

devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season." At length the hour and powers of darkness come, and then the bands of hell exert their utmost vigour against him, storms from hell blow hard upon him, the fountains of the great deep are opened on him : John, xiv. 30. " Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Col. ii. 15. " And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

(3.) The congregation of men dead in trespasses and sins stir up themselves against him : Isa. liiii. 3. " He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Judas betrays him, the Jews gape on him like a lion, crying, Crucify him ; Pilate condemns him ; he is scourged, crowned with thorns, smitten on the crowned head, his body racked till it was all out of joint, nailed to the cross, hangs there mocked, and pierced with a spear.

(4.) Death comes with its sting upon him, and pierces him to the heart, and casts him down dead : 1 Cor. xv. 56. " The sting of death is sin ;" this gives it the power of hurting any. The guilt of all the sins of the elect lay upon him, which could not but make the sting of death inexpressibly sharp and piercing. Thus a thousand deaths in one met together on him, for the Lord made the iniquities of us all to meet on him ; and all the arrows that should have pierced all the elect for ever, have entered into his bowels ; and, having fallen under death, he was carried prisoner to the grave.

**II. LET us consider the victory Christ obtained.**  
He

He tells us he has fought and overcome : Rev. iii. 21. " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Yea, he has triumphed over his enemies in his glorious ascension into heaven. Consider,

1. How this victory over death was obtained. It was obtained,

(1.) By his death. This was the decisive stroke : Heb. ii. 14. " That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death." It was such a victory as Samson's last victory over the Philistines, when he pulled down the house, and died himself with the Philistines in the fall of it ; and therefore he cried upon the cross, " It is finished." Death has done its utmost, and can do no more ; by his death he satisfied the law in all it had to demand of him as the elect's Surety ; he paid the debt, and removed the guilt. Sin being removed, and the law satisfied, death has no more that strength or sting wherewith it set upon him at first ; and so it fell with him.

(2.) By his resurrection. Thereby he got up above death, which had lost its power, and could hold him no longer, Acts, ii. 24. " Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." He stood a Conqueror in the grave, death's own quarters ; he broke asunder its iron bars, and brought away its keys ; behold they hang at his girdle, Rev. i. 18. " And have the keys of hell and of death." So death's dominion over those that are his, got an irrecoverable stroke, and he that had the power of death as to the elect, namely, as an executioner, viz. the devil, was also destroyed.—I next inquire,

2. What



2. What fort of a victory is it Jesus hath obtained over death?—It is,

(1.) A dear-bought victory, it cost the glorious Conqueror his precious life; he suffered the bruising of his heel, before the serpent's head could be got bruised. He suffered in his body, and also in his soul, and to such a degree, that the holy human nature could not have borne up under it, had it not been supported by his divine nature.

(2.) A complete victory in respect of himself, though not yet complete in respect of his members: Rom. vi. 9. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." Now he is beyond the reach of death and all his enemies, sitting at the Lord's right-hand until he make his enemies his footstool, Psal. cx. 1.

(3.) A glorious victory, fairs and angels singing the triumphant song. Hear the acclamations of joy and wonder with which he was met at his return from the battle, Isa. lxiii. 1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatneis of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." What a glorious victory was it which he obtained over the king of terrors, who subdues the most potent armies, overcomes the conquerors of the earth; but behold the great spoiler spoiled, the conqueror conquered by the King of glory.

(4.) An everlasting victory. Now death's power is irrecoverably broke; the serpent is wounded in the head, which is a deadly wound, it shall never be able to rally its broken forces against him any more; it went out into the world full, but the  
King.

King of faints has met it, and spoiled it, so that it in some sort is now empty.

As a practical improvement of what has been said, I would on this occasion earnestly call upon you,

1. As mortals, dying men and women, to come over this day to the Conqueror's side. Our Lord has obtained the victory over death, come ye and surrender yourselves to him, break your covenant with death and hell, enter into his covenant, and honestly enlist yourselves under his victorious banners, abide no longer among his enemies.—To prevail with you, I would lay before you the following MOTIVES.

(1.) If ye are out of Christ, ye live in death's territories; yea, ye are dead; while ye live, death hath dominion over you, Eph. v. 14. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Ye are spiritually dead, the threatenings of the law, as the bands of death, gird you about; the divers lusts ye serve are as the chains of death unto you. O! awake, ere ye be cast out of this world, and buried out of his sight.

(2.) The Conqueror is ready to receive you, and give you the privileges of the subjects of his kingdom, Zech. ix. 11. 12. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water; turn ye to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee." Christ is coming this day in the word to your graves, and saying to you, as to Lazarus, Come forth, bestir yourselves, O prisoners of hope! and come away, when the Redeemer and Deliverer, who has overcome death, is calling you! Abide not

not under the dominion of the foiled enemy, but come away to the victorious Lord of life.

(3.) Behold how he loved the children of men, John, xiv. 13. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Why did he fight this battle with death, but to rescue sinners to himself, as a prey out of the mouth of the devouring lion? Shall not his dying love win you, his dying groans awake you, out of your sleep in sin? Does not every wound he received call you to cast away your sins which lay so heavy on him? will ye love death, and slight the Redeemer, Prov. viii. 26. "All they that hate me love death."

(4.) How will ye grapple with death, if ye come not out of your sins to Jesus Christ? Man, remember thou must die; the day is coming these eyes will be closed, the breath that is now going out and in will go, to return no more till the last pulse beat. How wilt thou be able to grapple with the king of terrors alone? Death cast down the man Christ; if it did so to the green-tree, what will become of thee, a withered dead branch? Thou shalt find death lively as to thee, armed with its sting against thee, since thou art not in Christ, his victory belongs not to thee, but the first death will turn thee over into the hands of the second death; and so thou shalt be eternally dying, but never die.

(5.) Come to Christ, and thou shalt have the benefit of his victory over death: John, viii. 51. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death," never feel the sting of death, its nature shall be quite altered to thee. O! are ye not thinking what way ye shall get through that ford on that Red Sea, which  
ye

ye know not how soon ye may come to? Come to Christ, lay hold on the Conqueror by faith, in the way of his covenant; the sealed covenant will be your pass for safe conduct to the other side; it has carried all through that took their passage with it hitherto, and so will it you.—I exhort you,

2. To prepare yourselves for celebrating the triumph of this victory. The saints above are celebrating it at the upper table, ye are called to celebrate it at the lower table: “This do ye in remembrance of me.” Let not Satan get advantage of such as look for the benefit of this victory, to slight the memorial of it, lest they vex the Spirit of God, and pour contempt on Christ’s institution, and give their souls such a throw as they will not easily recover, while their fig-leaf covers of excuses will avail them nothing. Let none, however, venture rashly on such an ordinance. Take heed to your state, see that ye be not the King’s enemies, but his friends, by your coming honestly into his covenant, and putting a divorce into the hands of all your idols. In the midst of the triumphal throng, he will notice the man that wants the wedding-garment: Matth. xxii. 11. “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment.” Sinners dead in trespasses and sins are not fit to celebrate the memorial of Christ’s victory over death. Off with the grave-cloaths of your lusts, then, that you may be fit guests for the Lord of life on such an occasion.—Take heed to your frame; a dead frame is not fit for such an occasion. Alas! for the deadness on the spirits of professors at this day. O! labour to get a lively frame of spirit, wherewith to celebrate the memorial of Christ’s victory; get faith, love, repentance, desires, thankfulness, &c. in exercise; and for this end, I

recommend to you this night, to meditate on, and take a believing view of this battle.—Consider,

1. It was a set battle; not an accidental encounter, but determined from eternity: Gal. iv. 4. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Zechariah in his time proclaims the war: Zech. xiii. 7. “Awake, O sword! against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, faith the Lord of hosts.” Nay, it was proclaimed in paradise: Gen. iii. 15. “And I will put enmity between the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The ceremonial law, by which so much blood was shed, plainly predicted that a bloody day was coming.—It was,

2. A hot battle. Heavy were the strokes given here: Psal. xxii. 14. “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” It was a bloody battle, Isa. ix. 5. “For every battle of the warriors is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning, and fuel of fire.” A dreadful noise was here, the law, men, and devils, crying against the Son of God, death roaring for its prey, and the Mediator himself crying with strong cries and tears. What garments rolled in blood were here on every side!—rolled in the most precious blood of the Son of God: Isa. lxiii. 2. “Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?” A bloody spouse have we been to him.—It was,

3. A solitary battle on Christ's part. His enemies

mies were many, but he was alone : Pſal. xxii. 12. " Many bulls have compaſſed me."—Iſa. lxiii. 3. " I have trodden the wine-preſs alone, and of the people there was none with me." All were againſt him, none were with him to take a ſhare; ſo thick did the arrows of death fly, that neither man nor angel durſt ſet out their head, or venture into the battle on his ſide.—It was,

4. A longſome battle. He fought all along, from the cradle to the grave, from his birth to his burial : Iſa. liii. 3. " He is deſpised and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief ;" though it came to a height at the latter end.

*Laſtly*, There were no quarters for him in this battle : Rom. viii. 32. " He ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death." He was made to drink a cup of pure unmixed wrath. He met with no ſparing, that ſo, the arrows of death being all ſpent on him, his people might get free.

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. \*

---

## S E R M O N X.

ISAIAH, XXV. 8. *He will swallow up death in victory.*

**Y**E have been celebrating the triumph of Christ's victory over death, and professing yourselves the subjects of the Conqueror, yea, the members of his body. If you approve yourselves true to your profession, here is the best news you can possibly hear in this world, news which may animate you to fighting the good fight: *He will swallow up death in victory.*

I have yesterday handled two heads in the method. A third point now to be spoken to is, Christ's pursuit of the victory. Our Lord Jesus will pursue the victory he has obtained over death, till it be utterly abolished out of his kingdom.— Here,

I. I shall premise some things for the better understanding of this point.

II. Show how he pursues the victory.

I.

\* Delivered Sabbath Evening, October 5. 1718.

I. I SHALL premise some things for the better understanding of this point.—And,

1. I premise, that sin entering into the world, death obtained an universal dominion over mankind: Rom. v. 12. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” it reigned as a king, ver. 19. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses;” it became universal monarch, swaying its sceptre over all nations, kingdoms, and empires, from the one end of the earth unto the other. Every man receiving life in this world, not excepting those that are born to crowns and kingdoms, are born subjects to death. It is the most terrible king, even the king of terrors; an absolute one, against whom there is no rising up. This universal dominion it got by law, upon sin’s entering: Gen. iii. 19. “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” 1 Cor. xv. 56. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”

2. The kingdom of death consists of two very different territories or countries: One is the upper country, namely, the sinful world; the other the lower country, in the other world, that land of utter darkness, where the light is as darkness. In the former, the government of death is comparatively mild, but in the latter inexpressibly horrible. Here Death’s subjects have some gleams of light, joy, hope, though mixed with many sorrows; but there they will never see light more, nor enjoy the least ease from their pangs, which is the second death, Matth. xxii. 13. “Cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

3. Death’s power over sinners by the law,  
 O 3 reaches



reaches to the transporting of them out of this world into its dominion in the other world; it has power to carry them to the pit, and shut the bars thereof for ever upon them. Hence we find the rich man dying, and buried, and then in hell lifting up his eyes, Luke, xv. 23.; an impassable gulf is fixed between that miserable company and the saints above, ver. 26.; so that by death's power, had it not been hemmed in, all mankind had landed there.

4. That all mankind might not perish, the Father gave a kingdom to his Son, which he was to conquer out of the kingdom of death in this upper world; in which kingdom life might reign for evermore through Jesus Christ: John, vi. 37. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This our Lord undertook willingly, resolving to spare no expence, even of his own blood, to recover it.

5. Our Lord Jesus coming on this expedition, findeth all mankind fettered with the bands of death; death has seized them all without exception, fastened on their souls and bodies, keeping them as prisoners, till they should be transported into the pit from whence there is no redemption; and his own that were given to him of the Father, he finds wrapt up in the common ruin; so he, putting on a zeal for his Father's glory and the salvation of the elect, encountered death in their room, and, after a bloody battle, gained the victory. But after all this the chains of death still continue on his people, and they lie under them till the Conqueror, who by his death has purchased their liberty, come and loose them, in pursuit of this victory.

I.

I AM now to consider,

II. How he pursues the victory, *swallowing up death in victory.*

1. He looses the bands of that spiritual death under which he finds them, morally dead, lifeless, senseless, and motionless to any spiritual good. He puts a principle of spiritual life in them, quickening them by his Spirit, Eph. ii. 1. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." With authority he asks the grim vanquished tyrant, as he did others in the case of Lazarus, O death! where have ye laid him? He comes to the grave, saying, My word and my Spirit roll away the stone; and with a powerful voice he cries, Dead soul, come forth. Then feeble death loses its grips, and the dead comes forth to walk before God in the light of the living; and then he is a new creature; old things are done away.

2. He looses the band of legal death off the sinner; he is by nature a condemned man, dead in law, and death holds him fast with the cords of unpardoned guilt. But now the soul, uniting to Christ by faith, and so being clothed with his perfect righteousness, having his satisfaction applied to him, the cords of the guilt of eternal wrath give way, can hold no longer, and so death is beat from its grip of him, Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Now may the soul say, It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? The mighty Lord has burst the bars of iron asunder, death's snare is broken, and we are escaped.

3. He destroys the body of death in the believer. Still the grave-cloaths hang about the believer, even strong corruptions and divers lusts,  
the

the remains of that death from which they were raised in regeneration. There is a body of death cleaves to them, complete in all its members, therefore called the old man, which is the remaining corrupt nature, with the lusts thereof. This makes them groan, and long for delivery, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This also is swallowed up in the pursuit of this victory, by degrees. For,

(1.) It is crucified, gets a deadly wound, and its destruction ensured, in the conversion of the soul to God: Rom. vi. 6. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." The nails are driven through it, and every member thereof: Gal. v. 24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. It is nailed to the cross, and shall never come down till it breathe out its last. Its reigning power is broken, and can no more command with that full sway it did while the soul was under the dominion of death: Rom. vi. 14. "For sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

(2.) It is weakened and mortified more and more, in the gradual advances of sanctification: Rom. viii. 14. "But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Every new supply of grace weakens corruption more and more. The grace of Christ in the heart is a spring that will never be quite stopt, and therefore will work out corruption by degrees, as the spring does the mud: John, iv. 14. "But the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." They will  
be

be like the houses of Saul and David, while the former waxeth weaker, the latter waxeth stronger.

(3.) At the death of the body, the body of death is utterly destroyed: Heb. xii. 23. "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." There is not the least remains of it to be seen any more then; then there shall not be the least darkness in the mind, corruption in the will, nor disorder of the affections. When they are taken up into the mount, they are stript of their rags, and cloathed with change of raiment, for then Christ says, "Loose him and let him go."

4. He dries up all the sorrows of death, wipes away all tears. David was sometimes encompassed with them, but he is now got beyond them all. Death entering the world at the back of sin, has made an universal flood of misery, that covers the face of the whole earth; even the redeemed ones walking to Zion, cannot miss to dip their foot in it, and that often very deep; they are liable to afflictions on their bodies and souls, and all that is theirs; they are distressed with desersions and hidings of God's face; they often go mourning without the sun. And what are all these but the arrows of the foiled enemy, wherewith he annoys the Mediator's company in this lower world; but Christ will also spoil this part of death's game in his kingdom; he has taken the poison and strength out of these arrows already, that they cannot give a deadly wound; and in a little these Egyptians whom they see to-day, they shall see no more for ever: Rev. xxi. 4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

5. He brings all his people safe through the valley

valley of the shadow of death : Pſal. xxiii. 4. " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me." Death advances at length to the faint as a king of terrors, to looſe the ſoul from the body. They are ready to be affrighted at the fight, but the waters are dried up where they are to paſs. It ſtands before them like a ſerpent, but the ſting of it is gone, they can get no harm of it. " O death ! where is thy ſting ?" may the dying faint ſay ; they tread then upon the ſerpent, while they paſs over to the other ſide ; it caſts down the body into the grave, but their more precious part it cannot touch. It is like the ſtorm to Paul ; the body, the ſhip of the ſoul, is daſhed to pieces ; but the ſoul, the paſſenger, gets ſafe to land. This is a noble victory got through Jeſus Chriſt.

6. Now, death has nothing of Chriſt's but the bodies of his faints, not a foot of ground in his kingdom but the grave ; and theſe he will alſo wreſt out of his hand at the reſurrection. So, then, at the laſt day, by the ſound of the trumpet, death ſhall be ſummoned, in the Conqueror's name, to give up its dead ; and immediately it ſhall fling open its doors, and yield all up to him : Rev. xx. 13. " And the ſea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them." " Then this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality ; then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, *Death is ſwallowed up in victory.*" Death will hold faſt by them that are his own, even when they are come out of the grave ; but then nothing that ever belonged to it ſhall any more be about thoſe that are Chriſt's.

7. In conſequence of the abſolute victory over death, it ſhall be ſhut up, and confined for the  
ages

ages of eternity to the lower regions, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone : Rev. xx. 14. " And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire : this is the second death." As the waters of the deluge, that overspread the whole face of the earth some time, were, by the voice of God, chased away into, and confined in the deeps ; so death, in its whole extent, as comprehending all miseries, greater or lesser, that some time ranged through the earth at liberty, shall be gathered together, and thrown into the place of the damned, there to prey for ever upon its proper objects, the enemies of Christ, the great Conqueror.—I am,

IV. To make some practical improvement. This doctrine is of manifold use. I shall drop a few words from it to the profane, and to professors.—I shall address,

1<sup>st</sup>, Profane folk, who are quite careless about their state and conversation, on whose face death is painted, in the eyes of God and all serious persons. Consider,

1. Ye have neither part nor lot in this victory of Christ's over death, but are yet lying a prey to the devourer. What else means that loathsome conversation of yours ? Psal. xiv. 1.—3. " The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God ; they are corrupt, they have done abominable works," &c. What else means it, but that ye are yet rotting in the grave of your lusts ? Do not your profane speeches declare your throat to be an open sepulchre ; the full liberty your lusts get without controul, says ye are not sick of sin, but dead in it ; your want of the sense of religion, your not discerning the voice of God in his word, and having no relish for the sweetness of it, all these say ye are dead.

2. Awake,

2. Awake, and come forth to Christ, in a holy life, else your lot shall be for ever among the congregation of the dead: Gal. v. 21. "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Christ has set up a kingdom among us, but ye say, Let us break his bands, and cast his cords from us. Remember, if ye continue in this condition, Christ will cast you out of his kingdom; for if death shall be abolished out of his kingdom, be sure such dead souls shall never inherit among the saints, but receive their portion where death bears eternal sway.

2dly, Professors, amongst whom I must reckon communicants. To such,

1. By way of caution, I would say to you,

(1.) Beware of hypocrisy, having a name to live, and yet dead: Rev. iii. 1. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." O! how many are there like some dead beasts, whereof there is nothing good but the skin! Except the form of godliness, and their religious duties they go the round of, there remains nothing but a rotten heart quite estranged from the life of God, and a life full of dead works. Beware of this, for, with the abominable, the hypocrite will also be swept away.

(2.) Beware of apostacy, Christ will pursue his victory, and therefore, whoso draweth back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. x. 38.; they that draw back leave Christ's camp, and join his enemies, and they will be involved in their ruin, with a double destruction, as run-aways.

2. By way of application to your case on the back of this communion, I would ask you,

(1.) Have you got nothing at this feast from the Conqueror to set you a step forward to the victory, the spiritual victory? Blame whom or what thou wilt

wilt for it; a dead state, or at least a dead frame, is the true cause; and therefore repent. If thou be mourning and humbled under it, it is a sign of some life; pursue under Christ's banner, and thou shalt obtain the victory.

(2.) Have ye sped, and got some victory over the body of death? be not secure, and sit not down on that ye have attained, for death is not yet swallowed up; therefore pursue.—I shall only add,

3. By way of exhortation to duty from this point.

(1.) Be lively Christians, as those that are alive from the dead through Jesus Christ; keep grace in exercise, let not the holy fire go out; watch against deadness creeping in on your souls, yield not to it, for that were to yield to death, that must be swallowed up.

(2.) Join issue with the Conqueror, in pursuing the victory in your own souls. There is a noble Captain on your head; under his conduct, then, fight the good fight; let mortification be your daily work; while one lust remains, ye must never give over; make no truce with them, or any of theirs, but resolve to pursue these fruits of death, till death be swallowed up in victory.

(3.) Join issue with the Conqueror, in pursuing the victory in the world, especially in the places where ye live. Do your utmost, by word and example, to awaken a dead world; take care of the young generation; and as ye love their souls, remove the stumbling-block of your divisions out of their fight, which threatens the ruin of religion in this parish; when the members of the body are all going asunder, falling off from one another, it is an evidence death is working in that body; and it has made much sad work in the land and country-side already.



(4.) Believe this truth with application, in all your endeavours after holiness. That is the true method of sanctification, using the mean appointed of God, and believing the promised success. If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established.

(5.) Be weaned from the world, and long for the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory: Phil. i. 23. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Were we eager in the battle, we would readily long for the day of complete victory.

Let all be stirred up, and exhorted from this,

1. To get and make sure their interest in this victory purchased by Christ in this battle. Come to Christ, and make sure your interest in him; alas! what will it avail you that Christ has purchased this victory for you? It would be promising-like in this case, if ye be raised up from spiritual death, or if ye be wrestling against the remains of it.

2. Carry as becomes those who are interested in this victory.

(1.) O love the Lord, come see the field of battle, where the Lord lay, and love him, John, xiv. 13. Whom will ye love, if not him that died for us?

(2.) Hate sin, and seek the destruction and extirpation of it; set yourselves against the body of death. Ye have here—What may excite you to it, for it was your sin that gave death its power, and furnished it with weapons against Christ.—You may encourage yourselves in the contest, for victory is certain, for death is already vanquished in some sort: Rom. vi. 6. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ." Christ himself is engaged in the pursuit of the victory with you, and for you.

3. Patiently bear your troubles, weaknesses, and distresses,

distresses, that hang about you, for these workings of death will be quickly over.

4. Join not yourselves with the congregation of the dead. Bewarē, (1.) Of dead company, making them your beloved companions, for “a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” (2.) Renounce dead works, as an impiety towards God, and unrighteousness towards men. (3.) Beware of a dead case and frame, that is, to be cold, stiff, motionless, of the colour of clay, as men that are in a withered, lifeless, spiritual condition.

*Lastly*, Let heaven and eternal life be the main thing ye have in view, and are in quest of, saying, There is my rest, and there must I be.

---

---

THE SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT OF SAINTS  
FORMER EXPERIENCES. \*

---

---

S E R M O N XI.

2 KINGS, ii. 14. *And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*

**A**MONG all the Elders who have through faith obtained a good report, there is none more remarkable than Elijah the Tishbite. He was a person altogether extraordinary. In his exercise and experience he was singularly distinguished. His translation was a striking loss to the church of God; it was, however, not irreparable; his exercises were, in some measure, patterns to the people of God in after ages; his experiences were powerful encouragements to a following of him who through faith and patience inherited the promises; and, what was of still greater importance, Elijah's God still lived, and, as being the same yesterday,

\* Delivered August 16. 1713.

terday, to-day, and for ever, was to be the object of hope and confidence to his people in all generations. In all their straits he was to be looked to, and inquired after, for his presence with them, and his blessing upon them. Thus, we see, was Elisha exercised in the verse before us; for when overwhelmed, and in perplexity, *He took the mantle of Elijah, which fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*

This verse shews us,

I. What Elisha did. (1.) He took Elijah's mantle, that fell from him; God so ordered, that it fell in Elisha's sight for his comfort, that he might have it as a token of the spirit of Elijah resting on him. He willingly takes it up; he did not say, What avails the mantle now, when it is not above Elijah's shoulders? No; that God that did wonders by it before, can do the same again, on whose shoulders soever, by divine appointment; even so the ordinances of God are to be prized for the Lord's sake, not slighted for the sake of the instruments, though they are not like to fill the room of those that went before them. (2.) He smote the waters with it. He was to go back to the schools of the prophets in Jericho. Though the Lord take away eminent instruments, his work must not be neglected, they that are left behind must bestir themselves to carry on the Lord's work. Jordan was between him and them, as oftentimes depths of difficulties will be found in the way of duty. He might have boated it over; that was the easiest way, and to a carnal eye the safest. But it was not the way his godly predecessor took before him; therefore, having the same spirit as he had, he will rather believingly venture on the waters, in the faith that God

would carry him through, as he did Elijah before him. So he *smote the waters*.

2. We have what he said when he smote the waters: *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* It is a vehement exclamation for the presence of that God that was with Elijah: *Where is, &c.*; or a most ardent prayer for it: *Where art thou?* as some read it; for neither *is* nor *art* is in the original. He inquires no more after Elijah, he has no petitions to that saint when once he was departed; that had been impious; what he had to ask of him, he asked while he was on earth. He does not sit down and weep, and pore on the loss of Elijah, as if there had been no more hopes of good days since he was gone; but he betakes himself to Elijah's God. Though Elijah was gone, his God still remained. Elijah's experience of good from Elijah's God, kindled in Elisha's heart a surprising desire after him, and fills him with hope of good entertainment at that door where Elijah had come so good speed; for these are not words of diffidence, but of mighty earnestness, and strong faith; as appears by considering,

3. The issue of the whole, which was according to his wish. God was present with him the same way he had been with Elijah before, Jordan is divided, &c. These words (he also) some make Elisha's answering to himself, and read them, even he, viz. Elijah's God, yet endures; but though there is no doubt Elisha believed this, yet that reading does violence to the points and stops, without regarding of which there can be no certain sense of any language; therefore our translation is preferable; and these words (he also) are emphatical, to shew the freedom of God's grace, which is tied to none, but open and free

to

to all that come to him for it in the way that others received it.—From these words, I take this.

**DOCTRINE,** That the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days, should bring the succeeding generation to the same God for the same entertainment.

IN speaking to which, I shall,

I. Instance a few of these experiences of God's people in former days.

II. Show how we should come to God for the same entertainment

III. Give the reasons of the doctrine.—And,

IV. Add the improvement.

I. I shall instance a few of the sweet and desirable experiences of the Lord's people, which should bring us to the gracious Giver for the same, and such like; and I shall instance none but these of Elijah, who, you must remember, was a man subject to like passions as we are, James, v. 17. and to these I think the text leads me. Some instances of sweet entertainment this holy man had; such as,

1. The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of keeping warm and lively in a very cold and dead generation; so that he was best when others were worst. His zeal for God burnt most vigorously when the generation was turned most coldrife, halting betwixt God and Baal, like true fire that burns most keenly in the winter-frost, when a chill and cold air was the only air about him. By the warm blowings of the Spirit from above upon him, he was kept warm within. When nothing but deadness was on every hand, the Spirit of life from above kept him lively. So

it

it was with Noah in the old world : Gen. vi. 9. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation." And Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 8. "For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

But where is the Lord God of Elijah in these dregs of time, wherein professors generally are carried away with the stream of impiety from all their liveliness and tenderness that sometimes have been among them, when the more wickedness sets up its head, piety is made to hide its head the more ? a sad evidence that God is gone from us, when the standard of wickedness makes such advances, and that of shining holiness is retreating, and can hardly get hands to hold it up. I will tell you two sad experiences, common at this day.

(1.) The fulfilling of that scripture, Matth. xxiv. 12. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." It is a time when atheism, deism, and immorality, make prodigious advances, and practical godliness is under a deep decay. I doubt if ever Satan had more hands at work to overthrow revealed religion, and to raze the foundations of it, than at this day ; and this effort of Satan's against the church, has joined with it a most lamentable decay of the vitals of practical religion in those that are called by the Lord's name ; so that we are like to be exposed to this furious attack, wanting the best piece of our armour against it ; that is, an experience and feeling of the power of truth on our own souls : Ah ! *where is the Lord God of Elijah ?*

(2.) What heat there is, strikes all outward, while in the mean time folks are key-cold within ; a sad sign of a distempered body. It is not hard

to

to discern severals shewing a great deal of concern in the lamentable occurrences of our day; but how hard is it to find a man that is truly awakened to the exercise of godliness by all the alarming dispensations of our day, that is moved with fear, and busy preparing an ark for the evil day, labouring to get the particular controversy between God and his soul removed, putting out of his way the stumbling-block of his iniquity, and setting matters in order for the day of the Lord? Nay, Sirs, though some talk in their sleep, it seems we will all sleep together, till God's heavy hand give us a fearful awakening: *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*

2. The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of the power of prayer: James, v. 17. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." He was mighty in prayer; by his prayers the bottles of heaven were opened, the key of the clouds turned, nay, the bands of death loosed, 1 Kings, xvii. He was a great favourite of Heaven, whose cries pierced the clouds, got in to the throne, and returned, like Noah's dove, with an olive-branch of peace in his mouth. Such experience of the power of prayer had Jacob: Hof. xii. 4. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed," Gen. xxxii. Many times the Lord's people, when closed up on every side, have found a sweet outgate, their souls flying upward in prayer. The prayers of the saints have been the great ordinance of the church, have frustrated the plans of enemies, and turned them back on their own heads.

But



But where is the God of Elijah, while the trade with heaven by prayers is so very low? Alas for the dead, cold, and flat prayers, that come from the lips of professors at this day! so weak and languishing, that they cannot reach heaven. Sometimes the Lord lets loose enemies on his people, tosses them from vessel to vessel, and then the way betwixt heaven and them was well occupied. They had still some particular suits lying before the throne, and they could have given a good account of their receipts. But long ease has made them lose their tongue; so that the experience of many in that point now can hardly be named, unless they turn back to former days. There is one experience of Elijah's, which, I fear, is not uncommon among praying folk at this day, and that is, a restraint laid on them, that they cannot wrestle with God for the averting of wrath from the generation of God's wrath, 1 Kings, xvii. 3.—9. Such a sad experience had Jeremiah also, before the Babylonish captivity, Jer. xiv. 11. and xv. 1. And though God doth not so reveal his mind now in particular cases, yet I suppose that it will be found, that those who live near God, and have the spirit of prayer in such cases, may find something equivalent thereto in their liberty and confidence with the Lord, and that according to the subject of their requests: Ezek. xxxvi. 37. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

3. The experience of the sweet fruits of dependence on the Lord, and of a little going far, with his blessing: 1 Kings, xvii. 16. "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord." Elijah saw so very few for God in his day, that he thought he

he was alone; and the Lord strengthened his faith by such experiences. Many times God's people have had such experiences of the Lord's bringing great things about by small beginnings, as the cloud like a man's hand, according to the promise, Prov. iv. 18. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Hof. vi. 3. "His going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." God has many ways of working in the experience of his people; and when he works by means, sometimes he does great things by small means, as the feeding of Elijah, the widow, and her son, so long on a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse; Haman's hellish plot is overturned by the king's falling from his rest one night, Esth. vi. 1. Sometimes by contrary means, as Elijah was fed by the ravens, who were more likely to have picked flesh from him, than to have brought it to him.

But where is the God of Elijah at this day, when what we have seems to be blown upon, that it goes in effect to nothing? Our table is plentifully covered, yet our souls are starved; our goodness sometimes looks as a morning-cloud, it blackens the face of the heavens, and promises a hearty shower, but quickly proves as a little cloud, like unto a man's hand, which is ready to go to nothing; yea, the generation is blinded by the means that have a natural tendency to give light. Ah! *Where is the God of Elijah?*

4. The experience of a gracious boldness to face the most daring wickedness of the generation he lived in, though it was one of the worst. This eminently appeared in his rencounter with Ahab,  
1 Kings,

1 Kings, xviii. 1.; his standing alone against four hundred and fifty of Baal's prophets; whatever was his natural temper, he owed this to the grace of God, for when he was left to his natural courage, it failed him, chap. xix. 2.—4.; but the Lord spirited him then for the hard work he had to do, that he feared nothing in his Master's cause, Acts, iv. 13. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

But where is the God of Elijah now, while the iniquities of our day meet with such faint resistance, while a brow for the cause of God, a tongue to speak for him, and a heart to act, are so much wanting. The wicked of the world, though they have an ill cause in hand, yet they pursue it boldly; but, alas! the people of God shame their honest cause, by their cowardice and faint appearing in it. If God gives us not another spirit, more fitted for such a day, we will betray our trust, and bring the curse of the succeeding generation on us.

5. The experience of a glorious and powerful manifestation of himself, in a solemn ordinance, even at the sacrifice on mount Carmel, which was ushered in with the spirit of prayer in Elijah, 1 Kings, xviii. 37.—39. "Hear me, O God, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord he is the God, The Lord he is the God." That was a glorious day's work, when Satan fell like lightning from heaven, from which day, no doubt, many dated their conversion, some their revival

vival, and people there generally felt somewhat divine on their spirits. Such glorious days the church has often had in ordinances, which have been as a high stream-tide of the gospel; so that three thousand were converted at one sermon, Acts ii. 41.

But where is the God of Elijah, when so little of the Spirit's influences is found in ordinances, even solemn ordinances? Here is the mantle, but where is the God of Elijah? Here are the grave-cloaths in which sometimes the Lord was wrapt up, but where is he himself? Communion-days have sometimes been glorious days in Scotland, and sometimes the gospel hath done much good; so that ministers have had almost as much to do to heal broken hearts, as now to get hard hearts broken; but *where now is the God of Elijah?*

6. The experience of being enabled to go far upon a meal, 1 Kings, xix. 8.; but where now is such experiences, while there is so little strength in the meals to which we now sit down? This is a time wherein there is much need of such an experience; the Lord seems to be saying to his people, "Rise and eat, for the journey is long;" and what a hard journey some may have, ere they get another meal, who knows?

*Lastly,* The experience of the Lord's removing difficulties out of his way, when he himself could do nothing at them; Jordan divided; so Peter had the iron-gate opened to him of its own accord: for when the Lord takes the work in hand, were it never so desperate as to us, it will succeed well with him. Sure we have need of his experience this day. How is the case of many souls so embarrassed at this day, that they cannot extricate themselves, by reason of long and continued departures from God! so that all they can do is, that

they are fighting and going backward. Ah! *where is the God of Elijah*, to dry up those devouring deeps? Enemies have surrounded the church, and brought her to the brow of the hill, ready to cast her over; *where is the God of Elijah*, to make a way for her to escape?—I shall next consider,

II. How we should come to God for the same entertainment, if we would come speed. There were two things Elisha did, for the presence of God to be with him, as he had been with Elijah.

1. He prayed for it, sent his prayer to heaven for it; and if we would have the experience of God's presence as in former days, we must ply the throne of grace for it this night. And there are three things in his prayer, which must be in ours.

(1.) A most pressing sense of need, where he saw he could not venture into Elijah's post without Elijah's God. Sense of need makes earnest prayers. What is the reason we see not the glory of the Lord as formerly? we reign as kings without it; men have found out ways of their own, to get comfort without communion with God; they have the creatures breasts to suck at, when the Lord's consolations are not dropping into them. But if ever the Lord return to this generation, there will be a hunger raised in them, that all the world will not be able to satisfy.

(2.) A most vehement desire of his presence: *Where is the God of Elijah?* There was a flame of desires after the Lord, that could not be satisfied without him. Some have observed in nature, that the tongue is tied by a double string to the heart in man. If so, it seems it has been designed that the tongue should be a stringed instrument, to sound out only the language of the heart. Were the  
heart

heart more eager for the divine communications, we would wrestle with God in earnest, and not let him go till he blifs us ; but, alas ! our cauld-  
rife prayers do but beg a denial.

(3.) There was great faith in his prayers: *Where is the God of Elijah?* Faithless prayers will be inefficacious prayers to the end ; but the hand of faith will pierce through the cloud wherewith the Lord covereth himself. *1<sup>st</sup>*, He believed God could do what he sought, therefore he calls him Jehovah, and the God of Elijah, who had discovered his power in dividing the waters before. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, He believed God would do it, he had God's call to the work ; Elijah was taken away from him, but he had Elijah's mantle in his hand, for a token God would be with him, as with Elijah before ; and he was not faithless, but believing. So we must believe also, if we would see the glory of God ; not only the power, but the good-will of God : Jer. xvii. 6. 7. " Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

2. He used the means Elijah before him did, for attaining God's appearance and manifestation of himself. He smote the waters ; no matter though the means be unlikely to produce the effect, if they be of God's appointment ; and in faith we must stretch out the withered hand, if we would have it restored, and venture on the work upon the credit of the promise.

As a conclusion to this discourse, let me exhort you to go <sup>to</sup> the Lord Jesus this night, and wrestle for his presence as in former times ; and let the consideration of God's presence with his people in former times, take you to the same God for the same entertainment.

To prevail with you, I would offer the following MOTIVES.

Q 2

1. Con-

1. Consider, it is too evident the Lord has forsaken this generation in great measure. He is writing bitter things against this church and land. Her beauty is marred upon all her assemblies; where the cloud of glory some time rested, we may write *Ichabod!* Hence it is so few are converted in our day; and the Lord's own children, though they get some food, yet they fare not so well as in former times. Why? because the Lord is withdrawn in his anger. The sun of the gospel in Scotland is as a winter-sun, and looks as if near the setting, at least getting under a dark cloud: Isa. lxiv. 7. "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee, for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."

2. This would be the way to get a blessing; importunity prevails much in heaven. Were we thus exercised, we might get a blessing to this church, a blessing to this communion: Cant. iii. 4. "I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chambers of her that conceived me:" a blessing we should seek from him to ourselves. Though the Lord is sometimes so angry with a generation, that there is no turning away of his wrath, yet the serious seekers of his face will always get the blessing: Isa. iii. 10. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."

3. The door we set you to is a door where many have been liberally helped before you, and the Lord's arm is not shortened. The saints that were richest in experience got them all there, and all the fair ones now in glory, he was their God,  
that

that was with them in life, death, and now after death. Let the good report of his house, then, make you flock about his door, for there is no ground for that temptation, Job. v. 1. "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?"

4. It is a door where there is nothing given for personal worth. All that ever was given there to any of the children of fallen Adam, was given with that protestation, Ezek. xxxvi. 32. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" That the most unworthy in all succeeding generations might see they were welcome, it is for his own sake; and that cannot change.

*Lastly*, What will ordinances avail without his presence? Nay, they will do ill, instead of doing us good; they will bring on us a curse instead of a blessing; and therefore wrestle with him, and protest, Exod. xxxiii. 15. "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." The sermons will be to you as an empty sound, the Lord's table as an empty chair of state, when the King is away.—If his presence be not given you, you will get no spiritual feast; and one had better be at a common table, than at the Lord's table, when they do not feed: 1 Cor. xi. 29. "For he that eateth unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." If the King be away,—Then there will be no furniture for trials, none for the evil day, that seems to be approaching quickly; none for a dying-day, that is awaiting all of us. Now, if ye would find him,—Seek him in Christ, look for him in the several means of his appointment, streets, courts, &c.—Put away every thing that mars his presence with you.



---

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.\*

---

## S E R M O N XII.

2 KINGS, ii. 14.—*And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*

I SHALL now,  
III. Give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, that the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days, should bring the succeeding generation to the same God for the same entertainment.

This consideration may and ought to work upon us two ways.

1. By way of simple excitation and upstirring. When Elisha considered what God had done for Elijah, it set his soul on fire, inflamed his desires, set his heart a-longing after the Lord, that he might deal the same way with him. Thus the consideration of God's gracious appearances to and for his people in former times, should be a powerful motive to labour for the same or like experiences. It should inflame our hearts with a holy emulation,

\* Delivered August 16. 1713; afternoon.

tion, and earnest desire of the blessed entertainment others have got before us at God's door; for the following reasons.

(1.) Because, so far as we come short of it, it is a sign we are so far off the way where the footsteps of the flock are to be seen, Cant. xvii. 8.; and that is so dangerous, that it may well strike a nail to our heart to think of it. What is the reason we fare not so well about the Lord's hand as others before us? Have we not the same God to go to, the same covenant-promises? We have the same breasts of divine consolations, as full as ever, but it seems we have much lost the art of sucking them, that sometimes has been our experience.

(2.) Because, so far as we come short, it is a sign of God's anger against us, that he hath some quarrel with us he had not with his people in former days of the right-hand of the Most High; and may not this prick us to the heart, and set us to our knees? Isa. lix. 12. "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us." What is it but the sins of the generation, that stops the communication of the divine goodness? Does the Spirit of the Lord depart till he be grieved, or the holy fire go out till it be quenched? Does the Lord close his distributing hand till his people close their mouths? or does not the oil run while there are empty vessels to receive it? While the furious wind of persecution blew on God's people in Scotland, and the sweeping rains fell, sweeping away their earth from about them, the fountain of the divine goodness to them ran freely; but now, alas! through long ease, we have got the springs stoppt with our mud and earth.

(3.) Because we have as much need as they had: Luke, xv. 17. "And when he came to himself,

self, he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise, and go," &c. If we be less at God's door than others before us, it is not, I am sure, for any wealth we have at home, more than they had ; it is not that we do not stand in need, but that we are not so sensible of our need. Many of the Lord's people have taken little rest, when they had more than we can pretend to ; they have been very anxious to increase their flock, when it was far above ours ; and when we consider how fast they ran, when they had reached far above our small measure, should not that stir us up to mend our pace ? Phil. iii. 13. 14. " Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus."

(4.) Because these glorious examples should not be without due influence upon us. Example is a most efficacious incitement ; Cæsar grieved when he saw the statue of Alexander, and considered how he, at the age of thirty, had conquered the world, and himself, being older, had done nothing : Heb. xii. 1. " Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." How may we blush when we consider the stature of those before us, that have been as the palm-tree, while we, growing in the same soil, are like pitiful shrubs ! Surely, if our spirits were not mightily sunk and degenerate, the glorious example of the  
 Lord's

Lord's people in former days would set our whole soul a-going after the God of Elijah.

2. It should work on us by way of encouragement. Elijah's example gave Elisha hopes he might find God the same to him he had been to his predecessor. Encouragement is a notable spur to diligence, and is that which is most likely to take with men. What is it which makes us that we wrestle not for God's presence, as in former days? even unbelief, that tells us we need not be at the pains, for it will not do. But the report of the godly in former days contradicts the report of unbelief, and therefore should bring us back to God's door; even as when a beggar, having called at a door for his alms, was coming away without it, and should meet with another that had been plentifully served there, who would say to him, That is a good house, and though one may stand long at the door ere they be served, yet they give ay a liberal alms at length; would not that bring the beggar back again? So should the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days bring us to him for the same entertainment. For this there are the best reasons; such as,

(1.) Because the experiences of the Lord's people in former days were given, and put on record, for that very end. All the experiences of God's presence with his people in former days, are as so many signs of peace on earth, and goodwill towards men. They, as it were, stand at God's door, to invite and encourage those of succeeding generations to come in there for the same or like entertainment; and his people do but answer the design of them, when they come and inquire, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*—*Eph. xii. 7.* "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards

towards us through Christ Jesus.”—Rom. xv. 4. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.”

(2.) Because these experiences say there is enough to be had in God for the seeking, if we seek in his own way: Psal. xxii. 4. “Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried to thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.” The saints that have gone before us have spread a good report of God’s house, that others after them might come to the same door. They have had the experience of the Lord’s help in all the cases that we can be in; and whatever be the difficult steps we have to go, if we mark narrowly, we will see the footsteps of the flock before us in these steps through which their God has graciously handed them: Psal. xxxiv. 6. 8. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.—O taste, and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” And their experiences are their testimony to the truth of his promises: Psal. xii. 6. “The words of the Lord are pure as silver tried.”

(3.) Because we have the same advantages that they had, yea, and more than some of them, that lived in darker days than we do. How many have groped the way to the throne of grace, when they had not such light shining around them as we have to shew the way; but, however we make the comparison, we have the same God to go to that they had, who has as much to give, and is as gracious as ever: Jam. i. 17. “Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh  
down

down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" the same High-Priest over the house of God, that is as well heard by the Father now as ever, Heb. xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" the same covenant, for it is everlasting; the same promises, whose truth and mercy endure for ever.

(4.) Because all that ever the best of the saints got was in the way of free grace. It was not only undeserved, but given over the belly of ill-deserving; and if it be free grace that opens the door, what needy sinner is there but may come forward for a share? All the love that was ever bestowed on any of them, was free love, without the least deserving; if ye think there is any exception, look through them all, from Adam downwards, and name the man if you can. Paul challenges the world to do it, Rom. xi. 35. "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

IV. I AM now to make some practical improvement. And this,

1. In an use of reproof. This reaches a reproof to several sorts of persons; as,

(1.) To our modern blasphemers, who reckon the saints experiences of the workings of the Lord's Spirit on their spirits nothing but the effects of imagination, heat of fancy, or somewhat else. So true is it, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But when we consider the sanctifying effects of these operations felt on their spirits, how by these their hearts are loosed from the lusts to which they were formerly glewed, inflamed with love to  
God

God and his holy law, and thus to despise the world, rejoice in tribulation, joyfully to suffer for Christ, and deny themselves to all that is dear to them in the world for his cause, we must conclude, that these men do but new-model the doctrine of those that taught long ago, that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils; and that, as their working is formal, suited to the spirit of the natural man; so their spirit is profane.

(2.) Those that slight the experiences of the people of God, and appearances to and for them, as not worth their notice, far less of their pains, to get the same entertainment; and yet they did more service to the cause of God, by their godly simplicity, than we are like to do by our refined prudentials; and no wonder, for if a man will be truly wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. "Let him become a fool, that he may be wise." A little faith and dependance on the Lord for light and strength, will go farther than much carnal foresight. But they had the spirit of preaching, praying, and other things belonging to the service of God; and we have the bare act of it. The good Lord send back the Spirit, come of the act what will!

(3.) To these who are ready to talk big of the experiences of God's people, and of God's appearances for them in former days. With a whole heart, their consciences bearing them witness, they are not concerned to wrestle with God for themselves or others now, or to put to their hand, in their several capacities, to the revival of practical godliness in the generation; but, on the other hand, do improve it to the hardening of their own hearts, and to the contempt of ordinances and ministers. These are the genuine offspring of those who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished their sepulchres, yet are filling up the measure  
of

of their fathers iniquities, Matth. xxiii. 29.— Whence I may observe, (1.) That dead prophets are better liked by a formal generation, than living ones, for they get less trouble of the dead than of the living. (2.) Such would make a brave use of the means of grace that were in former days, which they are sure they cannot get, while they have no power to improve the means that are among their hands. (3.) These will condemn their fathers misusing of the prophets that are gone, who yet will trample on their successors that are remaining.

(4.) To those who improve the experience of the Lord's people in former days against themselves, to the deadening their own spirits, instead of quickening them, when they look upon them. By the subtlety of Satan, they are thereby discouraged and broken, instead of being animated, as they ought, to seek the same entertainment. It is the remains of a legal disposition in any of the children of God, that is the source of discouragements arising from this airth. They look more to the goodness that was in the saints, and the ill that is in themselves, than to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which alone the divine goodness did flow to them, and through which it may flow as freely to themselves.

*Lastly,* To those whose hard thoughts of God the experience of all the saints from Adam cannot remove. So vile are they, they conclude, that God's heart cannot be towards them, though they have all the experiences of former saints, as so many depositions to confirm the welcome of all that come to him through Christ, whatever they have been. O lay by these hard thoughts of God, so destructive to yourselves, and so dishonourable to God. Look among all that ever came to God,



if ye can find one that died at his door ; if that be your lot, you will be the first ; but God's word says you shall not : John, vi. 37. " Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Beware of hard thoughts of God, whatever your disappointments be ; if the devil can get that point wrought up in you, he has you fair before the wind for hell, where the fearful and unbelieving land ; and there is not a readier way on earth than that, to create a hell within a man, a hell, I say, where sin and sorrow for sin are both at a height. But here some may propose this

*Objection*, No other person's case is like mine.

*Ans.* And there is none good as the Lord ; he is goodness itself, infinite goodness, and infinitely good to sinners in Christ ; and that is sufficient to swallow up your matchless evil. What think ye of Paul, Manasseh, Adam ? But though ye cannot see a case like yours among all the elect of God, you cannot thence conclude your case is marrowless, more than if ye were in a wilderness where ye could see no marks of a person's foot, ye might conclude never one was there before you. But suppose the saints experiences leave you, yet the word will reach you : Rev. xxii. 17. " And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And if your case be quite new, God will do a new thing, according to his word. Some person must go foremost in every case ; venture you, then, on Christ with that case of yours, that others that may be in it after may follow, and ye shall find a matchless Physician for a matchless malady.—I shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation. Let me exhort all, especially communicants, to seek the Lord's presence

fence and glorious appearances as in former days ; and make this your great business, never ceasing till he make himself known, as in the days of old.

(1.) Seek his glorious presence to the spirits of his people, as in former days. The Lord's work here is at a sad stand ; cry, " Revive thy work in the midst of the years," Hab. iii. 2. Their bones are in that respect lying dry about the grave's mouth. O cry for the Spirit of life to enter into them ! Even the trees of God's planting are become mighty sapless ; God's wheat is mighty withered at the root ; cry for a shower of influences, that the work within, that is at such a stand, may go on yet, and soul-exercises may be set on foot again.

(2.) Seek his powerful manifestation of himself, to purge the generation's wickedness, and to make holiness more common and shining in our day. There is a deluge of profanity overflowing the land : *Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?* Cry for his appearance, to turn the stream, to make iniquity hide its head, and holiness to settle in its room. There is a glorious promise to the gospel-church, in Zech. xiv. 20. " In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord ; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar ;" cry for the accomplishment of it, to him with whom is the residue of the Spirit.

(3.) Seek his glorious appearance in ordinances, as in former days,—that he would beautify the place of his glory by his presence. Do your utmost to get him into your mother's house, for it is a heartless house when he is away. We have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth : *Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?*

(4.) Seek his glorious appearance for his churches, now when they are so low, and the hand of the Antichristian faction is so high : Jer. li. 50. "Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind ;" for your mother-church in particular, against which many are gathered, saying, Let Zion be defiled. Behold how pin after pin in her tabernacle is loosed, that it must quickly lie along upon the ground, if the Lord himself do not appear to hold it up. Seek for the revival and preservation of the covenanted work of reformation, that sacred pledge transmitted to us at the expence of the precious blood of many of the saints, the bearing down and destroying of which is like to make these nations yet swim with blood. Our rowers have rowed as into deep waters, where they have sunk our nation, and solemnly buried our covenants in the ruins of it : *Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?*

Cry for their resurrection ; and if ye can do no more, ye may do as Martha and Mary, that owned their relation to their brother while in the grave ; and say as Mary, and these with her, John, xi. 34. when Christ asked, "Where have ye laid him ?" "Lord !" say they, "come and see."—For motive,

1. Consider, that the Lord's appearances and manifestations of himself as to his people in former days, would make a pleasant change on the face of affairs this day, it would be as life from the dead : Isa. xxxv. 12. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

It

It would renew the earth's withered and decayed face. If, therefore, you have any respect for the thriving of your own souls, any pity on the perishing souls of a graceless multitude, any regard to God's honour and ordinances, any concern for his ark and work, seek his glorious appearance for his church.

2. Consider, that matters are come to such a pass with us now, that nothing less than God's gracious appearance for us, and presence with us, as in former days, can prevent our ruin; we have all grounds to fear an arousing stroke from the hand of the Lord, by means of a French, Popish, and malignant faction, set to raze our Jerusalem to the very foundation, whose tender mercies are cruelty; and if we should miss it, which is not likely by all appearance, there will be a blacker sight seen on this church, and these nations, by reason of that spirit of enmity against the purity of religion, and against all practical religion, that has made such dreadful advances this day, that, if God do not seasonably strike in, will, through time, wear out the fairs of the Most High.

*Lastly*, Consider the glorious things spoken of the latter times, to which the world seems to be advancing apace. The extraordinary efforts made this day for advancing the kingdom of the devil in the Christian part of the world, the universal decay of piety in the churches look like a critical juncture, when the honour of God is called upon to "arise like a giant refreshed with wine," to purify a people to himself, and to strike his enemies on the hinder-parts. Whatever sad work may be made on the churches before that come, O cry, "Awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days," Isa. lix. 9.—I shall close with a few advices.

1. Stir up yourselves to repent and reform: "Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die," Rev. iii. 2. It is high time we were bending to our feet, when the fire has begun to catch hold of our bed of sloth; we have slept long enough, labour now to get and keep matters clear betwixt God and your souls.

2. Lament after the Lord: 1 Sam. vii. 2. "And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Upon that they had occasion to set up another Ebenezer. The tears of the Lord's people after a departed God are the ready way to bring back their tender-hearted Lord. Mourn over your own sin, and the sins of present and former times.

3. Study unity, and beware of division, Psal. cxxxiii. 3.; be more afraid of your own than of other people's sins. This church at best is but weak; let us not by divisions make ourselves an easier prey to the common enemy, lest God be provoked to cast us into the fire, to make us burn together.

4. Lay out yourselves for the advancement of piety, to stir up one another to holiness, love, and good works. Put to your hand this way to hold up a standard for Christ in the world; the devil's agents are busy, not only against the out-works of religion, but to sap the foundations of it. What are you doing to strengthen them? To talk and complain about the defections of the time, will not do it, but apply your main force to advance and strengthen the vitals of religion in yourselves and others.

5. Labour to put yourselves in a posture for suffering; cast the burden of earth off your back, and let your shoes be on your feet, your eye on the prize; pursue it over the belly of all hardships  
you

you may meet with, and you will readily find God will be with you.

*Lastly*, Pray, pray, lift up a cry for the remnant that is left; let us meet continually at the throne of grace, ministers and people, to try it with him in his ordinances, and to wrestle for his presence.

CHRIST,

---

CHRIST THE FATHER'S GIFT TO HIS  
CHOSEN PEOPLE\*.

---

S E R M O N XIII.

ISA. lv. 4. *Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.*

**I**N the first verse of the chapter, there is a large offer of grace, and a cordial invitation to all to improve the blessings of salvation. In the second and third verses, the Lord expostulates with sinners for their slighting this offer, and pursuing after other things. Then the invitation itself is renewed, and backed with weighty motives. In all this the Lord has a special respect to the Gentiles, who at that time were strangers to the covenants of promise. In the text, there is a notable ground of encouragement for sinners to come to Christ; the very scope of it is to encourage them to come to him; it is as if God had said,  
Why

\* The time when this Discourse was delivered is not mentioned.

Why are you afraid to come? behold I have given him for that very end, to be a witness, a leader, and a commander to the people. Therefore you may conclude, that he must have a people to believe in him as a Witness, follow him as a Leader, and obey him as a Commander. Did ever any prince give any a captain's commission, but when he designed also he should have some under him as soldiers?

In the text, we have a declaration of what God the Father hath done for poor sinners; and because it is an unequalled deed, it is ushered in with a note of attention and admiration, *Behold, I have given*. He has made a gift to sinners, a gift such as may supply all their wants.

1. Consider the Giver; *I*, that is, the Father, the contriver and source of the sinner's salvation. None else could give such a great gift, none else had power to make this gift. In regard of the great Giver; then, it ought to be received with all due respect and gratitude.

2. Consider the gift, *him*; that is, Christ, of whom David was a type: John, iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." This is a gift suitable to the greatness of the Giver. He gives like a King, yea, like the King of kings: for his gift is unspeakably and infinitely great.

3. Mark the conveyance of this noble gift: *I have given him*; I have freely bestowed him. This was according to the covenant of grace; he was not given against his will. No; his Father's will and his are one, he gave himself also. The Father freely designed him for the work, and he cheerfully accepted, saying, "Lo! I come."

4. Consider the end of this gift. For what purpose did the Father give Christ? Why, it was to supply



supply the needs of the people, both the Jews and the Gentiles. But here the Gentiles seem to be especially aimed at, ver. 5. "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee." What sort of people these were, may be learned in part from the ends for which Christ is given. He is given,

(1.) For a Witness, to testify the truth and to reveal the mind and will of God to the people: John, xviii. 37. "To this end," said Jesus, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth he heareth my voice." Hence it follows, that they are an ignorant people, that know not God, nor the mysteries of salvation; the very people that have lost their eyes in Adam; an unbelieving people, who will not believe God, unless he proves what he says by his Witness.

(2.) For a Leader, to go before them as a Prince and a Captain, as the word signifies, and so they are a people that have difficulties to go through, and know not their way, and so stand in need of a Leader. He is given,

(3.) For a Commander, to give them out laws and rules for their obedience. This implies that they are an unruly people, who must have one to keep them in order.

There is a *Behold* prefixed to the text. This serves to stir up attention and admiration. Let us consider and wonder, how graciously and suitably the Lord has provided for us.—In this verse, there is this.

**DOCTRINE,** That the Father's giving of Christ to be a Witness, Leader, and Commander to sinners, is a matter worthy of deepest consideration, and greatest admiration.

IN

IN discoursing on this subject, it is intended, by divine aid,

I. To shew you some special steps of God's giving this noble gift, Christ.

II. To inquire for what this gift is so remarkable.

III. What we may behold in the Father's giving this gift. And,

IV. To conclude with a practical improvement.

WE are then,

I. To shew you some special steps of God's giving this noble gift, Christ.

1. God made this gift before time, even from all eternity, in respect of designation; the Lord designed him to be a Witness, Leader, and Commander to the people; from all eternity did God design to bring many sons to glory; and therefore at that period also did he design their Captain for them. What is done in time is but the execution of eternal decrees; eternal life was promised us in Christ Jesus before the world began, Tit. i. 2.

2. God gave him in the morning of time, in the first promise: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." When Adam fell, and involved all his posterity in a lost condition, when he had carried all of them out of the way of life, so that none of them could ever know it again without a Witness, nor walk in it without a Guide, then God promised this noble gift, to make up what Adam had lost, and to restore to us what he had taken away.

3. In the fulness of time, when he actually exhibited this gift; when the word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his  
Son,

Son, made of a woman, made under the law," Gal. iv. 4.

Then was seen that great gift foretold by Moses and the prophets, shadowed forth by the law, and looked for with earnest expectation by the people of God. A time it was when he thus came, wherein the world lay in deep spiritual darkness; the knowledge of the true God was almost totally abolished among the Gentiles; they knew not God, and the true religion was dreadfully corrupted among the Jews. The few that remained were wearied with the burdensome ceremonies, that could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore looked for the mercy promised unto the fathers.

4. God gave this gift in the last time, when the gospel was freely preached to all nations. Then it was, and ever since, that Christ set up his standard in the world, to receive all, without distinction, that would fight under his banner. Thus God gave him in respect of the free offer: "He is the gift of God," John, iv. 10.

5. He gives him, in particular, to every elect soul in the time of love, the day of espousals. This is that blessed spot of the believer's time, wherein they match with the Son of God, believe his word, and give themselves up to his conduct. They thus receive the unspeakable gift of God; and this is a crowning mercy indeed! Whosoever thus by faith receives this precious gift, shall receive him over again in the marriage-day, that is, when time is over and gone. Then it shall be said, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."—Let us,

II.

II. INQUIRE for what this gift is so remarkable.

1. It is remarkable, for the hand from whence it came. It was the Father that gave Christ; even he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. If a gift be valuable for the sake of the giver, then Christ is the most valuable gift, as given by the Father; and therefore he that slighteth Christ, slighteth the Father also. The town-clerk of Ephesus supposed that none could but know, that the Ephesians would be zealous for the image of Diana, because it was supposed to have fallen down from Jupiter, Acts, xix. 35.; ten thousand times better reason have we most highly to esteem our Lord Jesus, because we have the most infallible assurance, that he came down from God, the Father of mercies, "My Father (said Jesus), giveth you the true bread from heaven," John, vi. 32.

2. It is remarkable, for the persons to whom it is given. Who are they? They are men, and not angels; sinners, and not saints: "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. "Yea, in due time he died for the ungodly." Men that give gifts, usually give them to their friends, but God gave even his unspeakable gift to his enemies; men give to the rich, but God gave to the poor; he gave this gift to them that had mis-spent the gifts bestowed upon them at their creation. O let us set a mark here, and say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" 1 John, iii. 1.

3. It is remarkable, for the seasonableness of it. God not only gave his Son, but he gave him in proper season; as it was with Abraham, for whom

God provided a ram to be offered in the stead of his only son Isaac, who was already bound on the altar; so, when the sinner's neck was on the block, when divine justice had a sure hold of him, and was about to strike the fatal blow, then did God provide, and give Jesus to be a sacrifice in our stead. O what a surprize, as well as a comfort, was the promise of him to poor Adam! and O how welcome to us should be this faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that God sent even his own Son, "to seek and to save that which was lost."

4. It is remarkable, for the suitability of it. Unsuitable gifts are not much esteemed. What though a man would give a purse full of gold to one starving for want of bread, or present plenty of food to a person just dying of an incurable disease? Such unsuitable gifts could be of no use to these persons; but Christ is every way suitable to the sinner's case: "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him; because he ever liveth, to make intercession for us." For such an High-priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The balsam of his blood exactly answers our wounds in breadth and length; it cleanses from all sin, and purges the conscience from dead works. It was contrived by infinite wisdom for this purpose, and every sinner whose eyes are opened at once sees his suitability; for Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24.

5. This gift is remarkable, for the necessity of it: Acts, iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." What would the world have been with-

out

out Christ, but a dungeon of darkness, a pit of horror, a prison of misery and despair? Had we only heard God thundering on Sinai, and not God groaning on Calvary, then we had made the rocks rent, and the hills resound, with our desperate outcries. No man, no angel, was able to help; nothing but the blood of God could expiate our guilt.

6. It is remarkable, for the greatness of it. It is a gift without a parallel in heaven or in earth: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John, iii. 16. A greater gift than this Heaven could not give, and earth could not receive. The salvation is great, but the Saviour, the person who wrought out this salvation, must be greater. Many rich and blessed gifts God gives his people, but they are all little when compared with this great gift, for along with it he freely gives us all things. When God resolved to display and communicate his goodness, his wisdom, power, and bounty, he made a world out of nothing; but when he resolved to manifest his love, and discover all his glory, he gives us to view it in the face and person of Jesus. The Sabbath was appointed for celebrating the praises of God for the work of creation; but in addition to this, eternity is destined to celebrate the praises of the riches of his grace and glory in Christ Jesus.

7. This gift is remarkable, for the freedom of it. Christ is a gift every way free. There is a cluster of wonders in the freedom of it.—These we shall in part notice. This gift is given,

(1.) To the undeserving. We deserve no good at the hand of the Lord, much less the greatest good; we cannot challenge a drop of water by merit, much less Christ and his grace; so that

God cannot wrong us, whatever he deny us. It is given,

(2.) To the ill-deserving ; to them who deserved death and damnation ; who were justly lying under the curse of the first covenant, and whose demerit would have sunk them to hell. Yea, this gift is given,

(3.) To them that were not seeking it : " I am fought (says God) of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that were not called by my name." Christ can say of all his people, " Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The Father presses the gift of his Son upon poor sinners, even when they are feeding on husks, and not seeking after him, saying, " Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lv. 2. It is given,

(4.) To them that were not expecting it, or looking for any such gift at his hand. How was Zaccheus surpris'd when Jesus said unto him, " This day is salvation come to thine house," Luke, xix. 9.

(5.) Yea, it is still offered to them who have often refused it, who have been frequently bidden to the marriage-supper, and have as often refused to come : " Ye will not come to me, (says Jesus), that ye might have life ;" but yet still does he say, " Why will ye die, O house of Israel ?"

8. This gift is remarkable for the unchangeableness of it. All the spiritual gifts and callings of God are without repentance ; but above all it is so with Jesus, his great and unspeakable gift. Where he once comes, he never afterwards goes

away. There is a strict bond of union between Christ and the soul, which death itself cannot dissolve; yea, "there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus." If the soul cannot keep fast hold of Christ, Christ will keep fast hold of it: "I know my sheep, (says Jesus), and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," John, x. 27. 28. If the hand of faith be weak, he can strengthen it; and the Spirit of God does not faint nor grow weary. The term of the union between Christ and believers is during life eternal.—  
Let us,

III. INQUIRE what we may behold in the Father's giving this gift. Much, much indeed, may we here behold, that merits our attention, admiration, gratitude, and love. But at present, time only permits me simply to mention a particular or two.

1. In this gift we may see our own needs. If our necessity had not been very great and urgent indeed, God would not have given his own Son to be a witness, leader, and commander to us; had not our misery been great, and also beyond the power of men and angels to deliver from it, God would not have provided and given such a ransom for us. This at once shews our misery to have been so great, that none but Jesus could deliver us from going down to the pit. The divine excellence and infinite value of the remedy, clearly demonstrate the absolute necessity on our part of such a cure.

2. In this gift we may see infinite love. What but love, love eternal, and boundless grace, could have induced God the Father to have given his own well-beloved Son, even to die in the room of



such creatures as we are? Instead of merit, we had the very greatest demerit; and God was under no obligations to give us such a gift; his own love then was the source. In the gift itself, we have the greatest display of love ever made to any of the creatures of God; the greatness of it the heart cannot conceive, nor the tongue express; the greatness of it will through eternity excite the admiration, gratitude, and love, of angels and men.

3. In this gift, we have to contemplate a glorious design of doing good to sinners. All the gifts of God are intended for our good; but as this is the greatest of them all, yea, infinitely greater than them all taken together, so the good evidently intended by it is also exceeding great; yea, it bears a proportion to the infinite value of the gift itself. When we consider the divine dignity of the person sent, and his near relation to the Father, when we consider the greatness of the work his Father gave him to do, and the tremendously dreadful sufferings which he appointed him to endure, we may at once conclude, that the good thereby intended for sinners was so great, as to be worthy of the wisdom and goodness of the person who sent him, and worthy also of the Son of God to accomplish. This was nothing else than eternal life: Jesus, "the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons to glory."

IV. LET us now conclude with a practical improvement.

My friends, when God makes offer of this gift to you, slight it not, but receive it gratefully; accept of Christ as he is offered in the gospel. When Christ on the cross saw his mother standing by the disciple whom he loved, he said unto her, "Woman, behold thy Son!" then to the disciple, "Behold

hold thymother !” and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. So does God address you, saying to each of us, Behold my Son Christ, and take him home into your hearts.—For motives to this, consider,

1. That Christ is a leading gift. Wherever he comes, he never comes alone, he brings a train of blessings along with him, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; for in him all the promises are yea and amen. Receive him, and ye shall have a complete and everlasting righteousness with him, reconciliation and peace with God, pardon of sin, sonship to God, an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and, finally, a right to all things. If ye receive him, all things are yours: “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” 1 Cor. iii. 21.—23.

2. He is a soul-satisfying gift, in the enjoyment of which your souls may rest. Are you not seeking satisfaction, and pursuing after happiness? but “why do you seek the living among the dead?” Why do you suck the dry breasts of the world, and the impure fountains of your own lusts, that cannot satisfy? Isa. lv. 2. Nothing but an infinite good can satisfy the desires of the human soul; and here it is. Here in Christ, like Habakkuk, you may find a source of joy and strength, when all other comforts fail. As nothing but the mother’s breast can satisfy the hungry infant, so nothing but Christ can satisfy your souls aright: “Whosoever drinketh of the water (saith Jesus) that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life,” John, iv. 14.

3. He

3. He gave himself to the death, that he might be a gift suitable to your necessities. He is that bread that the Father gave from heaven; bread that was ground between the mill-stones, and baken in the oven of God's wrath, that he might be bread to you.

4. Do ye not need, positively need him? Can you be happy without a pardon, peace with God, a righteousness, and an everlasting inheritance? Now, there is no possible way of obtaining these, but by him. O! my fellow-sinners, how can ye live or die without him? Sure your own necessities have a loud cry to you not to slight him; your souls, pining away in sin, cry, O slight not a Saviour! your souls, truly sick, cry, O slight not the physician!

5. Consider, he is in your offer; you may have him if you will: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." You see there is nothing to hinder your receiving of him; for the Father is willing to give his Son to you, the Son is willing to give himself, the Spirit is willing: "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." Nay, it is not merely a simple offer, but a command: "This is the command of God, that ye believe on his Son." Therefore, under the pain of God's eternal displeasure, accept of him: "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

6. Consider, he will not always be in your offer. When once the Master hath risen up, and shut the doors, ye may knock in vain, there will be no more entrance. Thus ye may be taken from the offer, or it from you; now, then, is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

*Lastly*, Consider, if ye receive him not, ye are lost

lost for ever; and then it will be more tolerable for them that never heard of him, than for you:

“ If he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of God ?” For we know him that hath said, “ Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will repay, saith the Lord,” Heb. x. 28.—30.

My fellow-sinners, will ye now take this gift from heaven? I am sure there would not need to be so much work to make you receive a gift that is not worthy once to be named with this: If ye will not take it, what have you to say for yourselves? Perhaps the reasons why some will not receive this gift may be easily found out; as,

i. Some will not, because they need it not; like Esau, in another case, they may be ready to say, “ I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself,” Gen. xxxiii. 9. Alas! many are full, are rich, and reign as kings without Christ; but, O! would to God they were rich, and did reign. Such persons only reign like Saul, when God departed from him. Sure am I, that if there be a soul under heaven needs Christ, it is such a person. They who, like the Laodiceans, are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, blind, and naked, O how much need had they to listen to the counsel of Jesus, and buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich; for what have ye without Christ, but has God’s curse in it? all your gifts are cursed to you, Mal. ii. 2. “ I will even,” says God, “ send

a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already," because ye do not lay it to heart.

2. Others will not, because they have not room for it; many have no room for Christ; their hearts and affections are otherwise taken up. But, O! what takes up that room? what guests do you lodge in your hearts, that the Son of God cannot have access? If ye have not room, will ye make room? Tell him ye are content to take him, and invite him to make room for himself, and he will do it. He is able to cast out your idols, and to pull down the strong-holds of sin and Satan that are in your hearts.

3. Some will not, because they like not the onerous cause of the gift. There are many that cannot digest what is required of them who belong to Christ: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." They could take the crown, but they cannot away with the cross, or the hard service. Such are to be pitied, for they are led aside by mistakes; if Christ was in your hearts, his service would be your choice, and you would glory in his cross.

4. Many will not, because they have no will to come under the obligation of a gift. Thus it was with the Jews; going about to establish their own righteousness, they submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God. This pride of heart lies often veiled under the shew of humility, when all the while the soul refuses to come to Christ, because of unwillingness. Well, you must either be obliged to Christ for your salvation, or perish; for do what you will, or suffer what you will, if Christ be not yours, you perish.

*Lastly,* Not a few will not, because they think, though

though it may do good to others, yet it can do none to them. Who knows but this may be the temptation of some ! this is the poisonous breath of monstrous unbelief, that at once flies in the face of God's truth, making him a liar, 1 John, v. 10. ; and in the face of his wisdom, as if he had provided an unsuitable remedy. Sinner, who ever perished in the hands of Jesus ? and O what desperate cases has he cured ! But do you object there was never the like of yours ? *Ans.* Then you will glorify Christ the more, if you will venture yourself in his hand. Many wonderful precedents have you as proofs of his ability. Venture yourselves then in his hand, " for he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Amen.

HE

---

---

THE CHRISTIAN WEAK, YET STRONG \*.

---

---

SERMON XIV.

2 COR. xii. 10. *For when I am weak, then am I strong.*

**T**HE text is a gospel-paradox, best understood by experience. The Christian is a mystery, a mystery to the world; the saints are hidden ones, yea, in a great measure they are a mystery to themselves; so is the Christian life. The apostle, in the text, tells us one of the great mysteries of the Christian life, and that is meat out of the eater: "I take pleasure," says he, "in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." Christianity teaches not a Stoical apathy, no man is more sensible of the weight of his burden than a Christian; yet he can not only bear a heavy burden patiently, (which I believe is a mystery to many of us), but he even finds a pleasure in a burden he is not able to stand under.

\* This and the following Discourse delivered July 12. and 13. 1713.

under. After sense has considered a trial, gone out and in through it, and found nothing but bitterness, faith can discover a great deal of sweetness in it. The Christian well exercised, may get some glorious fights in his trials and temptations, that afford a refined pleasure.

1. It is a sweet fight for a Christian to see himself standing a candidate for glory, and on his trials for heaven, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ."

2. It is sweet to see Christ dragging the corrupt will to the cross, and driving the nails through it, for its mortification: James, i. 3. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

3. It is sweet to see Christ, in order to the starving of lusts, blocking up the passages by which provisions might be brought to them.

4. To see the soul out of weakness made strong, and the devil outshot with his own bow. This account of it the text gives, *For when I am weak, that is, when I am weak in myself, then am I strong in Christ*; ver. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The Lord allowed the temptation to continue with him till he was driven out of himself, and was brought to confess he was not man enough for it, and then the Lord gives him strength against it.

1. In the text, there is something supposed, namely, that the Christian is not always weak in the sense of the text; he has not always the due



sense of his weakness; sometimes his locks are cut, and yet he will go out as at former times. It is no small piece of Christian labour to keep a due sense of our weakness and insufficiency. When the Christian is strong in himself, then he is dead weak. If the devil can but get the man blown up with conceit of his own ability to stand his ground against him, then he has him fair before the wind, as Peter. Hence it is that some will stand before great temptations, and fall before less ones.

2. In the text, there is something expressed. When the Christian is weak in his own fight, then he is really strong; he baffles the temptation, he stands the trial, when he sees he is not man enough for it. Sometimes the devil rages, drives furiously by temptations, persecutions, and the like; but unless he raise the dust, so as to blind the Christian's eyes, that he see not his own weakness, nor the strength of the grace without him in Christ, instead of driving him off his way, he will drive him to Christ, in whom he is enabled to stand, so as to come off a conqueror. I take up the sense of the verse in this

**DOCTRINE,** That when the Christian is weak, then he is strong; weak in his own eyes, strong in Christ.

IN discoursing upon this subject, I shall consider the following points.

I. What is that weakness, which paves the way to spiritual strength?

II. Offer some remarks for confirming this point.

III. Give some reasons of the doctrine. And,

IV. The illustration of these will make way for

for a large practical improvement, in various uses of the subject.

I AM, then,

I. To shew what is that weakness which paves the way for spiritual strength.

1. There is in it a holy bent of the heart to that work, to which strength is required, with an honest desire and resolution to go through with the work. If a man hath no mind for the work, it is all one in that respect, whether he be weak or strong: Matth. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But the Christian, however weak,

(1.) Aims honestly at the performance of every duty. Like David, he has respect unto all God's commandments, Psal. cxix. 6.; he dares not baulk any of the laws of Christ; the whole law is written in his heart by divine grace, and he labours to write it over in his practice; he has no objection to any duty he knows to be enjoined of the Lord, but says, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right," Psal. cxix. 128.

(2.) He is honestly resolved to resist temptation, and mortify lusts. This is what must be done, tho' he knows not well how; he concludes, that though there be a lion in the way, he must be forward: "I have chosen," says he, "the way of truth," Psal. cxix. 30.; his feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; he dares not think to fail with every wind, nor to go back and lie down in the embraces of his lusts, for it is to be supposed God has set fire to his rest there.

(3.) He has laid his account with the cross, and resolves to continue his weak shoulders under it,

at Christ's call: Matth. xvi. 24. "If any man (said Jesus) will come after me, let him deny himself, take up the cross, and follow me."

He is resolved to follow the Lamb, though he should lie at the end of it, and never to leave the way of the Lord, for all the storms that Satan may raise in it; he prefers Christ's cross to the world's crown; and what he cannot keep with a good conscience, he will reckon himself better without than with it.

2. A sense of utter inability and insufficiency, to go through with that work, or any part of it: 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Though his designs are noble and generous, he knows he has nothing in himself to accomplish them; for ye must know, that the Christian's confession of weakness is no compliment, they are children that will not lie; it is no preposterous modesty or diffidence, that blinds a man to his own ability. But he sees things as they really are, and believes himself no more weak than he is. When he looks over all his inventory, of what he is, and what he has in himself, he sees nothing to depend upon, either in point of doing or suffering.

The Christian lies fairest for spiritual strength, when he is so low and weak in his own eyes, as that he dare not trust to any thing for his through-bearing, that is not Christ's or in Christ: "They are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3. A man is no more weak in his own eyes than he has reason.—The Christian considers himself as weak,

(1.) When he dare not trust to his own stock of natural or acquired abilities for suffering for Christ.

These

These things may sometimes carry a man through what is duty for the matter, but oftentimes they leave a man in the lurch, and can never help a man to do any good thing that God will accept; and no wonder; for saith Jeremiah, ch. xvii. 5. 6. "Thus saith the Lord God, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited." See also, Isaiah, xl. 29.—31.

(2.) When he dares not trust to the principles and resolutions of his heart. Nature is mighty ventrous in religion, when it is flushed with vigorous resolutions. The Scribe said unto Jesus, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Matth. viii. 19. But when the temptation or trial comes, they fall down like the walls of Jericho; the fire-edge soon wears off the spirit that is not stayed on the Lord.

(3.) When he dares not trust to vows and engagements. Every gracious soul will give itself away to the Lord, but they will not trust to these bands, but to him to whom they are bound: Isa. xlv. 24. "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." If men trust to their own vows, they will find them a sorry fence, that will go like Samson's withs when he heard the Philistines were upon him.

(4.) When he dares not trust to his own endeavours: Psal. cxxvii. 1. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." A Christian must be as diligent and vigorous in his way of duty, as if he were to do all alone; but if he would see the success of these endeavours, he must look for it from another quarter, as if he had

done nothing. If the faint will not learn this lesson otherwise, God will let him work on, till he work himself out of breath, and so lie down at the Lord's feet, as the church did : Isa. xxvi. 8. " We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth."

(5.) He dare not trust to the good frame he sometimes finds his spirit in. A good frame is a precious ointment to refresh the weary traveller, but is not a staff to lean upon, 1 Chron. xxix. 17. 18. ; it may be quickly lost, Psal. cvi. 13. " They soon forgot his works ;" it is a tender bud of heaven that is easily nipped, as Peter at the voice of a maid. It is a heavenly fire that needs continual supply, or else it will go out ; if the Spirit of God cease to pour in oil, that lamp will soon be extinguished.

(6.) He dare not <sup>trust</sup> turn to habitual grace. Paul had a good stock of it, but he durst not venture to live on it : Gal. ii. 20. " I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The grace within the faints is a well, the streams of which are often dry, but to the grace without them in Christ ; they can never come wrong, for it is an overflowing fountain. How quickly would the branch wither, if it were left to the sap within itself, but the sap in the stock keeps the branch green : " He that eateth me, (saith Jesus), even he shall live by me," John, vi. 7.

3. There is the weak soul turning to a strong God for strength, in the way of believing, 2 Chron. xi. 12. " O our God ! wilt thou not judge them ?  
for

for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are towards thee." When the strong man goes into himself, and musters up all the forces and powers of his soul, for the duty, or against the temptation, the weak man, that lies fair for strength, goes out of himself to muster up the forces of heaven by faith.—I may take up this in three things.

(1.) The weak man that becomes strong, truly believes that God has treasured up in Christ the strength and furniture of all the heirs of glory, for their work, 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John, i. 16. Since Adam fell, he never trusted any of the saints with their own stock, but has made the Mediator the great Trustee of divine grace, that if they would be supplied, they must go to him for it.

(2.) Jesus Christ, with all his salvation, being offered in the way of the everlasting covenant, the weak soul by faith lays hold on that covenant, and Christ therein, for sanctification, as well as justification. Thus the weak creature is joined to a strong God, the empty soul is joined to him in whom all fulness dwells; so that in this sense, tho' he have nothing, yet he possesseth all things, viz. in Christ his head; they are complete in him, Col. ii. 10.

(3.) He believes the promises of the covenant, and, on the credit of them, ventures on duty against sin, and takes up the cross: 2 Chron. xiv. 11. "Help us, Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude."

Though

Though resolutions, engagements, and vows, be not to be trusted, yet a man may safely trust the promise; it is the blessed contrivance of the second covenant, that all our duties are there wrapt up in promises; and whenever we are called to do or suffer, the covenant has a promise of strength for it, and the Christian, sensible of his weakness, trusts it.—I am,

II. To confirm this point.—For this purpose, I offer these remarks.

1. The Christian, when he closeth his own eyes, sees best, when he trusts least to his own understanding, he is best directed, according to the promise: Prov. iii. 5. 6. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Carnal wisdom is an ill judge betwixt sin and duty; and if men renounce it not, and singly give themselves up to the divine conduct, they will be ready to stumble at noon-day: 1 Cor. iii. 20. “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” Lot lifted up his eyes, Abraham closed his, and left his choice to his Lord, Gen. xiii. 9. 10. This is the reason why godly simplicity oftentimes carries men well through, while carnal policy leads men into the ditch; and weak shrubs stand, while lofty cedars are blown over, that God may stain the pride of all glory.

2. When he ventures on the difficulties in the way of duty, not knowing how to remove them, he gets best through. This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up his son, Gen. xxii.; but when he went down to Egypt, there was a difficulty in the way, which he would not leave to the Lord to remove, but fell on ways and means  
of

of his own, and came off shamefully, Gen. xxii.; overfast, overloose in this respect, 1 Cor. iii. 16. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." A little faith is more valuable than much carnal foresight. Leave difficulties in the way of duty on the Lord, if ever you would get safe through them: Psalm xxxvii. 5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

3. The Christian soldier fights best, when the violence of the enemy sets him to his knees. Paul experienced this, when he besought the Lord thrice, and got a gracious answer; and so he recommends it to others, 2 Cor. xii. 8. "Praying always (says he) with all prayer," Eph. vi. 18. It was in this last posture that Jacob got the notable victory, Gen. xxxii. 24. Hence it is said of him, Hof. xii. 4. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us." Did temptations and troubles set us to our knees, the devil would be outshot. Did the threats of the enemies at this time, but cast professors out of their beds of sloth down to their knees, the Lord's work would quickly triumph over the enemies of it.

4. The lower the soul lies, it is the nearer the throne above: Isa. lvii. 15. "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." A man will get a better view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit than from the top of a mountain. The soul is never nearer the divine communications,



tions, than when shame and blushing make him stand afar off with the publican, smiting on his breast. The soul in that case will get the kindly invitation, *Come up hither*; when the self-conceited presumptuous sinner, will hear, *Go down yonder*.

5. The duty a Christian is called to, and sees himself most unable for, he performs best. Peter, when he thought himself well buckled for a confession for Christ, denied him at the voice of a silly maid; but when he had better learned the duty of self-denial, he boldly stood upon defence, Acts, iv. 13. A man had better be in the dark, than walk in the light of his own sparks. A Christian never goes so actively through a duty, as when he leaves his own furniture for it behind him, throws it down in point of confidence, and takes up the promise.

6. The temptation that to a man is most contemptible, is most dangerous: Prov. xxviii. 14. "Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief." Many times the devil's wounded men do more execution, than his formidable army set in battle-array. Lot kept his ground in Sodom, when among a company of incarnate devils, but fell foully when he thought himself in no hazard in the cave. If ye would stand, ye must never despise the meanest, nor think the greatest temptation insuperable. The meanest is too hard for you, the strongest too weak for the strength that you may have in your God.

7. The Christian that stands before the Lord with trembling legs, is the meekest to take up Christ's cross, and will bear it best. He that dare say least, is the man that will do most: Isa. xl.

30. 31. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." He that ventures on the hour of trial, merely with a Roman courage or natural briskness of spirit, has but a weak reed to lean to. There is none more likely to be a disgrace to religion, than the presumptuous self-confident professor, that wants nothing to support the cause of God, in the time of trial, but only other professors hearts like his heart. The best and surest backing Christ will have, will be from those that tremble when he shall roar like a lion, Hosea, xi. 10. see also Isa. xxxv. 4.—6.

8. The Lord's people thrive best, when they have nothing but from hand to mouth. The most enriching time they have, is when felt needs are always driving them to God's door, and making them hang on about his hand: Rom. v. 3. 4. "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." The Christian that has most trials, has most experiences. Many battles afford variety of spoil to the Christian foldier; and a tract of smoothness in a man's lot, is ordinarily a dead time with the Christian, as to trading with heaven; he has not much outgiving, and has as little income. When David going against Goliath, got on Saul's armour and dress, 1 Sam. xvii. 38. he could not go with them; but when he had nothing but the staff, and the bag of stones out of the brook, he went freely, and succeeded.

As

As the fire burns most vigorously in a keen frost, so faith acts most vigorously when it has nothing to animate it but the naked word of promise. But when all is laid to a person's hand as they would wish, faith is so clogged that it cannot readily go with them.

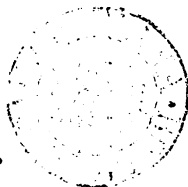
THE

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

S E R M O N XV.



2 COR. xii. 10. *For when I am weak, then am I strong.*

**W**E now proceed,  
III. To give some reasons of the doctrine, or shew, That when the Christian is weak, then he is strong; weak in his own eyes, strong in Christ.

Among other reasons which might be assigned, we shall mention the following.

1. Because he who is thus weak will not enter on difficulty but when he is called to it; and God's call to his people for any piece of work implies a promise of strength: Psal. xci. 11. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Self-confidence is venturous, thinks nothing too high for the man. Hence, he does not stay till he be led, but runs into temptation; no wonder than he comes foul off, like Peter in the devil's ground, the High-Priest's hall. But the first thing the weak man does, is to be sure of

VOL. I.

U

his

his call, knowing there can be no ground for confidence without it. And he will not be over soon satisfied with it, but ponders the path of his feet, Prov. iv. 26.

2. He is driven out of himself to the Lord Christ, the fountain of strength: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord," says the Psalmist, Psa. lxxxiv. 5. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," Psa. lxxi. 16. He leaves the rotten ground of self-confidence, and trusts in him that raiseth the dead, that calleth things that are not as though they were, and out of the mouths of babes perfects praise. The power of Heaven is engaged in his favour; he believes, therefore is not left to be ashamed. This is a sure way for strength: For,

(1.) It lies on the honour of God, to strengthen the soul that depends upon him alone, according to his word, and that in point of his veracity; God's word of honour is good security; also in point of his goodness and gracious nature. Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie upon him in favour of the party trusting him. And I think there is much in that word, Jer. xxxix. 18. "For I will surely deliver thee, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." Lot would rather that any evil that was to come should have fallen on himself and family, than on his guests; the reason is in these words: "For therefore came they under my roof," Gen. xix. 8. Humanity teaches people to preserve the life of a little bird, that flies into their bosom to be preserved from a ravenous bird. And they that take Ruth's way may be sure of the blessing she got: Ruth, ii. 12. "The Lord recompence thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

(2.)

(2.) Because it sweetly answers to the grand device of God touching the sanctification of sinners. For, (1.) The treasures of sanctifying grace are all laid up in Christ, "who of God is made unto us sanctification," 1 Cor. i. 30. and from him all gracious influences are to be derived: "Out of his fulness we are to receive, and grace for grace," John, i. 16. Accordingly the sinner comes to him, as the famished Egyptians to Joseph. (2.) They are to be derived from him by faith according to our needs; this is the appointed mean for conveyance of grace and strength from Christ, Gal. ii. 20. Accordingly the soul believes, that is, trusts in him for supply. Now, when the soul takes God's own way for strength, how can it miss it?

(3.) Because the glory of God's grace appears best in such a case. Thus it was with Paul, to whom God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When Christ cured the blind man, he anointed his eyes with clay. The grace of God works best alone; and therefore the Lord, to stain pride, and prevent men from sacrificing to their own net, brings them very low before he appears to work for them, that his work may be wonderful, Deut. xxxii. 36.

*Lastly*, Because in that case the grand stop of divine communications is removed; the vessel is empty, and so the oil runs. Self-confidence is diametrically opposite to the grand device of sanctification revealed in the gospel. That a man should trust himself, was the fundamental maxim of the Pagan morality, but revealed religion plainly overturns it: Prov. xxviii. 26. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." It is practically set up in the hearts of all men by nature, but grace overturns it: Matth. xvi. 14. "If any man (faith

Jesus) will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me."

IV. I AM now to make some practical improvement of this subject,

1st, In an use of information.

1. Learn, that they who were never carried off their own bottom for sanctification, have their religion yet to begin. It is a fundamental error in practice, for men to think, that though they need the righteousness of Christ for justification, yet they need but activity and diligence with their natural powers for holiness. This is as absurd, according to the scriptures, as to say the cripple needs but to ply his limbs, and so shall be cured. It is an evidence,—(1.) That thou hast never got a view of the corruption of nature, the plague of thine own heart; thy plague is in thy head.—(2.) That thou hast never felt the need of Christ for all his salvation, yea, for the principal part of it, that is, sanctification, which is the great design of the whole mystery of the gospel of Christ. And,—(3.) That therefore self has yet Christ's room in thy heart. Thou actest from thyself, and consequently to thyself, and so art rejected of God in all that thou doest.

2. We are taught, that they make foul work at communions, who,

(1.) Bind themselves to the Lord for work, but lay not hold on the everlasting covenant for strength. I will not deny but the sacrament is a seal of our engagement to the Lord; but, according to the scripture, it is mainly a seal of God's full covenant to believers, as appears from the words of institution; and therefore I think the main work of a communion-occasion is that Christians receive a full Christ, lay hold on a full covenant, suited to all their needs,

needs, and be no more faithless, but believing. They mistake also,

(2.) Who come to that ordinance without a deep sense of their wants, weakness, and imperfections. They who would have any thing at Christ's door, should be very sensible of their rank poverty at home: Luke, i. 53. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." They should be capable to lay their fingers on their sores, and tell what aileth them.—Those mistake also,

(3.) Who are at no pains to prepare for that ordinance, and to bring strength from heaven for the management of it: "Without me (says Jesus) ye can do nothing," John, xv. 5.; if nothing, how will they of themselves manage such a great and solemn work? therefore they have much need of intercourse with heaven by faith and prayer.—Those err,

(4.) Who depend upon their own preparation. It is hard work to prepare the heart for a communion; but it is harder to be denied to it, and trust nothing to it when we have prepared. It is hard to be wrestling with an ill heart, till it be brought to some tolerable frame; but harder to trust all to free grace.

3. We may learn that none are so ready to be a prey to the devil as the presumptuous, self-confident sinner. This is a train which, when laid for a man, will quickly blow him up. The poor trembling faint will keep his feet, when such an one's bent bow will quickly break.—In a word, we may conclude,

4. That the best way to stand is to be much in the work of undermining our self-confidence, and razing the grounds of it, shoveling away the mire in which that slag grows; we would thus be



brought into firm ground, and would grow up into Christ.—I now proceed to,

*2dly*, An use of comfort. This is comfortable to humble souls,

(1.) In the case of the church of God. This church is very weak at this day; she is weakened by mischiefs established by laws, by divisions, but, above all, by the provocations of her members against the Lord; she is cast into a decay of true tenderness, and practical godliness; she is far gone on in it; she has many enemies powerful and subtle, and there are few to stand against them, a weak company, weak heads, hearts, and hands; never fewer, perhaps, of the Nobles and gentry of Scotland to take her by the hand, than at this day. But it is very like she will be weaker yet, ere she recover strength, and many she trusts to now will leave her, that her army, like Gideon's, may be brought to a small remnant, ere the tents of Midian fall. But the farther the arm of flesh goes from the church of God, the nearer is the arm of God drawing to her.—There is comfort,

(2.) In your own case. It is no doubt the perplexing question of serious souls, How will I go cleanly through? Religion is no easy work at any time, but it is like to be harder than ordinary in our time. How will we get the Lord's way kept? Christ's cross born? If we faint at little trials, what shall we do under greater ones? But remember, when you are weak, then are you strong.—I shall only add,

*3dly*, An use of exhortation. I exhort you to keep up a due sense of your own weakness, and trust for your through-bearing in the Lord.

(1) Keep up a sense of the weakness of your heads, and lean not to your own understanding in the point of sin and duty; but be much hanging about

about the Lord's hand for light to clear your mind as to the way in which you are to walk.

(2.) Keep up a sense of the weakness of your hearts, and depend not upon your own strength for carrying you on in the way of duty when known, but go to the Lord for strength. In order to prevail with you, I mention the following MOTIVES.

[1.] This is necessary, to evidence your sincerity in what you have been doing. You have been taking a guide, professing yourselves incapable to guide yourselves, and a supporter, because you are unable to support yourselves. Honour him, follow him, and depend upon him.

[2.] You will have need of strength; be sure you will be tried; public trials seem to be abiding us, private trials you may lay your account with particularly; Satan is most busy at such a time.

[3.] You will never get through in your own strength; you have no reason to trust to yourselves, whatever the present frame and purposes of your hearts be. For, *1<sup>st</sup>*, Many sad instances have been of those who have got the slip of their own hearts, that thought they had as good reason to be confident as you, that they would never go back; witness Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, and Peter. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, Many that pretend fair are real nothings. We have need the Lord would hold the glass before our eyes, that we may see ourselves, our state and frame. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, The best have very deceitful hearts: Jer. xvii. 21. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And it is a general maxim, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26. We are very much unacquainted with ourselves, with our own hearts, we know not what manner of spirits we are of, Luke, ix. 55. The root of wickedness lies within us.

*Lastly,*

*Lastly*, Keep up the sense of your weakness, and trust to the Lord alone, and you will be strengthened with all might, so that you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you, Phil. iv. 13.

I shall offer some considerations to impress this on your spirits.

1. You will have need of strength, if you intend to reach heaven. Indeed, if you have taken your last sight of Immanuel's land, and have no mind for the Lord's work, but to turn your back on his way, and go with the stream, you may sit at your own ease, Satan will see to your swift progress, and will not leave you till he have you cast into the oven of God's wrath. But otherwise you must go against the stream, and you must have strength :

(1.) Strength for the duties of religion, and these are as large as the law, which is the rule of duty, and it is exceeding broad. Thou must now set thyself to internal and external obedience, thy duty to God and man ; give the obedience of heart, lip, and life ; thou must be universal in obedience, otherwise thou art hypocritical in it, and so rejected ; thou must have an holy conversation ; thine eye must ever be on the Lord, and his holy law ; holiness must go through all your actions, your religious actions, your civil and natural actions. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God ;" and surely for all this you need strength,

(2.) Strength for temptations. You must now resolve to enter the lists with a subtle devil, that has now more than five thousand years experience in the art of tempting. How will you stand ? With his agents in the world, he will fight against you with tongue, feet, and hands, and that too may be ere long ; and your most dangerous enemy is

is within : you have innumerable tempters within you : Jam. i. 14. " Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." There are many snares in the world, but none so dangerous as the corruption that is within each of our own hearts ; this will ever be ready to break out, and embrace its friends whenever they come near.

(3.) Strength for the cross. Have you engaged with a crucified Christ ? You must take up your cross, and bear it ; and this will require strength, (1.) To bear your every day's cross. Go times as they will, you will find every day will have the evil thereof. (2.) Your holiday's cross, in the church's troubles : " Thou hast (says Jeremiah) called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about," Lam. ii. 22. and how heavy that may be, we know ; but if the devil's time be short, he will be sure to have great wrath. We have had a cheap religion of it for many years, and therefore it has got many customers ; but if the after reckoning were come, which seems to be making haste, it is to be feared that many of us will throw it down again, and say, We never intended to have it at that rate.

2. You have no strength in yourselves answerable to that work ; and therefore, without doubt, you will never be able of yourselves for the least of it : 2 Cor. iii. 5. " Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God." Two things evidence this.

(1.) Our stock of strength was spent ere ever it came to our hands. The first Adam got it, Eccles. vii. 29. God hath made man upright, and he by falling left us without strength, Rom. v. 6. And thus the unregenerate world lies in wickedness,

ness, unable to recover themselves, but are held captive by Satan in chains of lusts, not to be broken by the power of nature.

(2.) Though, since Adam fell, God has given strength to his people, yet since that time God never trusted any mere man with his own stock of strength; but he has put a common stock of it into the hand of the Mediator, to be distributed by him according as the duties of his people require, and as they make application to him for it; and no man can come, saying with the younger brother, Luke, xv. 12. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," intending to set up and stand by himself. But he must come to stay at home, and receive his daily provision at his Father's table, and out of his hand, according to his necessities. The believer, being first by faith united to Christ as the head of influences, wherein all fulness dwells, must depend on him as the members on the head, the branches on the stock, and by faith derive strength from him continually, which cannot be, but under this sense of weakness which we press upon you, John, i. 17. 1 Cor. i. 30. John, vi. 57. Therefore I say confidently, that, be ye faints or sinners, ye have nothing in you to trust for the work of religion, if it be not Christ in you; and, be your stock always what it will, it is a very weak one, and you must not trust to it.

*Lastly,* You shall get enough of strength in Christ, if you take this way to it, living, and going out of yourselves, under a sense of utter weakness, to the Lord Christ, as the head of strengthening influences. If you ask, What is that? I answer, It is the soul's discerning an utter inability in itself for any spiritually good action, but without believing that God has treasured up sufficient strength in

in the Mediator, to be communicated to those that are his, and therefore embracing a full Christ for all, as held forth in the everlasting covenant ; and then venturing on duties, watching against temptations, and taking up the cross, upon the faith and credit of the promises of the covenant, trusting that they shall be made out to him ; which trust may be weaker or stronger, but according to the strength of it, so is the income of strength to the soul. In this way the weak go from strength to strength. Thus shall you be helped to go through the most difficult duties, acceptably, though not perfectly, to stand against the strongest temptations, to mortify the most powerful lusts, and to bear the heaviest crosses. This has made Christians attain to an eminent pitch of holiness, and made confessors and martyrs, joyfully to embrace a prison, banishment, a gibbet, a fire, and the most cruel torments enemies could invent. The more you are emptied of yourselves, placing your confidence in the Lord, the more will you be strengthened with might in the inner man ; and when you shall be perfectly unselfed, if we may so express ourselves, so that there shall be no more of it to marr the communication betwixt Christ and you, then you shall be perfectly holy, and set above the reach of all evil ; but because we are not perfectly divested of self-confidence in this world, therefore we do not here arrive at perfect strength. But all the saints, however, will give their testimony, that *when they are weak, then they are strong.* Amen.

THE

---

---

THE INTERESTING INQUIRY.\*

---

---

S E R M O N   X V L

MAT. XX. 6. *Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

**I**N the begining of this chapter, Christ spake a parable concerning the kingdom of heaven, the scope of which is to shew, that those who, by conceit of themselves and their actings for God, do place themselves among the first and chief favourites of heaven, shall be rejected of God, and treated as the last; they shall receive the last of Heaven's favours; while they who, through a feeling sense of unworthiness, dare not make such advances, shall be brought forward from among the last, where they placed themselves, and advanced to the first rank, where they shall be placed of God, who gives heaven as a gift to them that do not plead for it as a debt. This is plain from the occasion and conclusion of this parable: The  
vineyard

\* Delivered, Fast day, August 19. 1713.

vineyard is the church; the householder is Christ, whose vineyard it is; his going out at several hours is the call of the gospel at several times, coming to some sooner, to others later; the market-place is wherever the gospel comes. Our text is a pithy exhortation with those that are standing there idle, even at the eleventh hour, within an hour of sun-set; according to that, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" They are idle, in so far as they are not taken up about their work for eternity. Our text, you see, is a close application; the nature of this day's work requires it; and I hope you will not think we misapply it, if we apply it to you. Every word in it has its particular weight.—The following inquiries are suggested from it.

I. WHY are ye *idle*? What reason can ye give for your being idle?

II. Why are ye *idle*, more than some others?

III. Why *stand* ye *idle*?

IV. Why *here* *idle*?

V. Why *idle* in the *day*?

VI. Why *idle all the day*?

WE shall attend to these inquiries in their order.

I. Why are ye *idle*? If ye deny the charge, there are two things at least, which must be yielded to by most, if not all of us.

1. Ye have been very busy doing nothing; but it is better, they say, to be idle than doing nothing. What is it that most of us are busy about, but nothing? Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not, for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven;" that which is nothing for our souls, nothing for a blessed eternity. Indeed man



is a laborious creature; the life of the greatest sluggard is a continued succession of actions; the soul of man is like a watch that goes as fast when it goes wrong, as when it goes right. But, alas! laborious idleness and solemn trifling in the vanities of this world, is but a pitiful way of spending a man's life, which is but a short time of trial, in order to an unalterable state.

2. Ye have been very busy doing worse than nothing; like these, 2 Theff. iii. 11. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies." Alas! most of our lives are ill parted betwixt two; one is spent in weaving the spider's web, the other in hatching the cockatrice eggs, Isa. lix. 5.; either spent in nothing, or worse than nothing; either sitting still or making more progress hell-ward; either letting the separation-wall stand as before, or building it higher and stronger. But there is one thing that cannot be yielded, at least to the most part of this generation; and that is, that they are busy in their great work. No; no; idleness in this respect is the epidemical disease of the day, under which both professors and profane are pining away. For your conviction in this, consider,

1. What else means the lean souls among us? Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 15. "An idle soul shall suffer hunger," and Prov. xiii. 4. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." We may take up that lamentation, Isa. xxiv. 16. "But I said, My leanness, my leanness." Alas! for the many rickety children of the church this day, with their big heads, and lean slender bodies, who are puffed up with their knowledge, but are yet to learn the elements of practical godliness and experimental religion.—Consider,

2. The

2. The little desire there is among us after the heavenly rest: Job tells us, chap. vii. 2. "A servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and an hireling looketh for the reward of his work;" so, if we were not idle, we would be more desirous of that rest that remains for the people of God. But I fear, if I would speak agreeable to their consciences, they would say, that the Turks paradise would fit their desires better than the heavenly rest. It was the language of a profane Cardinal, I would quit my part of paradise for present enjoyment; so no doubt many would quit their part of heaven on lower terms, for they only desire heaven, because they love not to go to hell. They care not for the heavenly rest, because they trouble not themselves with the work meet for heaven.—  
Consider,

3. The little appetite after our spiritual food. The labouring man's work makes him find his stomach, and the Christian labour would make men prize the table covered to them in ordinances. The ordinances are greatly slighted this day, it is lamentable to think how little they are regarded. It is only in the Lord's hand to cure it, by filling folks hands with heart-work about their souls case. It is this that would readily make them eager of help.

*Lastly,* What else means the rank poverty, and rotten rags, which is all the portion of many souls? Rev. iii. 17. "And knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." How many are there, who are the genuine offspring of the serpent! on their belly do they go, and lust is their meat: they feed on nothing but the husks of created comforts, where-with the devil feeds his herds; as for communion

with God, and sense of his love, they know no more of them than if they had immortal souls for no other end than to keep their bodies from rotting. They go up and down in the rage of their profanify and lusts, like so many ghosts in their grave-cloaths, busy in nothing but dead works.

I inquire, then, why are ye idle ?

1. Is it because ye have nothing to do ? Truly, ye have very much.

(1.) Ye have your salvation-work upon your hand : Phil. ii. 12. " Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Many have never begun that work yet ; many that have seemed to have begun, are at a stand with it now. Ye were born children of wrath, under the curse of the first covenant ; what are ye doing to get free from the wrath to come ? There is a burden of guilt lying on you, what are ye doing to get it off ? Divers living lusts hanging about you, what are you doing to mortify them ? Is there any time to be idle, while that work is not wrought out ? Salvation-work is weighty work, for damnation-work is very terrible ; ye have that to undo that ye have been doing. Thou hast been weaving thy life into one web of sin, and ye have it to open out again into self-examination, repentance, and bitter mourning.

(2.) Ye have your generation-work to attend upon : Acts, xiii. 36. " For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God fell asleep." God made thee, and sustains thee ; some of you he has set in higher, others in lower stations ; what have ye done for God, what service to your generation ? The sun, moon, and stars are useful in their several places ; plants, yea, and beasts, are all useful. For what use art thou  
in

in the world? for *Him* who set thee there, and to those he has set thee among? Assure thyself, God will call thee to answer that question. I fear most of us have that work to begin yet.

2. Do ye think ye will get sleeping to heaven, and that your short-winded wishes for mercy will secure you from the wrath of God? Prov. xiii. 4. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and has nothing." No; ye must "so run that ye may obtain." Take the kingdom by force; strive, wrestle, else ye are ruined; deceive not yourselves, as if ye would just make a slip of it, out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. Thou wilt find it a leap out of that bed of sloth into a bed of fire and brimstone, where ye will lie down in eternal sorrow, if you do not seasonably bound to your feet, and put hand to your great work.

3. Do you think the devil is as idle about your souls as you are? No; though ye cannot creep out of your bed of sloth, the devil is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; tho' ye will be at no tolerable pains to secure your salvation, he will spare no pains to secure your damnation. Sleep ye, or wake ye, Satan is at your right hand; and if ye be not rowing against the stream, he will carry you down the stream, till he have you in the ocean of God's wrath, where ye will never see the shore.—The second inquiry is,

II. WHY are ye idle, while others are gone to work in the Lord's vineyard? Why do ye sit still, while others are fleeing from the wrath to come? Why are ye sleeping, while others are wrestling with God, as for their bare life? Why are ye dressing, eating, and drinking, while others, mo-

ved with fear, are preparing an ark against the day of wrath on these lands, and on the world.

1. Is it because the work in the vineyard is too coarse for your fine fingers? John, vii. 48. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? but this people that knoweth not the law is accursed." It is lamentable to think how religion is almost grown out of fashion among the fashionable people of this degenerate age; and shocking to see with what contempt some look on seriousness about soul-matters, resolving that these silly people, as they call them, shall for them enjoy their folly alone. Certainly these men would never have taken their name from one crucified between two thieves, if it had not been the religion of their country. But these that are wise in heart think very differently, and glory in the cross of Christ.

2. Is it because ye have another thing to do? Many in our day are of Pharaoh's opinion indeed, that religion is only for them that have no other thing ado. Ye are idle; but for them, they have their families and farms, &c. to look after. But, man, hast thou not an immortal soul to look after, as well as others? They said of Herod, It is better to be his swine than his son. I am sure, many a man's soul may say to him, Well is your beasts, in comparison of me; for one thought that is spent on my case, there is ten on theirs.

3. Are not ye by nature under the wrath and curse of God, as well as others? Yes; Eph. ii. 3. "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others;" and therefore let me say to you as the penitent thief to his fellow, Luke, xxiii. 40. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Better go to heaven with a few, through all the labours of the Christian life, than

to

to slide away to hell, at your own ease, with the multitude; better weep now, than weep eternally, for it will be no comfort to go to hell with company.

4. Will ye be content to see the labourers set with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yourselves, with the fellow-loiterers, shut out? you must either set to their work now, or you will see your doom at length, digest it as you will.—I now inquire,

III. WHY stand ye IDLE? Have ye put on a whore's forehead, and refuse to be ashamed? It would set you better to hide your head, as ashamed in that ye take up room in the world to no good purpose, living in a shameful neglect of your own souls, and the great end of your creation, which was not to sleep away a lifetime on the earth, nor to stand like a barren tree in God's vineyard, drawing away the sap from others, but to glorify God by acting to and for him.

1. Why then stand ye idle in the sight of men? Have ye a mind to tell the world, that go to God's vineyard who will, ye have no mind to stir? embrace God and his service who will, ye will have nothing to do with him, nor it neither? Are you afraid you want witnesses to stand against you before the tribunal of God, to testify how little you valued the working the works of God? The groans of those that warned you to your work, that were grieved at your licentious lives, will witness against you; nay, the stones and timber will cry out of the walls within which you live against you, and witness how little God was in all your thoughts, how little ye ever wrestled with God about your soul's case, and how the prayer, when ye made it, has died in your mouths.

2. Why

2. Why stand ye idle in the sight of the all-seeing God, who set you down in this world to work your great work? There are many that seem to be diligent workers, but God knows them to be mere idlers; what they work is before men, but their vineyard in the inclosure of their breasts is all overgrown with weeds, and they are at no pains to pluck them up. Have ye bid a defiance to the great Master, whose eyes are upon you in secret, as well as in public, that sees your heart, as well as your outward conversation? Be sure, he will call you to account.—The inquiry, next, is,

IV. WHY stand ye *here* idle, even in the market-place, where the great Master has been often calling whom he found here, and you among others, to go and work in his vineyard? and you had not been standing here idle, if you had been willing to work.

1. Why stand ye *here* idle, in a land of gospel-light? Isa. xxvi. 10. "In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord?" If you will serve the devil and your lusts, why do ye not go to the dark places of the earth, and work your works of darkness there? but why must they be brought forth in the face of the sun? why here, in this covenanted land, a land under the sacred bond of solemn covenant to the work of holiness, and the means of holiness; a bond which neither the breaking nor burning of them could loose; and they had never met with that treatment, had not men been as great enemies to piety as to Presbytery. But I dare say, there is no land where men must buy their ease at a dearer rate than in Scotland.

2. Why here, where the Lord is in a special manner

manner calling you to work, setting up his standard, and is about to cover a table for his labourers? will you be idle spectators, while Christ is to be sacramentally crucified before your eyes? will you be idle here, where the Lord is in a special manner calling you to search and try yourselves? If you will stand here idle, it will be a new *item*, in great letters, in the accounts of the despisers of Christ, and slights of the power of godliness in Yarrow\*.—I may once more inquire,

V. WHY stand ye idle in the *day*? The day brings with it a call to work, though indeed it is the time when the wild beasts enter into their dens, and lie at their ease, Psal. cii. 22. 23. But better to be a beast, than to be like a beast; they that sleep, sleep in the night; but what shall we say of them that cannot be got awakened, even in the day?

i. Then why are ye idle, when ye have a day to work in? No wonder our forefathers were idle, when they were wrapt up in the midnight darkness of Paganism and Popery; but though it was night with them, it is day with us; the sun of the gospel is arisen above our horizon, it has been long up, and will ye be idle in the day? God has not only set up the candle of conscience within you, but has made the sun of the gospel to arise and shine without you, to call you to work, and to let you see to work: Tit. ii. 11. 12. "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Such a day idled away will make a dreadful night!

2. Why

\* The place where this discourse was delivered.



2. Why are you idle, when you have but a day to work in? John, ix. 4. "The night cometh, when no man can work." It is to-day, if ye will hear his voice. The time of your life, and the season of grace, is but a day, and that day will soon be over; there is no working in the grave, Ecclef. ix. 10. The candle burnt to snuff cannot be lighted again, and time once gone can never be recalled; God will not turn night to day, to let the sluggard see to work, who turned his day to night. Now, when you have but a day, will you idle it away? Ye will, it may be, count it rather by years yet to come; but sure I am, the Spirit of God never learned you that way of accounting: James, iv. 14. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Pfal. xxxix. 5. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee."—I shall only inquire,

VI. WHY are ye idle *all the day*? Will no less than all the day serve? May not the time past suffice? Is it not high time now at length to awake? Is it not the eleventh hour with many of you? and the youngest here knows not but they may be in the last hour of their day. And are ye not afraid your glass run out ere your work be done? Sure it looks very like the very last hour of this church and nation's day: we have had a long day, but now may we say, Jer. vi. 4. "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." We are threatened with a dreadful eclipse of gospel-light, and a dark night, and we may well conclude as to many of  
us,

us, that our eyes will never see the breaking of the day again.

As the practical improvement of this subject, I shall only call on you to ponder seriously in your mind, the important inquiries addressed to you ;— to pose your consciences closely with them as in the sight of God,—to profit by the instructive lessons afforded from them ;—and, in short, that you study a being diligent in business, fervent in spirit, always serving the Lord.

CHRIST'S

---

---

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH GOSPEL MINI-  
STERS.\*

---

---

S E R M O N   X V I I .

MATTH. xxviii. 20. *And lo, I am with you  
always.*

**O**UR Lord Jesus Christ having, before his death, as a Prophet, revealed his Father's mind, and taught the doctrine of salvation, confirmed the same by many miracles; and having in his death, as a Priest, offered up himself a sacrifice to atone for the sins of his people, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness; appears here after his resurrection, as a King, ordering the affairs of his own kingdom, which is his church. And, *1<sup>st</sup>*, He asserts his power, his supremacy, and Headship, ver. 18. given unto him as Mediator. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, He gives a commission to his apostles, and in them to their successors in the work of the ministry, to raise up unto him a kingdom out of the kingdoms of the earth, to proclaim his laws among them, and

\* Delivered before the Synod of Merse and Tiviotdale, April 1712.

to enjoin an obedience to these laws in his name, and to take men solemnly engaged thereto, verses 19. and 20. Then, in the words of the text, by promise, he secures their encouragement, for the due discharge of their duty, in the words under consideration: *And lo, I am with you alway.*—In these words, consider,

1. The parties to whom this encouragement does belong: *You*, That is, (1.) The apostles, to whom these words were immediately directed: (2.) Ordinary ministers, succeeding to them in the ordinary work of the ministry, teaching and baptising, as is clear from the words, in which Christ promiseth to be with them to the end of the world; whereas the formal office of the apostleship was extraordinary, and soon expired. Their mission was immediate; their inspection universal and unconfined; they had an infallible directive power: Jo. xvi. 13. “When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth:” They had the gift of miracles and tongues, and were eye-witnesses of Christ: 1 Cor. ix. 1. “Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” So that to allow any to be their successors in the formal office of the apostleship, as some Prelatists would have the bishops, is to contradict the plain testimony of the scriptures, and of our senses; but the authoritative dispensation of the word, and administration of the sacraments, with the appendant power of discipline and government, which were the substance of the apostolic office, are continued, and will be in the pastoral office to the end of the world; and to these is Christ's presence promised, not excluding such as receive and embrace Christ's word preached by them.—Consider,

2. How, and in what case, they may lay claim to this promised presence; that is, in the faithful

adherence to, and discharge of their work, put by their Master into their hands. This is the import of the particle, and which knits the work and the encouragement together, ver. 19. *Go ye, &c.* If they shall quit their Master's work, they forfeit his promised presence. If they turn servants of men, they must look to them, and not to Christ, for their protection and assistance. If they receive their instructions from another than our royal Master, they must bid farewell to their part in the lot of his servants. Men that take upon them to teach what Christ never commanded, bringing in error in doctrine, superstition and the inventions of men in the worship of God, such have need of temporal power and force with them, seeing they have no ground from the word to expect Christ will be with them.—Consider,

3. The encouragement promised: *I am with you, &c.* It is Christ's presence that is with them in their work, and who would refuse to go a journey where Christ himself will be companion in travel? if the work be hard, his presence is sweet. Christ lays in here a sufficiency for the support of his servants against all the discouragements they may meet with in his work. And there are four things to be noticed in this.

(1.) There is but one encouragement proposed, their difficulties were many. If they looked to their work, it was very hard; they were sent out to grapple with the powers of darkness, to overturn the devil's kingdom, to reform the world sunk in idolatry and monstrous profanity, and to rescue the prey out of the mouth of the roaring lion. If they looked within themselves, they might see there a mass of emptiness, weakness, wants, and nothingness, unable of themselves to resist the least temptation. If they looked abroad,  
into

into the world, they might see that the venturing out into it, on such a design, was a running themselves into a manifest hazard; the wits of the world would treat them as a company of fools, the powers of the world as a company of seditious and pestilent fellows; the multitude of the world would cry, "Away with them, it is not meet that they should live on the earth." But go they must; and here is one answer to all their objections, *I am with you*; that is sufficient, be against you who will, *I am with you*, to assist, protect, and bear you through in the work, and to make the word in your mouths do execution; I design to raise up, by your means, a kingdom to myself, maugre all the opposition of men and devils. He does not promise to send armies with them, but to go with them himself.—His presence,

(2.) Is proposed as a present thing, an encouragement in hand: *I am with you—to the end*; not *I will be*. The expression is emphatical.

[1.] According to the prophetic style, it denotes the utmost certainty his servants shall have his presence in his work to the end of the world, as surely as if it were already done.

[2.] It denotes Christ's presence with his apostles, to be, by his own allowance and appointment, a pledge of his presence with these that, being called, follow out the work that they began in their day: *I am with you*; and let these that follow take it as a certain pledge, *I will be with them too*. Let the church be ever so low, there was never any glorious appearance Christ made for her, but she may call it Joseph, for the Lord shall add another.

[3.] It denotes, that Christ's servants, though they should be full of eyes behind and before, yet their eyes are often dim, that they even miss

Christ when he is really with them, and so are dejected, because they see not their own mercy: *I am with you*, &c.—His presence,

(3.) Is promised to be with them without interruption,—*always*, all days, every day; it is an Old-Testament phrase, denoting the continuance of a thing without interruption; as Gen. vi. 5. “And that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” He will not leave his servants at his work at any time; they may sometimes want the sense of his presence, but he is with them always, every day, in lightsome days, also in dark and gloomy days, whatever be their case, however hard their lot may be, their peace may be interrupted, but not their Master's presence with them. While they keep at his work, he will be upon their head.—His presence,

(4.) Is promised to be with them without end, till the end of the world; not that he will forsake them then; no, he will then give his faithful servants a place in the upper house, among them that are pillars in the temple of their God; they will enter into the joy of their Lord. But the work of the ministry, as it will continue to the world's end, so then it will be honourably laid by, and Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father; so that as long as the work lasts, the encouragement will go along with it.

4. There is in the words the note of attention prefixed, *Lo!* Hereby Christ stirs up and directs his servants to eye his promised presence as their encouragement: ‘Say not ye are left alone; see, I am with you; look not to earth, or to an arm of flesh, for your support, but look upwards to heaven; let not unbelief shut your eyes, but while you have one eye on your work, fix another on your Master, and then you will go on cheerfully. Now, you see

see that Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his church, as he has appointed a ministry in his church, and carved out their work for them, and peremptorily appointed them to set about it, so he has promised them his presence with them always to the end of the world, in the faithful discharge of the work he has put in their hands; and whatever be the opposition and discouragement they may meet with in it, he wills them to eye his promised presence as sufficient to bear them through in the work, against all discouragements whatsoever. This is the purport of the words of the text, which being thus explained, I shall now apply it.

I. HAS Jesus Christ promised his presence to his servants in their work? Let us, then, my Fathers and Brethren, cleave to our great work, to which we are called of the Lord. Let us steadfastly pursue the ends of our ministry, the advancing of the kingdom of Christ, and the pulling down the kingdom of Satan, according to the commission we have from our Lord and Master. Let us follow our work faithfully, over the belly of all discouragement or opposition which we may meet with in it. Our day is a dark day, and like to be darker; the Lord is angry with the generation, the plague is begun, and it is to be feared there will be a miserable face on this church and land ere it end. A door, we see, is opened, whereby errors in doctrine may crowd in, and set up their heads without controul, and superstitious worship and ceremonies, mere inventions of men's own hearts, may be, and are introduced, to mar the beauty of this church in the simplicity of gospel-worship, to the dishonour of God, to whom alone it belongs to appoint what way he will be worshipped; and the discipline and government of his house are left to be trampled under foot of



profane men, for any assistance we can expect now, but from him whose institutions they are, which surely calls us to lift up our eyes unto the heavens, from whence our help is promised. Our times are like to be ensnaring and very trying times to all sorts. The Lord's hand is very heavy by a great sickness and mortality; but the face of the generation looks as if the time were coming, when men shall think those happy who get to their grave in peace. If it should be so, we need not wonder at it.—Allow me to say in favours of the holy providence of God,

1. Providence (if it be so) has not stolen a march upon us; we have had fair warning, both from the word, and particular dispensations, whereby we have been brought, as it were, to the brow of the hill, and the Lord has brought us back, as with that, Hos. xi. 8. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" Yet have we not returned to the Lord; we have had the Lord's talents among our hands in peace now these two and twenty years; can it be but God will put both ministers and people to the trial, what they have made of the many preachings, communions, and other means of grace they have enjoyed. I think the light has shone very bright in our day; I dare not say our sacred heat has been proportionable; but ordinarily the saddest strokes follow hard at the heels of the clearest dispensations.

2. Many there are, who have the root of the matter in them, who need to have it awakened with a storm; many sleeping Jonahs in our ship, that are as yet sighing and going backward, much filthiness and blood gathered on the daughters of Zion, to be purged with the spirit of judgement and burning.

3. There

3. There are many who have taken up the name, but have nothing of the reality of religion, having gathered like summer's vermin in time of the church's peace; it is but reasonable to expect a storm for the discovery of such, by the loss of whom the church may turn to less bulk, but not be less worth.

4. The case of the generation cries for a stroke, in regard of the horrid contempt of Christ and his gospel at this day. The preaching of the gospel has for several years been a weary work, and very fruitless; and the truth is, we have, as it were, been weary of God. Atheism and horrid profanity abound, and are on the growing hand; these cry for vengeance; enemies have a cup to fill up, they have filled it well formerly, it is like, they have more to do to prepare them for an overthrow. So we have reason to lay our accounts with hardships in our work, and that we may have the walls to build in troublous times; and readily judgement begins at the house of God, and where it will. But let us faithfully follow our Master's interests and work, and not faint.

And that we may be stirred up hereunto, let us consider,

1. Our Lord Christ will be with us in the faithful discharge of his work, *Go ye, and lo, I am with you.* A believing sight of this would steel your foreheads in the Lord's work, with courage and holy resolution, Ezek. iii. 9. "As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead." Will Christ be with us in the discharge of his work? Then,

(1.) We shall have furniture for our work: Isa. xli. 10. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold

uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." 2 Cor. iii. 5. 6. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." No man goeth a warfare on his own charges, neither shall our Lord send his soldiery to fight his battles without furniture, more especially when he is upon their head himself; and if our work be more than ordinary, he will make the furniture proportionable: Acts, iv. 13. "Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." May be, we have much ado to get a sermon, when we have all time for study and meditation; what shall come of us then, if we be hurried? Truly, if we have the call, we may look for it being given us in that hour: Matth, x. 19. "For it shall be given you in that same hour, what ye shall speak," with more heavenly oratory in it than at other times. Be it doing-work or suffering-work, he allows furniture, Phil. i. 29. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Isa. xl. 30. 31. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that hath no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not faint."

(2.) We shall have success in our work, that is, the word in our mouth shall accomplish that which Christ pleaseth, Isa. lv. 2. "So shall my

my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." As to the elect of God, "As many as are ordained to eternal life, believe, however the stream of a graceless generation may go." As to believers, they shall be edified and bettered by it, Mic. ii. 7. "Do not thy words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" and very ordinarily the gospel is like a fire, that spreads most in a windy day. Nay, the Lord being with us, it will not be absolutely without effect on these that are not one whit bettered by it. It will be at least for a testimony to be produced against them, for our Lord, at the last day. If ye go where they are, the dust of your feet will witness against them. Salvation was in their offer; it will manifest their unsoundness. The gospel will hang the sign of folly at every wicked man's door, let them entertain it as they will: Mal. iii. 2. "But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." It will torment them that dwell on the earth. Christ's sword is two-edged, if it do not execution on men's lusts, it will do execution on their souls: Hof. vi. 5. "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth." The word will never leave them as it finds them, but will either make them better or worse.

(3.) We shall have protection in our work; Rev. ii. 1. "Saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right-hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." If earth and hell should conspire against us, as long as our Lord has

has any service for us in the world, we shall be protected. Every one has their day of working, let them trust the Lord as long as that lasts, let them go on in their work, they shall be protected. But when the night comes, appointed by the Lord, wherein he has no more service for us, then, and not till then, shall we be called off; and that night will carry us off, whether we be idle or at work.

(4.) We shall have provision : Heb. xiii. 5. 6. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Let us be at our work, and God will see to our provision : Psal. xxxvii. 3. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Bread has been an old temptation to ministers : Amos, vii. 12. 13. "Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread. But prophecy not again any more at Bethel, for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." But such as were faithful to the Lord have always hazarded the bread, rather than a good conscience : consult vet. 14. to the end of the chapter. Nature is content with little, grace with less; if we cannot trust Christ for our bread, I think we will scarcely be able to trust him with our souls. Miserable is that bread which cannot be got down without straining of our conscience; but little bread will go far with a good conscience and God's blessing : let us mind that, Dan. i. 15. "And their countenance did appear fairer and fatter in flesh, than the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat."

(5.) Then,

(5.) Then, as Elisha said to his servant, 2 Kings, ii. 16. "Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." Psal. xciii. 3. 4. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." The faith of the Lord's presence in our work would make all the opposition of our enemies very contemptible; seeing he is with us that hath the devil in chains, and who sets restraining bounds to the sea, and to the wrath of man, and can in a moment overthrow all the enemies of his work.

(6.) Then he will be against them that are against us in our work: *I am with you*. If the world will make themselves parties against you in your work, then, *Lo, I am with you*, on your side against them. A faithful ministry has always been the great eye-sore of the world; and none can at any time engage in that work, but must lay his account with opposition. But sooner or later it returns on the heads of their enemies, according to that prophetic prayer, which is an awful hedge about Christ's ministers: Deut xxxiii. 11. "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

2. Further to engage us to cleave to the Lord's work, let us consider, God will be with his ministers and his church always, even to the end of the world.—Then,

(1.) Lose what we will in the faithful discharge of our work, we will never lose our God: *Lo, I am with you ALWAYS*. There is nothing we have in the world, but enemies may get their hands upon; but there is one thing which they cannot reach, which is better than all goods, liberty, life; that is,

is, they cannot separate us from the love of our Lord Jesus : Rom. viii. 38. 39. " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There can be no lot so hard, but Christ's presence can sweeten, and make it desirable.

(2.) The world will have an end, and all its smiles and frowns also will be at length laid by for ever. Why then should its smiles flatter, or its frowns fright us from our Lord's work and interest? A little time will carry off both the slothful and faithful servant. But happy that servant, whom, when his Lord and Master cometh, shall find so doing. The solid faith of that life and immortality brought to light by the gospel, which we preach, would, I believe, make us very peremptory in our resolutions of diligence and faithfulness in our work, over the belly of all opposition in the world.

(3.) Our Lord's work will never lie for want of hands; he will have a church and a ministry to the end of the world. If we lay it by, others will take it up, and write death on our faces, by yoking us to it even in the heat of the day.

(4.) Our Lord and his people shall stand the last upon the earth, his enemies will drop off after one another, he will outlive them all, and stand a Conqueror, when they are all routed, and made to quit the field, *Lo, I am with you to the end.* His cause will always be victorious at length, and bear down all before it. Who knows but the wheels of providence may be in motion towards the total overthrow of Prelacy, and ceremonies in Britain and

and Ireland? Providence has often gone to work in as unlikely a way.

II. HAS Christ promised to be with us in his own work? O! then let us not divide among ourselves, let us endeavour unity in the Lord with all our might, and cleave to the work of God in this land, as one man, against Popery, Prelacy, superstition, error, and profanity, and whatsoever is contrary to sound godliness, seeing it is the work laid on us by our Lord in his sacred word, the book of our instructions, and seeing the land has been engaged thereto by solemn covenants with God. If any thing ruin this work of the Lord amongst us, it will be our divisions. No doubt, there will be means used by our enemies to divide us, knowing well, that if we once break, we are in danger of being broken more and more. Therefore let us pray and act for unity in the Lord; tho', like the builders of the wall of Jerusalem, we be separated upon the wall, yet being upon the wall, all at our work, the work will go on. But that which will be our ruin, will be one party throwing down what the other builds up; which will be the case, if in the anger of the Lord we be divided. If the mountain of the ministry fall a burning with the fire of division, all will quickly fall into the sea; but our unity will be our strength; and for as contemptible as the ministry of this church is at this day in the eyes of many, their unity will make them beautiful as Tirzah, and terrible as an army with banners; yea, even in our evil time, would afford us a glimmering prospect that the Lord would yet fill his house with his glory, Isa. lii. 8. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;" Mat. xviii. 19. "Again, I say unto you, that if two of



you shall agree upon earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." *Agree*, or, as the word is, *sympathise*, sound together. I take both these to be an allusion to that sweet passage, 2 Chron. v. 13. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." If, then, we have any love to the Lord, to his interests, to his people, to our own souls, let us be one in the Lord's work. Cursed will that carnal interest be, that shall loose a pin in the tabernacle of Zion.

III. HAS Christ promised to be with us in his work? Then let us not forget him who is with us, let us love Christ, let us preach Christ; this is our great work at all times, Eph. iii. 8. "Unto me, who are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." Let us beware of legal preaching; let that be the scope of our preaching, which is the great design of the gospel, to discover the corruption of men's nature, and to exalt the riches, power, and freedom of grace in Christ Jesus. We have the more need to take heed to this, because the corrupting of the doctrine of the gospel is like to be the temptation of our day.

To conclude: As to you, the people, whether ye  
be

be in the Lord's interests or not, ye have heard what ye may apply to yourselves. I think, upon the whole, if ye be wise, ye will say with these, Zech. viii. "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The profane world will be ready to laugh at this, but both ministers and people must lay their account to be fools in the world's eyes, if they will be wise in the sight of God.

Let none think from what I have said, that I have proposed myself as an example, or that I have forgot myself in this matter. God knows, I look on myself as the weakest and most unfit, for a time of trial, of all the servants of my Lord. But let truth stand and take place, come of the speaker what will. I desire, with you, to fix mine eyes on the promise of His presence, who hath said, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

L 2

CHRIST'S

---

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO THE LABOURING  
AND HEAVY LADEN.\*

---

S E R M O N XVIII.

MATTH. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour,  
and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

**T**HE great and main object of gospel-preaching and gospel-practice, is a coming to Christ. It is the first article in Christianity, according to John, v. 40. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." It is the connecting chain, 1 Peter, ii. 4. "To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up," &c. And it is the last exercise of the Christian; for when finishing his warfare, the invitation is, Mat. xxv. 34. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." It is virtually the all which God requireth of us: John, vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The words of the text

\* This and the following discourses on this subject, were delivered in January and February 1711.

text are a most solemn and ample invitation which Christ gives to sinners. In them I shall consider,

I. THE connection. For which look to verses 25. and 26. compare Luke x. 21. "Jesus rejoiced in Spirit." It was a joyful time to him when he made this invitation. He rejoiced in the account of the good news, the success with which the message of the disciples was attended; and in the wise and sovereign dispensation of grace by the Father, which he here celebrates, as also upon the view of his own power; where he shows, That all power was lodged in him. The keys of the Father's treasures of grace were in his hand, yea, and whatsoever is the Father's. He also shews, That none could know the Father, but by him, for that is given to him only. He, as it were, opens the treasure-door to sinners in the text.—From the connection of this verse, as just now stated, I would observe, that the solemnity of this invitation is most observable. There seems something to be about it more than ordinary. As,

1. It was given in the day of Christ's gladness. He was a man of sorrows, all made up of sorrows. Sorrow, sighing, weeping, groaning; were his ordinary fare. Once indeed we read of his being glad, John, xi. 15.; and once of his rejoicing, Luke, x. 21. And, again, on this occasion, here that thread of sorrow was interrupted, the sun of joy broke out for a little from under the cloud. His heart was touched, and, as it were, leaped for joy, as the word signifies; compare Matth. v. 12. with Luke, vi. 23. In the Greek, "he was exceeding joyful." At this extraordinary time and frame, he gives the invitation in the text. Hence infer,

1<sup>st</sup>, That Christ invites sinners with an enlarged heart. Joy enlarges it. His heart is open to you,

his arms are stretched wide. You often see him with sorrow and anger in his face, and this works with you that you will not come. Behold him smiling and inviting you now to himself, sending love-looks to lost sinners, from a joyful heart within! Infer,

2dly, May I say, the Mediator's joy is not complete, till you come and take a share? The scriptures will warrant the expression, Isa. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He rejoiceth, but resteth not; but invites sinners to a share, as if all could not satisfy while he goes childless, as to some he has yet an eye upon. Infer,

3dly, That nothing can make Christ forget poor sinners, or be unconcerned for them. Sorrow could not do it, joy could not do it; either of these will drive a narrow-spirited man so into himself, as to forget all others. But never was his heart so filled either with sorrow or joy, but there was always room for poor sinners there. When he was entering the ocean of wrath, he remembered them, John xvii.; and as our forerunner, he went into the ocean of joy, Heb. vi. 20. Like Aaron, he carried our names on his heart, when he went in to appear before the Lord in heaven, Exod. xxviii. 29.

2. The invitation was given at a time when there was a great breach made in the devil's kingdom, compare Luke x. 17. 18. Christ was now beginning to set up a new kingdom, and he sends out seventy disciples, which was the number of the Sanhedrim at first. He was to bring his people out of the spiritual Egypt, compare Gen. xlvii. 27. The success of the disciples was a fair pledge of the devil's kingdom coming down, and the delivery of sinners. And when the news of it comes, his heart rejoices, and his tongue breaks out in this invitation

invitation to the devil's captives, to come away upon this glorious signal. As he had begun to perform this part of the covenant, the Father had begun to perform his, which made his heart leap for joy, and sets him on to cry, that they would all come away, as disciples, vigorously to pursue the advantage which was got, P<sup>s</sup>al. cx. 7. "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head. Hence infer,

1<sup>st</sup>, That Christ's heart is set upon the work of sinners salvation. Ye see no undue haste, but he would have no delays. He holds hands to the work, calling, *Come unto me*. He preferred it to the eating of his bread; and what else is the meaning of all the ordinances and providences ye meet with? Infer,

2<sup>dly</sup>, That Christ would have you to come, taking encouragement from the example of others that have come before you. There is a gap made in the devil's prison; some have made their escape by it already, O! will not ye follow? The Lord has set examples for us, both of judgement and of mercy. In the beginnings of the Jewish church, there was an example of God's sovereignty, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1. 2.; and of the Christian church, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts, v.; of mercy, in the Jewish church, Rahab the harlot, besides Abraham, the father of them all, an idolater, Josh. xxix. 15. compare Isa. li. 2. Then in the Christian church, Paul, the blasphemous persecutor, 1 Tim. i. 16. Infer,

3<sup>dly</sup>, That however full Christ's house be, there is always room for more; he wearies not of welcoming sinners; the more that come the better. Christ's harvest is not all cut down at once, nor his house built in a day; if the last stone were laid in the building,

building, the scaffolding of ordinances would be taken down, and the world be at an end. But none of these has hitherto taken place; therefore yet there is room: Joel, iii. 21. "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not yet cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

3. This invitation is given on a solemn review of that fulness, of that *all* which the Father hath lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and that solely. The Father, as it were, no sooner leads him into these treasures, but he says, 'This and this is for you, sinners; here is a treasure of mercies and blessings for you; pardon, life, peace, &c. all is for you. Come, therefore, unto me, the Father has delivered them into my hand, I long to deliver them over to you. Come, therefore, to me, and hence I shall draw my fulness out to you.' Christ had got a kingdom from the Father; it was as yet thinly peopled, and so he calls you to come to him, that ye may be happy in him. He has no will to enjoy these things alone, but because he has them, he would have you to take a share.—I would thence draw this

**DOCTRINE,** That as the fulness lodged in the Mediator hath a free vent in his heart, so it seeks to diffuse itself into the souls of needy sinners.

JESUS CHRIST longs to make sinners the better of that all-fulness that is lodged in him by the Father. Christ speaks here to us as the true Joseph, Gen. xlv. 9.—11. As Joseph invited his brethren to come and dwell with him, so Jesus cordially invites us, and promises us a share of the fulness which he himself possesses.—In illustrating the above proposition, I shall only,

I. Assign

I. Assign some reasons.

II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM to give some reasons of this doctrine, or shew, why Christ is so kind and liberal to sinners.—He is so,

1. Because the Father hath given him for that end: Isa. lv. 4. "Behold, I have given him for a Witness unto the people, a Leader and Commander unto the people." The Father had thoughts of love to man; his love designed to distribute a treasure of mercy, pardon, and grace, to lost sinners; but justice would not allow his giving them immediately out of his own hand; therefore he gives them to the Mediator to distribute. An absolute God being a consuming fire, guilty creatures, as stubble, could not endure his heat, but they would have been burnt up by it; therefore he sets his own Son, in man's nature, as a crystal-wall betwixt him and them; he gives him the Spirit without measure, not only a fulness of sufficiency, but abundance of blessings, is laid up in him; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.—He is so,

2. Because he received a fulness of treasure for that very end: John, xvii. 19. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The first Adam got mankind's stock; he soon lost all. Christ takes the elect's stock in his hand for their security, and so he is given for a covenant of the people; he takes the burden upon him for them, and takes the administration of the second covenant, that it might, with them, be a better covenant than the first.—He is so,

3. Because he bought these treasures at the price of his blood for their behoof: Phil. ii. 8. 9. "He humbled



humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name." The Son of God, who is Lord of all, needed no exaltation in the court of heaven, being equal with his Father; but his design was, to exalt man's nature, to make these that were the children of the devil—friends to heaven, and prepare for them room there: "I go (said he) to prepare a place for you," John, xiv. 2. No wonder, then, that he should long to see the purchase of his blood, the fruit of the travail of his soul, come to him.—He is kind and liberal,

4. Because of his love to them. Where true love is, there is an aptness to communicate; the lover cannot see the beloved want what he has. God's love is giving love: "He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John, iii. 16. Christ's love is also such; he loves indeed: "He loved us, and gave himself for us," Gal. ii. 20.—For the improvement of this doctrine, I only add an use of exhortation.

Come to Christ, then, O sinners, upon this his invitation, and sit not his blessed call.—To enforce this, I urge these MOTIVES.

1. There is a fulness in him, all power is given him; want what you will, he has a power to give it to you; the Son of man had power, even on earth, to forgive sins. Grace without you, or grace within you, he is the dispenser of all: John, i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He is the great Secretary of heaven, the keys hang at his girdle; he shuts, and none can open; he opens, and none can shut.—Consider,

2. You are welcome to it. He has it not to keep.

keep up, but to give out, and to whom but to needy sinners? Even the worst of you are welcome, if you will take it out of his own hand: "If any man thirst, (says he), let him come to me, and drink," John, vii. 37.

3. Would you do Christ a pleasure? then come to him, Isa. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Would you content and ease his heart? then come. It is a great ease to full breasts to be sucked. The breasts of his consolations are full, hear how pressingly he calls you to suck! "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

*Lastly*, Would you fall in with the designs of the Father's and the Son's love, in the mystery of salvation? then come to him. Why is a fountain opened, but that ye may run to it, and wash? Seal not, shut not that to yourselves, which God and Christ have opened.

II. THE second thing to be considered in the words is, the persons invited. These are they that *labour*, and are *heavy-laden*. The word *labour* signifies not every labouring, but a labouring to weariness, and so some read it *weary*. Heavy-laden are they that have a heavy burden on their back, which they are not able to bear.

Who are meant by these? I cannot agree with those that restrain these expressions to those that are sensible of their sins and misery, without Christ, and are longing to be rid of the same; but I think it includes all that are out of Christ, sensible or insensible; that is, these that have not had, and these that have had, a law-work upon their consciences. And, to fix this interpretation, consider,

1. The words agree to all that are out of Christ, and none have any right to restrain them. None more

more properly labour, in the sense of the text, than those that are out of Christ, seeking their satisfaction in the creatures: Eccles. i. 8. "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And who have such a burden of sin and wrath upon their back as they have? The word properly signifies a ship's lading, which, though insensible of it, may yet sink under the weight.—Consider,

2. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John, v. 19. as men in a deep mire, still sinking. Christ came to deliver men out of that case; having taken upon him our nature, Heb. ii. 16. he caught hold (Greek) as one doth of a drowning man, even as he did of Peter when sinking, Mat. xiv. 31. And what are the invitations of the gospel, but Christ putting out his hands to sinking souls, sinking with their own weight. Consider,

3. That the words, in other scriptures, are without controversy applied to the most insensible sinners. See what labour and weariness! Hab. ii. 13. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" In the most solemn invitation to Christ in all the Old Testament, the word *labouring* is so used: Isa. lv. 2. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Luke, xi. 46. "Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be born." *Lade* is the same Greek word used in the text. Isa. i. 4. "Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." Were they sensible? far from it; for, ver. 3. "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." And, 2 Tim. iii. 6. it is said, "Silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."

4. Consider

4. Consider the parallel text : Isa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" where by the thirsty is not so much understood those that are thirsting after Christ, as those that are thirsting after happiness and satisfaction, seeking to squeeze it out of the creature; for the thirsty invited are the same that are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not. But these that are thirsting after Christ are not such.

5. If the words be a restriction of the call to sensible sinners, then the most part of sinners are excluded. If they are not included, sure they are excluded; and if the words are restrictive, sure they are not included; and then, so far from being the truth of the text, that it is no gospel-truth at all; for all, without exception, that hear the gospel, are called to come to Christ: Rev. iii. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And if any *one* be not called, they have no warrant to come; and if so, unbelief is not their sin, as in the case of the Pagans;—which is absurd.

*Lastly*, This is a most solemn invitation to come to Christ; and if I say the most solemn, there is some ground for it by what is said before. And shall that be judged restrained, that so expressly and solemnly comes from that fulness of power lodged in Christ, more than that just quoted? Rev. iii. 20. where there is no shadow of restriction. Besides, this restriction may well be a snare to an exercised soul, which ordinarily, by a legal disposition in all, will not allow that they may come to Christ, because sin is not heavy enough to them. But although sinners will never come to Christ till they see their need of him, yet this I will ever preach, that all, under pain of damnation, are ob-

liged to come to him, and that they shall be welcome on their coming, be their case what it will; that such as are willing to come ought not to stop on a defect of their sensibleness, but come to him, that they may get a true sense of sin unto repentance; for he is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins," Acts, v. 31. He is to give, not to stand and wait, till "folly bring repentance with it."—

III. CONSIDER in the words, to what the labouring and heavy-laden are invited. They are invited to come to Jesus; that is, to believe on him, to take him as he offers himself in the gospel.

IV. OBSERVE the encouragement afforded to influence a compliance with this invitation. Rest is promised to them here and hereafter: *I will give you rest.*—We may afterwards open up these things more largely, in handling the following doctrinal propositions, which we draw from the words thus explained, viz.

DOCT. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged in a wearisome labour.

DOCT. II. That all who are out of Christ are under a heavy load or burden, which by all their labours they cannot shake off.

DOCT. III. Whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; nay, he calls, invites, and commands them to come unto him.

I SHALL consider these in order.—I begin with  
DOCT. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged

engaged in a wearisome labour. Were you condemned, till you forsook your lusts, to row in the galleys, chained to the oars, to dig in mines, never to see the light of the sun, it were not to be compared to this wearisome labour, while out of Christ. If sinners feel it not, it is because they are not at all themselves. It is a truth, though a sad one, Isa. lv. 2. that they "labour for that which satisfieth not;" in the Hebrew, they "labour to weariness." Eccles. x. 15. "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

In discoursing this point, we may inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for.

II. How it is, that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction.

III. What sort of labour it is that they have in these things.

IV. Why sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ.

V. Make some practical improvement.

LET us inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for. No man engageth in a labour, but for some end he proposeth to himself. Though the devil is overman of these labourers, yet he does not make them go like clocks, without a design. Every one that labours proposes some profit to himself by his work, and so do these; there is always something, either really or seemingly good, that men seek in all their labours. So, in a word, it is happiness and satisfaction that they are labouring for, as well as the godly. For, consider,

1. The desire of happiness and satisfaction is natural to man; all men wish to see good. It is

not the desire of good that may satisfy, that makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, but the different ways they take: Pſal. iv. 6. 7. "There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, liſt thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed." In whatever caſe a man is on earth, in heaven or hell this is ſtill his deſire; and he muſt ceaſe to be a man, ere he can ceaſe to deſire to be a happy man. When that deſire, mentioned Eccleſ. xii. 5. ſhall fail, this deſire is ſtill freſh and green; and it is good in itſelf. Our Lord ſuppoſeth this in the text, and therefore he promiſes to them what they are ſeeking, reſt, if they will come to him.

2. This deſire is the chief of all; all other things are deſired for it. All men's deſires, however different, meet here, as all the rivers meet in the ſea, though their courſes may be quite contrary. Therefore this is what they labour for. The devil has ſome labourers at his coarſe work, others at the more fine, but they all meet in their end.

3. Defects and wants are interwoven with the very nature of the creature; and the rational creature finds that it cannot be, nor is ſelf-ſufficient. Hence it ſeeks its happineſs without itſelf, and muſt do it, to ſatisfy theſe natural deſires.

*Laſtly,* Seeing, then, man's happineſs is without himſelf, it muſt be brought in, which cannot be done without labour. It is proper to God to be happy in himſelf; but every creature muſt needs go out of itſelf to find its happineſs; ſo that action is the true way to it, that is, reſt cannot be found but in the way of action and labour, and becauſe they are not in the right way, it is wearifome labour.

LET

LET us inquire,

II. How it is that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction. Here it is impossible for us to reckon up particulars, and that in regard,

1. Of the different dispositions of men, and the various, as well as contrary opinions, concerning what may make a man happy. Varro says, there were two hundred and eighty opinions touching the chief good in his time. It is true, Christianity, in the profession of it, hath fixed this point in principle; but nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in point of practice. The whole body of Christless sinners are like the Sodomites at Lot's door; all were for the door, but one grasps one part of the wall for it, another another part, not one of them found it. The world is, as the air in a summer-day, full of insects; and natural men, like a company of children, one running to catch one, another another, while none of them is worth the pains. One runs to the bowels of the earth, another to the ale-house, &c.—It is impossible to determine here,

2. In regard of men's still altering their opinions about it, as they meet with new disappointments. Like a man in a mist, seeking a house in a wilderness, when every bush, tree, &c. deceives, till, by coming near, he is undeceived. 'O! (thinks the man), if I had such a thing, I would be well.' Then he falls to labour for it; may be he never gets it, but he ever pursues it. If he gets it, he finds it will not do, for as big as it was afar off, yet it will not fill his hand when he grips it: but it must be filled, or no rest, hence new labour to bring forth just a new disappointment: Isa. xxvi. 18. "We have been with child, we have been in

A a 3

pain,



pain, we have as it were brought forth wind."—  
It is difficult also,

3. Because they cannot tell themselves what they would be at. Their starving souls are like the hungry infant, that gapes, weeps, cries, and sucks every thing that comes near its mouth, but cannot tell what it would have, but is still restless till the mother set it to the breast. It is regenerating grace that does that to the soul. The Hebrew word for *believing*, comes from a root that signifies to nurse, as if faith were nothing but a laying of the soul on the breasts of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. The scripture holds him out as the mother that bare them; hence his people are called, Isa. liii. 11. "The fruit of the travail of his soul." He also is their nourisher; hence he says, Isa. i. 2. "I have nourished and brought up children." The breasts of the church, Isa. lxvi. 11. at which they are to suck and be satisfied, are no other than Christ. But, in the general, to see from whence it is that men out of Christ go about to squeeze out their happiness, see Psal. iv. 6. 7. quoted above. From which observe two things.

(1.) That it is not God, for these two are set in opposition; go to as many doors as they will, they never go to the right door; hence it follows, that it is the creatures out of which they labour to draw their satisfaction: "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, they hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

(2.) That it is good they are seeking out of them; and indeed men can seek nothing but under that notion, though for the most part they call evil good, and good evil. All good is either profitable, pleasureable, or honest; these, then, are all that they are seeking, not from God, but from  
themselves

themselves, or other creatures. The two former have respect to the cravings of men's desires, the latter to the cravings of the law. And seeing it is not in God that they seek their happiness and satisfaction, I infer hence, That all out of Christ are labouring for their happiness and satisfaction in one or both of these ways, either from their lusts, or from the law; and this I take to be the very labour intended in the text. For which consider these three things.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, That all natural men have two principles in them, (1.) Corruption; (2.) Conscience. Both crave of them: Rom. ii. 15. "Which shew the work of the law, written in their heart, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." Hence, because they do not mortify the lusts, they must be fed, or no rest; and therefore they labour for their lusts to satisfy them. Then, because they fly not to Christ for the satisfaction of their conscience, they go to the law.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, The bulk of natural men in the world have still been of two sorts; (1.) The profane party; (2.) The formal party. These have still been among Jews, Pagans, and Christians; the former labouring most in lusts, the latter in the law.

*3<sup>dly</sup>*, Adam left us with two yokes on our necks, (1.) Of lusts; (2.) Of the law. The last was of God's putting, but he gave strength with it to bear it; Adam took away the strength, but left the yoke, and put on a yoke of lusts beside; and in opposition to both these, Christ bids us come and take on his "yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light," Matth. xi. 29.

As to the labour they have in their lusts, they call them, and they run after them. These infernal devils in

in the heart drive the swine of this world into the sea of perdition; nay, turn the soul itself into a very sea, that cannot rest: Isa. lvii. 20. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." They labour like madmen for satisfaction to them, and no calm, no rest, till the soul come to Christ.

1. They labour hard in the lusts of profit: 1 John, ii. 16. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The profits of the world are the cisterns they squeeze for satisfaction; they bewitch the hearts of them that have them, and of them that want them; they fly after them with that pains and labour the ravenous bird doth after its prey: Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches take to themselves wings, they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." The strength of men's desires, and the cream of their affections, are spent on them; their happiness depends upon its smiles, their misery upon its frowns; if gone, their god is gone. Hence is that verified, Hab. ii. 13. "They labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity," like a poor fool running to catch a shadow. They have hard labour in lawful profits, how to get them, and how to keep them, but hardest of all, how to squeeze satisfaction out of them; there they labour in the very fire; they labour also in unlawful profits. The soul is an empty thing; lusts are ill to guide; conscience must make a stretch now and then, for the satisfaction of lusts; and the man will leap over the hedge, though the serpent will bite him: 1 Tim. vi. 9. 10. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men

men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil." Hence the carnal man, I may say, never gets up his back, but on his belly doth he go, and labours, as if he were a slave condemned to the mines, to dig in the bowels of the earth; like the blind moles, his constant labour is in the earth, and he never opens his eyes till he is dying. He has his lade of thick clay upon his back, Hab. ii. 6. as the fruit of his labouring in the fire. There is thus a labouring and heavy-laden party. Others take the world in their hand as a staff, nay, tread on it as the dirt, and they get it as a burden on their back, while guilt, many times contracted in the getting of it, whether by oppression, cheaterly, or neglecting of the soul for it, is like a sore back under the load, that makes them ready in despair to throw it away, but they know not how to subsist without it.

2. They labour in lusts of pleasure; they go about as the bee, extracting the sweet out of the creatures for their own satisfaction; this and the former usually go together. Profits and pleasures are the world's two great baits, at which all natural men are constantly leaping, till they are caught by the hook, and flung out into the fire of wrath: Prov. ix. 17. 18. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and man cannot but seek it; hence God proposeth it to men in himself, who is the fountain of all sweetness: Psa. xvi. 11. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore." But blind man makes the creature-sweetness his idol, and puts it in the room of God; for "they  
are

are lovers of pleasures, (in this sense), more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4. It is no fault to seek our profit; for, Heb. xi. 26. "We are to have respect unto the recompence of the reward." Nor to seek what may be sweet to the soul; for we may wish our souls to be "satisfied with marrow and fatness," Psa. lxxiii. 5. But the natural man's misery and sin both is, he forsakes God, and fastens on the breasts of the creatures for these things.

Now, there are two breasts of the creatures at which men may be sucking.

(1.) The breast of lawful comforts. Natural men fall on these, instead of the breasts of God's consolations, and labour, though in vain, to squeeze happiness and satisfaction out of them, and that with the greatest eagerness. They are lawful in themselves, but they often press so hard, that they draw out blood instead of milk from them; and are like men working at a flinty rock, to bring out water, instead of which they get fire flashing in their face, as in that case, Judges, ix. 15. when "fire came out of the bramble to devour the cedars of Lebanon."—There is,

(2.) The breast of unlawful comforts, Prov. ix. 17. "Stolen waters are sweet." Many seek their satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as to desire, and fill themselves with what God forbids them so much as to taste. O! the misery of Christless sinners, to whom both lawful and unlawful comforts are effectual snares for ruin. Like mad beasts, if they abide within the hedge, they tear up all to the red earth, which doth not yet satisfy. But they most usually break over all hedges; and they do so, because the creature can never fully answer the craving desires and hungry appetite, and yet, after all, they will not come to Christ, that they may have rest.

Those

These breasts of the creatures have many springs, divers lusts and pleasures, Titus, iii. 3. and these are served; men must labour in them as a servant at his master's work. I shall reduce them to these two heads, mentioned Eph. ii. 3. the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

1<sup>st</sup>, They labour for satisfaction and happiness in the pleasures of the flesh. And,—1. In sensuality. This was the door man first went to, after he had left God. And since the world was turned up side down by that means, the soul has lain downmost, and the flesh uppermost, so that they are all sensual, as Jude says, ver. 19. that have not the Spirit; and the soul is made drudge of the body. The belly is a god, and the pleasures of the flesh are squeezed, for satisfaction; all the senses are set a-working for it, and yet can never do enough: Eccles. vi. 7. "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled." Many arts and trades are found out to bring this to perfection, though all in vain, and there is no end of these things, which are of no use but to please the flesh, which, like the grave, never says it has enough.—2. Ease, sloth, and quiet, which is a negative kind of sensuality: Luke, xii. 19. "The rich man said, Thou hast goods laid up for many years, soul, take thine ease." All to please the flesh. This costs hard labour many times to the soul, many a throw conscience gets for the sake of this idol, what by neglect of duties, what by going over the belly of light to shun what is grieving to the flesh, as if men's happiness consisted in the quiet enjoyment of themselves.—They labour for satisfaction,

2<sup>dly</sup>, In the desires of the mind, and pleasures thereof. These, if they terminated on right objects, and were sought in a right manner, it would be well, for our true happiness consists in the souls enjoyment  
of

of God; but in the natural man all is in confusion. And,—1. There is much labour in seeking happiness in the pleasures of the judgement. This is the snare of thinking graceless men; this was among the first doors men went to when they turned from God: Gen. iii. 5. “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” And there is hard labour without a figure, for the punishment of that: Eccles. i. 13. “And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith”. And what comes it to at length? to no rest; for, ver. 18. “In much wisdom there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.” Here is fulfilled, Eccles. x. 15. “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.” Whereas, would they go to Christ, they would be in a fair way to get what they are seeking; for, John xvii. 3. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” “In whom are hid, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col ii. 3. There is labour,—2. In pleasures of the fancy. What else are all the lusts of the eye? all the abundance of the riches for which men labour so much? Eccles. v. 11. “When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? all they can think or say is, These are mine.” What is honour, credit, and the like, but a tickling of our fancy, with the fancies of others about us, adding nothing to real worth? And how busy is the soul oftentimes in that, Eccles. yi. 9. “Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire,

desire, Heb. *walking of the soul*. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. What satisfaction is sought in imagination-sins, lust, revenge, and the like? what restlessness there, 2 Pet. ii. 14. "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin." How busy is the soul oftentimes in imagination, of wealth, and the like, as if, when it had tried all other means in vain, it would try, while awake, to dream itself happy! "The thoughts of my heart," says Job, chap. xvii. 11. Heb. *the passions of my heart*, "are broken off."

3. The other thing in which natural men labour for rest, is the *law*; compare the text, Matth. xi. 28. with ver. 29. and 30. Emphatically is that labour described, Rom. x. 3. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." *Go about*; the word signifies, a seeking, like a disputer in the schools, or a tormentor of one upon the rack; to establish, to make it stand itself alone. They seek to make it stand, as men that will have a stone to stand on end, which, at the same time, is ever coming down on them again. Why all this? because it is their own: "Have not submitted." Christ offers a righteousness; but to take it, is to them a point of submission, against which they labour, as the untoward bullock against the yoke. They will never let it on till God break the iron sinew of the neck, Isa. xlvi. 4.

To confirm this, consider,

1. All men desire to be happy, and no man can get his conscience quite silenced, more than he can get the notion of a God quite erased from his mind: Rom. ii. 14. 15. "They are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another." Peace of mind is a natural desire, which



none can divest himself of. Hence it follows, men cannot but seek inward peace; and though they may set themselves to murder conscience for that end, yet seeing it will not do for them totally, they do of necessity take some other way. There never was but two ways; either Christ, or the law. The former they reject, therefore it follows, they follow the latter. Let us view this in three sorts of natural men.

(1.) In the profane person, who has not so much as a form of godliness; it is hardest to be found in them. But none so profane, but it will readily be found they have some one good thing or another about them, and sometimes they will compliment their consciences with a denial of satisfaction to their lusts, which is a labour so much the harder to them, as they are under the greater power of lusts. This sure they do not with an eye to make themselves miserable, but happy that their consciences may excuse them, Rom. ii. 15. Excusing, even those that are most at the devil's will, are taken captive, as hunters who take their prey alive, 2 Tim. ii. 26. Importing still, a conscience labouring in the law, though lusts, as being stronger, do for the most part prevail.—Let us view this,

(2.) In the formal natural man: some of whom labour in the duties of morality; others in those of religion; who are at no small travail in the law, if we consider it all for nought. Like the Pharisee, Luke, xviii. 11. they take not the gospel-way, yet they labour in the law. Sure lusts remain in them in their life and vigour. It surely costs labour so far to restrain them.—Let us view this,

(3.) In the awakened sinner. I am not for excluding these out of the text, but only that it be not restrained to them: Acts, ii. 37. "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and

and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles; What shall we do?" These mend their hands at this hard labour, and oftentimes labour so to keep the law, that they are both by themselves, and others taken for faints of the first magnitude, and yet it is but still in the law, till converting grace come, and fied them off the old root.

2. It is natural for men to labour in the law for happiness, and therefore, till nature be overcome by grace, men will not be put off it. The law was Adam's covenant, who, with his children, were to work and win heaven by their works; tho' they have lost their father's strength, yet they will keep their father's trade; though their stock be small, yet they will keep the merchandising for heaven, and give God good works for good wages. See nature speaking out of him, Matth. xix. 16: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And it often happens, that they who have fewest of good works lay the greatest strefs upon them.

3. Consider how this practice has been formed into principles, in the face of the sun of the gospel. Never was an error yet vented in principle, but in compliance with some corruption of the heart; therefore is that made the characteristic of true doctrine, that it is according to godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3. No sooner was the gospel preached, than Cain sets up for works in opposition to faith: Gen. iv. 4. 5. "And the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Paul gives the reason: Heb. xi. 4. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In Abraham's family, to whom the promise of righteousness was more clearly made, Hagar bears her son; compare Gal.

iv. 24. When the people were in Egypt, the generality of them knew nothing else. They had curtailed the law so very short, as all that labour in it do, that they thought they kept all very well: Rom. v. 13. "For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law." For that cause God gave them the law, as in Exod. xx. Gal. iii. 29. "The law was added because of transgressions;" it prevailed in the days of the prophets, in Christ's days, and from the beginning of the Christian church to this day;—hence our swarms of Papists, &c.—Consider,

4. They turn the very gospel into law, as unclean vessels sour the sweetest liquor that is put in them. What a real gospel was the ceremonial law to the Jews, holding up blood, death, and transference of guilt, from them to the substitute, every day before their eyes in their sacrifices! But, Rom. ix. 11. "Their very table (that is, their altar, so called, Mal. i. 12.) became a snare;" and they went about these things, as if by them they would have made up what was wanting in their observation of the moral law. Just so was it turned in Popery; yea, and, alas! among Protestants it is found thus soured, to whom the gospel is the law, and faith, repentance, and new obedience, the fulfilling of the law. But would to God it stood in principles only; but as sure as every unrenewed man is out of Christ, as sure even these natural men, whose heads are set right in this point, in their hearts and practice the very gospel is turned into law, and their obedience, their very faith and repentance, such as it is, is put in the room of Christ. For practice, when fairly traced, will shew the principles from which it proceeds.

*Lastly,* Consider, though all would be saved, yet natural men are enemies to the gospel-way of salvation:

salvation : 1 Cor. i. 23. " It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." They must then be in love with the law, for there is no mid; yea, so cleave they to it, that nothing but death can part Adam's sons and it, and this even a violent death in a day of God's power : Psa. cx. 3. Rom. vii. 4. " Ye also are become dead to the law ;" Greek, *deadened, killed, or put to death*. As long as a soul sees how to shift without Christ, it will never come to him ; add to this, that the godly find the remains of this principle in them to struggle against. Self-denial is the first lesson Christ gives, but they are a-learning it all their days. If it is thus in the green tree, what shall it be in the dry ?

---

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

---

S E R M O N XIX.

MATTH. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

**W**E are now,  
III. To inquire, What sort of a labour sinners have in these things? For the sake of plainness, it will be necessary to consider this labour, *1<sup>st</sup>*, As it respects their lusts; *2<sup>dly</sup>*, As it respects the law.—We are,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, To consider this labour of sinners, as it respects their lusts, their going up and down among the creatures, extracting from them a comfort and pleasures, which they take for happiness.—I shall here show the properties of this labour, and thus confirm the point, that they are engaged in a wearisome labour.

1. It is hard labour, and sore toil: Jer. ix. 5. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." None win the devil's wages for nought, they eat no idle bread where he is task-master, and they must needs run, whom he drives. The devil's  
yoke

yoke is of all yokes the heaviest.—To clear this point, consider,

(1.) What the scriptures compare this labour in lusts unto; whereby it will appear hard labour.—It compares it,

[1.] To the labour of a man going to a city, and not knowing the way: Eccles. x. 15. “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.” That is hard labour, as many know by experience. Many a weary foot such must go, many a hardship they must endure, and so must these in pursuit of happiness.—It compares it,

[2.] To a labouring in the fire: Hab. ii. 13. “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” How hard is their labour that lieth about a fire! what sweat! what toil! Jer. vi. 29. “The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away.” But how much more hard in the fire! As when a house is on fire, and men in it, labouring to preserve that which the fire consumes even among their hands. These labour; *1<sup>st</sup>*, In the fire of lusts, that inflames the heart, and scorches the very soul, Prov. vi. 27. 28. “For by means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread, and the adulterers will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his cloaths not be burned?” *2<sup>dly</sup>*, In the fire of divine wrath that is kindled by the former: Isa. ix. 18. “For wickedness burneth as the fire, it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.” This consumeth what they are working for in the other; so that when, like the spider, they have

have spun out their own bowels for a covering, yet it is by far too narrow, and they have but wearied themselves for very vanity.—It is compared,

[3.] To labouring under a burden, as in the text itself, which will not let the man get up his back. They are the devil's drudges, labouring under that load that will crush them at last, if they do not, as in Psal. lv. 22. cast their burden on the Lord, that he may sustain them. They are laden with divers lusts, which lie on them as a burden on the weary beast, which weary them indeed, but they are bound on as with bands of iron and brass.—It is compared,

[4.] To the labour of a soldier in war; they watch for iniquity as a centry at his post: Isa. xxix. 20. The natural man himself is the very field of battle: Jam. iv. 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts which war in your members?" The war itself you may see described in the three following verses. Who cannot but be well laboured with the feet of men and horse in that confusion? Though there be not grace and corruption to war in them, there are lusts, and lusts opposed to one another, lusts and light also.—It is compared,

[5.] To the labour of the husbandman in plowing: Hof. x. 13. "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity." They devise wickedness, which the Hebrew calls plowing it: "Devise not evil against thy neighbour," Prov. iii. 29. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire," Prov. xvi. 27.—It is compared,

[6.] Not to insist on more, to the labour of a woman in child-birth: Psal. vii. 4. "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief,

chief, and brought forth falsehood." What pangs do raging lusts create to the soul? What cords of death does it straiten with? No small toil at conceiving of sin, and bearing it in the heart, and bringing it forth; but nothing in the abominable brat to satisfy the soul after all.

(2.) It is hard labour, if you consider that eminent emblem of our natural state, the Egyptian bondage. Their deliverance out of Egypt was typical of their spiritual deliverance by Christ, and so that must needs signify man's natural state; concerning which it may be remarked, (1.) That as the children of Israel went down to Egypt in the loins of their parents, so we in Adam.—(2.) As the deliverance was wrought by the angel of the covenant, by the hands of Moses the Lawgiver, and Aaron the Priest, so this by the law and the gospel.—(3.) As Pharaoh opposed the children of Israel to the utmost, so the devil opposeth here. Pharaoh was "the great dragon which lieth in the midst of his rivers, which said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself," Ezek. xxix. 3. and was a type of that great red dragon, mentioned Rev. xii. 3. &c. But for that which concerns this point, see Exod. v. There you will find persons labouring, and heavy-laden, ver. 4. 5. It is hard labour to satisfy lusts, the devil's task-masters: Ephes. ii. 2. 3. "He worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." The Israelites had their tasks doubled, to put religion out of their heads and hearts, Exod. v. 10. Lusts also must be satisfied, but wherewith to do it is with-held, as straw was from the Israelites, ver. 11. They are scattered up and down among the creatures for it, but can never squeeze out a  
 sufficiency



sufficiency for them, even as the Israelites could not find stubble enough to prepare their bricks, ver. 12. 13. 14. If any appearance of deliverance, the labour is made the harder. Says Paul, Rom. vii. 9. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."—It is hard labour,

(3.) If ye consider the effects this labour hath, *1<sup>st</sup>*, On the souls of men. The minds of men have a toilsome task, where sin is on the throne: Isa. v. 20. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." That soul must needs be in a continual fever, while inordinate affections are in their strength, as in all out of Christ. A fermentation of lusts cannot but make a tossed mind. Anxiety and cares of the world stretch the mind, as on tenter-hooks. A conceived slight, like that of Ahab, 1 Kings, xxi. 4. sets the proud man's heart in a fire of wrath and revenge, and squeezes the sap out of all their enjoyments, as in the instance of Haman, Esther, v. 9. 13. Envy slays the silly one, lust strikes as a dart through the liver; anger, malice, discontent, and the like, make a man his own executioner; they are tossed between hopes, fears, and vanity, tumbled hither and thither with every wind of temptation, as a ship without either pilot or ballast. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, Even the body is oftentimes hard put to it in this labour. The covetous rises early, eats the bread of sorrow for what is not; the drunkard uses his body worse than his beast. More bodies have fallen sacrifices to lusts, one way or another, than ever fell by all the hardships either in or about religion.

2. It is base, mean, and abject labour: See Jer. ii. 21. compared with ver. 23. and 24. Were we

to

to die like beasts, we might live like beasts, with our souls grovelling still downward on the earth. If the soul had been so narrow, as to be satisfied with less than an infinite good, he had not spoke like a fool, who said to his soul, Luke, xii. 19. "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when his barns were full; in that case, the swine and his soul might have fed together. But we have immortal souls, capable of enjoying an infinite good, and such working in the earth must needs be a base labour for an heaven-born soul, which God breathed into the formed dust, but gave not to be drowned in a mass of flesh and blood, nor to be only as salt, to keep the body a while from rotting.

3. It is a constant labour. The sea rests sometimes, the carnal heart never: Isa. lvii. 20. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Lusts are ever craving, never say they have enough; they are rolling the stone to the top of the hill, which still comes down on them again and again, and creates new labour; see Psal. lxxviii. 18.—20. 29. 30. Two things make it a continual labour. 1<sup>st</sup>, Continual disappointments. These they cannot miss, seeing there is no satisfaction to be had in the creatures; yet their soul still craves, hence no rest, but are urged on to work again: Isa. lvii. 10. "Thou art weary in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, 'There is no hope.'" Men are like the silly doves without heart, who still go to the same nest where they have been harrid never so often before, and will even **big** there, where they have got a thousand nay-says. 2<sup>dly</sup>, What is got in them enlarges the desire, instead of satisfying it; the more that lusts are fed, the more they require to maintain them. Sin is an insatiable

fatable tyrant ; to labour in its service, is but to cast oil into the flame. The dropsy-thirst can never be quenched.

4. It is vain labour, they can never reach the end of it : Isa. lv. 2. " Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?" They shall as soon fill a triangle with a circle, as the heart with such things ; the grave shall sooner give back its dead, than the lusts of the heart say, It is enough. It is impossible to find satisfaction in these things, for they are not suitable to the soul, more than stones for the nourishment of the body. The body gets its nourishment from the earth, because it is of the earth ; the soul is from heaven, and so its satisfaction must come from thence. The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul, because they have no word of divine appointment, to be the staff of that bread which nourishes it ; without this, grass could no more satisfy the beasts, nor bread the hunger of man, than sand : Matth. iv. 4. " Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God has kept this as his own prerogative, to satisfy the soul, incommunicable to the creatures conjunctly or separately.

*Lastly,* It is notwithstanding costly labour ; for time that is precious is spent on it, which men should husband well, Ephes. v. 16. " Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." By time well improved, we might attain true happiness ; time once gone can never be recalled. But, ah ! what precious hours are cast away on these things, which might be improved in trading for heaven.—It is costly, because the gifts of the mind are thrown away on it. Reason makes us differ from the beasts, but by the abuse of it men make themselves worse

worse than the beasts: Jer. viii. 7. "Yea, the stork in the heaven 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 judgement of the Lord." Men's minds are employed not to know God, but other things; their choice also is not fixed upon him, their affections are bestowed on other things.—Finally, It is costly, because the outward good things of the body, and estate in the world, are bestowed upon it. Health and strength go in the pursuit of vanity, and in the service of their lusts, yea, are sacrificed many times on the altar of intemperance and sensuality. Riches, power, honours, as the feeding of the horse does, make people kick against *him* who lays these things to their hands. Yea, to crown all, the soul itself is thrown away upon it: Matth. xvi. 26. "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Men seeking vanity, lose what is most excellent; and it is dear-bought that is purchased at that rate.—I shall now consider what is meant by,

II. A LABOURING in the law. And to this most of what has been said may be applied; and besides it may occur afterwards. I shall only say these two things anent it at present.

I. It is most hard labour, for it requires the most exact obedience, under pain of the curse: Gal. iii. 10. "Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Nothing but perfect obedience is accepted, according to the law; and for the least failure, it dooms the sinner to death. Now, no man can perform this; and yet, so foolish are men, that they think to please God with their

works. Again,—it is hard, because the law neither promiseth nor giveth strength. God gave Adam strength to perform; he lost it, the law does not restore it; so that in this case they must make the brick, but no straw is laid to their hands. This makes hard work, and so, by the Spirit, it at length breaks the heart of the elect, and makes them die to the law, as a wife to a rigorous husband, Gal. ii. 19.

2. It is a vain and useless labour. There are much pains, and yet no gain, in this labour. It is vain, in respect of the soul thriving; they that labour in the law do but sow their seed in the sand; all they reap is wind, which may puff them up, but cannot nourish. Why so many barren dry professors? but because they are not trading with Christ, but with the law. Men go to duties, and rest in them; the pipe is laid short of the fountain.—It is vain, in respect of acceptance with God. It is thankless work, for it supercedes the commandment to believe: John, vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is a sad word, Rom. ix. 31. 32. "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Turtles were accepted on the altar at Jerusalem, when bullocks were rejected on these at Dan and Bethel.—Farther, it is vain, in respect of answering the demands of the law, Gal. iii. 10. Our curtailed obedience will not answer the measuring-reed of the law; it demands satisfaction for what is past, and perfect obedience for what is to come.—Finally, it is vain, in respect of salvation. The way to heaven by the first covenant is blocked up; the angel with the flaming sword guards it, Gal. iii.

10. O Sirs ! duties are a sandy foundation, and great will be the fall of legal professors.——Let us inquire,

IV. WHY sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ?—They do so because,

1. They have lost God, the fountain of happiness, and therefore they seek to squeeze it out of the creatures : Ephes. ii. 12. “ Having no hope, and without God in the world.” For, says God, Jer. ii. 13. “ They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters.” The sun is gone down upon them, and therefore they light their candles, and compass themselves with their own sparks ; for the empty soul must have something to feed on. The prodigal wanted bread, and therefore fed on husks. Doves dung is precious, when there is no bread in Samaria:—Sinners labour in these things,

2. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, they still expect satisfaction from them ; they are represented in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents, Gen. iii. 5. 6. That delusion took with them, is conveyed to their posterity, and will never be cured till grace do it. Hence men, though they meet with a thousand disappointments in these things, yet still from new hopes they renew the attempt.—Sinners labour thus,

3. Because these things are most suitable to the corrupt nature : Rom. viii. 5. “ For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh.” Fishes swim in the river, and care not for the most pleasant meadow ; swine prefer the dung-hill to a palace ; because every thing seeks its like. Lusts must be nourished with these ; even the way of the law, though just and good in itself, is the way

that agrees best with self : Rom. iii. 27. "Where is boasting then ? It is excluded. By what law ? Of works ? Nay, but by the law of faith."—Sinners are engaged in this labour,

4. Because they know no better. Christ is a hidden Christ to men in their natural estate ; they see not his glory, fulness, and excellency ; they say, as in Song, v. 9. "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved ?" The fowl scrapes by the jewels, and takes up a corn beside them, because it knows not their worth : 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient."—Sinners continue this labour,

*Lastly*, Because men naturally are enemies to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.—I now come,

V. To make some practical improvement of the whole.

Allow me, then, to expostulate with you in the most earnest manner upon this subject. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Isa. lv. 2. Seeing you would labour, will you not change your work, and labour in God's way, that ye may enter into his rest ? It is a wearisome labour that all out of Christ are engaged in. I would have you, then, to give it over, and engage in the service of Christ. I come in his name, to bid you, to beseech you, to cease from this labour. I have these things to say, in regard to it.

1. It is a labour God never put in your hands, but it proceeds from the devil, and a corrupt heart, who yoked you to that work of seeking your happiness

pinels in the creatures; in lusts, or in the law, and not in God. To this some may plead, Not guilty! 'We know (say such) the world is but a vain thing, and we place our chief happiness in God. God forbid we should be labouring in any such way!' For your conviction, however, I must speak a few things. You may be deceived; many are as busy as their hands can be at that work, and yet say that they are not: Prov. xxx. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."—I would inquire at you,

(1.) Who loosed you from this labour? Were you never at it? If you think so, you miserably deceive yourselves, Eph. ii. 3. already quoted. Since Adam went from God, to pluck his happiness off the forbidden tree, all mankind have followed his steps, and abide at the work, till converting grace loose them. What is conversion, but a turning to God, from whom we are naturally turned away? Alas! there are few converts!—Inquire,

(2.) Was you ever heartily wearied of this labour, seeing your folly in abiding so long with it? Was it ever a heavy task, that you was made to groan out under? All are welcome to Christ that will come, but none will ever give over their labour till they be brought to this. God must bring the soul to a holy despair in this way, ere it be given over, Hos. ii. 6. 7. And then the soul, having run itself out of breath, can neither get satisfaction in the creatures, nor go to God; thus it leaves the pursuit, and sits down with that, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." John, vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him."—I inquire,



(3.) How are you kept from returning to this labour? If you have left it, it will not be without a struggle. There is a natural bias in the hearts of all men this way. Alas! the strong man keeps the house with the greater part; they have no struggle with the world, neither how to get it, nor how to keep it out of the heart.—I inquire,

(4.) Whence is it your greatest dissatisfaction proceeds, from the world's misgiving with you, or God's hiding his face from you? from your disappointments in the world, or at the throne of grace? Where the disappointment goes deepest, the expectations have been greatest: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick;" an infallible evidence that most men are at this work. Men will not be dissatisfied for missing a thing, where they were not to find it.—I inquire,

(5.) Where do you find your greatest satisfaction and pleasure, if we may call it so? In the enjoyment of God, or of the world; or in getting the cravings of your lusts answered? Ah! there are not a few, from whom, if the world's joy was turned away, that would not have a blyth hour. They never found as much sweetness in the benefits of the covenant, as in these of the world.

(6.) If you be not labouring thus, what are you doing then? There is not, and there cannot be, an idle soul among us. If the devil has us not, God has us at work; one of the two must. These things must bring convictions to our breasts.

ALLOW me still farther to expostulate with you. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not? The labour you are engaged in is a thankless labour; God will not thank you for it; he says, "Who hath required this at your hands?" The devil pays you the wages which are due to it,  
which

which are death, Rom. vi. 23. He hath no better to give. Besides this, the labour in which you are engaged, is a labouring against God: Jer. ii. 13. "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, ye have hewed out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Ye are thus setting the creature in the room of God, and accordingly God is against you in this labour, so that you can never get what you are seeking from it. Oh! then be exhorted to cease from, to give up with this labour. To prevail with you in doing this, I would lay before you the following **MOTIVES.**

1. Why will ye toil so to bring out of the creatures what is not in them? Nothing but God himself is commensurable to the desires of the soul; no man ever saw or will see an end of his desires, till they are swallowed up in God himself. When the creatures were at their best, there was the forbidden tree in paradise to teach man his happiness was not in them. How much more now, when they are so much worse! Isa. xxviii. 20. "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrapt himself in it."

2. How can ye think to find rest in that which is restless in itself? are not all things here unstable as water, and so cannot excel? Unchangeableness is a necessary property of that which makes truly happy, for otherwise the very fear of losing it mars the conceived happiness. Will we seek our rest in vanity, fill our hands with the wind, sit easy on the rolling waves, or on the top of a wheel that is in continual motion?

3. Did you ever meet with that among creature-enjoyments, that was every way as ye would have

have had it? Dissatisfaction will proceed from any defect, however small, as it was with Haman, Esth. v. 13.; but satisfaction requires an universal concurrence of all desirables in the thing that must satisfy; so it is, Song v. 16. "He is altogether lovely." Let a man turn over the whole creation for satisfaction, let all be cast into his lap, yet he will find, as in Job, xx. 22. "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." Who ever got the rose that wanted the prickles? the sweetness in any of them, that wanted a mixture of bitterness?

4. Do not the disappointment of hopes necessary cleave to them all? They promise more when afar off, than they afford when they are come near. Mountains afar off become mole-hills when near; like a ball of snow, the more closely it is held, it will grow the less,

5. Has not the sap been squeezed out of enjoyments to thee between the hand and the mouth? Hof. ix. 2. "The floor and the wine press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Have you not had fair prospects that have been blasted in a moment, ere you ever tasted of them? As if they had appeared for no other end, but to raise the appetite that was not to be laid with them.

6. Has not the loss of them often brought greater sorrow than ever the having of them gave joy; while God has taken away the desire of thine eyes, thy choice comforts. Wer't thou not more grieved then, than thou wer't happy before?

7. Has not that wherein thou hast expected the greatest comfort turned out to be the greatest cross? This was the case with Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children, else I die," Gen. xxxi. compare Gen. xxxv. 16.--20. She got children, and death instantly followed.

8. Have

8. Have not signal mercies, as well as judgments, brought a sting along with them, while conscience has been whispering unto thee, that God was thine enemy.

9. Was ever thy heart truly at rest in these things, so that thou couldst say thou desirest no more? Nay, but the more of these, the more are they desired.

10. There is another way to come at your purpose. Come to Christ, and he will give you rest. This is a short way, for all is in him; whatever perfections are scattered up and down amongst the creatures, all is in him, and infinitely more. It is a sure way, for you will not miss happiness if you come to him.

I WOULD once more expostulate with you. Why do you spend your labour for that which satisfieth not? I would beseech you, in the most earnest manner, not only to cease from, to give up with, your present unpleasant and unprofitable labour, but also to change your labour; I would have you, not only to depart from evil, but even to do good; I would call upon you to engage in the service of a new Master, and run in the way of his commandments. You are labouring, you must be labouring, one way or other; will you not then engage in the labour of true religion, real godliness? If we must serve, surely it is better to serve Christ than the devil. The labour that there is in religion affrights the world at it; but why should it, seeing their labour is so great while out of Christ? Consider,

1. We are not calling you from idleness to working, but from labour to labour. And even if we were still to be slaves, better be so to God than to the

the

the devil. What will men say to Christ at the last day, who will be at pains in their lusts, but be at none in holiness, that will bear a yoke, but not Christ's yoke?

2. We call you, not from one base labour to another, but from a base to an honourable work. Should one be called from the stone-barrow to be a king's cup-bearer, it were not comparable to what is proposed.—1. They will have a more honourable Master.—2. More honourable fellow-labourers, for the angels serve him.—3. More honourable work, God himself is glorious in holiness.—4. A more honourable office; from being slaves to the devil, they are made kings and priests unto God.

3. We call upon you from vain labour, to that which shall be prosperous and successful; you are labouring for happiness there, where you will never get it, but here are full breasts; you are in vain striking at the flinty rock for water, here is an open fountain, where none ever went away disappointed.

4. We call you from a barren labour, where you will get nothing but sorrow to take away with you, to a labour which, when you have finished your works, will follow you, Rev. xiv. 13. Ah! miserable is your present labour, Isa. lix. 5. 6. The spider wastes its bowels to spin its web, and when all is done, one stroke of the besom sweeps all away; it is either killed in its web, or drawn by it as a rope unto death; so that it doth but spin its winding-sheet, or plait the rope for itself. Consider,

5. That the worst which can be made of it is, that religion is hard labour. But this should be no prejudice against it with you, seeing, as has been said, the labour out of Christ is also hard labour. But to cast the balance, observe,

(1.)

(1.) If it is hard labour, it is worth the pains, the other is not so; for, Prov. ii. 4, 5. "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." There is hard labour in digging stones, as well as in digging for gold; nay, it is hard labour digging disappointments, that which is not; whereas the gain of the other is precious and certain.—1. The promise, Prov. viii. 21. "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures."—2. The experience of all the labourers confirm the certainty of it: "I (God) said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain."

(2.) If it is hard labour, it is short; if the work be sore, yet it is not longsome. You shall soon rest from your labours: Rev. xiv. 13. He that is tired with his journey, his spirits will revive when near the end. The shadow of the evening makes the labourer work heartily, for loosing-time is at hand. The trials, afflictions, weeping, &c. of the saints, endure but for a moment. On the other hand, the labour of other persons knows no end; no rest abides them, but an everlasting toil under wrath that never ends.

6. We call you from a hard to an easy labour: "My yoke is easy," Christ has said it, we must believe it. But to clear it, consider for this time only these two things.

(1.) All the difficulties in religion arise from that active corruption which is in men, putting them to labour in their lusts and in the law: Mat. xi. 12. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Violence and force, not with God, he opposeth us not, but with our own corruptions. And in this sense only the scripture holds

holds out the labour of religion to be hard. But men do not state the matter fairly: Lay a ton-weight upon a rolling-stone, certainly it is harder to roll both together than the stone alone; but is the stone therefore lighter than the ton-weight? Take them separately, and absolutely, the labour in religion is easy, the other hard. Men cannot bear Christ's burden. Why? because they still keep on the devil's burden, and they cannot bear the one above the other; that is not fair. Lay off the one, take up the other; see which is lightest. A meek and a passionate man, which of them has the hardest task in bearing an affront? the sober man, or the drunkard? the worldly man, or he that lives above the world? The more power grace has, the more easy; the more power lusts have, the more hard is the labour.

(2.) There is true help in the one, not in the other.—The labour in religion has outward helps; the labourers are not helpless, they have a cloud of witnesses gone before them, whom they may see with their crowns upon their heads, Heb. xii. 1. Ye are not the forlorn in hope. Armies of saints have stormed heaven before you, and have left it behind them; that the work is possible, and the reward certain. The other have not this; if they get satisfaction in their lusts, they are the first. They see thousands before them, who have laboured as hard as they, disappointed, and are lain down in sorrow.—This labour has inward helps. Christ bears the heaviest part of his own yoke; he gives strength, he works the will for the work; and the work for us, when we have the will: Phil. ii. 13. "For it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Isa. xxvi. 12. "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." The others

others have not. True, they have that within them which puts them on to this labour, but the more of the one, the harder is the other, as the wearied beast is goaded by the spur, and worn out by their being beaten when no straw is allowed them. But where is the help to work satisfaction and happiness out of the creatures, or from the law?

7. We call you from a wearisome to a light-some pleasant labour. I have proved the first; for the last, see Prov. iii. 17. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But let us hear what can be said for both.

(1.) Is there much pleasure in sin? *Ans.* In some there is none. What pleasure has the passionate man, that kindles a fire in his own bosom? What pleasure has the envious, that gnaws himself like a serpent for the good that others enjoy? What pleasure has the discontented, that is his own executioner. Consider the calm of spirit that the contrary graces bring, and judge who has the better part.—As for those sins in which pleasure is found,

[1.] It is common to them with these creatures with whom they will not desire to be ranked. For these things that gratify men's sensual appetite are common to them with beasts, as gluttony, drunkenness, filthiness, &c. A sow can drink, and be as drunk as the greatest drunkard, and so on. And they have the better of them, as being under no law, and therefore, they can go the full length of their appetite.—2. They do it without remorse.—3. They find satisfaction in these things, seeing they are not capable of desiring greater things. Now, put these together, where is the pleasure? Is it not surpassed by the pain? As to the desires of the mind, these are common to them with devils. The greatest swearer, liar, and proud opposer



of religion, have the trade but from the second hand. The devil can satisfy his curiosity better than the most curious, reason more closely against religion than any atheist. Only obstinate despisers of reproof and mockers surpass the devil, for the devils believe and tremble; whereas for a time they do not.

[2.] The pleasure is but momentary, the pain follows hard at the heels, and is eternal. What pleasure can be devised, for which a man would hold his finger over a burning candle for a quarter of an hour? how much more dreadful to endure eternal burnings!

[3.] The struggle that conscience makes against corruption, brings more torment than that which corruption makes against grace. Conscience is more dreadfully armed than corruption; there is here as much difference as there is betwixt the hand of God and the hand of the devil. See now what becomes of the pleasure!

(2.) The labour in religion is truly pleasant. It is truly holy labour; for of that we speak, and scripture-testimony proves its pleasantness; see Prov. iii. 17. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Ask David, and he will tell you, in Psal. lxxxiv. Paul, in 2 Cor. xii. 10.

[1.] It is a labour suited to the nature of the soul, the better part, their divine supernatural nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Believers are partakers of a divine nature. This must needs create ease and delight; the stream easily flows from the fountain; birds with pleasure fly in the air. The reason of the difficulty in religion to many is, they are out of their element when engaged in it.

[2.] Therein the soul carries on a trade with heaven; entertains communion with God, through  
the

the Spirit of Christ, by a mutual intercourse of grace and duty, the soul receiving influences, and returning them again in duties; as the rain falls on the earth freely, so the waters run freely toward the sea again.

[3.] Great peace of conscience usually attends this; and the more labour, the more peace: Psal. cxix. 165. "Great peace have they who love thy law." Here is a feast which nothing but sin mars: 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Men cannot take it from us, John, xiv. 27.

[4.] Sometimes they have great manifestations of Christ, evidences of the Lord's love raising a high spring-tide of joy in their souls, greater than that which the whole congregation of the world enjoys, Psal. iv. 6. 7. It is joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8.

[5.] It is a lightsome way they walk in, whereas the other is darksome; the light of the Lord's word shines in it. The Mahometans have a tradition, that Moses' law and Christ's gospel were written first with ink made of pure light. Sure the scripture points out duty, as if it were written with a sun-beam.

8. We call you from a labour against yourselves, to a labour for your advantage. We must either do the work of God or the devil. Every sin is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new stone laid on the wall of separation. What a mad thing is it to be working out our damnation, instead of our own salvation!

9. We call you not to more, but to other labour. We are all laborious creatures; the greatest idler

is in some sort busy. Paul calls even them that work not at all, *busy bodies*, 2 Theff. iii. 11. Our life is nothing but a continual succession of actions, even as the fire is ever burning, and the rivers running. It is in some respect impossible to do more than we do; the watch runs as fast when wrong as when right. Why may we not then keep the highway while we are travelling.—Consider,

10. That the same pains that men are at to ruin themselves, might possibly serve to save them. There are difficulties in the way of sin as well as of religion. Does not sin oftentimes bereave men of their nights rest? Are they more disturbed when communing with their own souls, and with God? Do not men draw sin as with cart-ropes? Isa. v. 18. Why might not labour be employed in drawing the heart to God? If men would but change, and suck as greedily and incessantly at the breasts of God's consolations, as they do of the creature's, how happy would they be!

*Lastly*, Consider that the labour in religion is not greater, nay, it is less than in sin, for religion contracts our work to one thing: Luke, x. 41. 42. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." Sinners have many lusts to please, the saints have but one God to please; the work of religion is all of a piece, sin not so. There is a sweet harmony betwixt all the graces and all the duties of religion. But lusts are quite contrary; and as they war against grace, so against one another, James, iv. 1. "From whence come wars, and fightings among you? come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" So that the sinner is dragged by one lust one way, by another, another. And how hard is it to serve contrary masters!

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

S E R M O N XX.

MATTH. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

**I** NOW proceed to the consideration of  
DOCTRINE II. That all who are out of Christ, are under an heavy burden, which, by all their labour, they cannot shake off.

- IN illustrating which, I shall only,  
I. Offer a few observations.  
II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM to offer a few observations; such as,  
I That Satan has a load on all out of Christ; it is a load of sin: Isa. i. 4. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." This load is twofold:  
1<sup>st</sup>, A load of guilt, Gen. iv. 13. "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear," (Heb. *sin*.) Guilt is the heaviest load ever was on the shoulders of men or angels. The scriptures hold it forth,

(1.) As debt. He that is in debt is under a burden. It is the worst of debts, we cannot pay it, nor escape the hands of our creditor; yea, we deny the debt, care not for count and reckoning, we wave our creditor as much as we can; so it stands uncanceled. But it is a debt that must be paid: 2 Theff. i. 9. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They shall pay what justice demands.—It is represented,

(2.) As a yoke tied fast on the sinner's neck; hence pardon is called a loosing of it, guilt being, as it were, cords of wrath, whereby the sinner is bound over to God's wrath. Pardon is also called remission or relaxation: Rom. iii. 25 "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—It is pointed out,

(3.) As a burden: Hof. xiv. 2. "Take away all iniquity." Take away, namely, as a burden off a man's back. Hence Christ is said to have borne our sins, the burden of the elect's guilt being laid on his back. What a heavy load is it! (1.) It makes the whole creation groan, Rom. viii. 22. It caused them take their pains five thousand years since, and they are not yet delivered of their burden. All the groans that ever men gave on earth and in hell were under this burden; it sunk the whole world into ruin: "Christ took our nature," to prevent us going down to the pit, Heb. ii. 16. (Greek, *caught hold*), as of a drowning man, not of the whole seed of Adam, for great part of it fell to the ground, but of the seed of Abraham, the elect. (2.) This load sunk the fallen angels, made them fall as stars from heaven to the bottomless pit. And what a load was it to Christ, that made him

him

him sweat as it were great drops of blood, that made him groan and die!—It is,

*2dly*, A load of servitude to lusts, which of themselves are heavy burdens; the very remainder of which made the apostle groan: Rom. vii. 24. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” What greater burden can be, than for a man to have a swarm of unmortified corruptions hanging about him, whose cravings he is still obliged to answer. This is that which creates that weary labour, of which we have already spoken; better a man were burdened with serpents sticking in his flesh, than with these.—I observe,

2. The Law has a load on the Christless sinner; and that,

(1.) A load of duties, as great and numerous as the commandment, which is exceeding broad, can lay on. Though they perform them not, yet they are bound upon them by the commandment; and they shall sooner dissolve the whole fabric of the world, than make void this commandment. This is a heavy load. True, they that are in Christ have a yoke of duties laid on them, but not by the law, but by Christ. The difference is great; the law exacts perfect obedience, but gives no strength; Christ, when claiming obedience to his law, gives strength for the performance, which makes it an easy obedience.—There is,

(2.) A load of curses: Gal. iii. 10. “Curst is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.” Every commandment of the law is fenced with a curse, denounced against the breakers of it. How great must be the load, then, where every action is a sin, and every sin brings a curse! This is a heavy load,

load, that makes the earth reel to and fro, like a drunkard, under the weight of it.—I observe,

3. That God has a load on the Christless sinner, that is, of wrath : Eph. ii. 3. " And were by nature children of wrath." This is an abiding load : John, iii. 36. " He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." This load is far heavier than mountains of brass ; it is weightier than can be expressed.

II. I AM now to make some practical improvement. From what has been said, I infer,

1. That every one must bear his own burden. There is no getting through the world with an even up back. If people will not take up Christ's burden, they will bear a heavier one ; if they will not be Christ's servants, they must be slaves to their lusts ; if they will not take on the yoke of holiness, they shall bear a load of wrath ; if people will still slip the yoke of Christ, God will wreath the yoke of their transgressions about their neck, that they shall not get shaken off. We have given sorry entertainment to Christ's burden ; it is too likely we may come to get one of another sort. The entertainment we have given to Christ's burden is like to wreath a threefold yoke about our necks. For,

(1.) We have had little taste for the preaching of Christ, the great mysteries of the gospel. The preaching of sin and duty, as they call it, has been more desired than the preaching of the vitals of religion. I fear it be the plague of the generation, to get such preaching of sin and duty, as that the doctrine of Christ and free-grace fall through between the two, and the gospel be turned into a system of morality with us.

(2.) We have little valued pure worship, it has been a burden to us, and we have ground to fear

a burden of another sort, the trash of men's inventions in God's worship. There is an attempt already made to set up Dagon by the ark of God; and God knows where it may stop. If the ceremonies appointed by God himself were such, Acts, xv. 10. "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear," what must they be that are laid on by men?

(3.) God took the yoke of the enemy's oppression off our necks, for which we have been very unthankful. It is very like that God intends to lay it on again, that we may know the worth of our despised mercy: Hof. xi. 4. 5. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return." —We may hence lament,

2. The case of the generation living without Christ, heavy-laden, but not sensible of their burden, Isa. i. 4.; compare ver. 3. both already quoted. Sin fits light upon people, they reign as kings without Christ; the law's authority does not draw them away to Christ; and though wrath lies heavy, they feel it not. Oh! what is the matter? They never feel the weight of it, nor once seriously put the question to themselves, What shall we do to be saved? They are taken up with so many things, that their soul's case cannot come into their minds. Again, they have a dead soul, and a stupid conscience, they complain not. Men's spiritual senses are bound up, and a seared conscience, got by sinning over the belly of daily warnings, is the plague of the generation. Well, but when conscience is awakened, people will find their sores; when drops of wrath fall on the conscience,  
it



it will make a fearful hissing: Isa. xxxiii. 14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surpris'd the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—I only exhort you,

3. To labour to be sensible of your burden, and to be concerned to get rid of it. Is there not a burden of sin upon your backs? mind that you have to do with it.—Consider, That heaven's gate is strait, and will not let in a man with a burden of unpardoned, unmortified sin on his back. The wide gate is that which only will afford room for such. Oif it must be, or they will never see heaven.—Consider again, all that they can do will not shake it off, the bonds of iniquity are stronger than to be broken with their weak arms; all the moisture of their bodies, dissolved into tears, will not wash it off.—Consider, finally, it will never fall off of its own accord. Age coming on may wear off the violence of some lusts, but the guilt remains, and the root of sin. Death itself will not put it off, for it will lie down, and also rise with you, and cleave to you through eternity.

What shall we do then? What more proper than come to Christ? He, and he only, can ease you of your burden. This brings us forward to the invitation itself: *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden; which we have expressed in*

**Doctr. III.** That whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; he calls them to come to him, and in coming they shall obtain rest.—Or more shortly thus:

The

The devil's drudges and burden-bearers, even the worst of them; are welcome to come to Christ; and shall find rest in him.—In opening which, I shall in general shew,

I. WHAT is meant by coming to Christ.

II. I shall more particularly attempt to unfold the import of the invitation, in the several points deducible from the text.

III. I shall consider what is that rest which Christ promises, and will give to such as come to him.

IV. I shall make some practical improvement.

I. I SHALL shew what in general is meant by coming to Christ. To come to Christ is to believe on him: John, vi. 35. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Unbelief is the soul's departing, not from a living law, but from the living God, Heb. iii. 12. Christ is the Lord, God is in him, he calls sinners to come to him; faith answers the call, and so brings back the soul to God in Christ. Now, the scripture holds forth Christ many ways answering to this notion of coming to him by faith. And that you may see your privilege and call, I shall hold forth some of these to you.

1. The devil's drudges and burden-bearers are welcome to Christ, as the great gift of the Father to sinners, to come and take it: John, iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The world was broken by Adam; God sends Christ as an up-making gift, and the worst of you are welcome to him, yea, he bodes (urges) himself upon you.

Come

Come to him, then; ye broken impoverished souls, that have nothing left you but poverty, wants, and debt.—Such are to come to him,

2. As the great Physician of souls : Matth. ix. 12. " They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Christ in the gospel comes into the world as to an hospital of sin-sick souls, ready to administer a cure to those that will come to him for it. Our diseases are many, all of them deadly, but he is willing and able to cure them all. He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, and says, " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22.—Such should come to him,

3. As the satisfying food of the soul : Isa. lv. 1. —3. " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The soul is an empty thing, and has hungry and thirsty desires to be satisfied ; the creatures cannot satisfy, Christ can : John, vi. 35. " My flesh (says he) is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." God has made a feast of fat things in Christ, in him all the cravings of the soul may be satisfied ; there are no angels to guard the tree of life ; no seal on this fountain : Zech. xiii. 1. " In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." There is no inclosure about this flower of glory,

glory, Cant. ii. 1. Here is the carcase,—where are the eagles that should gather together?—Such come to Christ,

4. As one on whom they may rest : Song, viii.

5. “ Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved ? ” We are not able to do our own turn, but on him we should rely : 2 Chron. xvi. 8. “ Because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered thine enemies into thine hand.” Guilt makes the mind in a fluctuating condition. By coming to Jesus we are stayed, as is a ship at anchor. In, or from ourselves, we have nothing for justification and sanctification. God has laid help upon one that is mighty; the weary soul is welcome to rest in him.—Such come to him,

5. As one on whom they may cast their burdens : Psa. lv. 22. “ Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.” The soul is heavy-laden, while out of Christ; Jesus holds forth the everlasting arms, Deut. xxxiii. 27. faith settles down on them, casting the soul’s burden upon them; ‘ Come (says he) with all your misery, debts, beggary, and wants, I have shoulders to bear them all; I will take on the burden, ye shall get rest.’ He is content to marry the poor widow.—Such come to him,

6. As one in whom they may find refuge : Heb. vi. 18. “ Who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.” The law, as the avenger of blood, pursues the soul. Christ is that city of refuge, where none can have power against them. The gates are never shut; here is a refuge from the law, from justice, and from the revenging wrath of God. Here is shelter under the wings of Christ: how willing is he to gather his people, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!—Such come to him,

7. As one in whom the soul may at length find rest: Pſal. xxxvii. 7. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." The ſoul out of Chriſt is in a reſtleſs ſtate, ſtill ſhifting from one creature to another, not finding content in any. But by coming to Chriſt, the ſoul takes up its eternal reſt in him, and he becomes a covering of the eyes to it. We are like men in a fever, ſtill changing beds; like the dove out of the ark, we have no reſt, till we come to Chriſt.—Such come to Chriſt,

8. As a huſband: Matth. xxii. 4. "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." Your Maker is content to be your huſband, Pſal. xlv. 10. Miniſters are ſent, as Abraham's ſervant, to ſeek a ſpouſe for Chriſt. He is willing to match with the worſt, the meaneſt of you; he ſeeks no dowry; he is the richeſt, the moſt honourable, the moſt tender and loving huſband.—Such come to Chriſt,

*Laſtly*, As a powerful deliverer. Chriſt ſtands at our priſon-doors, as in Iſa. lxi. 1. "proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the priſon to them that are bound." All who come to him, as in 2 Cor. viii. 5. firſt give their own ſelves unto the Lord. Whoſoever will come to Jeſus, muſt give up themſelves to him. It is the work of faith, to give up the ſoul to Chriſt, that he may ſave it, that he may open the priſon-doors, take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive.

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

S E R M O N XXI.

MATTH. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

HAVING very briefly considered what it is to come to Christ, by pointing out under what characters we are to come to him, and the consequent improvement which this coming denotes, in order to explain the invitation here given more particularly, I go on, as was proposed,

II. To unfold its import, viewed in the several parts of which the text consists.

You will accordingly observe, that there is in the text, the characters invited,—the *labouring and heavy-laden*; there is the invitation itself, *come unto me*; by whom the invitation is given, by *Christ*; and the encouragement proposed to their complying with it, *I will give you rest*.—All these considered complexly, in our view, import the following things.

1. That all men naturally are at a distance from God; if it were not so, they needed not be bid

come. This is not a distance of place, but a relative distance, a distance of opposition, which lies in these three things.

(1.) The original union between God and man is blown up; they were united in a covenant of works, whereby they had common friends and enemies. This was the first marriage-covenant, but Adam broke it, and so broke off from God. Hence God drove him out of paradise, as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, spoiled of all her ornaments.

(2.) The hearts of men are naturally turned from God, and are a mass of enmity against him: Rom. viii. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is a perfect contrariety betwixt the nature of God and ours. That first sin of Adam has been a little leaven, that hath quite soured the whole lump of mankind; so that we are not only away, but far off from the Lord: Eph. ii. 13. "Without God in the world."

(3.) The soul is still going farther and farther from God in the whole of our life, while in that state: Heb. iii. 12. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Every sin is a step farther from God; therefore the gospel-call is after them that are running away, that they may return to the Lord. We are on the road leading to destruction, and moving very swiftly, as the water, the more it runs, the farther it is removed from the fountain-head whence it came.

From what has been now observed, we may learn the sinfulness and misery of our natural state. It is our duty and privilege to be near God; to be far from him must then be our sin and misery.

fery. No wonder, then, we be dead, that we can do no good while in this state of separation from God. God also is departed from us, Jer. vi. 7. Will not this end in eternal separation, if we return not?—The invitation imports,

2. That if you have a mind to meet and unite with God again, you must meet with him in Christ, and unite with God in him. “All things (says Jesus) are delivered unto me of my Father. Come therefore unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Would you have peace, pardon, and every blessing? you must come to him for it. God has condescended so far to forward the meeting, that he has come down, and dwelt in the flesh of Christ, there to wait sinners, to promote their meeting with him: 2 Cor. v. 19. “God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” He needed not to have come so far, but of his own free grace he has done it; but he will never come farther. There, then, and only there, sinners may meet him; God is in him, and is there to make up the peace through him; and if you will not come to him, and meet God there, you shall never see his face in peace.—Here it may be proper to shew, that this is God’s contrivance for re-uniting with sinners that are by sin far from him; and that there is no other way. This appears,

(1.) From plain scripture-testimony: John, xiv. 6. “I (said Jesus) am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.” He is the great Secretary of heaven, by whom alone you can be brought into the King’s presence: Eph. ii. 18. “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” The keys of the house of David hang at his girdle.

(2.) If there were any other way of coming to



God again, it behoved to be one of these two : either, *1<sup>ly</sup>*, By satisfying the law according to the first covenant ; but that is impossible for us, seeing we cannot give perfect obedience, nor satisfy justice for the sins we are guilty of, Gal. iii. 10. often quoted : Or, *2<sup>dly</sup>*, in a way of mere mercy, for mercy's sake. But this cannot be : for,—The justice of God necessarily requires satisfaction, and God will not dispense his mercy in prejudice of his justice : Psal. v. 5. “ The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, and thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.” One part of the character of God is, that “ he will by no means clear the guilty,” namely, without satisfaction. The law is already made, fenced with threatenings of eternal wrath, and it is broken ; God's justice and truth are both, in consequence, engaged to see the threatening accomplished.—Again, God's last will and testament is already made, and sealed by the death of his Son, but there is no such way proposed in it ; no mercy but in Christ ; yea, God has declared they shall have no mercy that come not to Christ : Matth. xvi. 16. “ He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—Moreover, the very providing of this way makes it evident that there is no other. Were there another way of bringing sinners to God, would not an infinitely wise God, and a loving Father, have fetched a compass, and dispensed with the blood of his own Son ? If any could have been spared, it might have been expected that He would ; but, Rom. viii. 32. “ God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all.”—Finally, ever since Adam was driven out of paradise, this has been held forth as the only way, as in the first promise. Abel's acceptance was by it, Heb. xi. 4.

Jesus

Jesus is the only propitiatory, where God speaks in mercy to sinners.

Here I might also shew, what a suitable contrivance this is, for the purpose of uniting God and sinners.—It is most suitable : For,

1. It is suited to God's honour, the glory of his divine perfections : Heb. ii. 10. " For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God, with the safety of his honour, may be reconciled to the worst of sinners in Christ ; yea, the glory of all his perfections shines forth most illustriously in the mystery of Christ ; there would be no safety in this plan, if it were not so.

2. It is suited to the comfort of the sinner, the contrivance being such, that it answers all the necessities of the sinner : Rev. iii. 18. " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." So that the soul may confidently come to God by Christ, who can do such things for it.

LET us more particularly consider this contrivance of the sinner's coming to, and uniting with God, by coming to Christ.—With this view, we observe,

1. That Christ is a substantial Mediator, partaking of both natures. He is the Father's fellow, yet bone of our bone. The worst of men are sinner \* to heaven than the fallen angels ; for " Jesus took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Here is the true ladder, the foot of which, his humanity, is set on the earth, the top of which,

\* More nearly related.

which, his divinity, reaching to heaven, Gen. xxviii. above which the Lord stands making the covenant. If it consisted with the honour of God, for the divine nature to take into personal union with itself the human nature, it is equally consistent to take men into mystical union with the divine person of our Immanuel, upon this foundation. And when sinners see the first, they are encouraged to look for the second in Christ.

2. In Christ justice is satisfied: He said, "It is finished." In him God has had presented to him a sacrifice to offended justice, a satisfaction to his law. God exacted, and he answered, till the utmost farthing was paid: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us;" and he got up the discharge. The sinner has in him a defence against justice, an everlasting righteousness, in which God may behold the sinner, and be well pleased with him, and the sinner may see God, and yet live. Mercy has a free vent in him, and pardons run freely through his blood. We observe,

3. That the covenant is made with him in his blood; and all the promises of the covenant, all the benefits of it, sinners have at the second hand, Gal. iii. 16. God has laid up all in him: 2 Cor. i. 20. "For all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." Sinners are to come to him for saving blessings, and to take them from him as the purchase of his blood: John, v. 22. Our righteousness, pardon, peace, are all in him, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. Grace is in him, "for of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John, i. 16. Glory is from him: "The Lord will give grace and glory."

4. By

4. By this means, the grace of God is exalted. It is to the praise of the glory of his grace. This is necessary for the glory of God in the second covenant, and for the sinner's comfort, which could not be promoted nor secured except in this way.

5. Here the matter is made sure; God is sure of the sinner, and the sinner sure of his union with God: such as are built upon this foundation, made members of him, Jesus will lose none of them. From what has been stated, I would infer,

(1.) That all who come to Christ shall come back to the state of union and communion with God, through him who knits heaven and earth, rent asunder by Adam's sin. Let your sins be never so great, these shall not stop it, for the cry of his blood is louder in God's ears, than that of our sins.—Infer,

(2.) That they that never come to Christ, shall never see God in mercy. Meet they may, but it will be a sad meeting, a meeting as of a malefactor with an inexorable judge, dry stubble with consuming fire, where our leaf will be as rottenness, and the blossoms of Christless duties go up as dust.

Thus you see there is but one door to God; but what if it be shut? No; it is open. For the invitation imports,

3. That sinners are welcome to come to Christ, that they may unite with God by him; Christ is ready to receive you on your coming.—As to this, consider,

(1.) Christ has made a long journey to meet with sinners. What brought him out of the Father's bosom into the world, but to bring sinners to himself, and so back to God again? What was the errand of the great Shepherd, but to seek them, even them that were straying on the mountains

tains of vanity? Luke, xix. "For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Consider,

(2.) How dear it cost him to purchase your union with God by him, 2 Cor. v. 21. "For he hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Though ye should little value his blood, he will not undervalue it himself; for sinners it was shed, and will he not welcome the reward of it, the fruit of the travail of his soul? Why were his arms stretched on a cross, and his side pierced through, but that he might open up our way to God? Consider,

(3.) How near lost sinners lay to Christ's heart, that he would refuse no hardship, in order that he might see the travail of his soul. His love was ancient love; from eternity, "his delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31.; see his choice, Heb. xii. 2.; and therefore, when he was to suffer, his heart was upon the work: Luke, xii. 50. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Jacob's love to Rachel shewed itself by his long service for her, which seemed to him but a few days. Consider,

(4.) Why has he set up a ministry in the world, but to bring sinners to himself? Matth. xxii. 3. "And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding." He would not have left ambassadors to treat with sinners in his name, if he were not willing to receive them, nay, were he not anxious that they should come to him. Consider,

(5.) He heartily invites you to come to him; as in the text; in Isa. lv. 1. "Ho! every one that thirsteth,

thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price; and in Rev. iii. 2. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These invitations look not like one who cares not whether sinners come or not, far less like one who is not willing to receive them. Consider,

(6.) The earnestness of the invitations; he deals with sinners as one that will not take a nay-say: Luke, xiv. 23. "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." He not only knocks, but stands and knocks: strives with sinners by his word, his providences, and the motions of his Spirit; answers their objections, Isa. lv. 1. and downwards; while none can refuse, but those that rush wilfully on in their ruin; as in Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your wicked ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Consider,

(7.) How he complains of these that will not come: John, v. 40. "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." He speaks as one that has been working in vain: Isa. xlix. 4. "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." He complains of Jerusalem, Matth. xxiii. 37.; yea, he weeps over obstinate incorrigible sinners, Luke, xix. 41. 42. "And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Sure

Sure he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven; they flow out as freely and tenderly as ever.—Consider,

(8.) He commands sinners to come to him. The invitations are all commands; they are most peremptory: 1 John, iii. 23. “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.” If you do it not, you can do nothing that will please him: John, vi. 29. “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” And he leaves it on us with the most dreadful certification: Mark, xvi. 16. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” And hence it follows, that the hearers of the gospel who perish, are inexcusable; the door was open, but they would not enter in.—The invitation imports,

4. That the worst of sinners are welcome to Christ: however great their burden of sin and misery be, it is no hinderance in their way to come to Christ. Where all are invited, none are excluded. But upon this I do not enlarge here, having insisted upon it at some length, when discoursing upon Joel, iii. 10.\* All that I shall just now observe is, that this consideration should shame you out of your slighting of Christ, and strike at the root of that bitter despair which lodges in the breasts of many, who are yet far enough from absolute despair of their case.—The invitation imports,

5. That Christ allows sinners to come to him, rather on account of the desperateness of their case, than otherwise: *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden.* As if he had said, “Ye have been labouring, and yet can get no rest; let that engage you to come to me. Sit down, and consider.

\* Whether this discourse belong, or not, to the Collection now publishing, cannot as yet be ascertained.

sider your case, if nothing else will prevail with you, let the desperateness of your disease bring you to the great Physician." You are cordially welcome to do so. For, consider,

(1.) That it is for this very end God discovers the worst of a man's case to himself, drives him to his wit's end, in order that he may begin to be wise : Hof. ii. 6. " Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." Ver. 7. " Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."—Consider,

(2.) That Christ has made offers of himself to those in the worst of cases : Isa. i. 18. " Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And he holds out himself as a Saviour in particular for these, Rev. iii. 17. 18. Isa. lv. 7.—Consider,

(3.) Such have been made welcome, who have employed such arguments with him : Psal. xxv. 11. " For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great ;" and so also in the case of the Canaanitish woman with Jesus, Matth. xv. 26.—28. Consider,

(4.) He has the more glory, the more desperate that the case is ; none see the stars so well as from the bottom of a deep pit. His power is the greater to pardon, his grace to overcome, when there is most occasion for these being displayed ; it is the worst of diseases, that do best proclaim the physician's skill, when a cure is effected.

From what has been just now observed, we may see and admire the divine condescension, that Christ is so willing to take the sinner in, when he sees himself cast out at all doors, can get rest no where



else ; that he will give him rest, and embrace the sinner, when he sees he can do no better, when he can make no other shift.—Hence also learn, how to make an excellent use of the badness of your case, even to take up these stumbling-blocks, and break up heaven's door with them ; to make a virtue of necessity, and the more that the burden presseth, the more readily to go to Christ with it. True, it is never right coming to Christ, which sense of misery alone produceth ; but love may thus crown a work, which terror begins, and which when from the Holy Spirit it leads to. In a word, you are absolutely inexcusable, that come not to Christ, be your case what it will.

I now go on to what was proposed,

IV. WHICH was, to explain the nature of that rest which Christ graciously promises, and which he actually gives to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, as truly come to him. And here it must be observed, that there is a rest which they may have in Christ ; a rest here, and a rest hereafter. In this life there is a fourfold rest to be had in Christ.—A rest,

1. In respect of sin. The rest Christ gives from sin is twofold.

(1.) A rest from the guilt of sin. Guilt is a poison, infecting the conscience, which makes it so to smart that it can get no rest, as in the case of Cain and Judas, and also with those, Acts, ii. 37. "They were pricked in their hearts." This, when it festers and becomes immovable, is the gnawing worm in hell. Christ gives rest from it, Heb. ix. 4.; his blood purges the conscience from dead works. The conscience, when like the raging sea, is stilled by him : Isa. lvii. 18. 19. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him

him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him." The soul finds this rest in the wounds of Christ, for, "by his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, cleanses from all sin. The soul, dipped in this fountain is washed from this poison, and is delivered from this sting of guilt.—There is rest,

(2.) From the reigning power of sin: Rom. vi. 14. "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin on the throne makes a confused restless soul, like the raging sea, continually casting out mire and dirt. Christ, by his Spirit's efficacy, turns sin off the throne, and restores rest to the soul. He casts down these Egyptian task-masters, and thus the soul enters into his rest: Heb. iv. 10. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." In the day of the soul's coming to Christ, he acts like a King, setting all in order in the kingdom, that was a mere heap of confusion before his accession to the throne.—There is in Christ,

2. Rest from the law; not that he makes them lawless, but that he takes off from them the insupportable yoke of the law, and gives them ease.—He does so,

(1.) From the burden of law-duties, which are exacted in all perfection, under the pain of the curse, while no strength is furnished wherewith to fulfil them: Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." This is the yoke on all men's necks naturally; Christ put his neck in this yoke, and bare it, satisfying the law's demands completely, and so frees all that come to him from

this service. Christ carries his people without the dominions of the law.—He does so,

(2.) From the curse of the law: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." Rom. viii. 1. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." These that come to him, he takes from off them that curse which they are under, and gives them his blessing, which he hath merited; carries them from mount Sinai to mount Zion, where they hear the blood of Jesus speaking peace, silencing the demands of vengeance, and affording a refuge for the oppressed.—There is in Christ,

3. Rest from that weary labour in which persons are engaged when in quest of happiness, leading the soul to the enjoyment of God: Psa. cxvi. 7. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The soul, restless in seeking happiness among the creatures, he leads to God, the fountain of all perfection, opening their eyes, as he did Hagar's, to see the well, and bringing them into the enjoyment of all good in him, uniting the soul with himself; where,

(1.) The soul finds a rest of satisfaction from Christ, which it can find in no other quarter whatever, for the soul finds a rest of satisfaction from him, when by faith it is set on the breasts of his consolations. In these there is an object adequate to all the desires of the soul, answering all its needs; thus, Prov. xiv. 14. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." There is the triumph of faith in the enjoyment of God: Phil. iv. 18. "But I have all and abound."—The soul finds,

(2.) A rest in him of settled abode, inasmuch,  
that

that the soul goes not abroad, as it was wont, among the creatures for satisfaction: John, iv. 14. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ becomes precious to the soul. Like the released lady, that did not so much as look on or take notice of Cyrus, notwithstanding of the noble part he acted, but on him (her husband) who said, he would redeem her with his own life. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—There is in Christ,

4. Rest in respect of troubles. Christ gives rest,

(1.) From troubles in the world, now and then, when he sees meet: Psal. xxxiv. 19. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." Zion's God reigneth, be on the throne who will; and when he speaks peace, neither devils nor men can create his people trouble; for, Lam. iii. 37. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" There is no such security from trouble as the godly have, but that is from heaven, and not from earth. Therefore,

(2.) Christ gives rest in trouble: John, xvi. 33. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." You may, nay, you shall meet with troubles, but he can make you get sweet rest in your souls; even when you are on a bed of thorns as to the outward man, he can give his

people a sweet rest even in troubles. How can these things be? may some say.—In answer,

[1.] Christ gives his people in trouble an inward rest, that is, an inward tranquillity of mind in midst of trouble: Psal. iii. 1.—5. “Lord! how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise against me. Many there be which say of my soul, ‘There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.” Christ can make the believer as a vessel of water tossed here and there, yet not jumbled. There was a greater calm with the three children in the furnace, than with the king in the palace, Dan. iii. 24. Fear may be on every side when there is none in the centre, because Christ makes a blessed calm in their hearts.—Christ gives in trouble,

[2.] A rest of contentment: “I have learned, (says Paul, Phil. iv. 11.), in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” This is not only the duty, but the privilege of believers. If the lot of the godly be not brought up to their spirit, Christ will bring their spirit down to their lot; and there must needs be rest there, where the spirit of the man and his lot meet in one: Psal. xxxvii. 19. “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”—Then follows;

[3.] A rest of satisfaction in the enjoyment of better things. What though the world hath a bitter taste in their mouths? Christ can hold a cup of consolation to them in that very instant, the sweetness of which will master the bitterness of the other: “Your sorrow (says he, John, xvi. 2c.) shall

shall be turned into joy." "Our rejoicing (says Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12.) is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." They are not indeed stocks, to be unmoved with troubles, but their sorrow is so drowned in spiritual joy, that it is *but as sorrow*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. "As *sorrowful*, yet alway rejoicing;" even as the joy of the wicked is *but as joy*. Troubles may raise a mutiny of lusts within, but the peace of God quells them: "It keeps their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."—Christ gives,

[4.] A rest in confidence of a blessed issue: 2 Tim. i. 12. "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The soul in Christ has the promise to rest on; and however dark a side the cloud may have, faith will see through it; though they may sink deep, they will never drown, who have a promise to bear them up.—Thus, you see, they rest in Christ in trouble; and this rest is a most secure rest, where people may rest confidently: Isa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." The wicked may have rest, but not with God's good will; therefore the more rest, the more dangerous is their case: 1 Theff. v. 3. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as a woman in travail, and they shall not escape." But there is perfect security in Christ, and that in the worst of times, Song, iii. 7. 8. Again, it is a rest that is so rooted, that the soul can never be deprived of it: Isa.

xxxii.

xxxii. 17. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." How soon is the rest of the wicked broken, their candle put out! But this, although it may meet with some disturbance by temptations, as the clouds may go over the sun, yet it shall be as sure as the sun fixed in the firmament; it will be proof against the disturbances of the world, against the temptations and accusations of the devil; yea, against the demands of justice, and the threatenings of the law. Then in the life to come, he will give them all complete rest who come to him: Heb. iv. 9. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." He will give their bodies rest in the grave, Isa. lvii. 2. and both soul and body rest in heaven hereafter; and that is a rest beyond expression.

If it should be inquired, Who is it that gives this rest? this is answered in our text; Christ says to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, and he is able to make good his word, *I will give you rest*. The gift of this rest is his prerogative; they that obtain it must get it out of his hands.—For illustrating and confirming this, consider,

1. That all creatures cannot give rest to a restless soul. Not any thing in them, or the whole of what can be afforded from them, can give it: Eccles. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Men, the best of men, cannot do it. Ministers may be directed to speak a word in season, but the Lord himself can only make that word effectual, 2 Sam. xii. 13. compared with Psal. li. Nay, angels cannot do it, Exod. xxxiii. 2. compare ver. 15. It requires a creating power: Isa. lvii. 18. "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him."—Consider,

2. There can be no rest to the soul without returning

turning to a reconciled God, for it is impossible the soul can find true rest elsewhere ; and there is no returning to God but by Christ : John, xiv. 6. “ I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He is the only ladder by which the soul can ascend to heaven.

3. Christ is the great Lord Treasurer of heaven. The fulness of power is lodged in him : Matth. xxviii. 18. “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” There is nothing that any can get from heaven in the way of spiritual favour, but what comes through his hands : John, v. 22. “ The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son.” Jesus also hath the keys of hell and death, Rev. i. 18.

4. He is the store-house, where the treasure is laid up, and out of which all needful supplies come : John, i. 16. “ And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”—Consider,

5. The glorious types illustrating this : Joseph, Gen. xli. 40.—44. ; Joshua, that brought the people to the rest in Canaan.—Consider,

6. That high character which he sustains : Heb. xii. 2. He is the “ author and finisher of our faith.”—Consider,

*Lastly*, It is reasonable it should be so, he hath purchased this rest with his blood ; and therefore there is an high propriety that he should be the giver, the dispenser of this glorious blessing.—In the

IV. AND last place, it was proposed to make some practical improvement of the whole. To enlarge here, however, would be improper, as a practical improvement has been made of the several parts of the subject all along, as they have been considered. At the same time, your attention may be



be called to the following brief hints. From what has been observed, you have had set before you,

1. A melancholy picture of the miserable state of all mankind by nature;—they are *labouring* and *heavy-laden*, they have various burdens lying on them, the burden of sin, the burden of the law, a burden often of fears, of terrors, arising from the former; and while thus heavy-laden, they are *labouring*, striving to ease themselves of their burdens, struggling hard to get rid of them, while after all they are only labouring in vain in the fire, wearying themselves in the greatness of their way; are spending their “money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not,” instead of obtaining the least ease or quiet. Their situation is in this way rendered more and more grievous and distressing, their burdens become heavier than they can bear, and their labour is rendered quite intolerable.

2. We may learn a special ingredient in the misery of those that thus labour, and are heavy-laden. They are under the law as a covenant of works, which requires the full tale of brick, without affording the least straw with which to make them. They are under most grievous task-masters, who are constantly saying, Give, give, while they are unable to work; and, what is still worse, they are without Christ, without God, and so without hope in the world. It is Jesus only that can help them; while afar from him, and enemies to him, they have no other prospect than that of perishing eternally.—But,

3. There is hence opened up a door of hope, even for such as are labouring and heavy-laden, whatever their characters or conditions have been, or at present may be, though they may have long laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought.

nought. However heavy, numerous, and continued these <sup>burdens</sup> may be, though in their view their condition may not only be distressing and deplorable, but even almost desperate, there is here a door of hope opened up to such. On Jesus is their help laid; in and from him it is to be found. He is saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour." "Hearken, ye stout-hearted, and ye that are far from righteousness." Nay, he speaks to such expressly by name; without excluding a single individual, whatever his present character or condition be, his gracious words are, *Come unto me, all ye* (the whole of you, and each of you) *that labour, and are heavy-laden, and* (in coming to me without peradventure) *you shall have rest.*

In the *last* place, There is pointed out to us what is the indispensable duty of all the hearers of the gospel. It is to come to Jesus; to comply with the gracious call and invitation here given. It is true, this in the text is addressed only to the labouring and heavy-laden; but is not this a character common to all the hearers of the gospel? Are not all more or less in this situation? A situation so far from being desirable, that it is exceedingly uncomfortable. If such, then, would consult their present or eternal welfare; if they would hearken to the gracious call, the kind invitation which Christ gives them; if they would obey Heaven's great command, it must be admitted, that it is their bounden duty to come to Jesus, that is, to believe on him; for it is only in the exercise of faith as coming to him, and according as faith is in exercise, that any can be freed from their heavy burdens, or be released from that vain and irksome labour in which they are engaged.

Let all such, then, be exhorted to cease from the labour

labour which satisfieth not; from these fruitless attempts which they are engaged in to rid themselves from these heavy burdens that they are weighed down under. Be exhorted to come to Jesus; cast all your burdens and your cares over upon him. He is able and willing to sustain both you and your burdens, whatever they are. Come to him, then, as you are, as labouring and heavy-laden. There is the most cordial welcome afforded to all such; the greater your burdens, and the more pressing your necessities are, in the way of putting your case unreservedly in his hand, and under his management, you may in due time assuredly expect a comfortable issue. He hates putting away. Whosoever will may come, and him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. *Come unto me (says he) all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*



CHRIST,

---

---

CHRIST, A REFRESHFUL SHADOW IN A  
WEARY LAND.\*

---

---

S E R M O N XXII.

ISA. xxxii. 2. *And a man shall be—as the shadow  
of a great rock in a weary land.*

**T**HIS prophecy relates to Hezekiah, to his happy and pious government; but doubtless a greater than Hezekiah is here, and that is Jesus Christ, the King of saints. This world, before sin entered into it, had always a clear sky; there was not an air of pestilential wind to blow upon them that were travelling through it to Immanuel's land. But since sin entered, the case is quite altered; strong winds of trouble blow, tempests of heavy rain fall; there are *inundations* in the world, as the word is; it is a dry place; in respect of comfort, it is a weary land; but though a weary land, it is not altogether without some comforting prospect. A shadow and shelter is prepared for the weary traveller; for it is promised in the text, *And a man*

VOL. I.

G g

*shall*

\* This and the following Discourse delivered August  
1715.

*shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*  
In which words, there is observable,

1. What the world is spiritually to Christ's subjects, the people of God, *a weary land*; that is, a thirsty land, a scorching country, a stormy place, with many inconveniences, which make travellers weary and faint. It is a wilderness, wherein there is no water, but a vehement heat, which makes people weary, and long for shelter and refreshment.—Observe,

2. What Christ is to them there, *as the shadow of a great rock*. How pleasant is a shelter in such a place to the weary traveller! Such is Christ to his people in the world. There are many shelters, there is even the shadow of created comforts; but, alas! they are unsubstantial shades; they are as the shade of a tree through which the sun, wind, or rain beats. But Christ is as the shadow of a rock, which none of these can pierce; and as a great rock, which gives a large shelter; so that there they have a perfect repose, blow what weather will.—The text affords us this

**DOCTRINE,** That Christ is a suitable shade, and a refreshing shelter, for those to whom the world is a weary land.

FOR illustrating this doctrine, it is proposed,

- I. To shew what is implied in the text.
- II. To inquire in what respects the world is a weary land to the faints.
- III. To point out in what respects Jesus Christ is a suitable and refreshful shade and shelter to them in a weary land.
- IV. Conclude with a practical improvement.

WE

WE are, then,

I. To shew what is implied in the text.—It imports,

1. That the world is not our dwelling-place, but the place through which we are travelling. This world is but a thorough-fare to another, where we come in at our birth, walk through in our life, and go out again at death. Many imagine but two fixed points in the universe, the higher and the lower, and that bodies are revolving in continual motion towards one or other of these, heaven and hell. The godly are going out of the world in affection, Song, iv. 8.; the wicked, in action, though not in affection; none are abiding.—It imports,

2. That there is no correcting of the ill air of the world; a shade and shelter may be had in it, but to reduce it to its first temperature, that it may be indeed a pleasant land, is not promised, and therefore cannot be expected. The winds of trouble must blow in it, while there are such treasures of sin in it to bring them forth. While our provocations against Heaven gather into clouds, there will be tempestuous rains of calamities in it. The godly may lay their account with this: John, xvi. 33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And the carnal world need not lay their account by it: Job, v. 7. "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards."—It imports,

3. That, foul or fair weather, we must set out our heads, and through the weary land we must go; there is no other way but to take our share of what may be going on in it. He that would stop till the sky clear, may with as good reason sit down and wait till the water run out, that he may get through the river dry-shod; the last may be sooner expected than the first.—It imports,

G g 2

4. That

4. That the travelling through it will try our strength; take what way we will, we cannot miss sometimes to be entangled in the wilderness, and to be wearied in it, though the heart were so glowed to it, as never to be wearied of it. The winds, the rains, and the storms, that blow there, will bear heavy on us, so as that we will need a resting, a refreshing place.—It imports,

5. That nothing less than the great rock will be a sufficient shelter in this weary land; no solid peace or repose out of Christ, more than there was out of the ark when the deluge came on. The winds and storms will blow down, or blow through, all other shades which men make to themselves in the weary land: Isa. xxviii. 17. "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Flying from one mischief, while they flee not to the great rock, they shall fall into another: Amos, v. 19. "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."—It imports,

6. That Christ is a sufficient shelter, however weary a land the world be: John, xvi. 33. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Be the storms or heats as great as they will, he is as a great rock; and from him, though the troubles may be great, yet they may expect a great salvation. They will always be safe who are under the shade of the great rock, through which neither heats nor storms can pierce: Psa. xciii. 4. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." It is impossible they can be greater than they have been; nay, they can never be

be so great as once they were, when from heaven, earth, and hell, at once they blew upon Christ. Yet he bore them, bore up under them, bore them off his people; even as the heats and rains fall on the rock, while those under its shade are kept safe.—It imports,

*Lastly*, That the weary world makes Christ more precious to sinners than otherwise he would be; If the traveller were not scorched with heat, or tossed with tempests, he would never look near the rock. Ease in the world, is the neck-break of many. But it is well for the church and people of God, that the world is a step-dame to them; were they better entertained in the world's house, they would more seldom knock at God's door.—We now proceed,

II. To shew in what respects the world to the people of God is a weary land.—It is so, because,

1. The wind blowing in the traveller's face makes any land a weary land to him; and in this world, there is a wind of ordinary trouble, that is seldom if ever down, but blowing especially in the face of the travellers to Zion: Matth. vi. 34. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Sometimes it blows away the man's ease, blasts his reputation, blows away his worldly goods, his health, his relations, &c. It blows so, that he is sure of nothing he has, unless it be Christ in him, the hope of glory. And the travellers must lay their account with this. This cannot fail but make the world a weary land. But the soul may find a calm under Christ's shadow, as Hannah did, when she poured out her soul before the Lord, 1 Sam. i. 16. Praying in faith is a great ease to a heart uneasy under trouble: Matth. vii. 7. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;

G g 3

knock,



knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Christ is an anchor that can keep the soul sure and steadfast amidst all the tempests of a weary world. He has an open ear to their just complaints, and a soft hand, under which the uneasy heart and head may repose themselves.—It is a weary land,

2. Because sometimes there are terrible tempests of common calamity, threatening to sweep all away before them, blowing in this world, which makes it a weary land. There are no tempests in the upper region, but in the lower region, where we are, they are very frequent, whereby nations, churches, and families, are thrown into the utmost confusion. David speaks of such, Psa. lv. 8. "I would," says he, "hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." These often make a most miserable face on the places where they blow, and make the land a weary land indeed. But even in this case, there is found peace under Christ's shadow: John, xvi. 33. "These things I have spoken unto you, that ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In him believers have a peace the world cannot rob them off. He has hiding-places for his people, where he will hide them, if not from trouble, yet from the evil, the sting, and hurt of it: 1 Pet. iii. 13. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" He will hide them, if not under heaven, yet in heaven; and they have no reason to complain who get there, though in a fiery chariot. Our Lord holds the winds in his hand, and they can blow no more terribly than he permits them; so that in the worst of times it is good news, Isa. lii. 7. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith unto Zion,

Zion,

Zion, Thy God reigneth !” And these that make Christ their friend, may bid defiance to all their enemies.—The world is a weary land,

3. Because the wild beasts in it make it a weary land. The scripture calls wicked men so, especially in their opposition to, and treatment of the people of God, and the world is the place of their abode : Song, iv. 8. “ Come with me, my spouse, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards.” And therefore, while they are travelling through the wilderness, they are often put to that prayer, P<sup>sal.</sup> lxxiv. 19. 20. “ O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked, forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever, have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” No wonder the world be a weary land to the people of God ; for the wild beasts are often heard roaring there : P<sup>sal.</sup> lxxiv. 4. “ Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregation, they set up their ensigns for signs ;” threatening to devour, and to swallow up, and to make the name of Israel no more to be remembered ; as the Egyptian beast did, Exod. xv. 9. But while these roarings make the hearts of God’s people to tremble, the voice of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, terrible to his enemies, is comfortable to his friends : P<sup>sal.</sup> xciii. 4. “ The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” This moderated the roarings of the Assyrian in Hezekiah’s days, Isa. xxxvii. 22. These beasts are often heard yelling in the world : Jerem. ii. 15. “ The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste.” Dreadful is that yelling they make when they are got together, uttering their blasphemies, curses, and reproaches, against God, his people,

people, and his cause in the world, as if hell was opened, which is the den of the great lion. This makes the world a weary land, and it is most heavy and distressing to the people of God: P<sup>sal.</sup> lxxiv. 10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" But there is refreshment and shelter under Christ's shadow in this case, while the soul sees that he will close up at length the blasphemous mouths, and bring them to the city above, where they shall hear no more of any such thing. But again, these beasts are often seen tearing and devouring in the world the men that are more righteous than they: Hab. i. 13. "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" God has his times wherein he lets them loose, to make havock of the church, and shed the blood of his saints. But under Christ's shadow there is refreshing in this case. He can break out the teeth of the great lions with a touch; and while they are at the worst, he says to his people, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Mat. x. 28. It was the way they treated Christ himself when in the world, but he rose upon them to their confusion; and so shall the church in like manner, and according to their measure, P<sup>sal.</sup> xxii. 12. 13.

4. Darknes causeth weariness, and a dark land will always be a weary land to the children of light. The world at best is but a dark land, in comparison with heaven: 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." But sometimes the darkness increaseth mightily. We have had a long sunshine of gospel-light, but men have loved darkness rather than the light.  
And

And now God is rising up to plead with the generation; and we may say, with Jeremiah, "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." Do ye not see the darkness come, and coming on the land more and more? There is a dark cloud already cast over the ministers and professors of Scotland; so that they have now been like a company of travellers in a mist; some crying this, and others that is the way; while many are at a stand, not knowing what hand to turn to. Hence there are an alienation of affection, divisions, and separations, amongst those who all profess that they are travelling to the same place, but cannot agree about the way. Terrible this at all times, but now especially, when the common enemy is at our gates, which should make us cease from these feuds, as it is said the beasts did, hare, dog, sheep, cat and rat, in the inundation of the Severn. Some pride themselves in these, but they will make the world a weary land to those that are led by the Spirit of truth and peace: Judges, v. 16. "Why abidest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleating of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart."

What shall we do in such a case? Get in under Christ's shadow, by faith, renouncing our own understanding, passions, and prejudices, and giving up ourselves singly to his guiding, and his shadow will be as the shadow on the dial, pointing to the hour of the day: Psal. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgement, and the meek will he teach his way." In the greatest darkness of the world, there is a light, even "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts,"

hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. This oracle of heaven is never struck dumb; but at any time men's corruptions may make them both blind and deaf to its warnings. But again, the bushel is preparing to put the candle under, which God has lighted to give light to his church, if mercy prevent it not; and then people that have made themselves so many silent Sabbaths, will get them made to their hands; and they that have been wearying for the day, may come to get a weary fill of it. Preachers driven into corners, closed kirk-doors, and the songs of the temple turned into howlings, will make a dark day. And now, if God do not mercifully interpose, we cannot miss it. But Christ's shadow will be refreshing in this case to those that get under it. Though the enemy should get leave to tread down the outer court, and these that worship in it, they that are farther in, shall be well seen to: Rev. xi. 1. 2. 'I though they should burn up all the synagogues of God within the land, yet there is a little sanctuary they cannot hinder you to carry about with you: Ezek. xi. 16. "Therefore say, 'Thus saith the Lord God, Although I have cast them afar off among the Heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." And though the stars should be stamped down to the earth, and no star-light shine in the church, ye shall not want light while the Sun of righteousness continues to shine.

Finally, The bottomless pit is already opened, the smoke is arising in our land, and the locusts are coming out of the smoke upon it: Rev. ix. 1.—3. The Popish party are now begun to make head, with their brethren the malignants who carry on the war with Antichrist, and to set a limb of Antichrist

tichrist upon the throne; and if they succeed, what can be expected, but that the smoke of Antichristian errors, superstition, and idolatry, will overspread these nations again? So that we must resolve either to take on the beast's mark or Christ's fire-mark, either burn or turn. It will be weary work to get through the smoke, which it is to be feared will stifle most of us, and blacken many. But get under Christ's shadow now; seek now to believe, and feel the power of truth. An empty profession will not do here; lamps without oil will go out in the smoke. But be it ever so gross, it will hurt none but the profane and hypocritical professor: Rev. ix. 4. "And it was commanded them, that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." They that have Christ's mark of true piety, shall be kept from receiving the mark of the beast. Under Christ's shadow they will be as the Israelites in Goshen; when darkness is over all the land, they shall have light in their dwellings.—The world is a weary land,

5. For blood and death going through it, make it a weary land. In heaven there are none of these things, it is the pleasant land, Rev. xxi. 4. But in the world they are very frequent; which often makes the weary sons of Zion to cry, "Woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers," Jer. iv. 31. The people that delight in war is a black character in the scriptures, Psal. lxxviii. 30. The confused noise of the warriors is no pleasant sound, nor are garments rolled in blood a pleasant sight. The constant disquiet and terror that attends the sword's raging in a land, is a wearisome case, as it is described, Deut. xxviii. 67. "In the morning thou shalt say, Would to God it were even!

even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

The white horse of the gospel has for many years made a pleasant parade through the land. But, alas! neither it, nor the crowned head, the Son of God, that sits upon it, has been much regarded; nay, both he, and his bow, which is the word, have been despised; few, very few, have given him a crown, Song, iii. 11. by closing with him in the gospel-offers. And now the red, black, and pale horses, mentioned Rev. vi. 4. 5. 8. seem to be ready to begin their march, to avenge the affronts <sup>of heretics</sup> ~~opposed~~ to the white horse; though the Popish and malignant riders mean not so, but to banish the white horse out of the land. What shall we do in this case? get in under Christ's shadow, that is the only safe retreat in such a case: Mic. v. 5. "And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." This should be our work this day; we should sit down under his shadow, believing in him, and depending upon him, Cant. ii. 3. When public calamity comes upon a land, every person will run to that place where they expect the greatest safety; but run where they will for shelter, if they run not to Christ, their shelters will fall down about their ears at length: Isa. xxviii. 17. "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." But the way of safety is to run to Jesus Christ: Prov. xviii. 10. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." You must sit down under his shadow, by closing with him in the offers of the gospel, taking him for all, and instead of all, for time and eternity; giving yourselves  
away

away to him, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, embarking in his interests and cause at this day, whoever be against it. This is a loud knock Christ is giving to gospel-despisers to open to him, after the slighting of many a still small voice, whereby he lets them know, that if they will not open to him as a Lord and Saviour, he will arise on them as a Judge with a vengeance, whether they will or not. Come, then, ye despisers of Christ, and sit down under his shadow, before the scorching heat of the weary land burn you up.

We must sit still under his shadow, by cleaving to him, and depending upon him: Isa. xxx. 7. "For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." Though the scourge reach all, the greatest safety will be there. Cleave to him and his cause, come what will come; for if you go off his way to seek safety, you cast yourselves out of his promised protection. Piety will be the best policy in the worst of times: Prov. x. 9. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his way, shall be known." And depend on him by believing his promises, both for your personal case, and the church's case; for whoever be in the field, victory is in his hand alone, and he gives it to whom he will; he does what he will in the armies of heaven and earth; whom he will he strengthens, whom he will he weakens, for he is the Lord of hosts; and he hath engaged, that at length it shall be ill with his enemies, and well with his friends: Isa. liv. 17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement, thou shalt condemn; this is the heri-



tage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."—But again,  
\* We must lie down under his shadow, in holy resignation, to suffer whatsoever he may call us to, Isa. li. 23. The dispensations of the day call aloud to us to prepare for suffering; if the malignant party prevail, doubt not but their little finger will be heavier than their father's loins. Our Lord has given many love-tokens to the generation, which have been lightly esteemed; howbeit, there are many that profess love to him and his truths; and it would seem, he will try what tokens we have to bestow on him and his cause. It is likely he will have a portion of some one's goods, relations, liberty, yea, and of their blood too, ere all be done; and it is to be feared, the tokens of his displeasure draw so deep, that many will give up with him on this account. But if you be wise, lie down under his shadow; for a thorny bed under Christ's shadow will at the last prove more easy than the beds of ivory, on which his enemies may stretch themselves for a little: Job, xx. 5. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." The hour and power of darkness will not last; and though God should suffer that party to carry all before them a while, there is no ground to doubt but God will be even with them, for all their enmity, and opposition to his work; yes, and render home their fathers opposition to it into their bosom, and give them blood to drink, for the blood their fathers shed in fields, and on scaffolds, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity by what they may now do: Rev. xvi. 5. 6. "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast

Hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."

But we must also stand up under Christ's shadow, and act for him. Certainly, as the quarrel is now stated betwixt Christ and his enemies in Britain and Ireland, he calls his people now to act for him and his cause. If *they* have a standard to be displayed for Popery and slavery, God has given us a standard to be displayed for religion and liberty: Psal. lx. 4, "Thou hast given a banner to them that feared thee, that it might be displayed because of the truth." And people are called, by this dispensation, to put themselves in a posture to defend their religion and liberties, their Protestant King, country, and families, and not to leave themselves a naked prey for murderers. And in such a time, people consulting their own ease, more than the honour of God, the welfare of his cause, and their neighbour's safety, may easily slip themselves in under Meroz's curse, which, when incurred, will not be got so easily off persons: Judges, v. 23. "Curse ye Meroz, (said the angel of the Lord), curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Never was the cause more clear in Britain. The word, to spirit the soldiery under the enemy's standard, should be, The great red dragon, Rev. xii. 3. and the motto corresponding with this, as in Psal. ii. 3. "Let us break their bands, and cast their cords from us." This is the design of the attempt, and, I am persuaded, is looked upon so by him that sitteth in the heavens. What else is the design of Papists and malignants this day? Our holy religion must go, and idolatry and su-

perdition come in its room ; we and our families must be murdered, or renounce our religion, though denying of Christ will never altogether please them, for they will especially never trust Scots Presbyterians, so that that would be the way to die a double death. Our Protestant King must go, and a Papist ascend the throne, and the covenanted work of Reformation be rooted out, unless that people act for their defence against the Antichristian party. I know no mids this day, but that every one must be on Christ's side, or on Antichrist's. This cause will bear no neutrality : Mat. xii. 30. " He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

Never was the cause more favourable ; for while our intruders and enemies cannot appear in the field but as rebels and traitors, laying themselves open to all the pains of treason and rebellion, we have, by the mercy of God, the law on our side. No doubt, masses will be said at Rome for them, and in other parts of the Pope's territory ; but the prayers of all the Protestant churches abroad will be for us and our righteous cause ; and the prayers of all the godly in the land will also be in our favour. It is true, indeed, our God is angry with us ; but sure I am, he is not well-pleased with them, he never was nor will be pleased with the cause they have in hand ; and therefore, seeing the cause is the Lord's, we may be sure, that " though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion ;" and when he has done his work with his furnace on Mount Zion, he will bring off his cause and people victorious at length, Isa. liv. 17. And we have ground to hope, that if the noise of enemies go on, it will raise up at length a ghost upon the Popish and malignant interest in these nations, that shall

shall affright them, and ruin it more than ever ; I mean, the ghost of the buried covenants \*.

\* The intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the history of Britain, has only to be reminded, that the period when this discourse was delivered was very eventful. An unnatural rebellion was then breaking out, cherished by a Popish faction both at home and abroad, which in its progress threatened to overturn our religion and liberties. On this occasion, the worthy Author, as a sound patriot for his country's welfare, as a genuine son of Zion, and a faithful watchman upon her walls, could not fail to sound a suitable alarm. From the deep sense he had of the impending danger, from a clear conviction of indispenfible duty, and possessing a natural warmth of temper, the strong expressions made use of by him in this and other parts of his discourses, are easily to be accounted for.

THE

---

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

SERMON XXIII.

ISA. xxxii. 2. *And a man shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, offered several reasons why this world is to the faints a weary land, I go on now farther to observe, that the world is to them a weary land : For,

6. An ill way makes a weary land to travellers. There is much ill way in the world, that wearies fore them that are travelling Zion-ward. It is true, the way of holiness is a good way, in so far as it leads to the heavenly Jerusalem ; and though it be strewed with thorns and briars, it is better to walk in it, than in the way to destruction strewed with roses. But an uneasy way we call an ill way ; and such is the way through the weary land of the world. It is all up-hill, which scars the most part of the world. The way to hell is down the hill, but the way to heaven is up the hill : Psa. xxiv. 3. “ Who shall ascend into the hill of God ? ” They that would sit at ease, and sleep through the world,

world, are not meet for heaven ; the way will try people's strength, and an easy way to heaven no man shall find. There are strong lusts, and temptations, and troubles, which people will have to climb over. But under Christ's shadow, the traveller will recover his breath again, and be invigorated for new difficulties, till he come to the top of the hill : Isa. xl. 29. " He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Ver. 31. " They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk and not faint.

It is a narrow way : " Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," Matth. vii. 14. Multitudes walk in the broad way, and there they get room enough ; but in the narrow way there are few travellers, and they that are on it must take good heed to their feet, or they are apt to catch a fall. And considering how rash we naturally are, and how weak headed and false hearted we are, and how narrow the road is, and how loose the ground about it is, it is no wonder, that with the Psalmist we complain of broken bones, Psa. li. 8. These make a weary way. But under Christ's shadow there is light for the blind, strength for them that go even on, and medicine to cure them that are bruised by their falls, if they intend not to lie still, but to get up and walk on.

It is a hard and rugged way, and therefore they must have leg-harness, as soldiers have, to preserve their feet from stones and roughness in the way of their march : Eph. vi. 15. " And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." There are many difficulties to go through, that will need resolution and undaunted courage. The spies saw such difficulties in the way to Canaan, that they brought  
up

up an ill report of the land. But Caleb and Joshua had another spirit, that fitted them to face all these difficulties, Numb. xiv. 24. The fearful are not for heaven, Rev. xxi. 8. But under Christ's shadow, there is sweet refreshment in the hardest piece of the way, and nothing is too hard for them whom he bears up : Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

It is a way wherein many snares are laid. The snares of the world make it a weary land. The way is beset with thorns, and lies through thickets, where on every side there is something to catch a man. There are snares in every lot, in every condition, in the most innocent things in the world ; and there is need of great caution to get through them. How often are men in the snare ere ever they are aware ! Like the poor bird, they find the snare laid where they were not looking for it. But under Christ's shadow, there is a shelter where they may be safe. It is he that leads them through the wilderness to that place where they will be in no more hazard. Yea, casting themselves by faith on him, they are in no danger from any quarter whatever.—It may be further observed,

7. That the country-disease often makes it a weary land ; and that in the world is sin. No sooner do any set their foot in that land, than are they infected with it : Psa. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Though the power of this disease be broken in the saints at their conversion, yet it hangs about them as long as they are in the land. What wonder, then, that it be to them a weary land?—And there are five things that make it so.

(1.) The heaviness of the disease. It is called a body of death, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body

body of this death?" Death is heavy in any part of it, how much more burdensome must a body of it be? It bears down the man continually; it is a burden to the back, that makes him stoop, and so makes a weary land.

(2.) The universality of the disease. It affects and indisposes the whole man, so that we may say, Isa. i. 5. 6. that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." It spreads itself like a leprosy, through all the faculties of the soul, and leaves no part of the man unaffected. It has smitten the understanding with blindness, and the heart with hardness, and filled the mind with enmity against God. Job's life was a heavy life when he was full of boils all over; and so is the life of those who are universally affected with the disease of sin.—There is,

(3.) The frequent relapses that take place in this disease. How often do they fall back again when they seem to be in a fair way of recovery! This makes a weary world to a heaven-born soul, that would fain be like God in holiness; ever wrestling, and ever falling into the mire again, makes weary work. This makes that longing to be away for which the saint is distinguished.—There is,

(4.) The malignant influence these things have on the saint's journey through the weary land. By these means they are very much unfitted for it, they walk very slowly. It is a weary journey to them; and oftentimes they are so laid by, that they are not able to move forward at all, and they are driven back, instead of going forward.

(5.) It is not their case alone, but of all that are there, the being affected by this disease. The world



world is an hospital of souls sick with sin. Some of them are sensible of their disease, others are not. The godly have not only their own plague-floes running on, but they also see those of others running on; and that makes a weary land: Jer. ix. 2. "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of a way-faring man, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." But under Christ's shadow, there is medicine for the fore. There is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. His blood takes away the guilt, his Spirit takes away the power of sin; and in his holy promises they see their freedom and complete cure.—I observe,

8. That the scorching heats in the world make it a weary land. And there are these four kinds of scorching heats.

(1.) There is the fiery heat of desertion, from heaven. This the Captain of our salvation met with in the weary land, Psal. xxii. 1.—14.; and this has often been the lot of the people of God in the weary land; they have lost sight of their guide, and have been left in darkness, and gone mourning many days, without the sun, with many a weary groan, Psal. vi. 6. Nay, there have been many positive outgoings of wrath against their souls, sparks of hell flying in on heaven-born souls, while they have been pressed under a sense of the Lord's anger, living, as it were, in the smoke of a furnace: Psal. cii. 3. "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth."—There is,

(2.) The fiery heats of temptation from hell: Eph. vi. 12. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against

against spiritual wickednesses in high places." When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they met with fiery serpents that bit them, Num. xxi. 6.; and while we are in the wilderness of this world, we cannot miss the inflaming bites of the old serpent the devil. Satan is within bow-shot of us while here; and the tosses of temptation from him make it a weary land. Ordinary temptations are never wanting, but are coming through the weary land like midges in a hot summer-day. Sometimes there are extraordinary temptations, fiery darts, where the poor soul will be as much put to it, to defend itself, as one to defend a thatch-house against one casting fire-balls, as it were, without intermission.—There is,

(3.) The fiery trial from the men of the world, persecution. This is such an ordinary inheritance of the people of God in the weary land, that an apostle says, 1 Pet. iv. 12. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." There is much dross, together with the good metal, which gathers together in Zion, and therefore God will have a furnace there, and the wicked of the world to set it on, and blow it up, and professors must be cast into it to try them, some to be consumed, some to be refined in it: Zech. xiii. 9. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God."—There is,

(4.) The fiery heats of contention and division from the altar, mentioned Rev. viii. 5. These have a sort of malignant influence on the church; they scorch and blacken her exceedingly: Song, i. 6. "Look not upon me, because I am black, be-  
cause

cause the sun hath looked upon me ; my mother's children were angry with me." Hence you may see the dreadful mischief which it does, Rev. viii. 7. 8. " There followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grafs was burnt up." Though the way be long and sore, the travellers may be hearty, and they may go pleasantly on, while they are comfortable to one another ; but when they grow a burden to one another, when their unity and love among themselves are gone, that makes a weary way to travellers. But never was the shadow of a great rock more suitable to the scorched traveller, than Christ is to his people in all these cases.—For,

[1.] He is their great plight-anchor in desertion, their hope, and the support of their souls. His blood is the great fence, under which they shelter themselves from the fire of the law, and brings them into hope, when they are next door to desponding. An absolute God is a terrible, but God in Christ is a refreshing sight.

[2.] He is their protector in temptation. Faith in Christ is a shield which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16. He is stronger than the strong man, and a present help in time of temptation, either to repel the tempter, or else to bear up the tempted. He says to them, " My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in your weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9.

[3.] He is their strong tower in persecution, where they abide, and stand out against all the storms of an enraged world. He gives them peace, when their enemies are carrying on the war. " Peace (says he) I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." He makes their bow to abide in its strength when the archers shoot at them,  
Gen.

Gen. xlix. 24. ; and makes them more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37. ; and so lines the thorny crown with his love, that it fits very soft on their heads.

[4.] He is their peace in time of contention and division With whomsoever they have war and strife, through him they have peace, peace with God, peace with conscience, and a hopeful prospect of getting thither,—where light shall be perfect, and where therefore there can be no difference of judgement ;—where love is perfect, and therefore no alienation of affections among the inhabitants shall prevail.

9. Scarcity of provisions makes this world a weary land. What else can be expected in the waste howling wilderness of this world, where, though there is enough to raise the appetite of lusts, and a sufficiency of husks for swine to feed on ; yet provision suitable for the soul is very scarce ; and this is what makes the world to the saints a weary land. For oftentimes their table is overturned ; the table of public ordinances is removed, which brings a famine of the word by which their souls should live, Amos, viii. 11. 12. Then they may be sent to seek bread for their souls with the peril of their lives ; and this makes a weary land to these that know the spiritual sweetness of gospel-ordinances. —Again, many times, when they come to the table of ordinances, they get nothing at all, not a morsel from the King's hand, less or more. How often are prayers, sermons, communions, like the empty chair of state, the King not filling it ; like the empty grave, where the grave-cloaths lie, but the Lord himself is gone ; so that there is nothing substantial, with which to satisfy the hungry soul. —Finally, at their best entertainment in the weary land, they ordinarily rise hungry, and with an appetite

petite. They are held short by the head, and it is but drops and sips that are got in this world; the full feast, where they shall hunger no more, is reserved to the pleasant land, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures evermore. But in this respect Christ is a suitable shadow, he keeps the soul from fainting; rather than they should want, bread shall be sent from heaven, and water shall flow out of the flinty rock: "Open thy mouth wide, (says he), and I will fill it," Psa. lxxxi. 10. He has the keys of heaven, and is the great steward of the Father's treasures, who, in the greatest scarcity, has enough amply to furnish those who by faith come to him.

10. Little company in the road to Zion makes it a weary land to the traveller thitherward. The multitude go all the other way; few take the narrow road. Christ's flock is but a little flock; in Elijah's days there were so very few upon the road, that he thought he had been all alone; he had so little help of the seven thousand, that he knew not of them. See how Micah longed for company on the road, but they were hid out of his view, Mic. vii. 1. and downwards. Now, this circumstance makes it a weary land; for at this rate the traveller has few to take a lift of his burden, and bear it with him. The apostle says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." But, alas! we are in a strange land, and there are many to lay a load above a burden, but few to take a lift of it. But people must even creep under their own burdens as they can, and keep to it themselves. This is what makes a weary world. But they are not to be moaned in this case, who get in under Christ's shadow; he can bear them, and their burden also. The Lord even reduces his people to this case, that they may depend the more upon

upon himself. When we have created props standing about us, we are ready to lay over much weight on them, and therefore the Lord suffers people to find their own weight, that they may be constrained to employ himself, to put the work in his own hand.—Again, the traveller has few to consult with, when he comes to a difficult and dark step. There are such steps which Christians meet with in their way to Zion, and it is no small mercy to have those who will help by their sympathy, advice, and prayers. But, alas! the unfeeling world affords few such; and this is what makes it a weary land. But Christ lives, and he lives to be a counsellor, an interpreter, one among a thousand. Therefore, let us not complain in this case: Mic. iv. 9. “Now, why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished?” They are well-guided whom Jesus guides; and if he do not guide us, we may blame ourselves, for “the meek he will guide in judgement, and the meek will he teach his way,” Psa. xxv. 9. Let us go to the oracle, and improve his prophetic office.—Finally, they have few to keep them out of languor by the way. It would be a great comfort to the weary traveller, to have the benefit of conference about the holy city, the New Jerusalem, to which the travellers are going, and of the glory, ease, and rest, that are to be enjoyed there; it would tend to comfort and stir them up to vigorous walking. But they are not alone, who have Christ with them; he can bear the soul company by his word and Spirit, he can keep them from languishing in the weary land.—We now proceed,

III. To shew in what respects Christ is a suitable and refreshful shade or shelter. The truth is, there is nothing in Christ but what affords a re-

freshful shade to the believer in the weary land : Song, v. 16. " Yea, he is altogether lovely." But the breaking of the spices will make them the more fragrant to those that have their senses spiritually exercised. Therefore observe,

1. That his very name affords a broad shade for the refreshment of the traveller in the weary land, sufficient to recover the soul that is swooning away : Song, i. 3. " Because of the favour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." When Moses would see the glory of God, the Lord proclaimed his name before him : Exod. xxxiv. 6. " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." His name is more glorious than if it were written in letters of gold ; it is written to us in letters of his precious blood. The truth is, all things in the world are rather names than things, the most desirable things in it are the name of nothing : Prov. xxiii. 5. " Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which *is not* ? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." The terrible things of it are but frightful names, 2 Cor. vi. 9. 10. ; but here is a name *that is above every name*, Phil. ii. 9. I shall mention only three instances. — His name is,

(1.) JESUS, a Saviour : Matth. i. 21. " His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." How sweet must this name be to a sensible lost sinner ! in the world we hear of Adam the destroyer, who ruined himself and all his posterity ; of sinners, his children, self-destroyers, Hof. xiii. 9. ; of Abaddon, the great destroyer,

destroyer, who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But to all these we may comfortably oppose Jesus the Saviour; stronger than Adam, saving those that he destroyed; stronger than sinners, helping those that have destroyed themselves; stronger than Satan, whom he spoils of his prey: Isa. xlix. 25. "Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."—His name is,

(2.) MESSIAH, or Christ, the anointed of the Father, pointing at his three offices. For under the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed; it signified their call to the office: so that in this name, we see him in all his offices, called to the Mediatorial office by the Father, and fully furnished for it; and so there is enough in him for all our needs, to be drawn forth by faith in his name. And we have it in Greek, as well as in Hebrew, shewing that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, have access to him: John, i. 41. "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, *the Christ*."—His name is,

(3.) IMMANUEL, God with us, Matth. i. 23. If we press this name by faith, the sap of it will come forth to the believer in three things.—There is,

1<sup>st</sup>, God in our nature: John, i. 14. "And the word was made flesh." God made man; Satan having withdrawn man from his allegiance, the whole human nature was corrupted, and set at enmity with God. But, behold in Christ the divine and human natures united, heaven and earth joined together in him, under the shade of which sinners may, with comfort and confidence, approach to God.—There is,



2dly, God reconciled to us in Christ : John, ̄ 14. " And dwelt among us ;" (Gr. *tabernacled*). Christ is the tabernacle of meeting, wherein God and sinners meet in peace : Rev. xxi. 3. " Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." There the weapons fall out of the hand of Justice, and there the arms of Mercy embrace the sinner. When the sinner comes there, he is out of the dark and black region, where death, wrath, and the curse reign ; he comes into a place of light, the light of the Lord's countenance, that shines on sinners, in the face of Jesus, our Immanuel. O what a blessed shade is here !—There is,

3dly, God on our side : Psal. xlv. 7. " The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." Under this shade, believers may bid defiance to all their enemies, the united powers of earth and hell : Rom. viii. 31. " If God be for us, who can be against us." This is the best shade the Lord's people can betake themselves to in a time of confusion and danger. Before the wars of Canaan began, the Lord brought Joshua under it, Josh. v. 13. 14. And if people could be got awakened out of their sleep upon these pillows which their enemies have laid under their heads, the directing them to this shadow by the word would be both reckoned sweet and seasonable, as Exod. ix. 20. This was the shadow Isaiah directed the people to, when the news came, that the malignant Ephraimites, and the idolatrous Syrians, were confederated to war against Judah, and to set up a king of their own stamp over Judah : Isa. vii. 2.—6. " And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim ; and his heart was moved, and the hearts of his people, as the tree

trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord unto Ifaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the high-way of the fuller's field, and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet, fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabaal." The prophet labours to draw them to this shadow, as a complete defence against the scorching heat of these two smoking fire-brands; for he says, Isa. viii. 10. "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought, speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us," (Heb. *Immanuel* is with us.)

2. His natures afford a broad shade to the traveller in the weary land; he is both God and man. - Jesus, he is man, and as such he has a sympathy, as one that has had experience of the troubles his people meet with in the weary land: Heb. iv. 15. "For we have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." As he is God, he is able to give them all protection in all cases and all conditions. However low they be, his power, being infinite, is able to raise them up. So that, however unequally they be matched with devils and men, they may say, as 2 Kings vi. 16. "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." When Christ sent out his apostles

apostles into the world, and knew that they would be opposed by the authority of the great ones, by the power, the learning, the prejudices, and superstitions of the world, over against all these he sets these emphatic words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matth. xxviii. 20.

3. His offices are a shade to the traveller in a weary land. These are suited to all the cases his people can possibly be in, in the weary land.

He is a Prophet, to teach them, to lead and guide them: Isa. lv. 4. "Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." If darkness arise, he is light to them that sit in darkness. There is no case so perplexed, but he can resolve it; and faith can begin where sight ends; and his direction will ever be ready to his own in the time of need: "It shall be given them in that hour, what they shall speak," Matth. x. 19.

He is a Priest to purge away sin, and manage his people's cause in the court of heaven. If guilt sting the conscience, and make a sick soul, his blood removes the sting; it purges the conscience from dead works, Heb. ix. 14; it heals all their wounds: Isa. xxxiii. 24. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." If they have a petition to present before the Lord, while Jesus lives, they know of a proper hand in the court of heaven, into which they can put it. For he makes intercession for us; he is our Advocate with the Father. This is no small comfort in the weary land.

He is a King, to protect and defend them, to conquer and restrain all his and their enemies. If Satan be too strong and subtle for them, yet Jesus is stronger

stronger than he, and can outwit him, and even outshoot him in his own bow. His grace is sufficient against the greatest temptations. If the world, the men or things of the world, be too hard for them, Jesus has overcome both. And though they may be ready to cry out for fear of these, that one day they will perish by their hands, yet their great Captain being on their head, they shall surely come off victorious at last, saying, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. His purchase affords shelter in the weary land. The price he paid was his own precious blood; the purchase then must needs be great, seeing the price was of infinite value. He has purchased for his people all that is necessary to make them happy. What Adam lost, Christ has purchased again, and that with advantage; so that all their losses are made up in him. Would you have the inventory of Christ's purchase? you have it, 1 Cor. iii. 22. "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." The best things for their enjoyment in time or through eternity. The worst things, through him, work for your good. What a refreshing shade, then, is this in the worst of times!

5. His relations afford shelter in a weary land. He stands in many near relations to his people; He is the foundation on which they are built, and therefore, as the house built on the rock stands unshaken, so he will support them under all pressures. He is their Father, and will allow them their provision, he will afford them protection; an inheritance, and every thing that children may expect from a father. He is their Husband, and therefore will be their defence; yea, their Head, and therefore

therefore he will guide them, and every way tenderly care for them, as the head does for the several members of the body.

6. His covenant and promises afford shelter in a weary land. The covenant is offensive and defensive, therefore the believer has common friends and enemies with the Lord himself: Zech. ii. 8. He that toucheth his people toucheth the apple of his eye. Hence said Jesus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Who would not venture to sea in that ship in which Christ himself, his interest, and his glory, are embarked; for though the ship in that case be beset with waves, it will not sink. Cæsar, when embarking on board of a ship to pursue his enemy, to encourage the pilot, who was afraid of the storm, cried out, You have Cæsar and his fortune embarked with you. How much more may the Christian not be afraid in the greatest storm, when Christ, his interest, and his honour, are with him. There are promises in the covenant suited to every case. The Lord has secured to his people protection and provision in the worst of times: "He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."

He has secured them against apostacy: John, x. 29. "No man (says he) shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." He has promised strength to the weak and fearful, Isa. xl. 29.—31; he hath promised his presence to be with them for ever, Heb. xiii. 5. Isa. xliii. 2.; he hath promised that all things shall work together for their good, Rom. viii. 28.; and, finally, there is nothing whatever which can befall them in the weary land, but there is something in the covenant and the promise suited to it, peculiarly calculated to comfort and support them under every pressure.

It

It remains that, as was proposed,

IV. I MAKE some practical improvement, which I shall do,

1<sup>st</sup>, In an use of information, and,

2<sup>dly</sup>, In an use of exhortation.

For an use of information we may see,

1. That it is a black mark of a soul, that has no more to look for as a portion but the world; when they take so well with the world's entertainment, that they never seek after Christ. The world is not the weary land to them, and so they care not for Christ. Are there not many who would desire no better portion than the world, if they could get it kept? They could well renounce their pretensions to Canaan, if they could get their tents to stand always on this side Jordan; they would never desire a better heaven, than their lordships, their farms, or what else they can work for with their own hands. While these things prosper with them, they have nothing to make the world a weary land to them; the country's disease never wearies them; and if they be crossed in one worldly thing, they do not go to Christ to get comfort under it, but to some other worldly thing. This speaks, that they are at home in the world, and are not travelling towards Zion. Others may be pilgrims in it, but they are not; they are just where they would be, and have no other choice, Psa. iv. 6. It shews also that they would never look near Christ, if death did not make sure of their being turned out of the earth. They have no love to Christ for himself, they could fend well enough without him, if he would but let them alone in the world.

2. See here the mystery of the Christian life.

Why

Why do true Christians so contemn the world? It is a weary land to all such. What keeps them all under the tribulation of the world, while others faint, so that they have had a joy in tribulation, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, yea, and even death itself? Why, under the shadow of the great Rock, they got meat to eat the world knew not of.

3. See the transcendent excellence of Christ. What a precious one must he be in whom there is enough to balance all the miseries of the weary land! There are some of these that nothing under the sun can balance; what avails all the riches and honours under the sun, to a person under extreme bodily distress, or exposed to the arrest of death. But in the most wearisome step of the weary land, Christ is a refreshing shade.

4. This lets us see, where there is a shelter to be found in the worst of times, against the stormy tempest of public or private calamity: John, xvi. 33. "These things (says Jesus) I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In Jesus Christ our safety lies, and without him there is no safety. Here is the rock that is higher than we, and higher too than the highest of our enemies, whether devils or men.

I have only now to add an use of exhortation. I would exhort you to come to Christ, and put yourselves under his shadow this day. And that you may understand what you are called to, take it in the following advices.

1. Lay aside your security, and see that you stand in need of a shade for refreshment and for protection in the weary land. However lightly people

people look on the confusions of our day, I think we have no reason to be secure; security is dangerous, seeing the sins of the generation are crying sins, crying for a stroke. Whatever has brought a stroke on a church or people, that is not wanting in Scotland this day. Did universal corruption amongst all ranks bring the deluge on the old world? that is visibly the plague of this generation. Did the despising of the gospel bring the Roman armies on the Jews? Matth. xxii. 7. the monstrous profanity amongst some, and loathsome formality among others, says we cannot escape, though God bear long with us.—The many deliverances we have met with when at the brink of ruin, and yet the generation not bettered by them, says that the axe, which has been lying so long at the root of the tree, will be wielded against us at the last: Amos, iv. 11. 12. “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel! and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!” We are manifestly pining away under spiritual plagues at this day, many given up to vile affections, the generation generally plagued with hardness of heart and deadness, men are turned hateful, and left to hate one another, biting and devouring one another, all which is an evidence, that there is an evil spirit amongst us.—Finally, our security in the face of alarming dispensations, is a terrible token, according to that in 1 Theff. v. 3. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”—I would exhort you,



2. To embrace Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the everlasting covenant. Ye that are strangers to Christ, come in at length. Let the state of your perishing souls come into your minds in earnest, and lay a sure foundation for eternity. Ye who have already come, come nearer and nearer, renew your acceptance of Christ, and stir up the grace of faith, that for the present is lying in such a weak state.

3. Repent of your sins, and turn from them. Amend your ways and your doings, and let not iniquity be your eternal ruin. Answer the call of God at length, that there may be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. Many delays have been in this matter, bring it now to a point, and halt no more betwixt two opinions, whether to be for God or for your lusts.—In a word, I exhort you,

4. To lay the weight of your through-bearing through the weary land over on Jesus Christ.—Look before you to the difficult steps that may be yet betwixt you and the grave, and solemnly take him for all you need or may need. Be concerned to depend upon him, and to trust in him, that he will not cease caring for you, and working in you, till he completely accomplish all that good word upon which he has caused you to hope.—To prompt you to this good work, I would propose the following MOTIVES.

1. This is the shade God the Father has provided for you. "I have (says he) laid help upon one that is mighty," Psa. lxxxix, 19.; and you hear what he says to you in the text. Therefore, honour the Father by coming to his Son, and putting yourselves under his shadow. He knew sinners would need a shelter in the weary land. O neglect not the offered salvation!—Consider,

2. That

2. That all other shadows are and will be but vain and vanishing ones; they will not be able to defend you from the ills to which you are exposed in the weary land; they will be like a hut built within the sea-mark, which will be carried away, together with the inhabitant, when the waters begin to flow: Isa. xxviii. 17. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Then your own wisdom will be but folly, your strength weakness, your carnal schemes shall not profit you.—Consider,

3. That the wrath of God will pursue all who are not under this shadow. O Christless sinners! what will you do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what will you answer him? He is a consuming fire, all else you can put betwixt him and you will be but as stubble, or at best but a partition-wall of dry boards, that will quickly be consumed in that devouring fire.—Consider,

4. That whatever weary steps ye meet with in the weary land, these will be doubly heavy by your not coming in under Christ's shadow; for the curse will be in them; and though they were very light in themselves, that will make them heavy. You will get all your burden to bear alone, as Saul did. And, O what a sad case it is to have heaven and earth dark both at once! Isa. viii. 21. 22.

—Consider,

5. That all the travellers to Zion have made this shade their shelter. It is a tried shade in all ages of the church, Psa. xc. 1.; whoever pursues them, this is the refuge of all the people of God in all times: Prov. xviii. 10. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The spouse of Christ looks for this shade, Song, i. 7. 8. and ii. 3.; and many a

good word they have spoken of it to recommend it to others.—Consider,

*Lastly*, That under Christ's shadow there will be safety in the most wearisome parts of the weary land. He is the Saviour, and there is none besides him. Under his shadow there is safety from troubles, when they are flying very thick in the weary land. He can hide his people in the hollow of his hand in the midst of danger, Psal. xci. 7. For he has all things at his command; men and devils are under the check of his providence. There is oftentimes a moderation of troubles.—Under this shadow people find, that though they be not quite freed from them, yet they are made very moderate to them: Jer. xv. 11. "The Lord said, Verily, it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction." And sometimes it is much better for his people to meet with this moderation, Jer. xlv. 5. The life for a prey is no small mercy. While his people rest under this shadow, there is always a spiritual salvation from the sting of evil; thus the nature of afflictions is altered, and the sharpest and heaviest stones thrown at them become precious stones, which do them no hurt, but rather good; for "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" 1 Pet. iii. 13.—To sum up all in a word,

There is never missed here an eternal salvation. However they be treated in the weary land, none go to hell from under Christ's shadow; but though they should go through fire and water, they will land at last in Abraham's bosom, and be brought unto the wealthy place. Amen.

THE

---

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF HALTING  
BETWIXT TWO OPINIONS.\*

---

S E R M O N XXIV.

3 KINGS, xvi. 21.—*And Elijah said, How long halt ye betwixt two opinions?*

**A**MONG the crowds of irreligious men in the visible church, there are few, if any, so positively determined against God and religion, as never to have a thought of repentance and reformation. Reason and interest appear so much on the side of religion, that where conscience possesses any power at all, one can hardly fail in having sometimes favourable thoughts on that side. But indecision and unsettledness in that weighty matter ruins men. It is so long ere they come to a point, that death often overtakes them before they have got the matter fixed; and they are set beyond the possibility of doing any thing for their souls, before ever they have resolved firmly what to do for them. The text is. *Elijah's exhortation with a great assembly*

K k 3

\* Maxton, Saturday, August 2. 1718.

in that dangerous case. The worship of Baal was set up, and authorised in Israel by Ahab, and patronised by his courtiers. Thence the body of the people, though they did not utterly renounce the worship of Jehovah, yet they were greatly corrupted with that idolatry. God had on this account sent a famine on them, and, though it had continued three years and a half, it had not reformed them. But Ahab lays the blame of this calamity on Elijah; Elijah retorts it boldly on him. They agree that all Israel be gathered with Baal's priests, who were dispersed over all the country, and the priests of the groves, who were Jezebel's chaplains, that the whole matter betwixt God and Baal, Elijah and Ahab, might be decided. The assembly being convened, Elijah comes to them, and, without observing any ceremony, or beginning to intercede with God for rain to them, he falls a pleading God's cause with them, expostulating with them on God's behalf, as in the text: *How long (said he) halt ye betwixt two opinions?*

In which expostulation, we have,

1. The matter of it; their halting betwixt two opinions. Here he attacks them on two points, and charge sthem with a grievous fault, an unaccountable weakness in the most weighty concerns of their souls.—He charges them,

(1.) With weak and wavering heads. They had two opinions; by the one they had a value for Baal, by the other for Jehovah. Not only did some of that people in their judgement declare for Baal, others for Jehovah, but the same persons at one time thought it best to follow Baal; at another time Jehovah; they were undetermined in this matter of the greatest importance. Their thoughts in this case were wavering, going hither and thither, like top-branches of

of trees going with the wind, which is the Holy Ghost's own metaphor in the original word of the text.—They were chargeable,

(2.) With unsteady feet. They halted betwixt these two, and they went from Baal to the Lord, and from the Lord to Baal again. Thus, passing from side to side, they were poor lame souls, (this is the Holy Ghost's own metaphor), they did not only limp, like men lame of one leg, (the best Christians carry such a halt with them, till they come to the grave), but they were like men lame of both legs, for this is the import of the original word, 2 Sam. iv. 4. They crooked to both sides, they went wavering from side to side, never straight, one time they were for Baal, another time for Jehovah, they were never steadily fixed.—In the expostulation, there is,

2. The manner of it: *How long will ye halt?* &c. They had been several years in that case, and yet were not come to a point. One might think the case was not so very difficult, whether Jehovah or Baal should be their choice; but wonder not at it, for the case is even as plain betwixt the Lord and your lusts and idols, yet year after year you cannot come to a point. The phrase is urgent; it imports,—the shamefulnes, the baseness of their conduct, that they should be so long in deciding in a matter so very clear, stumbling at that rate in broad day-light;—its grievousness to the Spirit of God; he was so weary with bearing with them, that he would fain have them come to a point, and therefore rouses them up to it.

FROM the expostulation thus explained, I would observe the following doctrines, viz.

Doctr. I. That to be still wavering and undecided  
in

in the absolute and final choice betwixt the Lord and idols, is most abominable.

Doct. II. That an unequal and unsteady walk, here-away, there-away, betwixt the Lord and idols, is an unaccountable and abominable way of walking through the world.—These I shall shortly consider in their order.

Doct. I. That to be still wavering and undecided in the absolute and final choice betwixt the Lord and idols, is most abominable.—In speaking to this I shall only drop a few things,

I. For explication of the point.

II. For confirmation of it. And then,

III. Make some application.—I am,

I. To explain the point.—In order to this, consider,

1. That the Lord and idols are suitors for the heart of every man and woman that hears the gospel; and because that idols have the first love, they strive to retain it, and the Lord comes to recover it. Lusts court it, and therefore the gospel teaches to deny them, Tit. ii. 12. “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and while it thus teaches, it brings a better offer. The devil, the world, and the corrupt nature, are proxies to agent for our lusts; the Lord’s Spirit, his ministers, and conscience, act for the Lord.—Consider,

2. That the sinner’s heart is urged with offers and arguments on both hands. God makes his offers, and urges them with the strongest arguments, taken from the certainty of eternal happiness, or misery, of enjoying his unspeakable love, or incurring his dread displeasure: Isa. lv. 2. “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread,

bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness." Satan is not behind hand in pains to urge his offers, he plies them with allurements of present profit and pleasure, most suited to the corrupt heart, which naturally gapes for them.—Consider,

3. That there can be no enjoying of both together: Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The Lord will not deal shares with lusts and idols, the offer is peremptory on other terms, "If ye take me, let these go." If the matter could be agreed betwixt the Lord and his rival idols, the wavering soul would soon be at a point, and would embrace both. But that cannot be; if the Lord be received, he must have the crown, and the most beloved lusts must be nailed to the cross: Gal. v. 24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."—Consider,

4. That the matter must be determined by the sinner's free choice: Josh. xxiv. 15. "Chuse ye this day whom ye will serve." The Lord will not take possession without the sinner's consent, for it is the heart he seeks, and if that be wanting, there is no bargain. And the choice must be an absolute and a final one; there must be a final deciding of this cause, so that thereafter the soul may cleave to the one with full purpose of heart, and altogether abandon the other.—Consider,

*Lastly,* That the Lord requireth the sinner's decided answer. But here the sinner wavereth; he is neither determined to give up altogether with  
the



the Lord, nor to give up wholly with his lusts; sometimes he is almost persuaded, but never altogether. So there comes still one off-put on the back of another; and when the sinner has been at the advising and deciding this business days and years, he is as far from a point the last day as the first.—I am now to propose some considerations,

## II. FOR confirmation of this point.—Consider,

1. That there is no competition here in point of real value. What is the dead idol Baal, in comparison with Jehovah, the living God? What are our filthy lusts, in comparison with Christ? Jer. xxiii. 28. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat? faith the Lord." It is a disgrace on our reason, to put them in the balance together, and argues a fearful blindness with which mankind are seized, once to entertain a doubt which to chuse.—Consider,

2. That it is ingratitude of the deepest dye, not readily to fall in with the offer. When the potter is making suit to his own clay, the mighty God to his own creature worm man, to put off his offer, because of the craving of the heart after filthy lusts, these brats of hell, and spawn of the old serpent, is certainly ungrateful. The Lord might have left us with them, to have made the best of them we could, which would have been no better than death; for what else could have resulted from our drinking that cup of poison? But now, when he comes to offer us life, how horrible is it to be wavering and undetermined, whether we will accept of the Lord and life, or not!—Consider,

*Lastly,* That this warning is on a matter of the utmost weight, and what we have not one to-mor-

row

row allowed us to advise upon. Our souls lie at stake, eternal salvation or damnation depend on our choice; if we make the Lord our choice, we are happy for ever; if ye do not, we are ruined for ever; it is, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," Psal. xcvi. 7.; so that, if death carry you off undetermined, your eternal destruction is unalterably fixed; and what an abominable thing is it then, to be still wavering?—I now proceed,

III. To make some application of the subject. And with this design, I would expostulate with you halters and undetermined sinners, who are not yet come to a point in the matter of your choice betwixt Christ and your lusts, in the words of the text, "How long halt ye betwixt two opinions?" How long will it be ere you come to a point how to dispose of that heart of yours? You have had many rich gospel-calls from the Lord, and many communion-calls, and yet you have not freely abandoned your idols, and made choice of the Lord, to this day. Still you are halting, undetermined, and wavering. How long shall it be thus?—In managing this expostulation, I would ask,

I. Who are the wavering, undetermined halters betwixt the Lord and their lusts?—I answer,

(1.) Ye who to this day never found the time to break your covenant with your lusts, and to enter into covenant with God, either in pretence or reality. Are there not some here, who never gave their personal consent to the baptismal covenant, who are utter strangers to personal covenanting with God in Christ? they have not even expressly in words renewed the covenant made for them in baptism, much less have they ratified it with their own solemn consent before the Lord; they are woful halters, but without making this choice

choice they can never see heaven: Eph. ii. 12. "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."—Ye are the wavering,

(2.) Who time after time slight the sacrament of the Lord's supper, not preparing yourselves to partake of it. What makes you always and constantly mere spectators and onlookers of the seal of the covenant, and that solemn engagement to be the Lord's, but that you are halters betwixt the Lord and your lusts? Were there a bargain in your offer, of which all the partners were obliged to strike hands with the party that makes it with them, and you stood by, and would not give your hand; would not that prove you not to be determined as yet for the bargain? You would be glad to have the bargain ratified betwixt God and you, if you were really for it: Psa. lxxviii. 31. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God."—To this some may object,

We would fain take the sacrament, but they will not give us tokens of admision.—To this I answer,

What hinders your receiving them, but your gross ignorance, or your ungodly and scandalous life, which certainly ought to do it: Matth. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." But why do not ye get the knowledge of God and religion, and reform your lives, that ye may fit down at the Lord's table? And here lies the matter, you are not so far determined yet as to quit your lusts, for all the communion with God that is to be had in the sacrament.—Such of you are halting,

(3.) Who have had your convictions of sin, and are in so far satisfied, that you should have given up with it, but your hearts were never brought to

to part with it to this day. Are there not many who are standing undetermined this day on the carcases of their murdered convictions? Acts, xxiv. 25. "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." They have been lashed by their consciences, to drive them to the Lord from their lusts; nay, they had much ado to resist these lashings; but, after all, these impressions are worn off, and they are not yet determined.—Such are wavering,

(4.) Who have (often perhaps) been aiming at the covenant, but always stuck at one thing. You have been brought to a point in many things, but one thing you could never yet get over. O miserable halter betwixt God and the idol of jealousy! shall that one thing mar the winning of thy soul? If you be not content with all the articles of the covenant, without exception, you have your choice to make, yet you are not determined: Mark, x. 21. "Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest," &c.—Such are halting,

(5.) Who are still at fast-and-loose with God, and whom nothing can bind, who do with their vows, as the dog with his collar, that slips it off and on as he pleases: Psal. lxxviii. 36. 37. "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." There are many of our communicants of this sort, who come under the vows of God very lightly, and as lightly soon after slip out from under the tye; the truth is, they never consider the matter with due seriousness. They make choice of the Lord, but, in very deed, their hearts were never in earnest determined.—Such of you are wavering,

*Lastly*, And in a word, who have not expressly embraced God and Christ, but cleave to your lusts. Our Lord has often come to you in the gospel, requiring your last answer, but you have neither yet given it, nor will you either plainly say ye will betake yourselves to your lusts and idols for altogether, nor are you come the length of an honest resolve to give over with them for altogether. Ye are undoubtedly woful undetermined halters.

2. I must ask at you, How long will ye halt, and be undetermined?

(1.) Have ye not halted long enough already betwixt God and your lusts? 1 Pet. iv. 3. "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Have ye not often enough sent away the Lord in his messengers groaning from you, because ye could not be won yet? (1.) Young halters, may not ye, after ten, fifteen, and twenty years, or more, be at a point whether ye will be the Lord's or not? I assure you, God has been at a point with many one in that time, who never got your length, but their states are determined in another world already, without possibility of alteration. Every seven years ye have been in the world, ye have had an year of Sabbaths, in these Sabbaths many, many a call. And will ye yet be undetermined? (2.) Old halters, may not ye be at a point, after thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty years; ye have taken to advise in? will ye halt on, till ye slip into a grave, into hell, undetermined. All the sermons ye have heard, the communions ye have waited on, even all the rods and the mercies ye have met with, have left you where they found you, as undetermined as ever, and will ye still go away this day as undetermined as ye came?

*2dly*, How can you be at ease as long as such

a weighty matter is undetermined? Poor soul! while thou art halting, thou art standing on the brink of the pit, and whether death or life shall be thy lot, whether heaven or hell, is still as to thee undetermined. Till thou determine the point to be the Lord's, and to renounce all thy idols, Satan has the hold of thee, and there is nothing between death and thee but one step, thou hangest over the pit by the long-worn thread of divine patience; and whenever that gives way, thou art lost for ever: John, iii. 36. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(3.) Do you not wonder, that God has waited so long upon you, that he has not taken your slights and scorns for your final answer? Is it not surprising, that he has not recalled his ambassadors, and denounced war against you, to be carried on for ever? Ye must needs wonder that it is not so, when ye consider the infinite greatness of him who makes suit to you, the meanness and vileness of those whom he courts, and the abominable competitors which ye prefer to him.

(4.) Are ye not afraid lest the Lord halt, and proceed no further in seeking after you? that this may be the last call that ever you may get? Luke, xiv. 24. "For I say unto you, that none of these men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." Sit this call, and who knows but the Lord may from this time leave you to your lusts? Psal. lxxxii. 11. 12. "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:" Saying, Cease my Spirit, cease conscience, ministers, ordinances, judgements, mercies; give that  
 L 1 2 man

man no more disturbance in the embraces of his lusts, let them hang by him, and he by them, till they sink him into hell, and lie there as a mountain of lead on him for ever.

(5.) Do you not know, the longer you halt, it will be the harder to come to a point for God? the longer ye hold off from the Lord, you will be the more loth to come away: Prov. vi. 10. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." He that is not fit this day, will be unfitter to-morrow; for lusts, through continuance, grow more and more strong, and the devil, that comes at first alone, afterwards his name is Legion, for they are many. I aver, that it had been telling many of us, that they had struck the iron many years ago, when it was hotter than it is now.

*Lastly*, Halt as long as you will, you must not only be determined for the Lord, and against all your lusts, but also you must be joined to the Lord, and separated from them actually, else you are ruined for ever. The case is plain, Mark, xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned."—Ezek. xviii. 30. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."—Matth. xviii. 3. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." So, if you have any mind to be free from the wrath to come, unless you have a mind to take your hazard with your lusts through all eternity, while God is God, to pursue the quarrel for the slight ye put on him, you must come to a point, and be determined for God, and give up with all your lusts.

Now, Sirs, there are two things lying before you this day, of one of which you are to take your choice.

1. You must either give up with God, Christ, heaven,

heaven, and glory, quit all your part in the covenant of grace, the purchase of Christ, and his death, freely, and betake yourselves to your lusts, idols, and sinful courses, and make the best of them you can to live and die with them. Satan is fond of your making this choice. Or,

2. You must give up with your lusts, idols, and sinful courses, freely quit your part in them, not excepting your darling lust, and betake yourselves to the Lord in his covenant, taking this day God the Father for your Father, God the Son for your Saviour, God the Holy Ghost for your Sanctifier, Christ for your Prophet, to be led by his word and Spirit; Christ for your Priest, to be saved by his obedience and death only; Christ for your King, to be ruled and governed by him according to his will absolutely. The Lord is willing that you make this your choice, and kindly invites the worst of you to it: *Rev. iii. 20.* "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me." And *ch. xxii. 17.* "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Nay, he commands you to make this choice: *1 John, iii. 23.* "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And so earnest is he in this invitation, that he will pass all your former slights, if you will but now fall in with this offer: *Ezek. xviii. 22.* "All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." Now, there is the choice in both parts, what say ye to it? *Josh. xxiv. 15.* "Chuse ye this day whom ye will serve."—



I demand your answer. What answer shall I return? Your final answer, for I cannot say that ever our Master will send me again to you on this errand.—Are there any here,

(1.) Who will give that answer, Jer. ii. 25. “There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.” O, Sirs! take your word again, we are loth to carry back that word; why will you die? why will you destroy yourselves? If we saw a cup of poison in your hand, which you would not part with, but would drink, we would flee to you, mix our blood with yours, before you should get it drunk; but what can we do in this case, but cry, O do yourselves no harm! and protest before God, angels, men, and your own selves, that your blood is on your own head.—Are there any here,

(2.) Who will give that answer, Jer. iii. 22. “Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.”—Job, xxxiv. 32. “If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.” Then, I call heaven and earth to record; you are at a point for our Lord never to go back; that it is an everlasting bargain between God in Christ and you; that he is yours, and you are his; that although this bargain betwixt our Lord and you has been many times back and fore, it is now fully and finally concluded, you are married now, and there is no room for any other suitors. O come, then, to your Lord’s table with a holy boldness, and get the covenant sealed!

*Lastly*, Is that your answer, Acts, xxiv. 25. “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee?” You say you will advise upon it. I declare we cannot take that answer; our commission does not bear us to indulge you even till to-morrow, in advising upon a matter

matter of such importance : Heb. iv. 7. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Nay, we cannot allow you even another hour or half-hour in hesitation : 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Give your answer, therefore, instantly, I peremptorily claim it ; if you delay longer, you may be in hell ere to-morrow, nay, next hour, it may be, next moment. What do you hesitate upon?—whether you will obey God or the devil?—whether you will cast the kindled coals of hell out of your bosom, or not?—whether you will travel in that narrow road which leads to life, or in that broad road which will land you in destruction?—in short, whether you will live for ever, or perish eternally ? Oh ! Sirs, be wise before it be too late, halt no longer, I beseech you, betwixt these two opinions : "To-day, if ye will hear his voice ; harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, the day of temptation in the wilderness." When a gracious God is now calling you, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" let the echo of your souls, and the answer of your tongues, be, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

*END OF VOL. I.*

\*\*\* IN Vol. II. will be given the other Sermon on this subject.

---

EDINBURGH, PRINTED BY J. PILLANS & SONS,  
NORTH COLLEGE STREET.

---

## ERRATA.

---

Page 43. line 27. from the top, *for with read*  
without

74. line 15. *for creative read created*  
76. line 29. *for the feat read these at*  
91. line 4. *for work read way*  
93. line 16. *for away read a way*  
100. line 22. *for hapless read hopeless*  
105. line 5. *for faith read said*  
110. line 15. *for value read do not value*  
118. line 4. *for which read with which*  
160. line 30. *for more more read more and*  
more  
175. line 25. *for stawed read starved*  
183. line 31. *for go the read go to the*  
189. line 6. *for spurn read spur*  
213. line 9. *for under read unto*  
222. line 19. *for turn read trust*  
237. line 18. *for know read know not*  
244. line 5. *for profanify read profanity*  
269. line 26. *for sad read glad*  
282. line 34. *for tne read the*  
283. line 36. *for haye read have*  
299. line 33. *for big read beg*  
301. line 15. *after kick against add him*  
347. line 2. *after these add burdens*  
360. line 15. *for opposed read offered*

[To fill up the four remaining pages, rather than give a part of next Sermon, we have taken the liberty to insert the following practical piece of Poetry, which, we flatter ourselves, will be acceptable to our readers.]

*The SOUL'S EXPOSTULATION with itself,  
for want of LOVE TO CHRIST.*

**W**HY all this darknes in my mind,  
And deadnes in my heart ?  
The cause of all, I clearly find,  
Is chiefly on my part:

Sure this estrangement from my God  
Much ignorance doth prove ;  
Such wand'ring of my thoughts abroad  
Does argue little love.

O ! think on him who did redeem  
Thy soul from sin and woe,  
Let him have only thy esteem,  
Say to all lovers, Go.

And never let a filthy lust,  
Or a religious one,  
Compete with him ; count all but dust,  
And say to them, Begone.

But let thy love on him be fix'd,  
Whose love was fix'd on thee,  
Who drank a cup of wrath unmix'd,  
Thy soul from wrath to free.

A duty's but a splendid fault,  
If thereon thou dost rest ;  
O ! then, renounce them ; never halt  
Till thou hast won dear Christ.

O thou ! my wicked wand'ring heart,  
No better than a *Lot*,  
Thou dost with such an object part,  
And dost on nothings doat.

O meditate on him a while !  
 Thy thoughts let fixed stand  
 On him who ne'er did thee beguile,  
 To whom thou gav'st thy hand.

Yea, I conjure thee, O my soul,  
 Ne'er from his paths to swerve,  
 But give him thy affections whole,  
 For he doth them deserve.

When thou an hateful object wast,  
 And didst deserve his ire,  
 He chose thee, and o'er others past,  
 That thou might'st him desire.

Yea, that he might thy love attract,  
 And gain thine heart's esteem,  
 Thy sins were laid upon his back ;  
 Thus he did thee redeem.

And being burden'd with thy guilt,  
 Upon him vengeance fell ;  
 Desertion, and God's wrath he felt,  
 Which was a very hell.

He to death's stroke himself did yield,  
 Thy enmity to slay ;  
 His side was pierc'd, yet he was mild,  
 That love might have a way.

Thus having purchas'd peace on earth ;  
 That he might it maintain,  
 He did ascend to heav'n with mirth,  
 And there he doth remain,

Where, as thine Advocate, he still  
 Thy num'rous causes pleads,  
 He doth present his *Blood* and *Will*,  
 And for thee intercedes.

All this he does thy love to win,  
 O! this believe and see ;  
 When thou wast all a lump of sin,  
 Christ gave himself for thee.

Hence, when he calls thee in his word,  
 " Give me thy wicked heart,"  
 Soul, echo thou, " Take it, O Lord,  
 It is my worst, best part."

Sound Reason even does declare,  
 That Christ thy heart should have,  
 For in thy Christ, and only there,  
 Is what thy soul should crave.

Now, soul, do not thyself delude  
 In this momentous case ;  
 Try if thou safely canst conclude  
 Thou hast this heav'nly grace.

Art thou affected with a sense  
 Of enmity and ill ?  
 Then plainly this doth evidence  
 True love, though it be chill.

And is it ground of grief to thee  
 Thou canst not love him more ?  
 Be sure, if conscience answer, Yea,  
 There is some love in store.

When inbred sin in thee does stir,  
 Thou dost not it allow ;  
 His hand, which drops the sweetest myrrh,  
 Thy plagues will all subdue.

When by his rivals thou dost see  
 His crown pull'd from his head,  
 Does this occasion grief to thee ?  
 Then here is love indeed !

When in a precept he does shine,  
 And duty does appear,  
 Then to obey thy soul's on wing,  
 If only he draws near.

When in a threat'ning of the law  
 Thy soul his voice does hear,  
 Then to offend thou stand'st in awe,  
 Love casts not out this fear.

And if his promise and thy case  
 Do sweetly harmonise,  
 Art thou amazed at his grace ?  
 Then love's in exercise.

Dost thou his person prize above  
 All things that he doth give ?  
 Well, then, this evidence doth prove  
 Thou in his love dost live.

If he withdraw at any time,  
 Thou can't contented be ;  
 When thy desire is towards him,  
 Then his is towards thee.

When thou his image dost behold  
 On any soul pourtray'd,  
 Dost thou esteem it more than gold ?  
 Then love's in thee display'd.













~~2~~  
48/04



